

Mr. Foksett went on to say that he had found a medical practitioner at Folkestone, calling himself Dr. Battersby — now a very old man — whose books showed that he had been in attendance at the birth of the child called Harry Moss, and further that he had assisted at the entrance into the world of the Earl of Belvidere, who was then — for his father was still living, though absent in Ireland — designated by His Lordship's second title of Viscount Bellamont. It was upon the Doctor's recommendation that Mrs. Moss had been engaged to fulfil those maternal duties which the Countess' unfortunate state of health forbade her to undertake.

"What is really curious about old Dr. Battersby's evidence is this," said Mrs. Foksett. "As I have already mentioned, he is a very old man, and it is unnecessary to accept his statement implicitly; he has no record of the fact, and his memory may be altogether at fault. But he declares with much positiveness that he distinctly recollects that the Countess' child was of a dark complexion — or, as he puts it, 'a black-headed baby' — the while he is equally certain that Mrs. Moss' infant was fair, or, as he says, 'a white-headed baby.'"

"Then, so far," said His Lordship, "Mrs. Nibloe's story is confirmed."

"Well," said the lawyer, "it may be viewed as in a degree confirming her story. But it amounts to very little. I don't see that much importance should be attached to this old man's story. Very likely his memory has played him some trick. There is no particular reason why he should recollect in these cases which baby was black-headed and which was white-headed. He does not pretend to recollect the complexion of other children he helped into the world about the same time, or, indeed, long afterwards."

"I must have been what he would call a white-headed baby," said His Lordship, thoughtfully.

"Possibly," observed Mr. Foksett, with the air of one reluctant to make any admission whatever.

"And this Harry Moss?"

"Well, oddly enough, this Harry Moss is a black-headed young man, with a complexion of a tallowy sort."

"I must see him," said Lord Belvidere.

"I don't advise it, but I don't see any absolute objection to such a course if Your Lordship insists upon it. I need hardly counsel the utmost caution in dealing with him. He must be addressed in the most guarded way. I have taken care to ascertain that he is altogether ignorant of Mrs. Nibloe's story of his origin. He is not a claimant as yet. He does not pretend to be anything more than what he really is — a law writer, as we say, in the employment of Mr. Took, law stationer, of Cursitor street."

"How soon can I see him? I am really most anxious to see him."

"For that matter, I have no doubt Your Lordship could see him at once. I have only to write a line to Mr. Took. I have a clerk in attendance; he can go down in a cab and bring the young man back with him. I dare say, in little more than half an hour or so."

VII.

"Hope I see you well, gents both," said Harry Moss, upon his admission to the presence of Lord Belvidere.

The young man was perfectly calm and at his ease; he was not in the least awed or impressed; there was no such thing as diffidence or modesty in his composition; he was as impudent as a London sparrow. A thin-faced young man, with a sallow, spotted complexion, straight black hair that tumbled over his forehead, dingly dressed in a smeared, frayed and threadbare suit of cheap tweed, altogether unwholesome of aspect, an odor of stale tobacco smoke haunting him, with a savor of public houses — this was the rightful heir to the Belvidere peerage.

Lord Belvidere raised his eyeglass and peered at his visitor.

"You see the likeness?" His Lordship in troubled tones inquired of his solicitor.

"May I inquire what likeness?" My Lord.

"It seems to me that he exactly resembles the old portrait of Hyperion Bellasis, the first Lord Belvidere. You remember the picture? It hangs over the fireplace in the large dining room at Beamish Castle. Beamish Castle was the family seat in Huntingdonshire."

"I remember the picture," said the lawyer, "but I don't see the likeness. I never do see likenesses."

"What am I to say to him?" asked His Lordship, with some agitation. "What are we to do with him?"

"You would like something to drink?" said the lawyer to the visitor. His Lordship was so clearly settling down into helplessness, that Mr. Foksett felt bound to go to the helm, as it were.

"Right you are," answered Mr. Moss. "I am always game for a drink. I came thirsty into the world, it's my belief, and I shall go thirsty out of it. I don't care much what it is so long as it gets into my head. I'm not one for non-intoxicating liquors. Give me the intoxicating, and plenty of 'em."

Curtis was bidden to bring a bottle of champagne.

"Do you mean it?" cried Mr. Moss, excitedly. "No larks! I never tasted real champagne but once, and I've dreamed of gooseberries ever since. I call this prime," he said presently, after Curtis had twice filled his glass. "Thank

you, as you're so pressing I don't mind if I do take another. Your jolly good 'ealths, my noble swells." And he drained a bumper in honor of his hosts.

"He's a cad," murmured Lord Belvidere. "He really is a frightful one. But no doubt he means well."

"I warned Your Lordship, if you remember, that he was not a very nice young man," whispered the lawyer.

"But, of course, fortune has not been kind to him; it may be that he has been very cruelly used, deprived during many years of his just rights. That must be borne in mind."

Mr. Foksett raised his eyebrows and his shoulders, but said no word. He had hoped that the appearance of Mr. Moss would have had its due effect upon His Lordship, would have completely discredited Mrs. Nibloe's story and ended all question of the young man's claim to the peerage.

"And now, gents, may I ask what you want with me? What can I do for you?" he asked. He had been gazing round the room with quick shifting eyes, noting the furniture, the pictures, the little minor accessories and decorations, not admiringly, but with a pert air of disparagement, ridicule and contempt.

"I am afraid he looks terribly like a pick-pocket," mused Lord Belvidere.

"You are employed by Mr. Took, of Cursitor street?" began the lawyer.

"That's so. I've worked pretty regularly for old Took altogether. He sacks me now and then, but he's generally glad to take me on again. For I back myself to do more and better than any of the whole billing of law writers when I'm in the humor; and when I ain't drunk," he added candidly. "I've got through a good many folios for your office, Mr. Foksett, taking one thing with another — chancery, conveyancing and common law, if you'll excuse my mentioning it."

"Is a law writer's a hard life?" inquired Lord Belvidere rather timidly.

"I shouldn't say it was a soft one," replied Mr. Moss. "Sometimes it's what you may call a stopping-upall night and working-the-hair-off-your-head sort of life. Sometimes it's write, write till you seem going blank blind, and your eyes feel like dropping out of your head. And then there comes the cramp in your forearm, and your fingers all pins and needles, and you'd give the world for winks, only you don't take 'em. And don't your head burn, and don't you feel a pain inside you as though you'd swallowed a live snake and couldn't digest him, and he was setting to work to turn round and bite his way back again to daylight? It's precious hard to stay awake sometimes, I know, though you may drink the blackest coffee and take pinches of the strongest snuff — they may powdered glass with it, a purpose, they tell me — to keep your eyes open, and sneeze yourself into liveliness. No, law writing isn't Paradise; I doubt if it's much worse than pen-and-ink, though of course I don't speak from experience; I've never tried that."

"But if the choice were permitted you, what would you wish to be — how would you employ yourself?" asked His Lordship.

"Well, sometimes I think I'd like to go on the turf; those flash bookmakers have a fine time of it, it seems to me. Sometimes I fancy myself keeping a public house, all gaslights and looking glass and adulterated drinks. I'd like to wear the real things in clothes, rings on my fingers, a shiny hat with a curly brim on my head and a prime weed in my mouth. I'd like to go to a music hall every night and marry the girl of my heart."

"You love, then?"

"If you must know, I'm dead gone on Polly Vavasour — which her real name is Muggidge. You've never heard of her? You surprise me. I thought every one knew Polly Vavasour. She's in the comic singing and dancing line of business. Wonderful favorite at the halls; always gets double encores wherever she appears; pretty little girl, and about as cheeky as they make 'em."

His Lordship sighed and glanced despairingly toward his solicitor.

"But I'm doing all the talking, it seems to me," said Mr. Moss vivaciously. "You sent for me, my noble swells; may one ask what for?"

"The fact is," Lord Belvidere replied suddenly, with an air of inspiration, "I want some writing done, some copying, and Mr. Foksett was kind enough to recommend me to apply to you." As he spoke he took a bulky manuscript from one of the drawers of his desk. "I want a fair neat copy of this work. It is, in point of fact, a poem, in twelve cantos — an early performance of mine, but not without merit of a certain kind, I sometimes flatter myself."

"Poetry, is it? What queer looking stuff!"

"Verse," explained His Lordship; "Spenserian stanza. The work is partly historical, but the chief characters are fictitious. It's entitled 'Aethusa; or The Last Crusade.' I want it neatly and plainly written, and am prepared to pay liberally. You will be kind enough to accept this on account."

He thrust a bank note into the soiled palm of Mr. Moss.

"Right you are," said the law writer. He glanced at the note and whistled significantly. He had been much overpaid. He contemplated his lordship and murmured: — "I thought as much. A noble gent with more money than wits. If I were in his place how I'd make the sovereigns fly."

"I'll copy it in double quick time," he said

aloud, "though it seems awful rubbish to look at, I never could stand poetry."

"Get rid of him, for God's sake," Lord Belvidere whispered to Mr. Foksett. "I can't bear it any longer."

The interview was abruptly brought to a close.

VIII.

"He's a cad, a frightful cad," said His Lordship, dabbling his forehead with his handkerchief. "But at least he must be provided for."

"I trust Your Lordship will do nothing precipitate," interposed Mr. Foksett.

"I must have time to think. Only the more I think over his wretched business the more convinced I am that grave injustice has been done. It is clear to me — clear as possible — that this dreadful cad — I beg his pardon, this most unfortunate and unhappy young man, I should rather say — is the true Earl of Belvidere, and that I am the real Harry Moss. He should be here, rich, noble, prosperous, respected, and I should be there, in Cursitor street, copying legal documents to gain my bread, toiling like a slave, writing as he described it, till my eyes seemed dropping out of my head, keeping myself awake with pinches of horrible snuff, and feeling my arm paralyzed with cramp and my fingers all pins and needles — wasn't that what he said? What right have I to despise him? I have robbed him of his birthright. I survey him from an eminence to which I have mounted by dishonest means, at his cost, at the sacrifice of his life. I may almost say — at any rate, of all that makes life worth having. Brought up as he has been — dragged up in the kennel, ill-treated, starved, worked to death almost, breathing poisonous air, pursuing an unwholesome calling — what wonder that he is what he is, vulgar, vicious, brutal — that he does what he does, thinks as he thinks, drinks as he drinks — aspires to keep a public house, good God — and looks forward to marrying Miss Polly Vavasour, of the music halls, who is, as he says, 'as cheeky as they make them?' In his place I should be doing the same, or worse very likely; while in my place he would be leading the life I lead, or a better, a nobler one, and that might easily be. He would be here, with every comfort about him, and engaged to marry Lady Gwendoline? I feel myself gone mad."

"Let me beg Your Lordship to compose yourself and to take a more reasonable view of the situation," said the lawyer. "Your Lordship is far too eager to credit this monstrous story of the change of children. For my part I refuse to believe a word of it. There is really not a tittle of evidence put forth in support of it."

"There is the evidence of one's own senses," protested His Lordship.

"There is absolutely nothing to go to a jury."

"But the man's likeness to Hyperion Bellasis?"

"I don't see it. It's a freak of Your Lordship's imagination."

"There are things one knows and feels to be true, although they may not be capable of legal demonstration."

"Then they are things a lawyer need not trouble himself about," said Mr. Foksett, sharply.

"I am not a lawyer, I know," admitted His Lordship.

"I am a lawyer, and I entreat Your Lordship to be advised by me. Help this young fellow, if you like. I don't say that he's a very deserving object, but his position is no doubt hapless enough, and he is the son of a woman who acted as nurse in Your Lordship's family, and was for some time in the service of the late Countess, your mother. But stop there. Rid your mind of all romantic notions about this fellow's origin. Turn a deaf ear to Mrs. Nibloe's nonsensical fable. It's suited to the stage or the circulating library, but it won't bear the test of daylight and comparison with the conditions of life. Instruct me to assist this young man, and then forget him. I'll engage that you hear no more of this claim — made on his behalf, not by himself, you will bear in mind. He knows nothing of the matter. Be assured that Your Lordship's titles, estates and property are all strictly and justly your own, and that you can not be deprived of them."

But Lord Belvidere could not or would not be convinced. Over and over again he reminded himself of the remembrance of Harry Moss to the portrait of Hyperion Bellasis; he repeated the story told by Mrs. Nibloe, and he dwelt upon Dr. Battersby's statement that the heir to the peerage born at Folkestone was a black-headed, and not a white-headed baby.

VIII.

One thing was clear. Believing himself to be Harry Moss and not Lord Belvidere, how could he marry Lady Gwendoline? He could not. He loved her: she was beautiful, lively, fascinating. But he felt himself unworthy to be her husband. He could not suffer her to be married to a Harry Moss. In this matter, at any rate, he could not honestly. The sacrifice was great, but he could renounce the hand of his affianced bride.

He sat down to write to her. But he was much troubled to find expressions. "Circumstances over which he had no control." What a trite and barren phrase it was; how inadequate to the occasion!

He sat for some hours with a blank sheet of note paper before him. Then he was spared further anxiety on that matter. Curtis entered

with a letter. "From Gwendoline," muttered his lordship, as he tore open the envelope.

The letter ran thus: — "Dearest Phibs (her ladyship had been wont thus to diminish his Christian name), can you forgive me? Let us be friends and not lovers; still less let us be husband and wife. We could not possibly be happy together. I like you very much, but I don't love you in the least. The plain truth is that we are not at all suited to each other. You are wise and clever, and grave and good. I am silly and stupid and frivolous, and only pretty good. Let our engagement end. Try and think kindly of me, Phibs, and don't let this pain you. Indeed it's for the best. Good by, God bless you." Her ladyship's signature followed, and a postscript. "I have half promised to marry little Charley Brabazon."

Lord Belvidere buried his face in his hands. He sobbed audibly, his tears oozing from between his fingers. When he was calmer he wrote a long letter to his solicitor, instructing him to arrange for the payment of liberal annuities to the persons known as Mr. Nibloe and Mr. Harry Moss during their lives.

"I'll be as just as I can," moaned his lordship. "I cannot be wholly just — what man can? I ought to give up everything, and I should give up everything if I were honest. But I am only indifferent honest, as Hamlet says. However, the real Lord Belvidere will be amply avenged for any wrong I may have done him. Life has lost all charm for me: my happiness in this world is at an end forever."

He bade Curtis pack his travelling trunks. He was going abroad for some time — for a year possibly. He left London by an early train on the morrow.

Lord Belvidere was never seen in England again. And little more was ever heard of him.

It was reported that after wandering some years in Eastern Europe and Asia he had taken up his abode among the Druses of the Lebanon. He had adopted Oriental dress, manners and customs, it was even said that he had become a Mohammedan and had been permitted to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. He had acquired reputation as a physician; not that he understood medicine, but he had liberally dispensed certain potent pills he had chanced to carry with him from his native land.

Travellers in the past sometimes encountered this eccentric Englishman; they spoke of his kindness and generosity, and of the valuable assistance he had been prompt to render them; but they did not hesitate to pronounce him stark mad. He had only asked of them that they would not address him by his title.

He died at Smyrna of yellow fever, when his papers and personal property came under the charge of the British Consul there. The strange will he left, entirely in his own handwriting, was generally viewed as very complete evidence of his state of dementia. He appointed his solicitor Mr. Foksett, his executor, and bequeathed his entire property, both real and personal, to a certain Harry Moss.

But it happened, the bequest was of no avail; the legacy had lapsed. Some time before the demise of his lordship at Smyrna Harry Moss had departed this life. His end had, perhaps, been hastened by the means of living idly and prodigally with which Lord Belvidere's generosity had provided him, for he had been in receipt of a handsome income paid to him punctually by Mr. Foksett of Furnival's Inn. In truth, Harry Moss died of delirium tremens in a London hospital. Mrs. Nibloe had turned to better account the annuity placed at her disposal. She became the mistress of a beer-shop in the Borough road and there prospered remarkably. She had given her hand to an ex-sergeant of police, and was reputed to be an exemplary wife to a husband of somewhat arbitrary disposition. — *Dutton Cook in Belgravia.*

FURS.

There is a great demand for raw material in furs this fall. The generation which was brought up to have its dresses and cloaks made to order after a careful selection of cloth has not died out, and there are also left some of the fussy class who always think they will be better suited to put on their clothes and waste more time shopping and dressmaking than they save in dollars and cents. For such deluded sisters these prices are quoted: — Plush, from \$5 to \$20 a yard; brocade silks, twenty-one inches wide, from \$2.50 to \$4; sicilienne, sixty inches, from \$7 to \$9; Russian hare, width three to eight inches, from fifty cents to \$1 a yard. Children's garments are all in cloth, but in great variety, nearly all being trimmed with plush or astrakhan, and the best in natural beaver. Ulster for girls from twelve to eighteen years old cost from \$10 to \$18.

The new style havelock is more desirable; in rich plaids trimmed with velvet or the before mentioned materials they cost from \$8 to \$14, and are cheaper in plain clothes. The fur robe interest is not allowed to suffer. Springfield has always been in the front in this trade, and the sales increase from year to year. Black, white and cinnamon bear in the best grades are very scarce, and as the supply grows less these robes will increase in price. The Hudson Bay wolf is a standby, and the Japanese wolf, black, white and gray abounds to the extent of replacing the buffalo, which now sells at fancy figures. English plush loses its forced character of an imitation when used for lap robes. It cannot be mistaken for bear or buffalo, and stands well on its own merits. They are very rich in coloring, and tolerably high in price, selling from \$25 to \$75. — *Springfield Republican.*