

to have been assisting in the whirr and turmoil of wheels and steam and leathern bands were idly kicking their heels outside ; for Sir Jacob had made no sign of yielding, and they would not give way, though the children were pining away for want of sufficient food, and the sticks were going to the pawn-shop.

Reuben came presently into the luncheon-room, going slowly, and bent as one who is in some kind of trouble.

"You have read those letters, Reuben?" asks the great man, who had finished his sandwich, and was slowly sipping his sherry, with his back to the empty fire-place.

"Yes, Jacob, I've read them all."

Reuben sat down by the table, and began drumming on it with his fingers.

"And what do you think?"

"I am very anxious. If the Eldorado Railway money is not ready——"

He hesitated.

"Well, Reuben? It is not ready, and I believe it never will be. Prepare yourself for the worst. The Eldorado bubble has burst."

"We must look elsewhere, then, for money. We must borrow, Jacob, for money we must have, and immediately—you know that."

"Borrow!—that is easily said—where? Of course I know we must find money."

"I made up a statement last night, Jacob. Here it is ; this is what you have to meet in the next three weeks. I fully reckoned on the Eldorado money, which would have tided us over the difficulty. Jacob, Jacob ! I told you that those Central American schemes never come to good !"

"Ay, ay. No use telling me what you prophesied, Reuben ; anybody can prophesy. Try now to see how we can face the storm—that is more to the point."

"There's the Ravendale Bank. You're chairman of the board."

"I proposed at the last meeting to borrow fifty thousand. They asked for securities, as a matter of form—— Well, I promised the securities, and I have not got them"

"There's the works."

"What can be done while the hands, confound them, are out on strike?"

"How much will they let you overdraw?"

"Not much further than we have gone already."

"Jacob, seven years ago we had a bad time to face—just as bad as this—you remember, just before the French war, out of

which you did so well. Then you found at one haul seventy thousand pounds. Can't you repeat that transaction?"

"The money was not mine ; it was my ward's, Julian Carteret's money."

Reuben started to his feet.

"Do you mean that you took his money to help you out of difficulties? Jacob, Jacob ! And all that money gone?"

"It can't be gone, man," said the millionaire. "How can it be gone when it was invested in the works? And a safer investment could not be made."

"If the world would only think so," sighed Reuben.

"Why did we not take steps to raise money before?"

"Because you were so certain of Eldorado. Why"—(here Reuben grew more agitated still) "did you not sell out your bonds?"

"No," said Jacob gloomily. "Perhaps it will recover. I saw a note in the paper this morning that the stock would probably rise again."

"Stock you might buy, but never hold," said Reuben. "And the Columbian Canals, and the Mexican Mines, and Turks and Egyptians, all gone down together. What shall we do—what shall we do?"

"Concede what the men claim, and start the works again," said Sir Jacob, who took things more easily than his subordinate, in whom, indeed, he had full confidence. "Concede all that they ask, and when the furnaces are in full blast make a limited company of it."

Reuben shook his head.

"That cannot be done in a week. Consider, Sir Jacob, you have only a week. If we could only see a way—if we could only gain time. Perhaps I ought to have seen what was coming a little sooner."

"What is coming, Reuben?" Sir Jacob leaned across the table, and whispered the words in a frightened voice. "What is coming?"

"Ruin, Jacob—ruin!" replied Reuben sorrowfully. "If you cannot raise money, ruin. If you cannot restore Julian Carteret his fortune—worse than ruin."

"No," cried the Baronet, "not that—not that. I did my best for my ward. The world will know that I acted for the best: that the works were paying an enormous income——"

"At the time, the money staved off bank-