

"The finest pass into Belgravia is through Thread-needle-street."

"And the noblest prospect in London is the Bank of England," added the lawyer.

"I thought it very ugly and dirty," said Saxon, innocently.

"I hope this law business is all over now," said Lord Castletowers.

"Yes, for the present; and Saxon has nothing to do but to amuse himself."

"Amuse myself!" echoed Saxon. "I must go home to do that."

"Because Reichenau is so gay, or because you find London so uninviting?" asked the Earl, with a smile.

"Because I am a born mountaineer, and because to me this place is a prison. I must have air to breathe, hills to climb, and a gun on my shoulder. That is what I call amusement."

"That is what I call amusement also," said Lord Castletowers; "and if you will come down to Surrey, I can give you plenty of it—a fishing-rod, and a hunter included. But in the meanwhile, you must let us prove to you that London is not so barren of entertainment as you seem to think."

"Let this help to prove it," said Mr. Trefalden, taking from his pocket a little oblong book in a green paper cover. "There's magic in these pages, my dear fellow. They contain all the wit, wisdom, and beauty of the world we live in. While you have this in your pocket, you will never want for amusement—or friends; and when you have come to the end of the present volume, the publishers will furnish you with another."

"What is it?" said Saxon, turning it over somewhat doubtfully.

"A cheque-book."

"Pshaw! money again. Always money!"

"Don't speak of it disrespectfully. You have more than you can count, and as yet you neither know what it is worth, nor what to do with it."

"Pray enlighten me, then," said Saxon, with a touch of impatience in his voice. "Tell me, in the first place, what it is worth?"

"That is a matter of individual opinion," replied Mr. Trefalden, with one of his quiet smiles. "If you ask Lord Castletowers, he will probably tell you that it is worth less than noble blood, bright eyes, or Italian liberty. If you ask a plodding fellow like myself, he will probably value it above all three?"

"Well then, in the second place, what am I to do with it?"

"Spend it."

"Saxon shrugged his shoulders; and Lord Castletowers, who had coloured up somewhat angrily the minute before, laughed, and said that it was good advice.

"Spend it," repeated the lawyer. "You never will know how to employ your money till you acquire the art of getting rid of it. You have yet to learn that instead of turning everything into gold, like Midas, you can turn gold into everything. It is the true secret of the transmutation of metal."

"Shall I be any the wiser or happier for this knowledge?" asked Saxon, with a sigh.

"You cannot help being wiser," laughed his cousin; "nor, I should think, the happier. You will cease to be 'dreary,' in the first place. He who has plenty of money and knows how to spend it is never in want of entertainment."

"Ay, and knows how to spend it!" There is my difficulty."

"If you had read Molière," replied Mr. Trefalden, "you would be aware that a rich man has discernment in his purse."

"Cousin, you are laughing at me."

It was said with perfect good humour, but with such directness that even Mr. Trefalden's practised self-possession was momentarily troubled.

"But I suppose you think a rich fellow can afford to be laughed at," added Saxon, "and I am quite of your opinion. It will help to civilise me; and that, you know, is your mission. And now for a lesson in alchemy. What shall I transmute my gold into first?"

"Nay, into whatever seems to you to be best worth the trouble," replied Mr. Trefalden. "First of all, I should say, into a certain amount of

superfine Saxony and other cloths; into a large stock of French kid and French cambric—and a valet. After that—well, after that, suppose you ask Lord Castletowers' opinion."

"I vote for a tall horse, a short tiger, and a cab," said the young Earl.

"And chambers in St. James-street," suggested the lawyer.

"And a stall at Gye's."

"And all the flowers, pictures, Baskerville editions, Delphia classics, organs, and Etruscan antiquities you take it into your head to desire! That's the way to transmute your metal, you happy fellow! Taken as a philosophical experiment, I know nothing more beautiful, simple, and satisfactory."

"You bewilder me," said poor Saxon. "You speak a language which is partly jest and partly earnest, and I know not where the earnestness ends, nor where the jest begins. What is it that you really mean? I am quite willing to do what you conceive a man in my position should do; but you must show me how to set about it."

"I am here to-day for no other purpose."

"And more than this, you must give me leave to reject your system, if I dislike, or grow weary of it."

"What! return to roots and woad after Kuhn and Stultz?"

"Certainly, if I find the roots more palatable, and the woad more becoming."

"Agreed. Then we begin at once. You shall put yourself under my guidance, and that of Lord Castletowers. You shall obey us implicitly for the next six or eight hours; and you shall begin by writing a cheque for five hundred, which we can cash at Drummond's as we go along."

"With all my heart," said Saxon; and so aided by his cousin's instructions, sat down and wrote his first cheque.

"He's a capital fellow," said Lord Castletowers to Mr. Trefalden, as they went down the hotel stairs; "a splendid fellow, and I like him thoroughly. Shall I propose him at the Erechtheum? He ought to belong to a club; and I know some men there who would be delighted to do what they could for any member of my introduction."

"By all means. It is the very thing for him," replied Mr. Trefalden. "He must have acquaintances, you know; and it is out of the question that a busy man like myself should do the honours of town to him, or any one. Were he my own brother, I would not undertake it."

"And I am never here myself for many days at a time," said the Earl. "London is an expensive luxury, and I am obliged to make a little of it go a long way. However, while I am here, and whenever I am here, it will give me a great deal of pleasure to show Mr. Saxon Trefalden any attention in my power."

"You are very kind. Saxon, my dear fellow, Lord Castletowers is so good as to offer to get you into the Erechtheum."

"The Erechtheum of Athens?" exclaimed Saxon, opening his blue eyes in laughing astonishment.

"Nonsense—of Pall Mall. It is a fashionable club."

"I am much obliged to Lord Castletowers," replied Saxon, vaguely. But he had no more notion of the nature, objects, or aims of a fashionable club than a Bedouin Arab.

CHAPTER XVI. THE ERECHTHEUM.

"No, by Jove, Brandon, not a bit of a snob! As green as an Arcadian, but no more of a snob than——"

Sir Charles Burgoyne was going to say, "than you are;" but he changed his mind, and said, instead:

"—than Castletowers himself."

"I call any man a snob who quotes Bion and Moschus in his familiar talk," replied the other, all unconscious of his friend's hesitation. "How the deuce is one to remember anything about Bion and Moschus? and what right has he to make a fellow look like a fool?"

"Unfeeling, I admit," replied Sir Charles, languidly.

"I hate your learned people," said Brandon, irritably. "And I hate parvenus. Ignorant parvenus are bad enough; but learned parvenus are the worst of all. He's both—hang him!"

"Hang him, by all means!" said another young man, approaching the window at which the two were standing. "May I ask who he is, and what he has done?"

It was in one of the princely reading-rooms of the Erechtheum Club, Pall-Mall. The two first speakers were the Honourable Edward Brandon, third and youngest son of Hardicanute, fourteenth Earl of Ipswich, and Sir Charles Burgoyne, Baronet of the Second Life Guards.

There are men whom nature seems to have run up by contract, and the Honourable Edward Brandon was one of them. He was just like one of those slight, unsubstantial, fashionable houses that spring up every day like mushrooms about Bayswater and South Kensington, and are hired under the express condition of never being danced in. He was very young, very tall, and as economically supplied with brain and muscle as a man could well be. The very smallest appreciable weight of knowledge would have broken down his understanding at any moment; and his little ornaments of manner were all in the flimsiest modern taste, and of the merest stucco. He "dipped" occasionally into Bell's Life and the Court Circular. He had read half of the first volume of Mr. Soapey Sponge's Sporting Tour. He played croquet pretty well, and billiards very badly, and was saturated through and through with smoke, like a Finnan haddock.

Sir Charles Burgoyne was a man of a very different stamp. He was essentially one of a class; but then, ethnologically speaking, his class was many degrees higher than that of Mr. Brandon. He was better built, and better furnished. He rode well; was a good shot; played a first rate game at billiards; was gifted with a certain lazy impertinence of speech and manner that passed for wit, and was so effeminately fair of complexion and regular of feature, that he was popularly known among his brother-officers as the Beauty.

The last comer—short, sallow, keen-eyed, somewhat flippant in his address, and showy in his attire—was Laurence Greatorex, Esquire, only son, heir, and partner of Sir Samuel Greatorex, Knight, the well known banker and alderman of Lombard-street, City.

"Hang him by all means!" said this gentleman, with charming impartiality. "Who is he? and what has he done?"

"We were speaking of the new member," replied Brandon.

"What, Cræsus Trefalden? Pshaw! the man's an outer barbarian. What social enormity has he been committing now?"

"He's been offending Brandon's delicate sense of propriety by quoting Greek," said the Beauty.

"Greek! Unpardonable offence. What shall we do to him? Muzzle him?"

"Condemn him to feed on Greek roots for the term of his natural life, like Timon of Athens," suggested the Beauty, lazily.

"He's little better than a savage, as it is," said Mr. Greatorex, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. "He knows nothing of life, and cares nothing for it either. Last Tuesday, when all the fellows were wild about the great fight down at Barney's Croft, he sat and read Homer, as if it were the news of the day. He's an animated anachronism—that's what he is, Sir Charles."

"Who the deuce is he?" ejaculated Brandon.

"Where does he come from?"

"Heaven knows. His father was a black-letter folio, I believe, and his mother a palimpsest."

"You're too witty to-day, Mr. Greatorex," sneered Burgoyne.

"Then he's so offensively rich! Why, he put down a thousand yesterday for Willis's subscription. There's his name at the head of the list. Makes us look rather small—ch?"

"Confound his assurance!" broke out Brandon. "He's not been here much more than a week. What's Willis to him, that he should give more than the oldest members of the club?"

"Well, it's a munificent donation," said the Guardsman, good naturedly.

"Munificent? Hang his munificence! I suppose the members of the Erechtheum can pension off a secretary, who has served them for fifteen years, without the help of a thousand pounds from a puppy like that!"