

friend at the club of Herbert not many weeks later—he was the same person who had found it ‘so very embarrassing’ to recognise Ernest in his shabby days when walking with a Q.C.—‘It’s a dreadful tissue of the reddest French communism, I believe, but still, it’s scored the biggest success of its sort in journalism, I’m told, since the days of Keene’s “Englishman.” Bradbury, who’s found the money to start it—deuced clever fellow in his way, Bradbury!—is making an awful lot out of the speculation, they say. What do you think of the paper, eh?’

Herbert drew himself up grimly. ‘To tell you the truth,’ he said in his stiffest style, ‘I haven’t yet had time to look at a copy. Ernest Le Breton’s not a man in whose affairs I feel called upon to take any special interest; and I haven’t put myself to the trouble of reading his second-hand political lucubrations. Faint echoes of Max Schurz, all of it, no doubt; and having read and disposed of Schurz himself long ago, I don’t feel inclined now to go in for a second supplementary course of Schurz and water.’

‘Well, well, that may be so,’ the friend answered, turning over the pages of the peccant periodical carelessly; ‘but all the same I’m afraid your brother’s really going to do an awful lot of mischief in the way of setting class against class, and stirring up the dangerous orders to recognise their own power. You see, Le Breton, the real danger of this sort of thing lies in the fact that your brother Ernest’s a more or less educated and cultivated person. I don’t say he’s really got any genuine depth of culture—would you believe it, he told me once he’d never read Rabelais, and didn’t want to?—and of course a man of true culture in the grain, like you and me now, my dear fellow, would never dream of going and mistaking these will-o’-the-wisps of socialism for the real guiding light of regenerated humanity—of course not. But the dangerous symptom at the present day lies just in the fact that while the papers written for the mob used to be written by vulgar, noisy, self-made, half-educated demagogues, they’re sent out now with all the authority and specious respectability of decently instructed and comparatively literary English gentlemen. Now, nobody can deny that that’s a thing very seriously to be regretted; and for my part I’m extremely sorry your brother has been ill-advised enough to join the mob that’s trying to pull down our comfortably built and after all eminently respectable, even if somewhat patched up, old British constitution.’

‘The subject’s onc,’ Herbert answered curtly, ‘in which I for my part cannot pretend to feel the remotest personal interest.’