

eager demonstrator of the necessity of our having a Public Prosecutor; now he had scarcely a word to say. There were only two subjects in which at this moment he seemed keenly interested—the one was the Report which Mr. Plimsoll's Commission had just published, and the other was, singularly enough, the act just passed in America about the paper currency. What earthly reason could he have for bothering about the financial arrangements of America? He did not own a red cent of the American debt.

One forenoon he was walking through St. James's Park, when he was overtaken by a certain noble lord—an ingenuous youth whom he had known at Oxford.

'Balfour,' said this young man, walking on with him, 'you are a Scotchman—you can tell me what I have to expect. Fact is, I have done rather a bold thing—I have taken a shooting of 13,000 acres, for this autumn only, in the island of Mull; and I have never been there. But I sent my own man up, and he believes the reports they gave were all right.'

'What are you to expect?' said Balfour, good-humoredly. 'Plenty of shooting, probably; and plenty of rain, certainly.'

'So they say,' continued the young man. 'And my *avant-courier* says there may be some difficulty about provisions. He hints something about hiring a small steam-yacht that we might send across to Oban at a pinch—'

'Yes, that would be advisable, if you are not near Tobermory.'

'Eighteen miles off.'

Then the young man was fired with a sudden generosity.

'Your wife has gone to America, hasn't she?'

'Yes,' was the simple answer.

'Are you booked for the 12th?'

'No.'

'Come down with me. I sha'n't leave till the 10th, if that will suit you. The House is sure to be up—in fact, you fellows have nothing to do—you are only gammoning your constituencies.'

'It's lucky for some people that they can sit in Parliament without having any constituency to gammon,' said Balfour.

'You mean we mightn't find it quite so easy so get in,' said the young man, with a modest laugh; for indeed his service in

Parliament was of the slightest sort—was limited, in fact, to procuring admission for one or two lady friends on the night of a great debate. 'But what do you say to Mull? If we don't get much of a dinner, we are to have a piper to play to us while we eat. And of course there will be good whiskey. What do you say?'

'I say that it is very good of you, and I should like it extremely; but I think I shall stay in town this autumn.'

'In town?'

'Yes.'

'All the autumn?' exclaimed the young man, with an air as though he half expected this maniac to turn and bite him on the arm.

'Yes,' said Balfour; and then he stammered forth a sort of apology. 'The fact is that a married man feels himself taken at an unfair advantage if he goes any where without his wife. I hate nothing so much as dining as a single man with a lot of married people. They pity you and patronise you—'

'But, my dear fellow, there won't be any married people up at this place—I can't pronounce the name. There will be only two men beside ourselves—a regular bachelor party. You surely can't mean to stop in town the whole of the autumn, and be chased about your club by the cleaning people. You will cut your throat before the end of August.'

'And what then? The newspapers are hard pushed at that time. If I committed suicide in the hall of the Reform Club, I should deserve the gratitude of the whole country. But, seriously, I am sorry I can't go down with you to Scotland. Much obliged all the same.'

'When does Lady Sylvia return?' asked his companion carelessly.'

'About the end of October, I should think,' Balfour said; and then he added, 'Very likely we shall go to Italy for the winter.'

He spoke quite calmly. He seemed to take it as a mere matter of ordinary arrangement that Lady Sylvia and himself should decide where they should spend the winter. For of course this ingenuous youth walking with him was not to know that Lady Sylvia had separated herself from her husband of her own free will and choice.

'Good-by, Balfour,' said the young Lord