

themselves sufficient," were arraigning the old tyrannies, whether of creed or government.

Among these young reformers Hugh Pierson was a leading spirit. Very hesitatingly at first had he given in his allegiance; for his was a nature to kindle slowly, to reason and debate in the commencement of an enterprise, but, being embarked, to fling into it the whole passion and interest of life.

The teachings of his clubs in Oxford were strengthened by occasional visits to his mother's friends in Manchester. Here the young man's sympathies had come in contact with the pale-faced operatives whose lives had dwindled down to an implement wherewith to do days' work and earn wages. He felt for them a pity so great that it overcame at a bound the Saxon sluggishness of his character, and made bitter differences between his uncle and himself.

That Hugh finally left college without a single "honour" did not much trouble his father. He had that kind of contempt for books which men who gauge every thing by land are apt to feel. The Piersons had gone for six generations to Oxford, none of them had ever taken honours, he had not done so himself—he did not consider it desirable his sons should make any innovation. But the letters he received from Hugh's uncle seriously alarmed him. A Radical, a Reformer, a meddler in other people's matters among the Piersons, was a case in which he had no precedent to guide him.

He took counsel with the old clergyman who for nearly forty years had twice a week drank a bottle of port and played a game of loo with him. But such counsel was only the blind leading the blind. They called up their life-long prejudices, drank a bumper to their memory, and separated more blind and stupid than ever. By the next morning the squire had convinced himself that it was just simply impossible for a Pierson to be anything more or less than the average race had been. "The boy's uncle was a manufacturer, quite unaccustomed to the habits and traditions of the landed gentry, and he had made a mistake—that was all."

He rode down after breakfast to the rectory and communicated this opinion to his friend. The two old men made merry over their fears of the previous night, and accepted with the sublime faith of conceited ignorance this solution. Still both thought Hugh ought to come home, and so a letter, kind and peremptory and withal just a little formal (the parental style of that day), was dispatched at once to Manchester, where he then was. The young man answered it willingly; his own land and people seemed to him the very best to try and improve; for he was not naturally quixotic, and had no ambition to carry the world on his soldiers.

For some time after his return all things went favourably. Such suggestions as Hugh made in regard to the disposal of the wool of their immense flocks, or the improvement of the im-