

army of clerks, and surrounded with an atmosphere or halo of solidity and stability. Nor was it by any means a new office. Sir Jacob was between fifty-five and sixty; he had held the same offices for a quarter of a generation. They had not originally been so well furnished, nor had he held the whole house for that time, but a plate with his name had been on the same door for five-and-twenty years.

In his private room, Sir Jacob found that morning a mass of correspondence in addition to the letters he brought with him, open, noted, and arranged by Reuben Gower. With practised eye he ran over the letters, making a few notes as he went along. Then he leaned back in his chair, thoughtful.

Sir Jacob in his private room was not like Sir Jacob on the platform, nor like Sir Jacob at home. In the domestic circle he was an amicable demi-god, whose word was law, and whose wishes had to be anticipated. On the platform he was the cheerful expounder of a sunny philanthropy and warm-hearted Christianity, which consisted wholly in giving money himself, persuading other people to give it, and praising the glorious names of noblemen, bishops, and other illustrious men who were associated with himself—to praise your associates is to praise yourself—in what he called the Movement. People talk now of a "movement," as if it was an object or an institution. They say that they have given money to the Indian "Movement" when they mean the Indian Famine Fund. There were few "movements" in which Sir Jacob's name was not prominent either as president, vice-president, or member of the general committee. In his private room, at his office in the City, however, Sir Jacob's features sharpened, his great bushy eye-brows contracted, and his lips—they were the large and full lips which belong especially to men who habitually address audiences in great rooms—locked themselves together. There was not much benevolence left in his face after half an hour of work among his papers.

Business was plentiful—on paper. There were the construction of a railway in Central America, orders waiting execution for his ironworks at Dolmen-in-Ravendale, gas-works in a Russian city, waterworks in a Chilian town—fifty other things: all this looked well. On the other hand, there were bills to meet, claims to contest, and, worse

than all, a long and bitter strike in the north, and by that morning's post—a strike in which compromise promised for the moment to be impossible. And the moment was an important one.

Sir Jacob, after a few minutes' reflection, put the matter for the moment out of his mind, and addressed himself to his correspondence. He wrote with great rapidity and ease, tossing each letter into a basket as it was written. It would be the duty of the clerk to collect and address those letters in the evening. He looked at his list of appointments. There was an hour to spare. In that interval he wrote twenty letters, all on different subjects, and every one commanding complete mastery of the matter. He read over each letter after it was written, approved it by a nod, and tossed it into the basket. It was one of the secrets of Sir Jacob's success that he could pass easily and rapidly from one subject to another, and not the least of his secrets, that while on a particular subject he could concentrate the whole of his attention to it. He was, in fact, a man who could work, and did habitually work.

Then came the appointments. (One after the other the men who had to see Sir Jacob called, stated briefly their business, received a reply, and went away. There was no waste of words, nor any exchange of meaningless amenities with Sir Jacob Escomb. Everybody knew that, and even a Russian diplomatist would have found it hard to get any waste of words out of this man of business.

The morning appointments over, Sir Jacob looked at his watch. Half-past one—time for the sandwich. He took up a few papers; he would go to luncheon, and talk things over with Reuben Gower. Reuben would be able to suggest something.

He looked in at Reuben Gower's room as he went upstairs to the luncheon-room. He was engaged with a gentleman.

"When you are at leisure, Mr. Gower," said Sir Jacob, "I shall be upstairs."

"The great Sir Jacob?" asked the visitor, with awe.

"No other," said Reuben Gower, shortly; "and as I was saying —"

The secretary was, as I have said, a man as old as himself, or a little older. He had been with Sir Jacob since the day when, side by side, boys together, they had run