

to bring about that end. It was simply a question of confidence and figures, not by listening to compliments and flattery. He would willingly retire with the general into the library, while his good friend, Mr. Vane, would perhaps stroll about the grounds, taking care to be within call of his valuable services were required.

The good friend Mr. Vane, who during luncheon had been paying particular attention to some old and remarkable Madeira which was on the table, did not seem at all to relish the plan thus sketched out. At the first, he seemed inclined to make some strong and open remonstrance, but a glance from underneath Mr. Delabole's bushy eyebrows dissuaded him therefrom, and he contented himself by shrugging his shoulders and indulging in other mild pantomimic signs of dissent and objection. Previously to retiring with Mr. Delabole, Mr. Geoffrey, with punctilious courtesy, accompanied Mr. Vane to the hall-door; pointed out to him where were the pleasantest walks in the grounds, how best to reach the spots from which the favorite views were to be obtained, and handed him the keys of the conservatory and the gates opening into the home park. Mr. Vane received all this politeness very coolly, inwardly determining to take the very first opportunity of revenging himself on Mr. Delabole for the unceremonious treatment received at that gentleman's hands.

Left to himself, Mr. Vane strolled idly about the grounds switching the heads off the flowers with his cane, and cursing Delabole's impudence for having relegated him to the duties of the second fiddle.

Make the best of your time, my good friend," said he, stretching himself upon a bench shaded by the overhanging branches of a large tree, and shaking his legs in the direction of the house, "make the best of your time, to swagger and give yourself airs, and show that you are the head of the concern; while I am, or am supposed to be, only one of its paid officers; for within a week or ten days at the outside, I shall be my own master, and if you attempt anything of that kind with me then, I shall be in a position to tell you my opinion of you in the very plainest language. Don't think I have not noticed of late, how very lightly you have drawn the rope which binds me to you! Telegraph for me when I am away, told to go here and there, to find out this and that, brought down here and shunted on one side, as though I were a mere clerk, whose business it is to make memoranda of what may pass between their excellencies. Oh, my good friend Delabole, you may take your oath I will not forget this. When once my marriage with Mrs. Bendixon is an accomplished fact, and I have the knowledge that I am beyond any harm which you could do me, then you shall taste the back which you have compelled me so frequently of late to swallow. I will put my foot on your neck, as you have put yours on mine, I will—Hullo, who's this coming this way? One of the gardeners, I suppose? No, by Jove! the person who was poking about at the station, and who seemed to take such interest in us and our movements. What can he want? He must be a friend of Sir Geoffrey's and makes his way through the grounds as a short cut from one part of his parish to the other. He will see I am a friend of the general's, and will want to enter into conversation. I hate persons, and shan't take any notice of him."

With this amiable resolve, Mr. Vane curled up his feet beneath him on the bench, pulled out a cigar, and was just about to light it, when, glancing up from under the brim of his hat, he saw the tall figure of the clergyman standing beside him.

Phillip Vane dropped the cigar, and sprang to his feet.

"Who are you?" he cried, "and what are you doing here?"

"There is no occasion for me to disturb yourself," said the new comer, quietly lifting his hat. "My name is Drage, and I am rector of one of the parishes in Springdale. I am speaking to Mr. Vane, I believe?"

"That's my name," said Vane, shortly, and resuming his seat, "though I cannot imagine how you know it, unless you read it off my portmanteau, when you were dodging about the station this morning."

"I knew it before I was dodging about the station, as you are politely pleased to say," said Mr. Drage; "I know a great deal more about you, as you will find out, before this interview is at an end."

"The deuce you do!" said Phillip Vane, with a cynical smile; "I did not know my fame had extended to these parts. And what do you know about me, pray, Mr.—I forget your name."

"My name, I repeat, is Drage!"

"A Drage? Drage," muttered Phillip Vane. "Any relation of Drage, of Abchurch-lane?"

"Ils son?"

"A most respectable man, holding a leading position in the City. My dear Mr. Drage, I am delighted to make your acquaintance." And he held out his hand.

"I do not think," said Mr. Drage, but otherwise talking no notice of the movement, "I do not think that you will be quite so pleased to make my acquaintance when you have heard all I have to say?"

Phillip Vane looked hard at his companion, and toiled with astonishment the beetle flush in his cheeks, the brightness of his eyes, the mobile working of his mouth.

"You may say what you please," he said, shortly; "it is a matter of perfect indifference to me. If you were in the City, your father's clerks could tell you what position I hold there. City men are careful in their representation, and of what they say of each other; but you are a parson, and are privileged I suppose?"

"I am a parson. It was in that capacity I became acquainted with the circumstances, the knowledge of which has induced me to seek you out. You are about to be married, Mr. Vane?"

"The dullest of laymen could have told you that," said Mr. Vane, again with a cynical smile; "the report was in the newspapers."

"Exactly; but the point I am coming to has not yet found its way into the newspapers, though it will probably be published ere long."

"And it is—?"

"It is that you are married already!"

As Mr. Drage pronounced these words a chill crept over Phillip Vane, and for an instant he felt as one stupefied and benumbed. But he speedily recovered himself, and looking his companion straight in the face, said:

"Either you have been befooled yourself, or you are trying to make a fool of me. In the latter case a hopeless and dangerous experiment."

"And you come from her?"

"No, I am here on her behalf, but not with her knowledge."

There was a momentary silence, broken by Vane, who said: "And what is the object of your seeking this interview with me?"

"To warn you that I am cognisant of the position in which you stand; to warn you against the commission of the crime which you contemplate—"

"And to ask for a round sum to buy off the opposition of yourself and your interesting accomplice. Is not that it, Mr. Drage?"

"You scoundrel!" said Mr. Drage. "Do you dare to address such language to me—a clergyman?"

"If it comes to a question of language," said Vane, with a laugh, "I believe that 'scoundrel' is scarcely a term much banded about in clerical society. As a matter of fact, I have found many gentlemen of your cloth not less open to a bribe than the rest of the world."

"You shall find one at least who seems to discuss even the possibility of such an arrangement. Let us bring this interview to a close; you will clearly understand my object in seeking it. I came to warn you that if you persevere in carrying out this marriage, I will most assuredly hand you over to the law!"

"And I warn you that if you interfere in my business, I will kill you!" said Phillip Vane, savagely.

"Such a threat has no terrors for me," said the rector.

"Perhaps not," said Vane, with a contemptuous glance at his companion's feeble frame; "however, I will find some decisive means of bringing you and your client to reason."

"Stay," cried Mr. Drage, "I did not come here to bandy threats, but simply to discharge a solemn duty. I will take no answer from you now, irritated as you are by the discovery that your real position is known to me. Think over what I have said, and save yourself from the commission of this great sin. If you have occasion to write to me you know where I am to be found."

Phillip Vane hesitated for a moment, then bowing his head, he said in a low tone:

"You are right. Be not think any more of the wild words I uttered in my rage; leave me to think over the circumstances in which I am placed, and the manner in which I can best extricate myself from the danger into which I was about to plunge. Leave me and—Heaven bless you for your kindness."

Mr. Drage looked at him with brimming eyes, and lifting his hat solely walked off.

"That was the best way of settling him," said Phillip Vane to himself, as he watched the rector down the path. "I must push this marriage through at once, and make some excuse for having it a perfectly quiet one."

(To be continued.)

THE PILBURY PORTFOLIO.

OR, THOUGHTS UPON MEN AND THINGS, IN PROSE AND VERSE.

BY REV. H. F. DARNELL.

PAPER I.—"SPECTACLES."

WHAT THEY ARE.

I have been giving some thought lately to the matter of "spectacles." In doing so, I have regarded them not so much from a philosophic as from a social and moral point of view. I find the subject far more prolific than I had at first supposed. How many things do we imagine that we have safely in our mind's grasp until we begin to analyze them, and find to our shame that we have only the shadow instead of the substance; and how many things do we think we can put into a nutshell until we commence trying to pack them? I find this to be the case! From the common centre, spectacles, my thoughts seem to radiate in every conceivable direction, so that it is positively confusing; whilst before me is the dread possibility that when I have got through my thinking I only may be found to have circled the square instead of squaring the circle. Here we have,—The origin of spectacles; the infinite varieties of spectacles actually in use; what bounds we are to set to the "genus spectacles"; the different purposes for which individuals make use of spectacles; what people did in that long and dark period when they were unprovided with spectacles; the advantages and disadvantages arising from the use of spectacles. Then, rising to a higher ground, (the moral aspect of the matter in hand,) we are opposed by a ray of more brilliant problems yet which are invited to tackle. It is essential to spectacles, (designated as they are supposed to be for the purpose of aiding or correcting imperfect vision), that they should themselves be visible and material? Has not anything, be it a passion or a prejudice, which intensifies or softens man's vision, contracts or expands it, as much claim as a pair of silver-mounted pebbles to be regarded in the light of "spectacles"? Does not this apply equally to man's mental as to his bodily vision, to his judgment as much as to his observation? Inasmuch as mental delusions and aberrations are more serious than optical, might we not to be even more careful in our selection and use as to the character of the one species of spectacles than of the other?

I do not propose within the narrow limits of this paper to dwell upon all the points which I have here jotted down, nor do I propose even to touch upon them in the order in which they have been presented. I proceed simply to pen down my thoughts in connection with this matter just as they entered into, and were altered through, my own mind. Whether those into whose hands this paper may chance to fall will be pleased to dignify them by the name of "thoughts," or contemptuously regard them but as the musings of some amiable lunatic who has deluded himself with the idea that he is a thinker, it is of course beyond my power to decide. Let it comfort me, should that be the case, to remember, that even philosophers have sometimes judged of each other, that when they thought they were thinking, they were only thinking they thought.

I have been impelled to the consideration of "spectacles" from my having observed of late how many of my fellow beings are in the enjoyment of what I have heard styled, this "new sense," as well as by the vast number and infinite variety of these popular appendages which are offered for sale. I had often noticed this before in a general kind of way; but I determined at length to devote one leisure hour to a more perfect and practical consideration of the subject. I imagined I could best set about this in two different ways. First, I could recall to mind all those of my friends or acquaintances who were in the habit of wearing spectacles, and note, as far as I was able, the particular kind they wore; and then they had in view in wearing them; and how far that end in each case had been gained. Secondly, I could take my stand in a quiet corner of one of our crowded thoroughfares, as if waiting for a friend or a public conveyance, and endeavour thus to arrive at a similar result by carefully studying each spectacle passenger as he passed me by, mingling with the human stream which surged continually through the busy streets of the capital. My observation usually proving more reliable than my memory, I decided upon adopting the latter course. I tremble to think, modest as I am with respect to my personal appearance, upon how many losses I must have been temporarily photographed during that one hour! The following is the result of my observations, and the conclusions to which they led me.

I found the wearers of spectacles to be of every age and sex, and of every rank and condition. In my eagerness to note those who used them, I suppose I became for the time blind to those unhappy ones who possessed them not; for all at once it seemed to break upon me that it was I who was singular in being destitute of them, and not those in wearing them. Had I not been so interested in my observations, I verily believe I must have straightway gone off and purchased a pair, if only to keep me in countenance.

These superior beings, gifted with the "new sense" of gazing through the mystic help of the works of nature and of art, were, I perceived further, confined to neither sex, nor to any period of life; nor did they think for one moment of restricting themselves to any one particular form of this useful implement. The spirit in which it was worn was by no means the same in every instance. Some carried it triumphantly, and others timidly; some modestly, and others audaciously; some apologetically, and some jauntily. In each case, however, I fancied I detected a sort of consciousness of being "spectacled."

It was but natural that the venerable old gentleman of the first passage, the silver-haired but falling sight with the friendly air, the silver hairs that glittered upon his broad, open brow, beneath his smooth and stately hat, suited and sufficiently accounted for, the appendage; as did the wrinkled forehead and feeble gait of that aged char-woman, bending her steps homeward from the scene of toil which called for stronger and younger limbs than hers. But it did not seem natural that they should cast the incongruous shadow of distant age over that graceful girl, whose fair cheek, delicate profile, and light, quick step, spoke rather of seventeen than seventy. This incongruity, however, attained its climax in the instance of a great over-grown, moon-faced lad of sixteen or thereabouts; who, with mouth agape, gazed through the double array of glass presented by the shop window and the large round pines planted upon his own countenance upon the cakes and confectionery within. Query: Did the extent of the aperture displayed by his open mouth represent the degree to which the sweets meant had been individually magnified by the double medium through which he contemplated them?

And now let me attempt to describe some few of the peculiarities which distinguished the different species of spectacles which were presented to my curious gaze, as those actually used, and not by any of the following beings. To begin with, there was the richly plated pair, (I think they were hexagonal, borne by the old gentleman before alluded to. The weight of those spectacles, and the amount of workmanship expended upon them, must have been quite amazing. If the nasal organ of the wearer had not been a "noble Roman" that any general officer would have been proud to own, he could never have sustained that burden so patiently and heroically as doubtless he had done the last quarter of a century. Who will say but that the nose did well, (as sung by the poet), to bear all the expense and risk of obligation rather than be robbed of its due by the following beings. To begin with, there was the richly plated pair, (I think they were hexagonal, borne by the old gentleman before alluded to. 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