

He regarded me as though he were not quite certain, and asked in his pronounless way whether I was glad to be back in London.

"Yes," said I. "Rogers is the only human creature who can properly wax the ends of my moustache. It got horribly limp in the air of Murglebed. That is the one and only disadvantage of the place."

"Doesn't seem to have done you much good," he remarked, scanning me critically. "You are as white as you were before you went away. Why the blazes you didn't go to Madeira, or the South of France, or South Africa I can't imagine."

"I don't suppose you can," said I. "Any news?"

"I should think I have! But first let me go through the appointments."

He consulted a pocket-book. On December 2nd I was to dine with Tanners' Company and reply to the toast of "The House of Commons." On the 4th my constituency claimed me for the opening of a bazaar at Wymington. A little later I was to speak somewhere in the North of England at a by-election in support of the party candidate.

"It will be fought on Tariff Reform, about which I know nothing," I objected.

"I know everything," he declared. "I'll see you through. You must buck up a bit, Simon, and get your name better known about the country. And this brings me to my news. I was talking to Raggles the other day—he dropped a hint, and Raggles's hints are jolly well worth while picking up. Just come to the front and show yourself, and there's a place in the Ministry."

"Ministry?"

"Sanderson's going."

"Sanderson?" I queried, interested, in spite of myself, in these puerilities. "What's the matter with him?"

"Swelled head. There have been awful rows—this