

"clever-looking" man. Attracted by the upright wall of forehead, which literally overbalanced the proportions of his face, they scarcely observed the delicacy of his other features. The clear pallor of his complexion, the subtle moulding of his mouth and chin, were altogether disregarded by those superficial observers. Even his eyes, large, brown, luminous as they were, lost much of their splendour beneath that superincumbent weight of brow. His age was thirty-eight; but he looked older. His hair was thick and dark, and sprinkled lightly here and there with silver. Though slender he was particularly well made—so well made, that it seemed impossible to him to move ungracefully. His hands were white and supple; his voice low; his manner grave and polished. A very keen and practised eye might, perhaps, have detected a singular sub-current of nervous excitability beneath that gravity and polish—a nervous excitability which it had been the business of William Trefalden's whole life to conquer and conceal, and which none of those around him were lavent enough to discover. The ice of a studied reserve had effectually crusted over that fire. His own clerks, who saw him daily for three hundred and thirteen dreary days in every dreary year, had no more notion of their employer's inner life than the veriest strangers who brushed past him along the narrow footway of Chancery-lane. They saw him only as others saw him. They thought of him only as others thought of him. They knew that he had a profound and extensive knowledge of his profession, an iron will, and an inexhaustible reserve of energy. They knew that he would sit chained to his desk for twelve and fourteen hours at a time, when there was urgent business to be done. They knew that he wore a shabby coat, lunched every day on a couple of dry biscuits, made no friends, accepted no invitations, and kept his private address a dead secret, even from his head clerk. To them he was a grave, plodding, careful, clever man, somewhat parsimonious as to his expenditure, provokingly reticent as to his private habits, and evidently bent on the accumulation of riches. They were about as correct in their conclusions as the conclave of cardinals which elected Pope Sixtus the Fifth for no other merits than his supposed age and infirmities.

Lost in anxious thought, William Trefalden sat at his desk, in the same attitude, till dusk came on, and the lamps were lighted in the thoroughfare below. Once or twice he sighed, or stirred uneasily; but his eyes never wandered from their fixed stare, and his head was never lifted from his hands. At length he seemed to come to a sudden resolution. He arose, rang the bell, crumpled up the memorandum which he had written according to Mr. Lehren's instructions, and flung it into the fire.

The door opened, and a red-headed clerk made his appearance.

"Let my office lamp be brought," said Mr. Trefalden, "and ask Mr. Keckwiteh to step this way."

The clerk vanished, and was succeeded by Mr. Keckwiteh, who came in with the light in his hand.

"Put the shade over it, Keckwiteh," exclaimed Mr. Trefalden, impatiently, as the glare fell full upon his face. "It's enough to blind one!"

The head clerk obeyed slowly, looking at his employer all the while from beneath his eyelashes.

"You sent for me, sir?" he asked, humbly.

He was a short fat, pallid man, with no more neck than a Schiedam bottle. His eyes were small and almost colourless. His ears had held so many generations of pens that they stood out from his head like the handles of a classic vase; and his voice was always husky.

"Yes. Do you know where to lay your hand upon that old copy of my great-grandfather's will?"

"Jacob Trefalden of Basinghall-street, seventeen hundred and sixty?"

Mr. Trefalden nodded.

The head clerk took the subject into placid consideration and drummed thoughtfully with his fat fingers, upon the most prominent portion of his waistcoat.

"Well, sir," he admitted, after a brief pause, "I won't say that I may not be able to find it."

"Do so, if you please. Who is in the office?"

"Only Mr. Gorkin."

"Desire Gorkin to run out and fetch me a Continental Bradshaw."

Mr. Keckwiteh retired; despatched the red-headed clerk; took down a dusty deed-box from a still dustier corner cupboard; brought forth the old yellow parchment for which his employer had just inquired, and slipped the same within the lid of his desk. Having done this, he took the armful of mouldy deeds from another shelf of the same cupboard, and littered them

all about the desk and floor. Just as he had completed these arrangements, Gorkin returned, breathless, with the volume in his hand, and Mr. Keckwiteh took it in.

"And the copy?" said Mr. Trefalden, without lifting his eyes from an old book of maps over which he was bending.

"I am looking for it, sir," replied the head clerk.

"Very good."

"Gorkin may go, I suppose, sir? It's more than half past five."

"Of course; and you too, when you have found the deed."

Mr. Keckwiteh retired again, released the grateful Gorkin, placed himself at his desk, and proceeded with much deliberations to read the will.

"What's at the bottom of it?" muttered he, presently, as he paused with one fat finger on the opening sentence. "What's wrong? Something. I heard it in his voice. I saw it in his face. And he knew I should see it, too, when he called out about the shade. What is it? What's he peering into about? Why does he want this copy? He never asked for it before. There ain't a farthing coming to him, I know. I've read it before. But I'll read it again for all that. A man can never know too much of his employer's private affairs. Not much chance of learning a great deal of his either. Confounded private he keeps 'em."

He read on a little further, and then paused again.

"Why did he send for that Continental Bradshaw?" he questioned to himself. "Why can I go, too, when there's plenty to be done here, and he knows it? He wants me gone—why? Where's he going himself? What's he up to? Abel Keckwiteh, Abel Keckwiteh, my best of friends! keep your right eye open!"

And with this apostrophe he returned to the deed, and proceeded with it sedulously.

"Well, Keckwiteh," cried Mr. Trefalden, from the inner room, "have you found the copy?"

"Not yet, sir," replied the trusty fellow, who was then rather more than half way through it. "But I've turned out a boxful of old parchments, and I think I shall be sure—"

"Enough. Look closely for it, and bring it as soon as it turns up."

"It will turn up," murmured Mr. Keckwiteh, "as soon as I have finished it."

And so it did, about five minutes after, when Mr. Keckwiteh made his appearance with it at his master's door.

"Found? That's right!" exclaimed the lawyer, putting out his hand eagerly.

"I won't be sure, sir, till you've looked at it," replied the head clerk, with becoming modesty.

Mr. Trefalden's fingers closed on the document, but his eyes flashed keenly into the lustreless orbs of Mr. Abel Keckwiteh, and rested there a moment before they reverted to the endorsement.

"Humph!" said he, in a slightly altered tone.

"Yes—it's quite right, thank you. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Mr. Trefalden looked after him suspiciously, and continued to do so, even when the door had been closed between them.

"The man's false," said he. "None but spies have so little curiosity. I shouldn't wonder if he's read every line."

Then he rose, locked the door, trimmed the lamp, dismissed the subject from his thoughts, and began to read the will. As he read, his brow darkened, and his lip grew stern. Presently he pushed the deed aside, and jotted down row after row of cyphers on a piece of blotting paper. Then he went back to the deed, and back again to the cyphers, and every moment the frown settled deeper and deeper on his brow. Such a complex train of hopes and doubts, speculations and calculations as were traversing the mazes of that busy brain! Sometimes he pondered in silence. Sometimes he muttered through his teeth; but so inaudibly, that had there even been a listener at the door (as perhaps there was), that listener would not have been a syllable the wiser.

He took up a little almanac printed on a card, and cast up the weeks between the fourth of March and the third of April. There were not quite five. Not quite five weeks to the expiration of this long, long century, during which Jacob Trefalden's half million had been accumulating, interest upon interest—during which whole generations had been born, and lived, and had passed away! Good Heavens! to what a sum it had grown. It had amounted now to nine million five hundred and fifty-two thousand four hundred and odd pounds! Words—mere words! His brain refused to

realize them. He might as well have tried to realize the distance between the sun and the earth. And this gigantic bequest was to be divided between a charity and an heir. Half! Even the half baffled him. Even the half seemed too vast to convey any tangible idea to his mind. Even the half amounted to four million seven hundred and seventy-six thousand two hundred and odd pounds. Tshaw! both were so inconceivable that the one produced no more effect upon his imagination than the other.

He took up his pen, and made rapid calculation. Supposing it were taken as an income at five per cent? Ha! one could grasp that, at all events. It would produce about two hundred and thirty-eight thousand pounds a year. Two hundred and thirty-eight thousand a year! A splendid revenue, truly; yet less than the income enjoyed by many an English nobleman; and not one penny more than might be very easily and pleasantly spent by even a poor devil of an attorney like himself!

It might have been his own that princely heritage—nay, would have been, but for the cursed accident of birth! It might have been his; and now to whom would it fall? To a stranger—an alien—probably to an uncultivated boor, ignorant of the very language of his forefathers! Oh, the bitter injustice of it! Had not he at least as fair a right to this wealth? Did not he stand precisely in the same degree of relationship to the giver of it? By what law of natural justice was the descendant of the eldest son to revel in superfluity, while he, the descendant of the youngest, stood on the brink of ruin? Had it even been left for division between the survivors, both might have been rich; but now—

He rose, pale and agitated, and paced restlessly about the room.

But now, was it not evident that this heir was his born foe and despoiler, and had he not the right to hate him? Was not the hand of the desperate man against all men, even from the very beginning? but was it not first raised against those who have wronged him the deepest? William Trefalden was a desperate man. Had he not appropriated that twenty-five thousand pounds paid over to him by Lord Castle-towers two years ago, for the liquidation of the mortgage, and did not ruin and discovery stare him in the face? Having hazarded name and safety on one terrible die known only to himself, should he now hesitate to declare war upon his enemy, who was the possessor of millions?

He smiled a strange smile of power and defiance, and ran his finger along the black lines on the map. From Dover to Calais—from Calais, by train to Basle—Basle to Zurich—Zurich to Chur. At Chur the railways terminate. It could not be far beyond Chur where these emigrant Trefaldens dwelt. It would take him three days to get there, perhaps three and a half—perhaps four. He would start to-morrow.

His decision once taken, William Trefalden became in a moment cool and methodical as ever. All trace of excitement vanished from his face, as a breath clears from the surface of a mirror. He thrust the Bradshaw in his pocket, scribbled a hasty note to his head clerk, carefully burned the cyphered blotting-paper in the flame of the lamp, and watched it expire among the dead ashes in the fireplace; locked his desk; tried the fastenings of the safe; glanced at the clock, and prepared to be gone.

"A quarter to seven already!" exclaimed he, as he unlocked the door. "I shall be too late to-night!"

He had spoken aloud, believing himself alone, but stopped at the sight of Mr. Keckwiteh, busily writing.

"You here, Keckwiteh?" he said, frowning. "I told you you might go."

"You did, sir," replied the scribe, placidly; "but there was Heywood and Bennett's deed of partnership to be drawn up, so I would not take advantage of your kindness."

Trefalden bit his lip.

"I had just written a line to you," he said, "to let you know that I am going out to town for a fortnight. Forward all letters marked private."

"Where to, sir?"

"You will find the address here."

And Mr. Trefalden tossed the note down upon the clerk's desk, and turned towards the door.

"Glad you're going to allow yourself a little pleasure for once, sir," observed Mr. Keckwiteh, without the faintest gleam of surprise or curiosity on his impassive countenance. "Begging pardon for the liberty."

His employer hesitated for an instant before replying.