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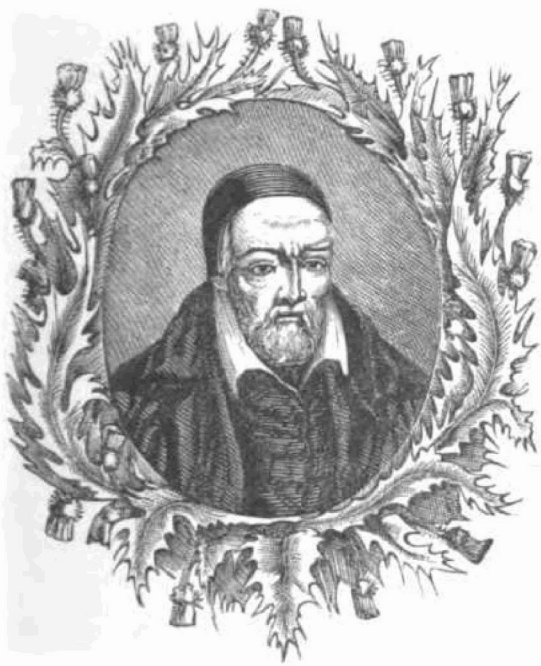

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD & SONS, EDINBURGH;

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# A VISITOR AND HIS OPINIONS.

## A STORY OF THE SEEN AND UNSEEN.

### CHAPTER I.

He came round the corner of the cliff suddenly, no step or rustle as of a wayfarer betraying him before he appeared, with something indefinable in his pose, as if he had just descended from a height, and a quick look around as at an unknown landscape quite new to him. It was near Dover, on the road that leads by the sea past the Castle heights towards the town. A man more than ordinarily tall, of an imposing personality so far as could be seen in the darkening air, clothed not like the usual wayfarers on that road, but in long dark-coloured garments scarcely definable, different from ordinary English dress, though it was scarcely possible to say in what way. His sudden appearance was very startling, as heralded by no sound or step, to the one or two people going in the other direction who met him without any warning, and started aside a little to make way for him without well knowing why. The covering on his head was like a close-fitting Spanish cap, but enveloped with filmy folds of something dark which made it resemble a turban—all vague, however, in the ever decreasing light. Something shone in the front of this cap, vague also, like a faint star among clouds, or the gleam of one of those little electric lamps that are now so much in use on the stage. It flashed in the eyes of a man on the road and dazzled him so that he had almost fallen over the cliff, though the other with whom he was walking saw nothing at all,

but asked, "What light? I saw no light," when his companion cried out. The passenger, however, neither paused nor questioned, but walked on, with an exceedingly light firm step, and a certain air of noting everything about him, though he did not stop to look either to the right or left. He went on into the town, keeping his way straight, crossing streets, and even the railway itself, without the faintest hesitation or alarm, with the air of one whom neither train nor heavy waggon could hurt, as if he could have wafted them all away by his breath or a wave of his hand. And this air of quietness, of calm assurance as if nothing could harm him, was very impressive, and made people turn to look after him as he went swiftly, lightly past them. Who was he? One knows that princes are not greater to look at, larger, stronger, more powerful, or even more imposing in aspect, than other men; yet there is a certain tradition of grandeur lingering about the name, so that several people said, "He looks like a prince," as this man went by.

He went to the great hotel, the Lord Warden which we all know, and where, as he rose into the light ascending the steps, much curiosity was excited, and a sudden pause occurred in the little bustle of people coming and going. It was such a pause as might occur if somehody had suddenly said, "The Prince of Wales is coming": the porters and other attendants about backed into corners, the manager came forward bowing low, and rubbing his hands nervously: and the guests in the hotel drew aside in little clusters, gazing at the new-comer, who, though he had nobody to announce him, and came forward attended by no suite or servants, made this curious impression on all who saw him. He came up to the obsequious manager, with again one almost imperceptible flash of a look round, which took in everything as everybody felt—a true prince's look, which in a moment recognises whoever there may be who is known; but there did not seem to be any one here known to this great personage. He said a few words to the manager in a tone which was not German or any accent we are used to, but yet not English either—in a large sonorous voice which gave a thrill to every one standing by. The manager bowed more and more, till he seemed almost doubled in two. "It is all right, sir—your Highness—my lord," he said: and instead of calling any inferior, took up suddenly a pair of silver candlesticks in which the candles had just been lighted for some other guest, and himself went mounting backwards very uncomfortably up the stair, showing the way. The Prince, or whatever he was, smiled, and said, "Walk, sir, as nature intended you." These words were heard by everybody. They were not very extraordinary in the way of words; but yet they were repeated in the most curious way from one to another, as if they had possessed the most remarkable meaning. "I heard him say it with my own ears," various people said afterwards, as if they had been made partakers of some great axiom of wisdom. It was to the best apartment in the house that the Stranger was led—a spacious sitting-room, with large windows looking out upon the Channel, which that night was "dirty," flustered by big waves with white tops which rose and fell, making a fine effect to those who viewed it from the security of the shore.

The room was dark, save for these two twinkling lights and the broad spaces of window through which shone the last of the twilight, and the clearness of a windy sky, and the glimmer and weltering light of the sea. "Your Highness had, I fear, a bad passage," said the manager: he paused a moment for a reply, and then added, "But the luggage and your Highness's servant arrived all right."

At the same time another figure appeared in the doorway between the sitting-room and a bedroom opening from it. No doubt about this individual. A well-bred valet, gentleman's gentleman, grave, respectful, point-devise. He had a letter in his hand. "From Lord Hillesborough, sir," he said, at first with less awe than had been hitherto shown at the sight of the Stranger; but on the second look at this majestic figure, half visible, with the light of the candles behind him, even Jerningham felt a thrill. "I was to wait your—your 'Ighness here," he said, faltering as he drew back within the door.

"You will have the goodness to call me Sir only; I am not accustomed to titles," said the Stranger. Sir! to be sure! that was what it was right to say to the Prince of Wales himself. Not accustomed to titles! was he perhaps, then, a king *incognito?* It appeared more like that than anything else to these two persons, accustomed to all the laws of service. Highness, though it means a great deal to other men, would not mean much to a king. To him it would mean a derogation, a sort of disrespect, though unintentional. Sir was the title for him—spelt with an "e" at the end, and not pronounced exactly as the English monosyllable is. Sire—it was pronounced Seer the manager was aware, who knew a little of all the languages of the Continent. He made a lower bow than ever, backing and bowing himself out of the room, murmuring "Yes, Sire," as he went. As for Jerningham, his soul owned a thrill of alarm to feel himself left alone with this wonderful person, king or potentate. "A gentleman of great distinction," he was told, had engaged him; a foreign gentleman, not accustomed to English ways. This is not a description which usually fills the English domestic with the graces of humility. It is difficult for him not to despise a personage, however exalted, who is ignorant of English ways. But, though there was an outlandish look about this one, for once Jerningham was really overawed. He retreated from the doorway, and began to occupy himself with unpacking his new master's luggage; but after a time his curiosity overcame him, and he peeped through the chink of the door to see what 'E was about. And indeed nothing could be more curious than what he was about. He had taken the letter to read it, not to the light of the candles, which burned all by themselves as though nobody wanted them upon the table, but to the window, where he stood reading it in the dark. No, not exactly in the dark either—a soft light fell about him, showing the whiteness of the letter and the attitude of his head bent to read it; a light that seemed suffused over his figure and the very part of the carpet he stood upon, and to shine in the panes of the window against the darkness that was in them from outside. What was it? Had he a taper, then, or some travelling-lamp, or — what? At this point in Jerningham's curious self-inquiries his new master turned his head half round, and the

man felt as if he were being looked at with a sort of mild observant smile, though it could only have been through the woodwork of the door, or the wall itself, which was impossible—for that barrier of physical obstruction was between the gazer in the one room and the sudden observation of the personage in the other. The effect, however, was so real, that Jerningham retreated to the farther corner of the bedroom and turned his face to the wall, and covered it with his hands to escape the sudden sensation. Yet the look which he thought he felt (which was ridiculous, impossible!) was not a severe look but a smiling one,—a look full of indulgence, as if for the error of a child, though so penetrating. Jerningham persuaded himself afterwards that it was that dashed taper or lamp, or whatever it was, by which the Prince was reading his letter, which caught a reflection in his own eye through the chink of the door. But anyhow he did not venture to pursue his own observations any further.

The letter thus read was remarkable in tone, being as it was a letter from an old and distinguished English peer to a man much younger than himself, and, though so remarkable in appearance, coming so suddenly and with so little pretension upon the scene. It was in the most respectful terms, almost more than his own native prince would have called forth from so eminent a subject, though there were no titles of honour employed:

"I have endeavoured to carry out your wishes in the most complete manner in my power, though our arrangements here are necessarily all so incomplete, so little perfect, that I fear you will scarcely be able to understand that I have really done everything I could, remembering your command that there was to be no shutting out of the common conditions of our life, and that your desire, which it is the highest pleasure and honour to me to obey, was to see these conditions in their most simple form. I wish I could hope that the sight would give you any satisfaction; but I await with the most eager anxiety your permission to arrange my poor house here for your reception, with a trembling hope that perhaps the rural life amid which we live, though still so unlike everything you have ever known, will not seem to you so terrible and repulsive as I feel with humiliation that which you have now come into must be. The man whom I have sent is likewise according to your command, neither better nor worse than the ordinary. I could have selected a man of higher character so far as our imperfect knowledge goes, but it appeared to me that this would not be according to the sentiment you had expressed nor the object which you pursue. With what anxiety, what hopes, and what fears, I follow your course in my thoughts, I will not attempt to express: and I should add with what sympathy—were the word such as I could venture to use in the comparison between your elevated nature and that which is the inheritance of one who is always your devoted and most humble servant,

"HILLESBOROUGH."

Signed below this name was a cipher in strange lettering like a second name. The Stranger put down the letter on the table, still with the same smile upon his lip which he had turned upon Jerningham—a look as of indulgence, understanding everything, not unaware of feebleness, of

something mingled in the respect, perhaps of a tone of obsequiousness, perhaps of an overstrain of effort—but accepting all with a benignancy which had no criticism in it. Presently he took off the covering from his head, which had the most curious shadowy appearance in the half light, as if the filmy drapery round it were a pair of folded wings, and the soft light that fell round him came from between them like the shining of a star. The last hypothesis was not unjustified, as he took something from among the folds which caused an instant displacement of the lights and shadows about him. What it looked like was a large diamond set in something dark and indefinite, with a white rim as of silver round this strange little lamp of light separating it from the darkness below and around. He put it down upon the table, replacing upon his head the hat or turban upon which the downy dark wings seemed to close more distinctly than ever. It appeared to be habitual to him to have his head covered. He turned back after he had done this to the view from the window — the dark sea tossing its waves, the spray dashing upon the rocks and piers, the long weltering of the ridges of sea as they rose and fell, the lights in the harbour sinking and rising, the shadow of the cliff wrapping everything in deeper darkness. It seemed to have a great fascination for him. During the course of the evening he turned to it again and again, as if with a sensation of relief, perhaps feeling that nature and even storm were more congenial than the surroundings of man. But he was not disposed to separate himself so far as would appear from the life going on around him. He looked at the clothes which Jerningham had arranged for him, spreading them out on the bed, with again a smile. "This is the dress of England?" he said, with the little accent which not unpleasantly pointed him out as not an Englishman. Jerningham by this time had recovered his self-possession. "Not of England, sir," he said; "but for the evenin', as far as I've 'eard, the costoome of all the civilised world."

"Is it so?" said the Prince, with an amused look. He added, "Is it much remarked when a stranger continues to wear the dress of his own country here?"

"Oh, not at all, sir," cried Jerningham, with a sort of patronage and condescension to ignorance. "There was the Indian princes at the Jubilee in all colours, and blazing with jewels, as the papers said. It was pecooliar, but it was admired. The ladies, they liked it," he added, perceiving that his new master, now that he saw him more closely, was still a young man. "If I might make so bold as to ask," he said, after a moment's silence, "what was your 'Ighness's country, sir?"

"I do not think," said the Stranger, "that I will change my dress to-night. Do you belong to this country? have you relations with the people here? do you think you could act as my guide?"

"My last place was 'ere, sir," said Jerningham, in a slightly alarmed tone. "I was in the commandant's service; and though I've no relations, yet I can find my way about. There ain't, however, as you might say, very much to see in a place like this,—nothing except the Castle, and—and the cliffs, and——" Jerningham ended abruptly, constrained by his new master's eye.

"Some thousands of people," said the Prince. "I wish to see them. Can you guide me to the

places where they live? Men—and women—are what I want to see."

Jerningham looked up with a sudden leer in his eye. "O—oh!" he said. His glance told that he divined in his master a hypocrite of the foulest tastes hidden under this guise of gravity, and that his mind was somewhat relieved by the discovery. He put his hand over his mouth to conceal his suppressed laugh. "I can show your 'Ighness—what we calls life, sir," he said.

His master looked at him with a mild severity which betrayed no anger, yet, if that were possible to a countenance so full of intelligence, something like a want of understanding. It was the look of an acute observer confronted with something which was a puzzle to him, and called all his faculties into exercise. The mean perplexes the noble as much as the noble disturbs the mean. He did not understand.

"We will go at once," he said.

"Lord!" said Jerningham to himself, "ain't he hot on it!" He was pleased to guide a Prince to see life, but there were preliminaries which he felt ought not to be neglected. "If I might make so bold, sir," he said, "won't your 'Ighness dine first? After your 'Ighness's journey——"

"I will go at once," his master repeated, with the air of a man not accustomed to be contradicted; and turning round, walked towards the door.

"Sir!" said Jerningham. "The weather is a bit cold. Your 'Ighness will put on a big coat at least over your costoome?"

"Put on a coat yourself, my good fellow," said the Prince, benignantly. "Thank you for thinking of my comfort. I shall not feel the cold."

He went out without another word, followed by Jerningham, struggling into a greatcoat behind him, with haste and difficulty, not daring to keep this wonderful person waiting. As they went downstairs the same phenomena occurred as before. The people about the hall of the big hotel, though they were people in some cases thinking no little of themselves, drew back upon each other with the same impulse as moved the busy porters and waiters, and left a clear path for the Stranger and his attendant. The manager bowed to the ground, rubbing his fat hands obsequiously, but caught at Jerningham as he passed with an eager demand, half in pantomime, half in a whisper, "Won't the Prince dine?" Jerningham answered in the same way, "He'll do as he likes, and there's no orders." He was a little put out, as well as the manager, about this unordered dinner; for if the Prince was not hungry after his journey, Jerningham was, though he had made no journey: and the valet was fond of taking his ease in his inn.

He hurried, however, after the tall figure which went on in front of him, towards the lights of the town. Dover is not a well-lighted town. The twinkles of lamps made the darkness visible, and almost increased the danger of the path across the railway and all the intricacies of the streets, though in the darker parts Jerningham grew curiously aware of a light that seemed diffused around them, of which he could not tell where it came from, but which certainly was there. The darkest corners were somehow lighted by it, so that even Jerningham did not stumble and kick his shins, and the Prince marched forward as if he had known the way all his

life; but the man could not tell where it came from, and afterwards got into so dazed a condition from the various surprising incidents of the night that he ceased to remember that strange preliminary, though at first he was constantly turning round, gazing about, and even looking overhead to discover where it came from. When they came into a street full of flares of gas, many of them unprotected and waving in the breeze, and where all the traffic of a Saturday night was going on,—outside stalls and little booths with their set out of provisions, red-and-white joints of beef, high coloured in the flare, deep green piles of vegetables,—the Prince walked up and down several times together, now on the lighted side, where all the people were hustling each other, now on the darker pavement opposite, where everything appeared as in a phantasmagoria, the waving flame of the coarse lights, the incessant movement of the shadows, the din of the cries filling the night air with uproar. This was not what Jerningham believed his master desired, and he would have led him by a cross street in another direction but for the wave of his hand, which stopped all explanation. There was a man half lying in a wheelbarrow towards the middle of the road, in the way of the carts and carriages which passed infrequently. He had something to sell half crushed under him where he lay, but he was past thinking of anything to sell. Whether he was ill or drunk was a difficult question. Jerningham unhesitatingly gave it, however, in favour of the latter, especially when his master stopped beside this partially perceptible figure, which suddenly yet softly became quite visible, showing a face stupefied and sodden, though whether with work or beer, or the sleepiness of fatigue, it was impossible to say. The man was roused, but writhed and twisted himself uncomfortably, as unwilling to be so brought out of his half-unconsciousness; but it was he who spoke first, struggling up out of his prostrate condition, and crushing the shell-fish over which he was lying as he raised himself on his elbow. "Who are you? and what do you want with me?" he said.

"Get up," said the Stranger, "and take me to your home."

"My 'ome?" said the seller of shell-fish: but he got clumsily to his feet. "Don't you shine your lantern into my eyes," he said. "I've got no 'ome."

"Take me to the place where you live," the master said again.

"What do you want with the place where I lives? I lives nowhere to speak of—where I can, one time one place, one time another; and no good for me to go there at all, if I don't sell my winkles and get a somethin' to tide over Sunday. Hey! I say, don't turn on that blasted lantern. Come on, then, I'll go if I must, and you'll just hear what She says."

Jerningham found himself after this, with a humiliation not to be described, walking along the flaring street, a wretched barrow trundling in front of him, and a still more wretched man. He had dreamed of something very different,—oyster-bars and strange expensive drinks, and smiles—that could be purchased too. The man with the barrow might be what his master understood by life; but Jerningham's ideas were not of that kind. They went on to the veriest slums—not to the quarters lit with fitful luxury to which Jerningham had intended

to introduce his master. And as they went there ran on a sort of monologue of grumbling talk from the costermonger who was their guide.

"Nice streets these are for a man to be trundling about at this hour o' the night, where there's not a soul to buy a penn'orth, and not a copper in my pocket, s'help me——! Oh, I knows better. Ye needn't ask me! I knows country roads that are deeper in the mud, and more quiet still; and I knows London. London's what I like. Ye can lose yourself there, and none knows if ye're a man or just a bit of the whole blasted thing as is a-going round and round. If ye drops it don't matter, and if ye goes on it's all the same."

"And what has brought you to this?" said the clear voice which sounded over the head of the crouched-up, shambling creature. He gave a side-look up towards his questioner's face, then blinked and shrank again.

"Where have you got your bull's-eye thing as blinds a man a-flashing in his eyes? What's brought me to this? How d'ye know as I wasn't always like this, crying winkles about the streets? Well, I wasn't, and that's the fact, however ye've found it out. It's a many things, if ye will know. My folks was very respectable once. I was put to school and went to church and all that, and wore as good clothes as—you do. Lord! but you've got queer clothes on: I never had no outlandish rig like that. You're a furreeneering chap, I suppose? and what do ye want putting questions to me?"

"I want to know what has brought you to this." The Stranger had the calm of power in his voice. He made no explanations, and there was no capability of resistance in the individual whom he questioned,—at least in the present case.

"Well," said the man, defiantly; "chief thing, I suppose, is drink. I was a silly when I was young—thought a poor chap could be like a gentleman, and take his pleasure 'stead o' working, working like a mole. And then came bad company, and then—Lord! when anything's happened to you as makes you miserable, there's nothing like a drop o' drink. Good folks they think it's your bad 'eart, as if a man wisht to get dead drunk and tumble about the streets. What a man wants is to forget hisself and all his trouble; to get lifted up as if he could fly; to have a dazzle in his eyes that makes everything grand. If it makes ye miserable in the end, I'm not denyin' of it; but at fust beginning it's a prince it makes ye, as if ye could fly over all the world.

"And then there's other things," said the man, pausing upon his barrow, standing still as in a reflective mood. The Stranger stood like a tower immovable by his side, pausing when he paused; while poor Jerningham, indignant beyond words, not only to be in such company but to be forced to stand and listen, drew back as far as he could from this ridiculous group. The light, whatever it was—concealed lantern or bull's-eye — shone upon the costermonger's face, lighting it up with a soft ray. "Lord! when I think what a fool I was!—I thought as I'd always be a young chap able to take my fling: and I thought as being a silly one day was nothing again' going straight the next. Nor it ain't neither, that's a fact, still," he added, vehemently, "so long as a man can keep his 'ead."

"Then some men, you think,"

said the Stranger, "do keep their heads."

The man paused a moment reflectively, and then he burst into a harsh laugh. "Fact," he said, shaking his head. "I don't know as many does. There's a fellow I know as makes believe, and lies low and gets the tin out of poor chaps like me when they has a shilling to spend. That's one thing as brought me to this pass, as you're so curious wanting to know. And then there's the missus—as aggravates a man with her tongue and her sharpness and naggin', till ye don't mind a bit what ye do."

"The missus—that means that you have a wife? how in this state of wretchedness could you bind another being to yours?"

"Wretchedness!" said the man, so stimulated by this reproach that he sprang to his barrow and pushed on so quickly that Jerningham, proudly paying no attention, was left behind, and had almost to run to keep up with his master's accompanying stride. "I wish you'd talk of what you know, master! She ain't no more wretched, I can tell you, for being along o' me. Wretched yourself! and ye ain't no 'appier than the rest of us, I'll go any money, if the truth was known! Bless you," he said, dropping out of his momentary indignation into more ordinary tones, "we weren't like this neither her nor me when we come together. I was a young chap, earning a good wage when I was steady, and she was a young lass as—as wasn't for any man to turn up his nose at. Lord! she was a tidy one when we come together first! and nice-spoken when her back wasn't up: but always a bit hasty in the temper, ready to give ye a kiss or a blow. As for wretched, you keep them big words to yourself, master! Jyane, I believe, if you ast her, she'd rather have me and my barrow than many a man as drives his own cart: for I'm a good-tempered one, I am, and takes a deal of worritin' afore I answers back; and as for liftin' my hand upon her, much less my boot, as some chaps do, that's a thing as never happens——'cept now and again, when I'm devilled with the drink."

"But how was it," said the Stranger, "when you were once young and earning a good wage, and she once so tidy and pleasant,—how was it that you did not continue so? You knew that the drink would harm you, did you not? and you knew that your bad company would make you bad too? and you knew that quarrels would spoil your comfort, and idleness would stop your wages? How was it, then?—how was it?"

The costermonger stopped again: he sat down upon the shafts of his barrow to reflect. "Blessed if I know," he said. "Lord! I've said all that to myself many a day, but it ain't done no sort of good. Always seems, somehow, as if the wrong thing was the most fun. Governor! don't you say you don't know that, for I knows human nature, and I wouldn't believe you,—not I."

"You thought it over, then?" said the questioner: there was no blame in his voice,—it was the voice of an inquirer anxious to know. "There were times when you stopped and regretted, and wished to turn back to the other way?"

"You don't speak like a parson," said the man. "I donow what kind of a bloke you are. You don' seem somehow as if you was a-tryin' to ketch a chap up. Sartain sure as I thought it over many a

day. And we've kissed and made friends, Jyane and me: and we've said we'd never do it no more: but, Lord, afore you're six steps from your own door there's a chap coming along as says, 'Hallo, Joe! goin' to work o' Monday mornin' like you was the boss hisself. Man! I'll not believe it of you. There's some fun agoin' on down the street. Come you along o' me.' And p'raps you stops a moment and jaws, and says he'd best go to work himself, 'stead of stoppin' them that means better: but, Lord! it always ends the same way," he added, starting off with his barrow again. "You thinks it's just for once, and you goes. And then you wishes you had cut your throat sooner. And then you feels as if you'd choke the missus afore she gets out one of her burnin' blazin' words. Well! one thing as I can say is this—that it ain't them as preaches as suffers for it, but you yourself. And that it ain't never done o' purpose as they thinks, but just as you says to yourself for once and accidental-like. Lord! don't you think I'd rather have a good coat to my back, and a good supper to go 'ome to, 'stead of wheelin' a barrow full o' dashed winkles as I hain't sold and ain't likely to, and not a copper in my pockets to give the missus for to-morrow as is Sunday?—which is your fault, master, now I comes to think of it, draggin' me out of the market where I could have got rid of every shell o' them, sure as I'm alive."

"'Old your tongue," said Jerningham, glad of an opportunity to display his disgust. "You were lying there drunk and smashing the winkles when you were spoke to by—a gentleman as—didn't ought to touch with the tongs a drunken beast like you!"

"Ho!" cried the costermonger, quick as fire, letting down the shafts of the barrow, and turning upon his new assailant; "you're agoin' it too? but I ain't that low down as I'll take abuse from the likes of you."

Jerningham, who really was the person to be pitied, having his personal dignity so sadly disturbed by such associations, only saved himself by jumping back from the sudden blow levelled at him. But the costermonger's wrath lasted only for a moment. The Prince laid his hand on the man's arm, and he calmed at once by an influence which he understood as little as it was contrary to the circumstances altogether. He took up the shafts of his barrow again in haste and silence. And the strange party proceeded without a word through one dark street after another. Yet it was not dark around them. The dark atmosphere of the night, and the thick air contaminated by all the emanations of the crowding miserable houses, seemed just then to be softly cleared, illuminated by a vague radiance scarcely enough to be called light,—something softly diffused coming from no point like a lamp or lantern, but moving with them, wrapping them in a tempered warmth and softness. The tall figure of the Stranger was the least revealed of the three. He moved like a shadow, towering over them—a Presence always felt yet vaguely seen. Thus they came at last to the court, opening off a little dingy street, where the seller of shell-fish lived. It was a sort of square of dingy houses, each with light in its windows, which filled the ill-smelling enclosure with a sort of squalid cheerfulness, in which, late as it was, children were still playing, and women keeping up a noisy conversation from the doors. The

din, the closeness, and the smells quite overcame Jerningham, who was not accustomed, as he said afterwards, to no such slums. He fell back, his devotion to his new master being insufficient to make up for the injury to his feelings. "I'll be handier here, sir, to call the police, in case you should meet with anything as is disagreeable," he said. "Quite right. I approve your prudence——and thought for me," said the Prince, looking upon him with that smile which made Jerningham so uncomfortable. "I wish, sir, — I do wish as your 'Ighness would be guided by me, and not risk yourself in no such places," cried the valet in his irritation. His master only laughed: this was all the answer Jerningham received.

And then there rose a tumult in the court,—one of the women darted out from her door, a fury with wild hair flying, with a wild flutter of ragged clothes, and a shawl on her shoulders, from which she flung forth her arms, the heavy drapery lending force to her fierce gesticulations. "You've been at it again, you drunken beast! you blasted fool! you darned ass!—you! you! you!" with each an epithet, she cried. "He's got them all still in the barrow, as I gave him the money to buy for a last chance. And here he's back without a penny, and my last shillin' gone to the dogs like all the rest, and nothin' left to buy a bite for the children—and it Satterday night! Oh! oh! oh!" she burst out in a wild mingled outburst of rage and tears, flying at the throat of the man. The Stranger stopped her in full career with his hand upon her shoulder, but she did not yield to his influence so quickly as the man. She struggled under his touch, tore herself away, and once more flung herself upon her husband who had seated himself on his barrow, with screams of rage and misery. A mingled din of approval and disapproval came from the lookers-on. "I don't wonder at her, poor lass, after all as she's had to bear," said one woman, who seemed to be on the outlook also for an errant husband; but, "Lord! she's got to put up with it, and why can't she take it easy?" said a matron, amiably tipsy, on another door-step. "Jyane, Jyane, you'll be sorry after!" said a third, interfering; "and 'im never lifting a hand!" The Stranger drew near the group again. He put his hand once more on her shoulder, and drew her away. "Is this the woman," he said, "that was so tidy when they came together, and so nice-spoken? and that a man loved? And what has brought her to this pass?"

The woman turned upon him, struggling still. "And who told you that?" she shrieked, — "for you don't know me, nor I you. Tidy — and that a man loved! Look at him now—is that a man?"

"What has brought you," he said, "to this pass?—you that were once sweet and young."

The woman stared in his face, but could not see it, while hers was clear, the seat of many passions, convulsed and struggling. "Let me go!" she cried. "I'll tear his eyes out, and no person shall stop me. Young! I'm not old yet, to be treated like that. Oh! if I was once tidy and nice-spoken, who's done it? I'm better than he is. I thinks of my children. I'm not—so bad as he."

"What has brought you to this pass?" the Prince repeated, with his voice of perfect calm.

The woman flung herself down upon the dirty pavement, and covered her face with her hands.

CHAPTER II.

Jerningham had much of the same sort of annoyance to bear during the first month or two of his service with the mysterious Prince. He was made the purse-bearer, which was some slight compensation (indeed on that first never-forgotten Saturday night he was called to pay for the barrow of winkles, and thus smooth down the tumult of the moment between the costermonger and his wife). His master showed a singular indifference to money, which he never touched or had any dealings in, bidding Jerningham do what was necessary whenever there was any question of payment, with a confidence which seemed to proceed rather from a certain contempt for that medium than from any well-founded trust in the man who had been recommended to him as an ordinary man and nothing more. In this situation of dignity, however, the servant accompanied his master through many strange scenes. He went with him to London, and to many places there where Jerningham would willingly have followed, or even led his lord with very different aims from those which the Prince seemed to pursue. And, indeed, the Prince's aims were not very easy to fathom. He was not a charity organiser, nor an almoner, nor a missionary. He gave, or rather ordered Jerningham to give, money freely on occasion; but this was certainly not his object. He went everywhere with the same inquiry on his lips, "What has brought you to this pass?" and he put it to everybody, sometimes in the most astonishing circumstances, addressing people who it might have been thought would have knocked him down for his impertinence, or at least resented it in some unequivocal way. But though they might be angry at first, they always ended by telling some story of strange things unlike those appearances which met the eye. One of the persons, for instance, thus interrogated was the clergyman of a large parish, a man full of good deeds, who was very indignant with the words—"this pass?" What pass was the excellent rector in, whose hands were only too full of everybody else's business, who was the Providence of so many? He had looked contemptuously, indignantly at his questioner, with a scorn of him as an unauthorised busybody which was most natural. But then a spell had fallen over that good clergyman. "How did I come to this pass? full of tickets and cases to examine, and subscriptions to be got? How can a man help it? You go out full of faith, and the first person you meet with cheats you, and turns your very heart. Then you rush to the other side and trust nobody; and the first thing you hear is that you have helped to starve some real sufferer. Then one gets wild for a time; and at the last you come to feel there's no confidence to be put in anything but figures and cases, and cut-and-dry machinery. There was a time when I was—a young fool; thinking everything was to be done by reasoning with them, and persuading them, and showing your affection. Ah, that's the grand principle still! the love of God, and the sympathy of our Lord. But then one drifts into the organisation tickets, and elections to hospitals, and so forth. Regret it? ah, that I do with all my heart! If I were a young man again I'd stick to the

higher principle: but what can a poor parson do that has to make the best he can of his parish, and keep all his charities going?"

There was never any reproof in the Prince's eyes: he heard this, and a hundred other strange avowals, with a calm which was never broken, and he was unwearied in hearing them, going about the world everywhere, inquiring from every man the secret of his divergence. He took no notes of these many and varied cases: of the women who began with protestations of having been deceived, then, in the light of his steadfast eyes, burst forth into wailing plaints of folly, of the heedless rush into temptation, the fall, half invited, half defied; or the merchant who had meant no harm, who had staked his friend's credit for something which only an accident prevented from becoming his friend's advantage instead of hurt; or the servant who borrowed from his master, meaning nothing but to repay. Over all these persons and hundreds more the light which it was so difficult to define suffused itself, never failing although the sun might. Jerningham made out at last by much study that it proceeded from somewhere just over his master's head, for it lighted up the faces of those who were before him, and kept himself in a curious depth of shadow, so that the most earnest gaze fixed upon him could scarcely penetrate that dimness. There were many things in Jerningham's mind as he thus attended upon his master. A strong curiosity in the first place. He could not in any way fathom this man. It was not for charity he went about the world, though sometimes he would be very charitable—so charitable that Jerningham thought that it was nothing but proper in the circumstances to take toll: nor was it for any pleasure to himself that the valet could understand. For what was the good of collecting all these stories? The Prince never talked of them, so far as Jerningham knew; it was not for the sake of gossip. Nor did he seem to intend to write a book, for he never put pen to paper, never wrote a letter. The problem was one which could not be explained in any way. And there were a great many mysterious things about the master to whose service he had been sent by so unexceptionable a nobleman as the Earl of Hillesborough. He had evidently plenty of money, which was left in Jerningham's hands, and which he himself never looked at. The Prince lived as if there were no such thing as money in the world. When there was anything to pay he looked at Jerningham, and that was all that was necessary. Jerningham had pretty pickings, it must be allowed. He did not rob his master, nor permit any one else to do it, but he took a percentage for his trouble: this appeared to him perfectly right and justifiable. He did not, indeed, intend to do anything of the kind when he began. He had always been honest, he said to himself, and he never meant to be otherwise. But a percentage, that was allowed everywhere when a man had so much trouble as he had—a trouble which had never been mentioned or thought of when he was engaged.

Another thing was that, as the Prince did not wear the beautiful clothes that had been provided for him, preferring his own "costoome," as Jerningham said, it seemed wiser that the valet should wear some of them than that they should be thrown away. Jerningham wore the coats to keep the moth out of them. He put on one on a certain day with this excellent

object, and another day he put on another. The Prince was larger than he, and much taller, yet somehow they all fitted Jerningham. It could do them nothing but good should the master finally make up his mind to put them on, that they should be worn to air them now and then. With all these things Jerningham did very well for himself and harmed nobody, as he himself believed. It did not occur to him that his master might one day turn upon him with his usual inquiry, "What has brought you to this pass?" and that he might be compelled to reveal everything. This pass! he was in no pass! he was doing nothing wrong. And as for any interrogation from his master, he made very light of that. The Prince did not observe any of these things. In short, Jerningham came by degrees, notwithstanding the mystery that surrounded him, to have on the whole a considerable deal of good-humoured contempt for his Prince.

There was one thing, however, about which he continued to be so very curious that he felt no effort to be too great to find it out. And that was, as has been said before, the mysterious light which accompanied his master everywhere. It flashed upon him suddenly at last what it was. Going into the Prince's room one evening in the twilight, he was astonished and blinded by the light which shone from a table at which his master had been sitting,—a light almost level with the table, proceeding from one central point. Jerningham drew near upon the tips of his toes, though the Prince was not there. He saw then, to his amazement, that it was a jewel in a curious dark setting covered with strange signs—but it was not the setting or the signs that moved him. It was the diamond!—such a diamond as he had never in his life beheld before. You may think he was not likely to have had much experience in diamonds; but Jerningham had been in good places all his life, and had seen a great deal of jewellery in his day, though never, never anything like this! It was of the size of a small watch, and as it lay there on the table seemed to represent Wealth itself incarnate, fortune and all it brings—quite unprotected, within the reach of any chance person that might come into the room. A flood of indignation rushed through Jerningham's mind at the rashness of his master, who could go and leave such a prize as that open upon the table. He bent over it to look at it, but it so blazed into his eyes that they were dazzled and could see nothing. Lord! what a thing to see lying on a table within reach of your hand—worth thousands and thousands, enough to make a man comfortable for life: comfortable! more than that,—rich, like a prince. Jerningham made a rapid calculation in his mind how a man—not himself! oh, not himself! but any man—might dispose of such a thing. It would be difficult to do, for diamonds of that size are not common anywhere; but no doubt, at least in foreign parts, it could be done. And a man could get away to Holland or some such place before ever anybody knew anything about it. From London a man can get off anywhere. These thoughts flew through Jerningham's mind with a sort of rush of moral indignation to think how easily it might be done, and how any man could do it. He put out his hand, not without alarm, to touch the wonderful thing which was worth, he said to

himself almost bitterly, far more than all a man even in a good service could lay up in his life; but as he was about cautiously to lift it he heard the Prince's step returning to the room, and fled precipitately, fearing to be asked what he was doing there. This was all that happened the first time.

But it appeared that the Prince, always a strange person in all his habits, had a fancy for reading by the light of his great diamond, and Jerningham saw it many times after this. He began vaguely to define also, after many questions with himself where his master had hitherto hidden it, to make out, putting one thing to another, that this blazing orb of light was in reality no other than the shining jewel which he had hitherto thought no bigger than a glow-worm, which shone among the filmy folds of the Prince's head-gear when he was out of doors. This made it more wonderful still to think that it could contract and then magnify itself in this way; but Jerningham soon came to the conclusion that its contraction must be caused by some peculiarity in its setting, which partially covered it when worn, and subdued its size and splendour. His mind grew more and more full of this diamond as time went on. He had been so angry at the thought that some one might steal it and escape to Holland with it, that it would be wrong to imagine he had any intention of committing such a crime: and yet his mind was full of the diamond by night and by day.

One night, he could scarcely tell how, he found himself at a late hour in the Prince's room. Among his other habits was one of walking late, and so far as Jerningham was aware, his master was out, though he had represented to himself that he had heard the bell, and that this was the reason why he made his way thither at so late an hour. He was curious to know also (he said to himself) whether the Prince went out with so valuable an ornament in his hat, alone, and at night, which would have been so foolish a thing to do. Jerningham's heart gave a jump when he saw the blaze of the jewel on the table. The rest of the room, the bed and the large space behind, lay in total darkness, but a luminous circle was drawn round the table upon which the diamond lay. He paused a moment, his heart beating loud, and then he drifted silently, moving, as he afterwards said, by some sort of compulsion, not by his own will at all, into this circle of light. His face was a sight to see as he came within the range of the illumination out of the shadowy gloom in which all things are softened. It was blazing with excitement, with eager cupidity, with that vehemence of desire which is so strong a passion—to have it, to possess it, even to take it into his hands! but he was also afraid. His master might come in upon him before he could escape. There might be some trap about the dreadful glorious thing itself. It almost blinded him as he looked down into its white flames. At last, in mingled greed and terror, he put out his hand——

Ah! Jerningham's shriek would have wakened the Seven Sleepers; and there was no one to be awakened here, but only a perfectly collected, self-possessed looker-on, who had seen everything with a pair of serene open eyes from the bed. What the Prince saw was a man fixed and immovable, his countenance con-

torted with alarm and horror, standing, not as if he held the diamond, but as if it held him, in the centre of the floor, the rays of the gem shining round him, his features convulsed, his whole soul gone forth in that wild shriek. He stood trying vainly to disengage his fingers from the paralysing grasp that seemed to him to have seized him, an image of fright and helplessness. "Jerningham," said his master, "is it you? and what has brought you to this pass?"

"Oh, let me go, sir!" he cried. "I'm a fool; I'm a thief. I don't mind what you call me. Let me go; let me go! Your 'Ighness, I'd ask you on my bended knees, if I could bend a knee or move a finger! Oh, let me go!"

"What did you want with my diamond?" the Prince said.

"Want with it? It was your Ighness's fault leaving of it there, where a man couldn't help seeing it. Want with it,—oh Lord! But I don't want nothing now but to be let free and never trouble nobody any more."

"What would you have done with it?" said the Prince, in his calm tones, "had you got it safely away?"

"Oh Lord!—oh Lord!—only let me free of it for one moment! I'd have sold it," cried Jerningham, feeling the words forced from him, and understanding now in his trouble how it was that every one had answered these questions—a thing he had never understood before.

"To whom? not to any honest dealer, who would know its value."

"I'd have gone—to Holland. I'd have found some o' those fellows out. It mightn't have been its value," cried Jerningham, "but it would have been a fortune to me. Oh, your 'Ighness! don't pull the brains and the eyes out of a poor man's head, but let me go!"

"And what would your life have been afterwards? You would have trembled to see me come in wherever you were and ask for my diamond. You would have been afraid to be seen by any one who knew you. You would have wandered from place to place, and tried every coarse pleasure which you cannot indulge in because you have your character to think of now; and you would have found them all bitter in your mouth."

"Very likely, sir; very likely, sir," cried Jerningham in his distress. "It's true; it's true. I've thought of all that. I knows it as well as any man. Sir, I'll never ask you for a character nor nothing if your 'Ighness will let me free."

"You thought of all that?" said the master, in his absolute calm.

"I did; I did! I knows it all. But what's the good of knowing when a thing drags you as if your soul was coming out of your body? It's your 'Ighness's fault for leaving it there."

"Then you will do it again tomorrow if I let you free."

"Oh, never, s'help me—oh, never! Yes, perhaps I will. A man never can tell what he'll do. I can't tell you a lie though I want to;—perhaps I will. It's stronger nor me. Oh, your 'Ighness; oh, for the love of God, let me free!"

Jerningham was in torture. The blood in his veins seemed to be turned into fire; sparks came from his broadcloth; his temples throbbed as if some dreadful machinery had been set going within; and the blaze of the diamond in his eyes was like those flames which he had heard of all his life as the

reward of those who steal and lie. But suddenly in a moment he felt a dark still shadow over him. The machinery in his head stopped; the flare in his face was subdued; a cool hand touched his; and the cruel thing that held him loosed its clutches. This was what the sensation was — not that the diamond was taken from him by his master's hand, which was the fact, but as if it had been constrained to let him go. A sudden sense of relief ran through Jerningham's frame, but along with that—was it possible?—a regret,—a pang as of something which had all but been his, yet never would be his again.

The Prince put it down on the table on the same spot as before. "You are sorry," he said, "that you have not succeeded. You forget already how it punished you. You would try again."

"No, your 'Ighness; no, your 'Ighness," said Jerningham. The sense of relief was in all his veins, and yet it was dreadful to him to give it up, and have no further hope of it. There ran through his mind like an arrow the thought, that after he was dismissed there might be a very good chance of coming back privately, and, with gloves or handkerchiefs wrapped round his hands or something, managing better another time. He did not entertain the thought, but it flashed through him all the same. He stood back in the shade an abashed and penitent sinner, notwithstanding this flash of thought.

"I asks no warning, sir, after what have 'appened; no board-wages nor nothing. I'm thankful to your 'Ighness for a-letting of me off. I asks no character. Mr Jones of the hotel will see, sir, as I leaves everything right, and not a pin out of its place. I'm—I'm a good servant, sir," said Jerningham. He paused for a moment, his intromissions with his master's garments and his percentages jumping up suddenly into his face. Then he added, "I mayn't be strong to resist a great temptation as has been left before my eyes; but I'm a good servant, sir, and nobody can speak different."

"You intended, then, to go away?" said the Prince, with a smile. "No; you need not go away. I shall not dismiss you. You will, perhaps, attempt to do this again? Well, you know beforehand what the issue will be, and I need not say any more. We understand each other, I think? in this and also in the other little ways——"

"What other little ways, sir?" said Jerningham, holding his head high; but it was very difficult to keep any pretence up in the presence of his master. "If your 'Ighness is satisfied, sir, so am I," he added, lowering his eyes and his tone.

The Prince's laugh was not unkindly, yet it rung into Jerningham's very heart, and stung him much more than a lecture. "I am satisfied—that we understand each other," he said, and dismissed the culprit with a wave of his hand.

And this was how the strange incident ended. A master that had no respect for himself as a master; that could find out an attempt at robbery and never dismiss the man; that left the most valuable property about, and all his money in Jerningham's hands, notwithstanding that he knew Jerningham to be a rogue—as if it didn't matter,—as if nothing mattered! "Lord! I'd have turned him neck and crop out o' the 'ouse. I'd have in with him into the hands of the police sooner than look at him. He shouldn't never 'ave 'ad a day's grace from me!" Jerning-

ham said to himself, putting himself in his master's place; but he was on the whole relieved to be going to bed as if nothing had happened, with his character safe, and no longer any necessity for flying to Holland or elsewhere in order to realise his ill-gotten gains.

It was shortly after this that the Prince went for the first time to Hillesborough, though, as the reader may recollect, it was Lord Hillesborough who had arranged everything for him on his arrival in England. He was received with great state as became the highest rank—indeed, though he never stood upon his greatness, and his title was never fully announced, he had at the same time never hesitated to accept the name of Prince as natural and befitting his condition. When the old earl came out to the door to meet him, their rencounter was considered by many persons to be both curious and touching. Lord Hillesborough had travelled much in his life; he had been all over the world — everywhere, people said, without knowing very well what that word meant. He had penetrated far into the East, he had gone through Africa (as was said; for much less was known of Africa in those days than now). As for Europe and such little holiday journeyings as are to be accomplished there, he thought nothing of them; and that he should have met in his wanderings a mysterious Prince whom nobody knew, yet who was every inch a Prince, bearing his superiority in every feature and action, was a very natural thing. But it was strange and pathetic, as people say, to see that very old man, full of dignities and honours, bowing low before the Stranger, who greeted him with the warmest cordiality, but no such demonstrations of respect. Lord Hillesborough hurried down the steps to open the carriage-door with his own aged ivory hands. He murmured something about so poor a means of conveyance, though his carriage was good enough for the Queen herself. The Prince smiled in the most gracious and affectionate manner; he put his hand to his heart, his lips, and his forehead by way of greeting; finally, when he got out he put an arm round the old gentleman like a son, and seemed to raise him thus like a feather up the flight of majestic steps, which were usually a great strain upon Lord Hillesborough's limbs and breath. "I am glad to arrive at your house, my old friend," he said. "And I am honoured above all honours to see you here," said the old man. The Prince drew the old earl's arm within his own — and those who were watching saw, as if some air of youth and strength had blown that way, his countenance clear like the sun, and light come into his eyes. See what friendship does, they said, even to so old a man! For he no longer looked old when this glorious young Prince, —so more than common tall, so splendid in his bearing, in his strange yet noble dress, and with — now clearly shining and displayed — a diamond bigger than the Koh-i-noor shining through the filmy folds of his head-dress,— had him by the hand.

There was a party of some eminence assembled at Hillesborough, presumably to meet the Prince, though, so far as I am aware, the name of this illustrious *convive* had not been mentioned directly to any of them. The old earl had spoken, however, to some, of a friend whom he expected, who was making a sort of voyage of discovery in England, a member of a very old prince-

ly race, "of a civilisation much anterior to ours," he said. What did he mean? a Brahmin prince from India—perhaps a sacred Llama from Thibet,—"one of old Hillesborough's swans, who are mere geese," a witty member of the party said. But they did not laugh when they were presented to the mysterious and noble personage who appeared among them —though there was scarcely one who was not distinguished in one way or another — like an eagle among the lesser birds, rather than a swan. He talked with them freely and upon all subjects, with an easy grace of utterance which was very surprising in a foreigner. And he was not a Hindoo: no dark nor even dusky blood ran in the veins which traversed visibly on his temples, in lines of blue, the milk-white of his complexion. He might have been an Anglo-Saxon for his fairness; but he was not an Anglo-Saxon, — the type was much higher, more intellectual, and finer than anything produced among our races. There was a keen ethnographer among the party who was eager to identify him, yet entirely baffled by the Prince's imperturbable and smiling incapacity for being questioned. He questioned a great deal himself on his own part, and knew almost everything about the private history of most of the people there, and this almost exclusively from themselves, for he encouraged no gossip. Day by day his fellow-guests wondered more and more at him,—at his points of view, the opinions he expressed, and his curious spectator-attitude in respect to everything that went on. He blamed nothing, they observed, attacked nothing—had not a word to say about the foreign policy of England, nor her treatment of the distant States in which her sons had made their settlements. This was a thing that was eagerly expected from him at first. A foreigner himself, and evidently one from the far East or South, there was nothing so likely as that he should criticise the methods of Great Britain with those conquered or allied provinces, and the vast world of heathenism which she had more or less subdued. But to the surprise especially of a Cabinet Minister, who was one of the party, he said nothing at all on this point. He did not even attempt to make out that his own race was more truly civilised than the British, and might with truth call them barbarians. He never spoke, indeed, of his own race at all. Sometimes he would exchange a recollection with Lord Hillesborough of some particular moment or occurrence through which they had passed together, and on these occasions named him apparently by a name which was quite unknown, and indeed never was caught by any one, each hearer making of it a different sound — a word of a language which nobody had ever heard before.

The mysterious visitor caused great interest and excitement among the guests at Hillesborough. He was heard of through all the county; and people to whom it was half a day's journey came to call, with a sense that the very crown and climax of all old Lord Hillesborough's eccentricities was thus to be seen and taken account of. But the Prince's visit was of still more importance to some of those who were most closely at hand.

CHAPTER III.

Lord Hillesborough had never married; but he was not without ties of family on that account. He had led a wild and wandering youth, and for the greater part of his middle age had been pursuing researches, which nobody could quite trace out, in distant parts of the universe, sometimes for years together dropping out of the knowledge of men. He had got beyond the climax of life when he returned and took for the first time possession of his ancestral place and honours. There he had neither been unaware of nor indifferent to the responsibilities of such a position. He had done all that a member of the House of Lords can to stimulate good legislation and control bad,—which is the highly important and useful office of that body,—taking care that the nation should have full time to think, and do nothing rashly or unadvisedly. He had taken up many schemes which seemed visionary to his colleagues and fellows, and some which were very practical and excellent. His estates were governed with great care under his own special supervision—no wrong being left without a remedy, and no poverty which could be helped being permitted to exist. Whatever was best in the way of leases and improvements to the farmers, and of good cottages, allotments, and indulgences to the labourers, existed on his land before the younger theorists had begun to speak of such schemes. He was not altogether successful—what man is or can be?—and yet life was as tolerable at and about Hillesborough as it could well be made. He could not change the nature or the character of his surroundings. He that was unclean was unclean still, except now and then when a miracle would happen with which Lord Hillesborough had nothing to do. He did not believe that allotments or anything else that he could do would save either men's souls or bodies; but when that divine something did come into an erring man's breast which makes him a good man—a miracle still daily accomplished among us, heaven be praised! which is greater than healing—the old lord acknowledged it with reverence however it came,—whether by means of the Methodist preacher in the village, or by the ministrations of an anachronism under the form of a modern brother of St Benedict, or by more intimate and secret help from heaven,—always allowing that this gift from God was beyond all allotments, and that to be made good was the one primary necessity of life. This was a point in which he differed from most law-makers of to-day; and yet he was very modern in his way, and scorned no suggestion, even when coming from the least venerable quarter, which seemed to have any good in it. He was surrounded, in consequence, with what might be called a very high average of general wellbeing. More, perhaps, is scarcely to be looked for, whatever men may do or say.

I have said, however, that he did not want for the ties of a family, notwithstanding that he had never married, and had consequently no children of his own. His house was superintended and reigned over by his sister, Lady Elizabeth Camden, who had an only daughter, to whom the old gentleman was much attached; and it was the home of his nephew and heir, the son of a younger

brother, who had been Lord Hillesborough's favourite in life. It was the evident and most commonplace conclusion that these two young persons, both so dear to the master of the house and both so deeply indebted to his bounty, should marry and carry on the lineage after him; but this most desirable and natural issue had been put aside some time before, when it became evident that Arthur was not likely to turn out so well as had been hoped. There were many excuses for him, people said. Why should he work either at school or college, when he knew there was no need whatever that he should do so, and when, without any exertion, he could have everything that is desirable in life? No doubt he would sow his wild oats, and settle down and marry some nice girl, and be as irreproachable as most of his fathers had been before him. Anyhow, he should not marry Lucy, Lady Elizabeth said, and she was a woman not given to changing her mind. At the same time she had indicated, which perhaps was not so wise, the man who was to marry Lucy, who was already an epitome of all the virtues, a man with very fine estates and a good deal of money, and universally approved of wherever he went. But, unfortunately, Lucy was not of her mother's opinion in this latter respect. Therefore, even in this admirably regulated house, with such a man as Lord Hillesborough at its head, all was not peace as it ought to have been. He was an example to the whole county, but it was not an example which was efficacious in his own house. And yet these two erring young people were both very fond of him, and considered him the best of men. They would have liked to please him; there was no opposition to him in either of their minds. Sometimes they were both in rebellion in different ways against Lady Elizabeth; but Uncle Hillesborough was to both the most loved and trusted of friends.

It was not long before this state of things was made very apparent to the Prince. He fathomed it the first evening, when he saw the young people doing their utmost to entertain their guests, though nothing could have been more natural or delightful than the family affection between them. What might have been the confidences between him and Lord Hillesborough I cannot say—nor if there were any confidences; but it was not very long before this important and evidently most influential visitor, whose manners were such as gained everybody's trust, was sought by young Arthur with his tale, and a prayer for his intervention. "For one can see that Uncle Hillesborough thinks nothing too much to do for you," he said. "If Lord Hillesborough is so good, is not that a reason why I should be very cautious what I ask him?" said the Prince, with a smile. But he soon was made aware very plainly what it was the young man had to ask. He listened patiently, and then he proceeded in his usual way to trace the trouble to its cause.

"What," he said, in the words he had already used so often, "has brought you to this pass?—for one like you, so young, so full of happiness, so well off, cannot have come to despair in a day. What has brought you to this pass?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the young man, with his hands in his pockets, swaying backward and forward against the light of the broad window—"nothing that was very bad. I got drawn in a bit with fellows I had known at school,—not for any harm, only for fun,

don't you know. Every one bets a little; and you never think when you begin that you can't stop just when you please. Then that leads to other things. When you get into your first hole, and see what an ass you've been, the thing you want most is not to think about it. It seems no use thinking about it when you can't mend it. Then fellows tell you how by risking a little more you have such a good chance of recovering yourself; and then you get awfully excited, and you heap on everything, and you feel sure you must win this time. Some fellows do, and set themselves straight, and then pull up, and are not a bit the worse for it. That's what I meant. They are actually the better for it, don't you know, getting such loads of experience; and, after all, nothing but experience ever teaches a man. Well! then when you have everything in the world hanging upon the chance of what is going to happen at a race meeting, or something else of that sort—don't you see your head's not any good for work or reading, and you can't bear home or being quiet. You have got *not* to think; and the only way not to think is to keep yourself in a whirl with — well, with other things; and so you get into what people call dissipation, without wanting to, without meaning to, just to keep yourself from thinking——"

The Prince said nothing, but shook his head: there was perhaps a half smile on his face—or so at least the young man thought.

"What's the good of talking?" he said; "I can see you know it all quite well: and of course, however far off your country is, and however mysterious you make it, Uncle Hillesborough and you—human nature, I suppose, is the same there as here."

The Prince did not make any reply to this: he continued to shake his head. "It seems to me," he said, "that if, instead of taking precautions against thinking, you had allowed yourself to think, all might have been mended at any moment before things came to this pass."

"I didn't come to a man like you," cried the youth, almost indignantly, "to be told that! Why, any old woman could have told me that! Don't you know how it draws you on? Oh, hang it all, you must know! You can't have come to know such lots of things, and to understand men so well, without finding that out. It draws you on; and in a kind of a way you like to be drawn on; and you think it's life, and all that; and after a while you can't bear the quiet of home, and the routine. You must have something to excite you, to fill up the gaps. I don't know why things that are called wrong should always be nicer than things that are called right. They make you spin, they keep you going. But it isn't because they're wicked you care for them; it's because they are fun."

"To me they seem very poor fun," the Stranger said.

"Well, perhaps," said the youth, subdued. "You're above all that. I shouldn't suppose they would seem fun to you. I — shouldn't like it if they were. They're not always fun, to tell the truth, even to me; but they keep a fellow on. But you don't blame me badly, do you,—you that know what men are?" he added, after a pause, glancing up with a pleading look, like the insinuating plea of a child.

"Yes," said the Prince, "I blame you: but still more, I wonder at you, selling your youth and all your chances and hopes for less than the mess of pottage! That was always something,—it satisfied a hunger of the moment;

but yours are only the husks that the swine eat."

"Oh, I say!" cried the youth; then he paused, and said, penitently, with a drooping head, "I believe you're not far wrong. I have been a dreadful ass, that is the truth." He looked up again with his boyish insinuating plea. "But I've learned better now. I've bought my experience. Prince! if you will get Uncle Hillesborough to look over things this once, and start me straight, you shall see it will be very different another time."

"Will it be very different?" said the other. "If you had meant wrong the first time, and now meant right the second, I think there would be better hope: but you meant only fun, as you say; and how can you be sure that you will not mean fun again?"

"Oh, by Jove!" cried the young man, "I know better now! Fun's very well, but if it can only end in a revolver, one sees that won't pay. I'm up to a great many things now that I never thought of before. If you'll stand my friend, Prince——"

"In any way, in every way that is permitted, I shall certainly stand your friend," the Stranger said, in his grave tones but with his benignant look.

Young Arthur could not burst out with his schoolboy exuberance, "Oh, thank you; thank you awfully!" as he had intended. He was silenced by that look, which seemed to mean so much more than the words meant, which is not the usual way; but yet he did not know what they meant. He went away a little awestricken; yet he was full of hope.

And it was, I think, the same day that Lucy also sought the Stranger with her story. She was more timid than her cousin. She had no confession of wrong-doing to make, in Arthur's way, but yet it was dreadful to the girl to be in opposition to her mother, and to be appealing to a person she knew so little. She said to him prettily, with downcast eyes, that she did not know how it was that it seemed more natural to speak to him than to any of her old friends whom she had known all her life.

"Perhaps it is because I am a stranger," said the Prince.

"Oh," cried Lucy, "perhaps it is that! The others would either take sides with mamma or blame her,—and she is not to be blamed, she is right; but oh, Prince, you who know everything, I can't help thinking I am right too."

"I am afraid I don't know everything. I am only an inquirer among you little young people on the earth; but you will teach me to know——"

"I—teach you!" cried Lucy, clapping her hands; "but if you don't know everything, you understand, and that is better. Oh, Prince, I am so full of trouble and difficulty! One thinks naturally that anything one wishes for, very, very much, must be wrong, you know. But this I am quite, quite sure is not wrong."

"Tell me what it is," he said, with a smile.

She gave him a quick glance, and then drooped her head again. "You will know," she said, very softly, "even though I didn't tell you, that it must be something about—about my marriage, Prince."

The last words came out with a little rush, as if Lucy were glad to get them said. "Oh!" he said, "is that so?"

"What else could it be?" said Lucy, with a sigh. "Of course on no other subject would I oppose mamma. I know that she understands most things far better than I do; and she is very, very good. She is my best friend; she loves me more than anybody in the

world. Oh, Prince! you must not think I don't know that."

The Prince smiled, looking down upon her benignantly, but said no word.

"But when you think that it is I who must pass my life with him, not she—and that there is one whom—whom I——while the other, though I know he is a good man, and that mamma is right about him, and—and all that—yet I could not, I could not bear him, oh, Prince, how could I? when there is another—another!"

Lucy put up her hands to her face with a little sound of tears.

"Tell me about this other," the Stranger said; "sit down and be composed and tell me—everything you can tell——"

"I can tell you—all!" cried the girl. "I couldn't to anybody else; but I am sure you must have loved—some one, very, very much, and you understand."

He smiled over her downcast head, and in answer to the sudden upward glance of her wet eyes; but the smile was mysterious, reticent, opening no confidences on his own part. He did not assent to the assertion she made, nor yet contradict it. His attention was given solely to the suppliant, not disturbed by any reflection from experiences of his own.

"This gentleman," said Lucy, plunging into the middle of her subject, "whom mamma thinks so much of, is old—at least older a great deal. I seem to have always known him. He is very nice, and he has always been very good to me. I might have done—what mamma and he wanted, and never known anything better, and just lived dull and half alive all my days. But one day last summer I went over quite by accident to see—some other girls at Horndean. I had not been invited. It was only because it was a fine day, and Uncle Hillesborough had given me my pretty little pony-cart, and I thought I should like to go: just a fancy—and quite by accident."

"Quite by accident," the Prince echoed, in a tone which made Lucy look up at him once more; but she did not understand either his look or his mysterious spectator-smile.

"And there was—some one, who came in for tennis quite by accident too; they had not asked him; they did not even know he was at home. And we drew each other for partners in the game, and we played all the afternoon; and afterwards he walked by the side of the pony-cart half the way home. He walks so quickly and so light, he went as fast as the pony. Oh, Prince, do not you think that when we met like this, without a thought, knowing nothing about it, that it must have been Providence—Providence? heaven itself that brought us together when we never knew!"

"And this was the man?" the Prince asked.

"Oh yes!" cried Lucy with fervour, clasping her hands, too earnest even to blush, "this was the man! the only man—the only, only one that I could ever—— And it is all so different. I might have married the other gentleman whom I was always meant to marry, and never known what it was at all—— But the first moment I saw Harry I knew. I was ready to put my hand in his and go with him anywhere; and I don't mind if he is poor or rich, we could always, always get on together. We don't need even to speak to understand each other. We know what we mean—he me, and I him. And to think that we should have met like that——!"

"Quite by accident," the Prince repeated, in his musing tone.

"I prefer to say," said Lucy,

with great gravity and solemnity, "by Providence, Prince! It seems accident to us, but God,"—the girl lowered her voice with tender reverence and enthusiasm,—"God must have put us down for each other long before, and brought it about so, that we might always see His hand in it. *He* thinks so too. We are quite, quite sure that it has all been brought about by heaven. They say, you know, that marriages are made in heaven," she added, flashing a wistful smile at him out of her shining wet eyes.

"And is it a proof for that that earth opposes?" the Prince asked.

"Mamma opposes," said Lucy; "this is my great trial. He is not rich, and the other gentleman of course is; and she still wants me to marry him, as if our love was a mere fancy and meant nothing: when it means everything — our whole lives! Oh, Prince! you can help us; everybody listens to you."

"But," he said, "do you not think that your mother knows best? that this gentleman, whom I do not know, whom she has chosen and selected for you, who has thought of you for years, is very likely a better mate for you than one whom you have met without any choice, inadvertently, quite, as you say, by accident."

"Love doesn't choose," cried Lucy, "it comes! it doesn't think of being suitable or not, it just is, and there is no more to be said. Oh, Prince! I shall think you do not know so much as I supposed, have not had so much experience as I thought, if you don't know that. It is the only thing in all the world that is quite, quite true."

"It seems a beautiful thing—through your eyes," he said; "but if I talked with your mother——"

"Mamma," cried Lucy, "would not deny that—nobody would deny it; they may try to get over it, but they would not deny it: for everybody at least, though they may go against their knowledge—which is blasphemy—knows what Love is."

"They know what Love is?"

"Oh yes, yes, Prince! and that it comes like the wind in the Bible where it listeth — bloweth where it listeth—comes when no one is thinking of it, without any invitation, without any arrangement."

"Quite by accident!" the Prince repeated, with a smile.

## CHAPTER IV.

The party at Hillesborough being, as has been said, a party composed of very distinguished persons, with aims and pursuits much above the common, was greatly occupied at this particular moment by discussions concerning the best means of reforming society, and especially concerning the condition of the poor, which takes up so much thought and so many anxious plans in this generation. There were some very active advocates of that which calls itself the Service of Man, and which considers itself an immense improvement upon the Service of God, though that has been for many hundred years the rule by which loving your neighbour as yourself was given forth as the half of law and religion. And there were also many who went in the ways of that older faith. Much discussion, not only between these different methods, but upon—to their credit be it said—the best way in which each man could try his own method without assailing his neighbour's—was naturally rife, and many

schemes were debated in the hearing of the Stranger, who listened so courteously to every speaker, but never put in any suggestion or advice of his own. This was his general attitude — hearing everybody speak, without either criticism or judgment, collecting all opinions, and listening with grave respect to what the very humblest had to say. But naturally his imposing presence and all the prestige that surrounded him, the sense of superior intelligence and understanding which everybody felt who approached him, made this silence on his part unnatural, and he soon was referred to on all sides for his opinion. "One who has seen so much as you have," it was said, "with so many varied experiences — so great a student of human nature——" These words came from different speakers, all pressing upon him to know what he thought.

"A student of human nature, am I?" he said. "Yes, it is perhaps the distinction which I am most willing to adopt. My studies have not been of long duration nor so profound as I should like them to be. But still—human nature is the most interesting thing in the world,—a thing which above all, as the Scriptures say, the—— other races desire to look into."

"It is flattering to the Scriptures to be quoted by you—if a little unexpected and old-fashioned," some one said.

"Ah, you think so? I am old-fashioned. I have heard even from some of your clever people that I do not exist," said the Prince, with a smile.

There was a little chorus of half-laughter. "Berkeley, you mean," with little liftings of the eyebrows, however, between some of the hearers and a murmur of "Old-fashioned indeed!"

The Prince replied to this murmur as if it had been the voice of the company in general, distinguishing the whisperer, who had been only heard in the shape of an inarticulate murmur by the rest. "Very old-fashioned, as I told you, keeping many primary ideas; and I have always found very great interest in the human race. To us who are bound by other rules, the mere existence of this delightful vagrant in the universe—a creature always choosing, always changing, acting according to a will which is not the same for two days together—is the miracle of miracles: a being so strange! that can lift up its reasonings, its little round of fantastic argument, against the Lord of heaven and earth; that can defy Him, and yet is not consumed; whose laws of living are so unlike everything else; with whom nothing is settled, nothing certain; the plaything, not of chance, as you say, or of fate, as your predecessors said, but of something far more fantastic and wayward still, his own will. Sometimes I have noticed that a woman, that a child, as being a still more marked embodiment of the law of your being, is an object of the same tender amused observation to you as the universe in general gives to your race."

The circle gathered closer around the Prince, with looks, some of aroused curiosity, others of offended surprise. "Our race—which I suppose, whatever difference there may be in nationality, is yours also. You philosophers of the East take much upon you, but scarcely to be above humanity," one speaker said.

"The Prince is from Thibet. I knew it," said another, with a laugh.

But the attitude of Lord Hillesborough was the most curious of all. He stood with an expression of the deepest anxiety, and also of an almost agonised entreaty, upon

his face, addressing that speechlessly with look and gesture to his friend. The Prince gave him a smile, waving his hand as if gently putting the remonstrance away. He made no reply to the comments of the other spectators.

"Your schemes," he said, "are good: there is much in them of that divine charity which some of you acknowledge (as if you were paying a compliment to your God) and some of you do not. You will do something by them, all of you, in proportion to the heart you put into them: yet you will never do anything. For why? It is impossible that you should ever succeed."

"And why should we not ever succeed?" asked one. The circle laughed: it was angry,—there was quite a tumult of feeling round the speaker.

"Because you have to do with a race which learns nothing, which makes no progress, which begins again afresh in every generation——"

His voice was lost in a chorus of laughter and exclamations. "This is too much, in the very age and birthday of the Science of Evolution. We allow all that the Mystic can demand as a matter of argument; but no progress?—— Prince, this is too much!"

"You did not think, I suppose, that I spoke of your machinery?—the great paraphernalia of life-convenience that you build about yourselves. That does not make you true or pure, or to walk humbly with your God. What is it this earth of yours wants to make it happy and free of those evils you contend with?"

"Ah, tell us that!" some one cried.

"I will tell you that; it is simple. It is like what you say to a child: it is to be good. It is that it should get once more into harmony with the will of God. It is that it should eschew evil, learn to do well. It is that it should become natural to be pure, to be temperate, to be true. It is that no man should hurt his neighbour, or tempt his neighbour, or vex his neighbour any more; that there should be no excess, no breach of the rules of nature, no rebellion against the institutions of God——"

"Ah that, *par exemple!* long sermons and daily prayers and so forth!"

The Prince took no notice. He went on with his calm voice, as of one who knew no argument, who stated only the most evident unassailable fact—"Whereas," he said, "every human dwelling is full of rebellion and refusal. It is the first thing in the outset of a child upon life. That which is ordained is resisted; the principle of all things is to contradict. It seemed to us others a wonderful possession to have this will, this power of choice—a virtue which none of us could reach who were bound by other laws—the very flower of being: not to follow our Father's guidance only by necessity of nature, but to do it by choice, selecting His noble will by the glory of its own manifestation as the best, the only way. Who to be so much envied, so much thought of, as Men? Even afterwards there was still a charm. It is more wonderful than any evolution—I take your word," he said, looking round him with a smile—"to see a creature of God, standing, choosing, amid all the powers of heaven and earth—everything in love and subordination save he—he alone, by his nature free to do what he will. Think of it! We did so and sang for joy. The triumph and the height of all seemed to us to be so made that you could choose. Those who choose not but obey,—who know not hatred nor falsehood nor dis-

turbance, but only the law of love, —applauded, acclaimed to the farthest depths of the infinite. To us, I tell you, it is a charm still to see every new man come into the world, to see him hesitate which turn he will take, to see everything placed before him and his own soul confirm the lesson, and experience point out and conscience protest. Ah, you know that process, every one of you. It is another evolution than your science dreams of. The father has learned the lesson, but that does not teach the son. Over and over, over and over, your own children show it forth before you. To each new generation the world begins over again: each new man makes his choice like the first man—untaught by what has gone before him, undaunted by the misery of the past."

The group which had gathered round the Prince was silent. Some of them looked at each other askance, as if saying he has heard of So-and-so or So-and-so: for there were those there who had learned that lesson bitterly in the ruin of their children or their friends. Those who felt in themselves that this stranger was perhaps playing upon the secrets of their lives, confronted him with a pale defiance not to betray their consciousness of that truth; but all were still overawed by his bearing, and the wonder of his attitude, and what he said.

His face suddenly melted as he looked round after that address. A tender smile came upon it. His eyes grew luminous and soft as if with tears. He broke forth in a voice that was slightly broken with a sound of half weeping and half laughter. "But all by accident!" he said. "The new man pauses; he thinks; he chooses in his heart: it is solemn to him as the movement of the spheres—when, lo! a little breeze rises; a little cloud floats over him: a bird sings: a comrade calls: and he turns—into the other way. Not with intention—he has no mind to go wrong: it is only for once —for a moment—and all will be well again. And as it begins so it goes on. His life, that was to be so lofty and so great, becomes an accident—the accident of accidents. He does not know when he wakes in the morning how far he may have gone ere night. He goes out heedless and smiling, and meets Ruin round the first corner. He makes a thousand plans, and then foils them all in a moment by the lifting of his hand. He cannot tell from hour to hour where his steps are to carry him. He remembers, and ponders, and knows —— yet next time does the same. We who look on are moved by I cannot tell you what wonder, what interest, what pity! We would shout aloud to warn him, but our voices are not as his: and who can warn him who knows all that we could tell him, and the penalties, better than we — yet makes no difference? The wisest cannot tell what he will do next—where his steps may stray. We watch him as you might watch a child upon the edge of a precipice. He totters; he stumbles; he turns aside; the butterfly leads him now to the edge of destruction, now away laughing to the flowery fields: then, while you rejoice, back again like the flight of a bird — over, into the darkness! Ah!" cried the stranger, with a voice that burst forth like a great organ, "that last alone is what appals you. You think then that all is over—whereas it is the great escape."

He paused a little, nobody saying a word, then resumed in a calmer tone: "How are you to set right this round of accident? You cannot make any man begin where his father left off, or profit by his

experience. But I have learned one great thing by coming here, and it has been a consolation to me unspeakable, almost making up for everything. It is that he very rarely means any harm when he begins. What he intends is to do well. Take this to your heart, you that are truly troubled. Very, very rarely do they mean any harm. There is one here who meant to be a noble man like those he belonged to—but one heedless step after another has brought him face to face with despair. Ah!" said the Prince, with a little start of pleasure, looking round him, "this law works also in things which are not evil but good. I see another who went forth one day like a child to her play, and met—another who is to be her companion through earth and heaven. They did not plot it or plan. An hour before they had never heard each other's names. An hour after and the link that is never to be broken was welded between them. They met — by accident. Can I tell you how this was done? Not I: nor can they. Love is: it is not known how it comes; it is an accident like all the rest." Here he turned towards his host and called him by that name which no one understood, or could ever catch distinctly. "Brother," he said, with a tone of mild authority, "you will look to these two, for they are yours. See to it." He paused again, then turned to the little anxious crowd which was full of eager curiosity. "The strange thing is," he said, "that this free soul, this being all will and independence, has never yet, amid all his vagaries, chosen fully and always to be good. This was what we looked for, hoped for, fully expected—that out of so many there would be one here and there who in the fulness of his will would choose. There was One as you all know; but He was the only one in heaven or the universe who could do whatever He would, whose existence was His own to use as He pleased. There might have been some among us who would gladly have tried, but each of us belongs to his own sphere, and has his own duty to render; and who could tell that with man's will we might not have failed as he does. There was but One bound by no law; and He, you know, has done it. He took your nature and your will, and exposed Himself to all your accidents, and chose the perfect life, and fulfilled it. You all know. And in the face of the Son the Father sees you all. Nay, a greater wonder still than that, if greater wonder can be. When I look at you," the Prince said, touching lightly his bosom, bowing slightly his head, "it goes to my heart. You are a little like Him! a little—a little! for He is a man in the fulness of your manhood. You remind us all, like little brothers, like far-off relations, always of Him. Think whether those, whose image our Lord wears, are dear to us or not! There is something in all of you—a look, a movement. You wear His features, and flout Him as if He had never been. The wonder of it! But you are a little like Him all the same—all of you, even in what you call the slums. I, who have been there, have been caught by a glance—just a movement of the eyes, perhaps, a lifting of a hand, something, I cannot tell what, that reminded me of my Lord!"

He paused with a long breath of emotion, and there came from the bosom of that little crowd, all gathered round him, a sigh, which was unspeakable, which meant they knew not what,—a strange thrill, an indescribable feeling. The Stranger made a slight move-

ment, as if shaking off an impression too deep for the moment. And then he resumed—

"In the meantime, it is very good, very good that you should help your brothers, as that they should help you; and good will come—accidentally, as all your actions are swayed. But you will make no fundamental change. If by giving bread and coals, and education and comfort, you could make them good!—but that is the only thing: and as for these thousands of years they have not chosen it, it is not likely they will to-day. And no one can force them to be good. God may not. His pledge is against it. They are to be free: it is the law of their being, as it is ours to obey. The consolation is that though all do evil, scarcely one—I have never seen one—meant to do it from the beginning; perhaps not one!—they are swept along by accident after accident. And thus your earth sways undestroyed in the great space and breath of God, which is common to us all. And the years go on towards their accomplishment. And your countenance, the face of man, shines over us in heaven."

"What is all this talk," said one of the spectators, impatient, who had long been trying to get utterance, "of us and you?—as if you had some superiority over our race, or were not subject to all our penalties. You speak well, Prince, and your traditions may be so different from ours as to give you this feeling. Still I suppose you are a man like the rest of us. I like that you said about no one meaning harm, and about each starting afresh—I have myself felt that. But——"

The speaker paused confused. He uttered a strange sound as of wonder, remonstrance, bewilderment. Some one said after that there had been a noise in the other part of the room, and that everybody had looked round. I don't know what explanation of the incident there might be in that, or indeed if it really was so at all. But this is certain, that the gentleman who had begun to reply to the Stranger suddenly paused, making that wonderful sound in his throat. And it immediately became apparent to everybody around that the foreign Prince, Lord Hillesborough's guest and friend, was no longer there. It happened in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Even had the attention of the other guests been called momentarily away, there was no second door by which he could have left the room, and nobody saw him leave the room. But he was not there. He had been the centre of the group, closely surrounded, and that living circle had not opened that anybody was aware of to let him go forth. But he was not there. There was, as was natural, a great outcry and hubbub. Some of the women fell a-crying; the man who had been speaking stood with his lips apart, as if still in his consciousness giving forth that strange muffled cry. One man cried in mockery, "I told you he was a Mahatma from Thibet!" But perhaps the strangest thing of all was the aspect of old Lord Hillesborough, who was perceived to be standing quite outside the group, with his hands clasped, and the most wonderful expression of tenderness and trouble in his face. Whoever was surprised it was very evident he was not surprised, which to some seemed the most curious of all.

Arthur, the young heir of the house, rushed out of the room as if with the intention of following and finding the visitor who had disappeared. He returned in a few minutes with Jerningham in a state

of great excitement, sobbing, with gasps of utterance, and holding an open paper in his hand, "Which I don't deserve it, my lord, I don't deserve it!" he cried. "I've done perhaps no worse than others would have done in my place, and I didn't mean no harm: if he didn't use 'em himself it seemed—it seemed a kind of a pity not to use 'em: and here he says I'm to have all—but I don't deserve it, my lord."

Half-a-dozen people precipitated themselves upon the paper in Jerningham's hand, hoping to discover some mystery: but it was no more than a few simple words, requesting that Jerningham should have all that was in his hands. "He will do better another time," the paper bore, and it was signed by a curious cipher in a language to which no one there had any clue. Jerningham interposed, with convulsive exclamations. "He have put the big diamond into his 'at again," he said; "I thought as something must be up. He didn't leave that — no, my lord, oh no! nor I wouldn't have touched it if he had, seeing how once it took and grabbed me—me that was doing no harm: oh Lord! no, that's not true. But oh, gentlemen, he's took it, and he's gone—and the best of masters, and I'll never see his like again——"

The commotion that ensued in the house, and the way in which many of the gentlemen present endeavoured to trace the mysterious visitor, walking all over the park, going to all the railway stations, and making a hundred inquiries, need scarcely be told. Some of them thought they had accounted for his disappearance more or less satisfactorily. As for Lord Hillesborough, who made no inquiries, he was fully satisfied a few days after by the arrival of a letter from the north of Scotland, written in the scratchy and tremulous handwriting of a woman, and one that did not appear to be an educated woman or belonging to his own class. It ran as follows:—

"DEAR SIR AND BROTHER,—One that you will know of has just come in bye to me, and bid me to write and tell you his visit was over, but stepped out of his road to give me a word, as a poor person that has had great privileges and been admitted to things she does not attempt to understand. Dear sir, he bids you to know that he is well satisfied, and glad that he was permitted to come, and has now gone to his own place, the which you will understand better than me: and that if you will take his advice about things you are acquainted with, he is free to say it will be well. He sends you his greetings but no farewell, seeing that he awaits your arrival soon, and also that of me, an unworthy sister, scarce daring to put down, though he gives me the permission, dear sir and brother, my new name, ——"

What followed was in the same cipher as that of the Prince. The old earl had seen it before, but did not know who was the bearer on earth of that name.

He took the advice of his mysterious counsellor, and abounded more than ever, if that were possible, in good deeds and kindness to all. And one day he was found smiling in his chair, where he had sat in a great peace all the night, having departed many hours before any one knew. The last thing he had done was to trace on the paper before him a word in the same cipher as the above, which no doubt was also his name there whither he had gone.

And the Prince, so far as I am aware, has not been seen or heard of more.