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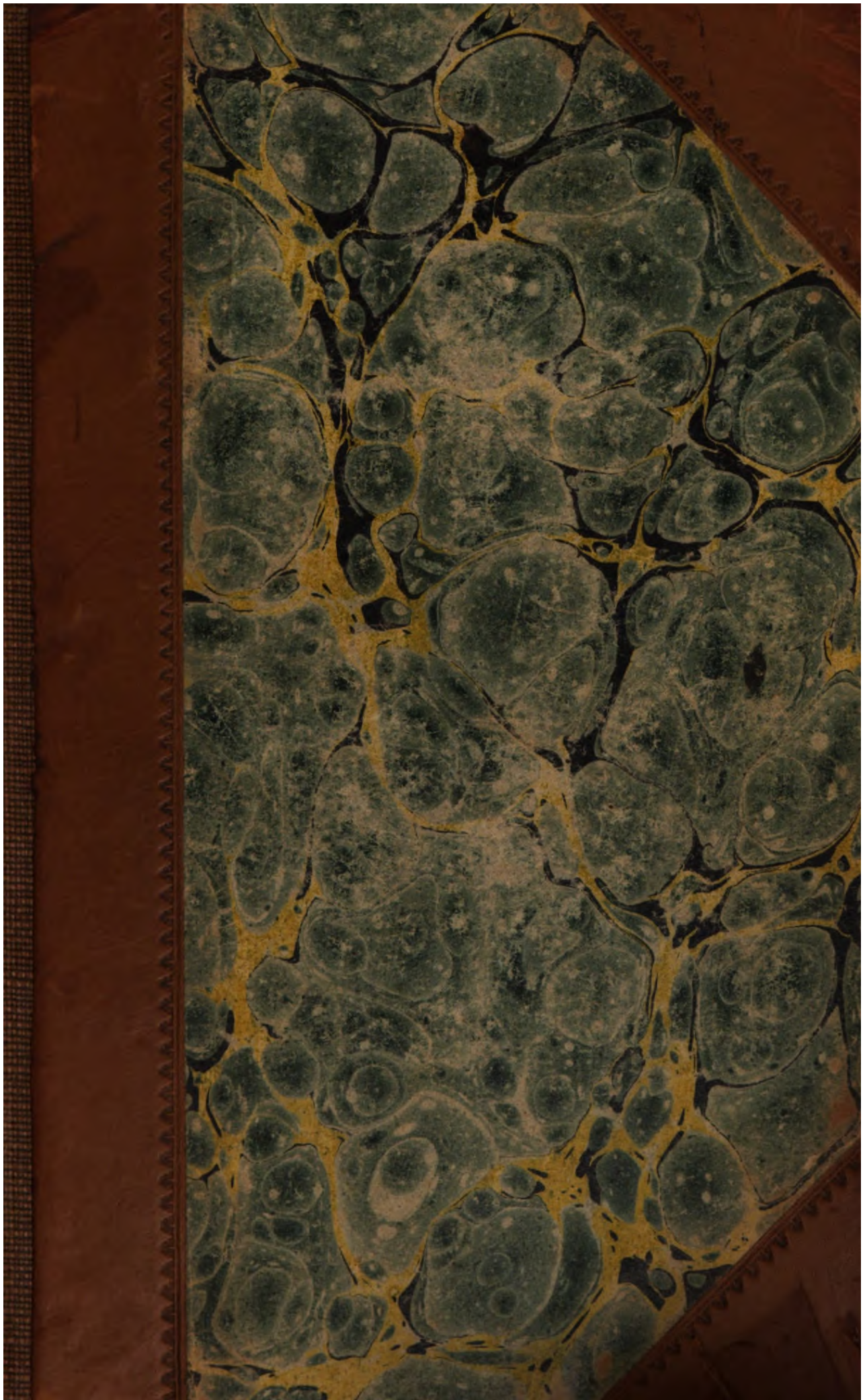
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10-10-1917

THE RADICAL:

AN

Autobiography.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE MEMBER,” “THE AYRSHIRE LEGATEES,”

ETC. ETC.

“A foe to tyrants, and my country's friend.”

LONDON:

JAMES FRASER, 215, REGENT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXII.

88.



LONDON:

J. MOYES, CASTLE STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
BARON BROUGHAM AND VAUX,

LATE LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND.

To you, my Lord, "the head and front" of our party, I inscribe these sketches.

No individual has, with equal vehemence, done so much to rescue first principles from prejudice, or to release property from that obsolete stability into which it has long been the object of society to constrain its natural freedom.

To you belongs the singular glory of having had the courage to state, even in the British Parliament, "that there are things which cannot be holden in property;" thus asserting the supremacy of Nature over

Law, and also the right of man to determine for himself the extent of his social privileges. What dogma of greater importance to liberty had been before promulgated? What opinion, more intrepidly declared, has so well deserved the applause and admiration of

NATHAN BUTT!

9th May, 1832.

THE RADICAL.

CHAPTER I.

THE darkest hour is ever before the dawn. This the disappointed and the unfortunate should bear in mind, and cherish their hearts, in despondency, with the consideration, that if a man can afford to wait, he never fails in the end to obtain much of the object of his wishes. These reflections come with encouragement; for now, thank Heaven, our long-deferred hopes are about to be realised,—let no one despair when his fortunes seem most disastrous! Who, in this long-afflicted nation, could have indulged in the glorious anticipations that now brighten in our prospect? What man, who has tasted the bitter of Tory exultation, and been forced

to stoop to that abasement which, like iron, entered every Whig soul, when the arrogant official faction, in its high and palmy state, trampled on our sacred rights? But our pearls are about to be rescued from the hooves of the trampers. The day begins to dawn, in which all honest men, with emancipated communities, will, in the free natural exercise of their faculties, vindicate the perfectable greatness of the human character, and lift it above those circumstances of oppression, privation, and servitude, which it has from the beginning endured.

But enough of this; I must repress the enthusiasm with which my feelings are excited by that which is at this moment the theme of all tongues, all heads, and all hearts. I allude not to the Cholera, but to the Reform Bill. I speak not of laudanum, or rhubarb and brandy, or of any drug that has been found efficacious in the pestilence; but of that alone which the contemptuous Tories have denominated the "Russell purge."

To return, however, to the subject of these pages—the history of my own life:—I am

sure that I cannot adopt any better course to secure to me the sympathy of the reader, and his participation in my joy, than by simply relating my experience during that bondage and servility from which we are all on the point of being relieved. In my sufferings I have had many companions; and a naked recital of what we have undergone together, is sufficient to demonstrate the iniquity of that frame of society now ordained to be destroyed. Happy posterity! in vain shall ye, with all the invention of your future genius, attempt to conceive the calamities of that condition from which we, your ancestors, now intend to save you. It is reserved for you and yours to employ, with proper truth and effect, that precious expression, which the Tories of these days have so perversely used — “the wisdom of our ancestors!”

I shall not waste my reader's time with a particular account of my pedigree. Things of that sort, like other ancient errors, are fast becoming obsolete. A plain narrative of facts is all that my purpose requires; and

these I shall record with a manly and undaunted pen.

My father was an attorney. In his mind the rubbish of ancient law was often inconveniently manifest: he had strange unwholesome notions of the reverence in which the decisions of tribunals should be held; and it was his intention that I should be adulterated, in the very purity of youth, with similar respect for the same dogmas, and with the conclusions of understandings trammelled by precedents; but Fate willed it otherwise. There was, indeed, an elastic principle of resistance within me even from my childhood; and I have never ceased, supported by it, to regard political shackles with unabashed antipathy. My spirit was nerved with irrepressible energy against every symptom of pretension, no matter in how dear or venerable a form it menaced me.

Well do I recollect, that while yet a mere baby, playing on the hearth-rug with a kitten, which in its gambols scratched my hands, how I seized it by the throat, and how my grandmother, then sitting by,

took me up in the most tyrannical manner, and, before I would forego my grasp, shook me; but it was not with impunity. The spirit of independence I have ever largely shared, and it was roused by her injustice. One of her fingers, to the day of her death, bore witness to the indignation with which my four earliest teeth avenged her intervention in behalf of the feline aggressor.

It would, however, be a tedious and vain task to recount the manifold instances in which my childhood was molested by misrule, the lot of all, under the old system. Reciprocal oppression was the very spirit of that system; and it is no exaggeration to say, that the whole human race now in existence can verify this fact. But I allude only to the anecdote of the cat, to shew my precocious sentiment of the divine right of resistance. The circumstance, indeed, proves with what a lively discernment I was in that innocent period awakened to the sense of wrong, and the instinctive alacrity with which I resented the violence of the old woman, who, with-

out discrimination, took the adversary's part ; but she has gone to her audit, if audit there be, and I shall say no more : I have only brought it in here as my earliest recollection of my antipathy to injustice.

I might multiply domestic injuries of the same kind, of which I was the victim, especially as my mother was a person who never allowed any of her children to evince the slightest independence ; on the contrary, she often irresponsibly ruled them with a rod of iron. Perhaps, however, her discipline was inseparable from her situation, for it must be conceded, that her offspring were not always of the most pliant and submissive humour : my brothers and sisters were brats of the most wilful kind, and were ever endeavouring to make a slave of me ; but with a firmness of fortitude singular for my age, I resisted all their attempts to domineer. I shall not, therefore, animadvert with any particular rancour on the memory of " all the ills I bore " during that juvenile persecution wherein I was the martyr.

The courteous reader, after this, will not

object to follow me to school. On that calamitous arena it is impossible to describe what I suffered. Lenient were the lions that the Roman gladiators had to encounter in the amphitheatre, compared to the wild bipeds that I was compelled to fight with in the play-ground. O Nero and Caligula! and thou sullen Tiberius! were ye not amiable compared to the autocrats of the birchen sceptre, under whose jurisdiction I sustained the thralldom of so many grievous years? But example is better than precept; and it belongs to the nature of this undertaking that I should describe one or two of those instances of despotism, which, in their effect, have been more durable on my mind than all the lessons I then learnt. The recollection of them, it is true, no longer excites that flush and throbbing of the spirit which I felt at their advent; but as the boy is father to the man, I cannot entirely forget that such things were. My schoolmaster was, what every boy well knows, of course a perfect brute, and it is needless to say more about him; universal sympathy

awakens at the justness of the epithet. Listen, kind reader, and I will give you a taste, by example, of that peremptory pedagogue.

CHAPTER II.

IT has from time immemorial been the artful aim of all education to obscure the sense of natural right. To education, therefore, I am inclined, with Mr. Owen, to ascribe all the vice and distress which deform our human condition. The antipathy, indeed, which we are taught to foster in ourselves against those ebullitions of feelings misnamed crimes, is purely conventional. The opulent and aristocratical, who have usurped the possession of property, and who by a strange fraud have wrested the privilege of legislation from the general human race, have found this essential to their interests; and, accordingly, the indulgence of even the most ordinary feelings is branded in their vocabularies with epithets of iniquity.

I had not been a twelvemonth at school when I made this discovery; the conse-

quences were striking ; but I must describe the story as it came to pass.

There was at that time a boy of the name of Billy Pert at our school : he was my chum and fag, and, allowing for the subordination arising from the latter circumstance, he was also my comrade and friend. It happened one day that Billy and I strolled towards the village by a foot-path we had never before frequented ; it led to the back-gate of the Rector's garden, which we approached without very well knowing the temptation into which it led.

On reaching the gate, we beheld, over the hedge that surrounded the garden, trees loaded with blushing and inviting fruit ; our mouths watered at the sight ; and Billy observed to me, that it was a shame apples should be so beautiful and not free to all who longed to taste them. The remark was philosophical ; and having heard somehow that church lands were national property, I ingeniously observed, which was to him delicious, that whatever, therefore, grew on such lands was public property : we ac-

cordingly, after a little reciprocal comparison of ideas, agreed between ourselves, that we, being of the nation, could commit no moral offence in helping ourselves to those beautiful apples. With the intent to do so, but still having a dread before our eyes of the prejudices of society, we looked cautiously for an aperture in the hedge. Our search was successful; but we observed that a window of the house stared upon the gap; and we resolved, in consequence, to postpone the gratification of our wishes till night, when the moon, who was then in her first quarter, would assist us.

After having reconnoitered the environs, we returned to the school, and there arranged with several other boys who slept in the same dormitory, on the mode by which we should be most likely to accomplish our desire. We went earlier than usual to bed, but we did not undress; on the contrary, with the assistance of one of our sheets, we lowered ourselves down from the window, and with silent footsteps ran to pluck the forbidden fruit.

On our arrival at the breach in the hedge, we stood, however, appalled ; a candle was in the window, and the Rector behind was shaving himself, as it was Saturday night, and he deemed that task unbecoming the solemnity of the Sabbath morn. But our wits readily supplied an expedient to overcome the difficulty ; one of the boys suggesting that he and two others should go round to the front of the Rectory, and there shout and with a great noise alarm the inmates ; assured that Dr. Drowser, as the rector was called, would hasten to the scene of turbulence ; while Bill Pert with two others and I should ravage the garden.

This stratagem was speedily carried into effect : Bill and another boy scrambled through the hedge, mounted the tree, and threw us lots of apples, till we deemed that we had acquired enough ; but in descending from amidst the boughs, Bill's foot slipped, and he fell to the ground, sprained his ankle, and was with the greatest difficulty hauled through the hole in the hedge. As he was excellent at whistling, it had

been agreed that he was to give the signal to recall the confederates from the front of the house ; but, alas, the best-concerted schemes are often frustrated ! The pain of his ankle rendered him unable to give his lips the needful expression, and I was obliged to go round and call the others off from their part in the enterprise.

It might have been supposed that in the performance of this duty no particular risk was likely to be incurred ; but Fate was inauspicious and ruined all ; for not receiving from our companions a reply to my first shout, I cried aloud, “ Jem Stealth, come home ! ”

The Reverend Doctor was by this time looking out at one of the windows, and immediately recognising my voice, called out, with exultation, “ ’Tis Mr. Skelper’s mischiefs.” The whole party heard this, and scampered home as fast as possible, leaving poor lame Billy Pert and the apples behind them.

Billy, on finding himself deserted, bel-
lowed as loud as possible to the Rectory,

and presently the whole family, with Doctor Drowser himself in his dressing-gown and night-cap, and a candle in his hand, issued forth, and laid hold of the culprit, as they denounced that unfortunate child of nature.

I shall not bestow my tediousness on the reader with what happened that night; but on the Monday morning—(Sabbath passed innocently)—when Mr. Skelper came into the school-room, there was silence, and solemnity, and dread. All those who were engaged in the assertion of genuine principle sat conning their lesson with down-cast eyes and exemplary assiduity,—serious were their faces, and timid were their eyes; my heart rattled in my breast like a die in a dice-box : the other boys were under the malignant influence that was characteristic of the then state of the world—their laughter, though stifled and sinister, was provoking; and for the side-long looks which they now and then glanced at us, their malicious eyes ought to have been quenched.

The master advanced with sounding foot-

steps to his desk ; his countenance was eclipsed :—never shall I forget his frown.

Having said prayers with particular emphasis, he then stepped forward, and summoned all who had been engaged in the nocturnal exploit, by name. With trembling knees we obeyed ; and I chanced to be the first whom he addressed.

“Nathan Butt,” said he, with a hoarse austere voice, (for he was a corpulent man) “Nathan Butt, what have you been engaged in ?”

This was a puzzler ; but I replied, “that I had just been reading my lesson.”

“You varlet !” cried he ; “don’t tell me of lessons : what lessons could you learn in robbing Dr. Drowser’s garden ?”

“I could not help it, sir,” was my diffident answer ; “we were tempted, and could not resist : the Doctor should not put such temptations in our way ; he is more to blame than we are ;” and waxing bolder, I at last ventured to say, “we only tried to get our share.”

Mr. Skelper was astonished, and exclaimed,

“What can the boy mean? You audacious rascal! these are the sentiments of a highwayman;” and with that he hit me over the shoulders with his cane, as if he had been a public lictor, and I a malefactor. In a word, no more questions were asked, nor the truth of our opinions attempted to be ascertained; but each and all of us were compelled, after receiving a cruel caning, to sit on a form by ourselves, ruminating indignantly on our wrongs, a spectacle to the whole school. The sequel is still more illustrative of the bold character of my companions, and the free and noble principles which from that day have continued to animate my abhorrence of coercive expedients in the management of mankind.

CHAPTER III.

SITUATION develops character; and the little adventure which I have just described illustrates this truth. School-boys before, and school-boys hereafter, have been, and may be, subjected to punishment for stealing apples; but few, I suspect, were ever animated in such an exploit by motives so exalted as mine. It was not the sordid feelings of the covetous thief that drew me into that enterprise; but an innate perception of natural right; and the consequence has been indelible: it rivetted my young determination to reform a system of society which took so little cognisance of the extent of temptation. The tale itself has often served, by its incidents, to brighten the social hour; but the effects have ever been like molten sulphur in my indignant "heart of hearts."

For days and nights after that morn of

retribution, I burned with resentment : my meals were unrelished ; my tasks, which were never pleasant, became odious ; one time I thought of flying from the school—of playing the Roman fool ; I roamed about the common, moody and vindictive ; and when the fit was strong upon me, I could have put the master to death ; but I was afraid of what the eloquent and energetic Caleb Williams calls “ the gore-dropping fangs of the law.”

From the greatest depths of despair the elastic spirit often rebounds ; and accordingly, from that ultimate abasement of purpose to which it is the nature of revenge to sink us, my spirit recoiled—I became animated with the noblest impulses : instead of subjecting Mr. Skelper to penalties, I resolved to rouse the school to a glorious Reformation. It is impossible to describe the rapture with which the conception entered into my mind. The ecstasy of Jean Jacques Rousseau, when he imagined his essay against the Arts and Sciences, was flat and stale compared with mine, which descended upon me with the

enthusiasm of a passion ; and I saw that the vindication of the privileges of my young companions opened a career illustrious and sublime.

No sooner had the animating idea revealed to me its beauty, than with youthful ardour I obeyed the impulse. Sagacity taught me that my companions and partners in suffering were already prepared by Destiny to listen to my suggestions with glad ears ; and it was so ; for when I took occasion to speak my purpose, they declared their willingness

“ To share the triumph, and partake the gale.”

It was on the Sunday week from the day of our punishment that I first broke my mind. The scene was in the churchyard, after sermon ; the bumpkin crowd had dispersed : around us were the tombs of the dead ! Had we been companions of Catiline, meditating the overthrow of Rome, we could not have been more grim at first in our determinations of revenge ; but as we proceeded to plan the operations, our awe of failure gradually diminished, insomuch that

in the end we relished in anticipation the result of the undertaking, and revelled in the assurance of success:—a clear proof, as it has ever since seemed to me, that man has not that innate and gloomy abhorrence of those bold risks by which liberty must be conquered from the few who have an interest in maintaining general servitude and poverty.

Our first resolution was vengeance on Mr. Skelper; and our next was a unanimous determination to quit the school in a body, with three triumphant cheers, at the consummation of our success. Some of the boys, with a true republican spirit, proposed to tar-and-feather the despot; but my humanity revolted at the idea, and I endeavoured to assuage their animosity by an exhortation to a philanthropical suggestion: others thought that he should be seized in his easy chair, and carried out of his study, at the dead of night, and plunged into a gravel-pit that was near the house and full of water. But these extremities were congenial only to the few; and, after a long discussion, it was agreed, over a new grave, with a mutual shaking of

hands, that on the next Saturday night every edible and drinkable in the house should be taken away from larder, closet, and cellar, by the avengers; and that when all was fairly removed out of the house, the boys should assemble in front and give three brave farewell huzzas.

Alas! in this contrivance we counted not on the weather. The fatal night came on as wet as it could pour, and our preparations were so far advanced that discovery was inevitable; my good genius, however, pointed out a way of rendering this disaster subservient to our gratification.

As was the case in rainy weather, we had that night the use of the school-room. There, mounted on a form, I harangued my compeers on the exigency. They received my oration with shouts of applause. I pointed out to them that it would be a confession of cowardice to be baffled by Fate, and on such a night it could not fail to be otherwise, if we attempted our original purpose; "but," said I, dilating as I spoke, "we are in this but urged to a greater undertaking: forth

we cannot go in such a night; it would drench us to the skin, and frustrate our ingenuity: let us, therefore, invoke the spirits of justice and the demon of revenge; let us use the cords of our beds, not to hang him, but to tie the arms of the tyrant and the myrmidons of his household; and when we have done so, let us put candles in every candlestick and empty bottle in the house, and fill his devoted mansion with illumination; then let us place ourselves round the table, before his eyes, and riot upon every savoury article beneath his roof; when we are satisfied, let us drink his health, and place regular watches over him for the night: in the morning, as it cannot rain always, we shall be ready to depart at an early hour."

With exultation this suggestion was adopted. A party was sent to the dormitories to uncord the beds; and when the nightly bell was tolled as a signal for us all to go to sleep, we gave a roof-rending huzza, and each well-appointed phalanx proceeded in the execution of their several hests.

I led that band by which our dreadful retribution on the master was to be executed. He submitted to our cords without uttering a word ; but on one occasion he gave me a look that withered my heart. By this time the outcries of the maids were shrill and piercing, mingled with horrible giggling and screams. Old Mrs. Dawson the housekeeper, who had retired, before the bell rang, to her own chamber, hearing the uproar, came to the banisters of the stair, and inquired with alarm what was the matter ; we, however, respected her sex : she was a good-natured body, and a favourite with all the boys ; in consequence she was only ordered into her own room.

The revolution was now irresistible ; but in the midst of the fury, a cry from Mrs. Dawson's window, wild as that of fire, was heard, and presently a knocking thundered at the door. From what hand that knocking came, none stayed to question ; but all, with a simultaneous rush, fled by the back door, despite the rain, and sought refuge in the Goose and Goslings Inn at the village. The

arrival of so many juvenile guests terrified the landlord. The news of the insurrection spread like wildfire; the whole town was presently afoot; and before we could rally our scattered senses, we were led captive by beadles and constables back to our fetters.

But mark with what singular emphasis Destiny spoke her will to me: all the other boys were received back, and on the spot decimated for punishment on Monday morning, all save me; me Mr. Skelper would not again receive: he called me the ringleader, a boy of incurable audacity, and ignominiously inflicting his toe on a tender part, bade the constable take me out of his sight.

A transaction of this kind needs no comment. I saw the full iniquity of that system in which such irresponsible power was allowed to be exercised. No prayers I said that night; but I made a solemn vow, that the overthrow of that organisation of things in which man durst so treat his fellow-man, even though he were a child, ought to be the intrepid business of my life.

In the morning I was sent home by the

stage-coach, the guard of which was the bearer of a libellous letter to my father. What ensued on my arrival, when the old gentleman read the nefarious epistle, cannot be told ; but it gave me both black and blue reasons to resent the ruthlessness of that false position in which children and parents stand, with respect to each other. Who ever heard that, in a state of nature, where all is beneficent and beautiful, the cruel hyæna, which so well deserves the epithet, inflicts coercive manipulations on her young ?

CHAPTER IV.

FOR several days after my return home, my situation might have drawn sympathy from statues. My father never spoke; my mother looked at me in silence and shook her head: I was as a tainted thing; and my meals, with a refinement of cruelty, were made solitary, in another room from the family parlour. The impression of such iron-hearted conduct, to a generous high-minded lad of fifteen, may be guessed, but cannot be described. My heart swelled with grudging; and I could see no remedy for my deplorable condition, but only supplications for pardon. To this meanness, however, I strengthened myself with the sternest resolutions never to stoop; and, in the end, my tenacity of purpose was rewarded as virtue ought always to be.

My mother, on the third or fourth day,

began to relent. The first symptom of the thaw was evinced by her presenting me with a pear, and saying that she hoped I had received a lesson that would serve me for life. My father, however, remained still inexorable; and his first speech, on the morning of the fifth day, was appalling. "Nathan Butt," said he, "you have been from your infancy a turbulent child, ordained to break the heart of your parents, and send their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. The offence that you have been guilty of to Mr. Skelper can never be forgiven; it is a blot upon your character which can never be effaced; but you were not sent into the world to sulk in idleness all the days of your life; I have therefore resolved that you shall go to another school, where you may learn something, and redeem, by endeavour, the past. To-morrow morning you shall come with me by the stage-coach to Witherington school: you may have heard that the Rev. Dr. Gnarl, who keeps it, is a very different person from the lenient Mr. Skelper. He is a man that will make you stand

in awe of him; the audacity of such a thought as tying him in his chair, you will find dare not there enter your head. I say no more; but be ready when the coach passes at daylight to-morrow, to come with me."

There was something cool and steady in the severity of this speech that I did not much like, and destiny presented to me no alternative but only to submit; accordingly, in the course of the day, I began my preparations; and in the evening, much to my surprise—for I had been all these dismal days a stepson in the family—my mother invited me to sup with the rest; and I observed that the supper on this occasion was distinguished with a spacious florentine, which I lacked not the discernment to perceive had been consecrated for the celebration of my departure; but, with the same fortitude and forbearance that have ever distinguished me in life, I resolved not to taste it, enticing and savoury-smelling as it was. In this masculine resolution I persevered, my father and mother exchanging rueful looks.

Without taking any part in the conversation, I retired early to bed, though not sleepy; and as I lay tossing in the dark, I heard my mother come stepping softly into the room, and take a seat at my pillow, where she had not sat long till she began to sigh and sob. The room was dark, and I could not see; but I have no doubt she was indulging in a fit of tears; for she had not the spirit of a Volumnia, though her son had so much in him of Coriolanus.

When she had given way for some time to her sensibility, she inquired if I was sleeping. My innate respect for truth would not suffer me to disguise the fact, though I had an apprehension of what would follow.

On receiving my answer, she began to exhort me to change my behaviour, adding a great deal of motherly weakness and affection, more than I could endure, insomuch that, while she was speaking in the most earnest manner, I found it expedient to give a great snore, and pretend that I had fallen fast asleep. At this she rose with a heart-

felt sigh, and pronouncing a benediction, went away.

Early next morning I embarked with my father in the coach for Witherington, where we arrived in time for breakfast, which we took at the Black Bull Inn, and afterwards proceeded to the residence of Dr. Gnarl.

His house stood on the edge of a green common, within a white-painted railing, many palisades of which were broken, and all around wore an aspect of the ruin that is more akin to destruction than decay; indeed, though we saw none of the doctor's pupils, it was quite evident, from the appearance of the place, that it was the domicile of numerous school-boys; and so I soon found; for, instead of the thirty blithe and bounding boys that I had left at Mr. Skelper's, there were upwards of a hundred lads, of various ages, all of whom possessed a particular artificial character, the effect of the doctor's austere discipline, through which, however, as I afterwards observed, their natural tempers and buoyancy

broke out with an amiable brilliancy. They consisted chiefly of youths who had been, like me, expelled from other seminaries, but for causes of bravery which, when we became more acquainted, they were proud to relate. They were, indeed, notwithstanding their submission to the authority of the doctor, gallant and congenial companions, and had a just sense of the thralldom to which they had been consigned by their parents and guardians, in obedience to those prejudices with which society has been so long oppressed and deformed.

My introduction to Dr. Gnarl was an epochal event, never by me to be forgotten,—an era in my life. My father and I were shewn into a raw, unfrequented kind of a drawing-room, where soon after the reverend doctor came to us, and to whom my father said, at his entrance, “I have brought you Nathan Butt, my son, who I trust will, in your hands, be reclaimed from his audacious courses.”

I looked at the doctor. He was a little,

stumpy, red-faced man, with austere eyes, and as erect as it was possible to be; dressed in black, neatly I must say. His legs were thick, and his feet small, on which he wore bright and glittering shoes, fastened by little round silver buckles. He also wore a trim close wig, slightly powdered, with his spectacles up; and spoke with a lisp, which inspired me at the first hearing with no reverential sentiment.

My father having some business to transact in the borough, which returned two members to Parliament, and it was then the eve of a general election, soon after left me alone with the doctor, by whom I was immediately treated in a manner that made my blood boil. Having seen my father to the porch, he bowed; and bidding him good morning, returned into the drawing-room, where I was standing, by no means comfortable; nor was my felicity in the slightest degree increased by the manner in which he said,—

“Nathan Butt, follow me into the school-

room; and when the other boys have said their lessons, I shall see what progress you have made."

With these words he twirled on his heel, and marching with an air of consequence on before me, led the way to the school. I followed with a palpitating heart; for it was impossible to conceal from myself that his accent and appearance betokened humiliation to me.

As we approached the school, which was behind the house, I heard a dreadful clamour within, which recruited my faded energies, and I took fresh heart from the music of the din; but the moment we entered, all was silence, and my courage instantly sank, for it was a sudden and ominous tranquillity, that told, with more emphasis than words, the power with which the master ruled, and the terror with which the adolescents obeyed.

CHAPTER V.

ALTHOUGH I had now turned my fifteenth year, I was not at all aware of the state of society. The blind gropings of instinct had, indeed, instructed me of something wrong in the habits and usages of mankind; but nothing very precise could be said to have obtained my serious attention. I could see around me the hand of oppression ever visible, and I felt in my own case that power rather than justice was consulted by those who regarded my independence with jealousy. But the time was drawing nigh when the inductions of reason were to ratify the apprehensions of instinct, and the nebulae of sentiment to assume the clearness and distinct forms of rational conclusions.

I have mentioned that the ancient borough of Witherington returned two members to Parliament, and that a general election was

soon expected. In less than a month after my arrival at Dr. Gnarl's school, the dissolution of Parliament took place; and at the same time it was made known that one of the old members, a Whig, retired, and that two new candidates, a Radical and a moderate Tory, intended a contest for the vacant seat. The tidings of this struggle were received with gladness by all the school; and in the course of a few days the pupils declared themselves resolute adherents of the liberal cause. Dr. Gnarl, however, with a strange sagacity, inspired by his fears, foresaw this result; and accordingly announced that he would punish, as guilty of a gross offence, every boy who presumed to take a part in the election.

This decision was fatal to the joyful thoughts with which we were animated, especially as he declared that on the days of election the doors of the school would be shut, and no egress allowed while the poll continued open. But arbitrary absolutism has ever been defeated;—the boys held a consultation together in the play-

ground; and it was resolved to address a round-robin to the Doctor, and remonstrate with him for so interdicting us in the exercise of our undoubted rights as Britons. Some of the bigger lads advised a different course, and suggested that we should dissimulate our principles, and pretend to be of the Tory party. This, however, was scouted by those who knew the Doctor best and longest. They asserted, that, notwithstanding all his Tory predilections within the school, he was out of it an inveterate Whig, and the most pontifical of living things,—maintaining that no apparent change on our part would cajole him.

This opinion soon became universal; and the majority of the boys declaring that it would be equivalent to an abandonment of principle to disguise our feelings, the expedient of the round-robin was adopted, drawn out, and signed. It was to the following effect:—

“ Sir,—Glorying in the name of Britons, we have been astonished at your prohibition of our privileges; but we will assert our

native and immutable rights. Give us, then, freedom to attend at the hustings, or prepare yourself to endure the consequences of a refusal."

Six boys, including me, at my own request, were appointed to present to the potentate this Spartan epistle; and next morning, when the election was to begin, the ceremony of giving the round-robin was to be performed.

Never did an incident of the kind exhibit the corruption of nature in man more impressively than this ceremony. At eight o'clock in the morning the deputation went to present the remonstrative robin. Whether we had been betrayed by any sinister adherent, I know not; but the Doctor was seated in his elbow-chair, and beside him stood a gigantic horse-whip. He received us, however, coolly, with a smiling countenance; and having taken the paper in his hand, he read it aloud, carefully looking over the names. His sneers were satanic; in the most irresponsible manner he flung the paper into the fire, and suddenly

grasping his whip, he laid on the shoulders of the deputation, as if they had been each an obstinate waggon-horse. We fled before him, and sought refuge elsewhere; but his tyranny was only exasperated by our flight. One by one he called up the other boys, and treated them with as little mercy. Their cries and screams, which ascended from beneath his dreadful flagellation, for the whipping made him fiercer, filled us with sympathetic anguish and sorrow; till one of our number, called Jack Scamp, cried out, that the cowardly rascals deserved it all, for sitting silent spectators of the outrage committed on us. This led to a change of operations. We instinctively gave three huzzas; and with indefatigable zeal, and being on the outside of the school, broke every pane of glass in the windows. The lion at this came rushing forth, pale and ghastly, followed by the whole school, who immediately joined our party, and assisted to envelop the little man in a cloud and whirlwind of missiles, snatched from the ground. By what partial God he was borne

away from our vengeance, still remains undivulged ; but when the storm abated, he was no where to be seen.

Our triumph was complete. We arranged ourselves in a body on the spot, and marched in regular array to the hustings. To crown the *éclat* of our noble assertion of independence, we happened to fall in by the way with an old fiddler, who was playing to obtain charity. Him we instantly impressed and placed at our head, astonishing the assembled multitude at the hustings, who made way for our procession !

I have been the more particular in these details, because they are associated with the hallowed doctrines that Mr. Chase, the popular candidate, impressed me with on that memorable day. It was, indeed, the birthday of my soul's freedom ; for the manner in which he described the malefactions of the Whigs and Tories (he spared the delinquency of neither) was congenial to my best feelings ; and the tale he unfolded of the usurpations of their aristocracies, not only in legislation, but in property, froze the very marrow in my

bones. It seemed to me as if the world had been, from time immemorial, in backsliding confusion; and my heart burned with a vehement ardour to arrest the chaos into which it was fatally hurrying. But in that moment, the demon of the age — that genius of the oppression which so saddens the earth — was hovering at hand; and in the very flame and passion of my antipathy to the afflictions of the world, a numerous band of constables surrounded the whole of Dr. Gnarl's resolute youths, and, in the most shameful and lawless manner, compelled us to return with them to the school; where the despot, with a courage that would have done honour to a better cause, welcomed us back, hoped we had been well edified by the trash we had heard, and with undaunted sobriety ordered us apart in threes and fours to our respective rooms, where he kept us on bread and water for two days; at the end of which, to our amazement, when summoned into the school-room, we beheld our fathers and guardians assembled.

“Gentlemen,” said the Doctor to them,

when we were arranged before them—"is it your pleasure to remove these rebellious youths from under my jurisdiction? or am I free to let them feel a weight of discipline equivalent to the offence they have committed?"

The courteous reader need not be told what answer the fiend of the existing order of things taught them to give; but from that hour the law went forth; and for the next twelve months never more than three of the boys were allowed to be seen talking, or in any manner associating together, under the penalty of a severe horsing. Thus, with a harshness that would have disgraced the worst of all the Cæsars, he re-established the discipline of the school; peace was restored,—peace, did I say? Alas! can it, therefore, be wondered, that I am so animated against a system in which crimes so obnoxious to the freedom of rational beings can with impunity be committed? On that day I swore never to abate in my desire to crush a social organisation whose natural secretions evolved such suffering and guilt.

CHAPTER VI.

THE remainder of that year of bondage, worse than Egyptian bondage, which I breathed under the iron rule of Dr. Gnarl, completed my epoch of youth. At the end of it my father summoned me home; and though I carried with me the reputation of being subdued, I know that in my heart I was none altered. The true complexion and the right side of things were revealed to me, and, I need not add, with no increase of admiration for either. Some of our neighbours acknowledged that they saw a change upon me; but with that inherent predilection for detraction which belongs to morbid sentiment, they described it as something which could not be understood, and never failed to call it malignant. My stern and manly contempt of oppression, in whatsoever form it appeared, they spoke of as sullenness.

The effect of their calumnious insinuations was soon visible. Many lads of my own age and station, who had been originally my playmates, and whom I again expected to be the associates of my riper years, became prejudiced against me; and the first years that I spent in my father's office after my return, for he placed me on the lofty tripod stool, were well calculated to nourish morose determinations.

I soon discovered, by that perspicacity with which I was naturally endowed, that I could only hope to be received into fellowship by the young men whom I had expected would be my friends, by a submission, on my part, of the erectness of my principles, and a pliancy of conduct towards theirs, the bare idea of which was revolting; and accordingly, with a decision of mind, which their contumely and manifest aversion made no sacrifice, I turned from those who should have been my companions, and soon found a congenial refuge among spirits of a more generous philanthropy.

The town in which my father's house was

situated, had, a few years before, been a listless village ; but the accident of a wealthy manufacturer ascertaining that the brook which bounded the green was practicable for mills, induced him to build a large factory there, and doomed

“ Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plains,”

to the hectic prosperity of the cotton trade.

Among the spinners and weavers which this insalubrious change introduced, was an aspiring band of young men, with pale faces and benevolent principles. In their society I found an agreeable solace and compensation for my abandonment of those whose station was more on a par with my own. We held frequent nocturnal meetings, at which they always treated me with the greatest respect, and made me their president; but this honour, I felt, was, like all others, most incommodious : seldom an opportunity arose, while in the chair, to give utterance, by opinion or argument, to the inductions of my understanding ; and, in consequence, I resolved to abdicate the pre-eminence to

which that portion of the old leaven with which they were yet leavened inspired them to raise me. After this abdication, I found myself in all my energy ; a free gladiator in the arena, my strength and superiority were then displayed.

During the first winter we discussed general topics and the speculative conjectures of erudite men ; but when the rumours of what was then taking place at Paris reached our rural haunts, and the London mail brought daily news as it passed through our town, patriotism and curiosity constrained us to club together for a newspaper.

If the orations of Mr. Chase, on the hustings of Witherington, roused my latent feelings, that newspaper gave them tendency and purpose. It was soon evident to those brave philosophers—who were such indeed, though by profession but weavers and cotton-spinners—my companions, that mankind had incurred a fearful arrear in their duties to one another ; and in vain we endeavoured to discover by what right, sanctioned by the equity of nature, lords were lordly, and the

poor man doomed to drudge. That something was wrong, and destructive of natural rights, in the unequal existing division of property, could not be questioned. The speeches of the illustrious great of the French Convention, confirmed by the eloquence of some of the brightest stars in the constellation of the British senate, enlightened our understandings. It required, indeed, but little other reasoning to convince us all, that the world had been led by some pernicious undiscoverable influence in the olden time to prefer the artificial maxims of society to those natural first principles which ought ever to be paramount with man.

When we had arrived, self-taught, at this conclusion, the majority of our association held resolute language, and began to nerve themselves for enterprise. A few, however, among us, tainted with a base diffidence, listened with alarm to our distinction between the institutions which originate in the frame of the social state, and those absolute rights which man has inherited from nature, anterior to the operation of

the gregarious sympathies that have led to the organisation of society — an organisation which gives forth the grievances of the world.

Debates for some time ran high and warm : at last we became so fervent towards our respective adversaries, that a breach was inevitable. Soon after, several of those who were considered as the champions of the existing social order, married, and became church-goers. I do not insinuate, however, by this, that they recanted their former notions of the ecclesiastical usurpations ; but I thought of what Lord Bacon says about men who give hostages to society, and ceased, in consequence, to have any intercourse with them.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILST I was thus, in obedience to Destiny, developing my faculties, and fitting myself to take a part in those great purposes in which I am, to all appearance, appointed to be drawn forth, it is necessary I should here relate a personal incident that has had some influence on my subsequent career, and in the adjustment of my feelings between nature and society.

About the time of which I have been speaking, an amiable young woman and I were brought into a very awkward position by the parish officers. Perhaps, as the affair was altogether private, I ought not to have mentioned it in these pages; but as my chief object is to exhibit the perverted world as I found it, I can do no less than narrate some of the circumstances; especially as they serve to shew how widely that artificial

system, which has so long been predominant, is different from the beauty, the simplicity, and the integrity of nature.

For some weeks there had been a shy and diffident acquaintanceship between Alice Hardy and me, insomuch that, before we exchanged words, we had looked ourselves into familiarity with one another. She was not, however, in that rank of life which my father, in his subserviency to the prejudices of society, would approve of as a fit match for me; and therefore I resolved to seek no closer communion with her. Nevertheless, it came to pass, I cannot well tell how, that one day we happened to fall into speaking terms; and, from less to more, grew into a pleasant reciprocity. Nothing could be more pure and natural than our mutual regard; it was the promptings of an affection simple, darling, and congenial.

While in this crisis of enjoyment, malignant Fortune influenced the parish, and we were undone. One morning the beadle, wearing his cocked hat, big blue coat with red capes trimmed with broad gold lace,

appeared at the door of Alice's mother, and calling her forth by name, impertinently inquired respecting some alteration that he had been told was visible in her appearance. To this she gave a spirited answer; at which the intrusive old man struck the floor with his silver-headed staff in a magisterial manner, and said, with a gruff voice, which alarmed the poor girl, that if she refused to answer his question, he would have her pulled up before her betters.

This threat she related to me in the evening, when we met, as our custom was, to walk in my lord's park; and next morning I went to the saucy beadle myself, and demanded why he had presumed to molest her with his impertinence. But instead of replying as he ought to have done, he said, with a look which I shall never forget, that he was coming for me to give security that the parish should not be burthened, as he called it, with a job.

This was strange tidings; and I was so confounded, that I did not know what answer to make. I assured him, however,

that it had all come of an unaccountable accident, and should be so treated ; for that neither Alice nor I had the least idea of the consequence—indeed, we never thought of it at all. But I spoke to a post ; and, by what ensued, it was plain to me how much parochial beadles are opposed to the fondest blandishments of nature.

In some respects, the affair, in the end, as far as the parish and the beadle were concerned, was amicably settled ; but my father, highly exasperated that I could not discern, or would not confess, a fault, resolved that I should no longer remain in that country side. Accordingly, I was sent off very soon to my uncle, in one of the principal manufacturing towns of the kingdom, to be placed in his counting-house ; it being deemed of no use to think I could ever make any figure in the law ; my mind, as the old man asserted, was doggedly set against the most valued institutions of the country, and altogether of an odd and strange revolutionary way of thinking.

“Nathan Butt,” said he, on the evening previous to my departure, “you go from your father’s house—what he says with sorrow and apprehension—an incorrigible young man: you have, from your youth upward, been contumacious to reproof, and in your nature opposed, as with an instinctive antipathy, to every thing that has been endeared by experience.”

This address a little disconcerted me; but in the end my independence gave me fortitude to say,—“Sir, that I have not been submissive to the opinions of the world and to yours is certain; but it is not in my character to be other than I am. Fate has ordained me to discern the manifold forms which oppression takes in the present organisation of society ——”

“Oppression!” cried the old gentleman, with vehemence, “do you call it oppression, to have been, from your childhood, the cause of no common grief to your parents; to have been kicked out of one school, and the rebel ringleader in another?—Nathan Butt! Na-

than Butt! unless you change your conduct, society will soon let you know, with a pin in your nose, what it is to set her laws and establishments at defiance.”

“Alas! sir, pardon me for the observation—but you have lived too long; the world now is far ahead of the age which respected your prejudices. I am but one of the present time; all its influences act strongly on me, and, like my contemporaries, I feel the shackles and resent the thralldom to which we have been born.”

“You stiff-necked boy!” exclaimed my father, starting up in a passion; “but I ought not to be surprised at such pestiferous jargon. And so you are one of those, I suppose, destined to be a regenerator of the world! Come, come, Mahomet Butt, as I should call you, no doubt this expulsion to your uncle’s will be renowned hereafter as your Hegira. I have seen young men, it is true, in my time—that which you say is now past—who, with a due reverence for antiquity, and a hallowed respect for whatever age and use had proved beneficial—but the

lesson is lost on you: however, let me tell you, my young Mahomet, that we had in those days mettlesome lads, that did no worse than your pranks; but ——”

“ Well then, sir, what was the difference between them and me ?”

“ Just this, you graceless vagabond!— what they did, was in fun and frolic, and careless juvenility; but you, ye reprobate! do your mischief from instinct; and evil, the devil’s motive, is, to your eyes and feelings, good! You—ye ingrained heretic to law, gospel, and morality, as I may justly say you are—have the same satisfaction in committing mischief, that those to whom I allude had, in after-life, in acts of virtue and benevolence.”

It was of no use to answer a man who could express such doctrine; so I just said to him, that I claimed no more from him than the privilege of nature. “ The beasts and birds,” said I, “ when they have come to maturity, leave their lairs and nests, and take their places in the world.”

The old man, in something like a frenzy,

caught me by the tuft of hair on my forehead by the one hand, and seizing a candle with the other, pored in my face, at first sternly, and then softening a little, he flung me, as it were, from him, and said,—“ Go, get out of my sight, thou beast or bird of prey !”

I shall make no animadversions on such a domestic life ; the reader will clearly see that it belonged to that state of society which soon, thanks be and praise, is about to be crushed. It will no longer be in the power of one, dressed in a little brief authority, to play such fantastic tricks with those in whom the impulses of nature are justly acknowledged as superior to all artificial maxims and regulations.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY uncle, Mr. Thrive, was a brother of my mother, and the toppingest merchant in all the town of Slates. He was a bustling, easy-natured man, indulgent to the foibles of others, yet, at the same time, regular and respectable in his own habits. His reception of me was familiar and jocose. He had previously been prepared for my arrival by a letter from my father; and I delivered him one from my mother, which he read over before he spoke to me; and as he read, I could perceive a temperate smile dawn and brighten on his countenance. He, however, at the conclusion, affected a droll austerity, which was to me as relishing as pleasantry.

“ You scamp,” said he, “ you have too good a mother;—here is my soft sister beseeching me for all manner of kindness

towards you, and mitigating, with a deal of fond and motherly palaver, the impression which she fears your father, in his anger, may have produced upon me. But I will make no promises,—if you do well, it will be better for yourself; but if you be abandoned to the follies your father speaks of, Nathan, my nephew, you are a gone Dick !”

There was certainly something in the manner of this address that I did like; but there was also a firmness of tone in the utterance of the latter part, that fell upon my spirit with the constraint of a magic spell. I perceived that Mr. Thrive was a stout and steady man of the world; though a merchant, he was yet less indulgent than my father, who was an attorney.

There was a great difference in their appearance too. My uncle was a portly, well-dressed person, of an urbane, gentlemanly air: my father, who had been more than five-and-thirty years the legal adviser of Lord Woodbury, one of the greatest

beaux of his time, was, in his appearance, the opposite of all ever deemed fashionable and favour-bespeaking. His clothes were of a strange and odd cut: he wore half-boots, light-blue stockings, and brown kerseymere inexpressibles, with large silver knee-buckles; commonly a black satin waistcoat with spacious pockets, a bluish-grey coat with broad brass buttons, a tye-wig well powdered; and his face was red as with the setting glow of a departed passion.

But the difference was most remarkable in their tempers. Mr. Thrive was a shrewd, sharp observer, who saw many things with a glance, which he afterwards recollected apparently without effort. My father, on the contrary, possessed but little of that alert faculty, and somehow was as little inclined to remember whatever he observed objectionable. This much I am bound to say in candour; for it was the general opinion of those who had known him longest. Towards myself, however, I do think his character was an exception; for my least faults he uniformly noticed severely, and

never forgot ; my most piquant remarks he often scouted with derision, or blamed with animadversion in no measured terms : in short, he was an aristocrat of the Tory tribe, and I in those days gloried in being a thorough democrat. It requires, therefore, nothing additional, to assure the reader that we did not live on the best of terms. My removal to Slates was, in consequence, really an agreeable translation ; for my uncle, what with his business, and bustling, and jocose disposition, seemed to look lightly on my peculiarities ; and for some time I spent with him the happiest halcyon days of my life ; — and yet Mr. Thrive was a stanch Government man.

When I had been a few weeks at Slates, I gradually fell into acquaintance with several spirited liberal young men, more distinguished in the town for their philosophical principles than for those aberrations in conduct, which made others of the same class less eminent for decorum. It would ill become me, indeed, to speak lightly of those to whom I allude ; but I soon was led

to notice that there was something of an organic difference between my companions and them.

We were of a sedate and methodical character, addicted to books more than to bottles, — thoughtful, inquisitive, and in our way of life sober and reasonable. Our adversaries, for such in truth they were, gave themselves up, in many respects, to wild and dissolute habits, possessed little information, and, with a kind of irreverent ribaldry, professed themselves the champions of those institutions of which we, on our part, considered it the greatest of duties to work the overthrow. They were, indeed, like the drunken soldier who in the Puritan war swore to a church, that he would stand by her old soul while he had a drop of blood in his veins.

It was during my intercourse with those enlightened associates, that my crude reflections on the causes of unhappiness in the world assumed form and consistency. At that time the war of the French revolution was raging; the Great nation, having got rid of their ancient government, and having

cured their country of all its hereditary scrofula, was renewed in vigour; every thing they undertook was consolatory to the oppressed of the earth; and they exhibited to astonished Europe the amazing effects of that enlarged philanthropy which they had so long cherished, and by which they had become the foremost people in the universe. It was delightful to contemplate the triumphs of liberty among them, and how they hallowed their cause with blood. But the contrast, when I looked around me, was deplorable. Never can I forget the indignant feelings with which I regarded the obstinacy of the infatuated Pitt, and the audacity with which his sordid adherents resisted the progress of knowledge, and arrested the perfectability of man.

In the midst, however, of the humiliation which that weak and wicked statesman and his colleagues made me suffer, I was cheered, as the mariner in the storm is with the sight of a beacon shining bright and high. The disasters which so often overwhelmed their measures gave confidence to

my hopes that shipwreck was their doom. But it would be to weary the intelligent reader, to descant on this theme. It is sufficient to observe, that the ruling demon of society and the genius of nature were then fighting in the mid heavens; and the latter could not but sooner or later prevail. "Thrones and sovereignties," said I, "the resources of empires, hierarchies, and orders, and the progeny of artificial life, may for a time withstand the eternal goddess; but as sure as the moon waxes to the round bright full, she will vindicate her jurisdiction, and gladden the earth."

CHAPTER IX.

IT is not my intention, as I have already intimated, to record in these pages my private memoirs ; but I cannot adequately describe the impressions which I received from many circumstances, originating exclusively in that state of society which there is now the happy prospect of living to see dissolved and abrogated, without now and then departing from the strict rule prescribed to myself, and touching a little on the incidents of my domestic history.

When I had resided some time, better than a year, with my uncle, he said to me, as we were sitting together one Sunday evening by the fire-side, he looking over some family papers, and I reading Godwin's Political Justice, a work in the highest style of man :
“ Nathan Butt,” said he, “ our family is not very numerous, and in course of nature,

bating my sister, you are the nearest, as the eldest of her children, to me of kin; and should you survive me, I have thought that it would be a prudent thing of you, and a great satisfaction to me, were you to make a prudent marriage. I see it is not necessary that fortune should be an essential ingredient in the choice, but it can be no detriment."

To this I replied, "That I was very sensible of the kindness with which he treated me; but, sir," I added, "marriage is what I have never thought of: indeed, to speak plainly, I have great objections to incur an obligation, to which the world has attached so many restraints, at variance with the freedom which mankind have derived from nature."

"Pooh, pooh, Nathan," cried my uncle, "I am serious; don't talk such stuff now; we are not on an argument, but an important business of life."

"I assure you, sir," was my sedate answer, "I have never been more serious. Marriage, sir, is one of those artificial com-

pacts invented by priests and ecclesiastics to strengthen their moral dominion."

"I shall not dispute with you, Nathan," replied my uncle, "that marriage does bring grist to the church's mill; but we are not to judge of it merely by the tax which we pay for its blessings; therefore say nothing on that head. Men and women must have some law to regulate them in their domicile, and as no better has yet been enacted, we must conform to what is."

"In Paris, sir," said I, "it is no longer ——"

"Nathan Butt," said my uncle, rather sternly, "I am speaking to you on a very important subject; therefore don't trouble me with any thing about your French trash, and the utility of living in common like the beasts that perish."

I had never heard Mr. Thrive express himself in this manner before: hitherto he had only laughed, as it were, at what he called my Jacobin crotchets; but I could discern that a feeling of a more sensitive kind affected him on this occasion. He

was a rich man—his favour was therefore worth cultivating; and I frankly acknowledge that this consideration had great weight with me. But principle should be above corruption; and I felt at the moment that I was yielding to the deleterious influences of the artificial social state, when, for a moment, I thought it might be for my interests to accede to what was evidently his intention. However, I rallied, and frankly told him that I never intended to marry.

“You are a fool,” cried he, “and may live to repent it:” and abruptly gathering up his papers and rising, said, before leaving the room, “Reflect, Nathan, well on this short conversation. I do not look for an old head on young shoulders, and you are not destitute, on some occasions, of common sense; reflect on this, I say, for a week, and next Sunday evening we shall resume the conversation.”

He then went away; and as his remarks had disturbed the philosophic equanimity with which I had been pondering over the sound and sane maxims and apothegms of

the book before me, I closed it; and drawing my chair close to the fire, placed my feet on the fender, and began to ruminate on my uncle's worldly dogmas.

It was clear to me, that, with all his ability as a man of business—and in that he was considered eminent—Mr. Thrive had no right conception of the difference between man in a state of nature, and as a member of society which is in so many things opposed to nature. “What good, I would ask,” said I to myself, “can he expect to reap, by alluring me, with pecuniary considerations, to hazard all that is valuable to a rational being, by taking on me the fetters of an obligation that is not only fast becoming obsolete, but is acknowledged by so many as the most vexatious that can be incurred;” and I thought of Doctors' Commons.

For several days I did reflect on the conversation just recited, and felt, even to the Thursday night, that all my principles remonstrated, as it were, against a compliance with the wishes of my uncle; but from

that evening I certainly underwent some change.

I then thought, for the first time, of the shortness of life—no elixir or expedient having been discovered by which it could be prolonged. I reflected also, with a sigh, on the uncertainty of fortune, how often the best-laid schemes were frustrated, and the seeds of industry and skill blighted in their growth, affording no harvest. I became sad; a feeling of grief, more intense than melancholy, occupied my heart; and I said to myself, “Man is but a cog on a wheel, a little wheel in the great enginery of Fate.”

This nothingness of individual man in the universal system of things had a great effect upon me, and at last I began to think, who among all the females of our circle would make the best wife: but this was unsatisfactory. Over and over again I meditated on the subject; but the more I meditated respecting them, the faults of each became more conspicuous to me; insomuch that by the Sunday evening, although I had re-

solved, in submission to circumstances, to assent to an occultation of principle, I was embarrassed, and could determine on no choice. Thus it happened, when the hour came round, I was exceedingly perplexed, and, contrary to custom, instead of taking a book, as was my wont, I sat idle; while my uncle, I could perceive, eyed me with occasional sinister glances, that made me thrill, as if I felt that he suspected me of some delinquency. At last he broke silence:

“ Well, Nathan Butt,” said he, “ I observe by your manner that you have been giving some heed to what I said last Sunday night; what is your determination?”

“ Truly, sir,” was my diffident answer, “ I know not what to say: marriage itself I consider as one of the incidental evils of the social state, and until that undergoes a thorough reformation, it appears to me, all things considered, that, out of a philosophical respect for the opinions of others, it must be tolerated.”

“ Well, Nathan, I do not say that your remark, which looks so like philosophy, is

altogether nonsense ; but the matter in hand is, Are you, then, disposed to take a wife ?”

“ I cannot exactly answer that question, because I am acquainted with no young lady that I would prefer more than another ; and therefore, as I have little inclination for the state, and no motive of preference, I am very likely to remain a bachelor.”

“ Well, I must say, Nathan, you are a young man of very odd notions ; but as I am convinced marriage is the best thing that can happen to you, my endeavour shall not be wanting to discover a proper match. What think you of Miss Shuttle, the daughter of my old friend ? I have long considered that she would make you a very suitable wife, being largely endowed with good common sense, with which you are not overburdened, and a cheerful social temper, in which you are greatly deficient.”

Now, Miss Shuttle had never blithened my cogitations ; but the moment my uncle mentioned her name, I was sensible of an attractive bias towards her. Not, however, to trouble the courteous reader with further

particulars, let it suffice that we were in due time made man and wife, according to the most approved forms of the Establishment ; though I, being the son of a Dissenter (for my father was a Presbyterian), would have preferred a ceremony less ostentatious.

CHAPTER X.

MY wife certainly possessed those qualities for which she had been recommended; her only fault was, indeed, of the most blameless description. She had not the slightest predilection for ratiocination; but, on the contrary, she was a living effigy of passive obedience; and it was only in this supple compliance that I ever found her tiresome. Once, however, she did evince a capability of sustaining an argument—the highest faculty in man; and I have never since ceased to wonder at it, for on that occasion she was triumphant.

She had changed our cook; at which, as the woman was civil and managing, I expressed some surprise, it being my habit to partake of my philosophical share of dinner without remark.

“What you say, my dear, is very true,”

was her answer; "she is an excellent creature, but a very bad cook, and I hired her for a cook."

"But," replied I, "you should have balanced her good qualities against her defects."

"That would not have mended her cookery—it would still have been as bad as ever; and you cannot deny, Nathan Butt, that good eating is one of the greatest comforts in life."

"Is it? I'm sure, Mrs. Butt, I pay no attention to it: it is a subject—an animal subject—beneath the dignity of an intellectual being."

"It may, sir; but when one thing at table happens to be better than another, I observe you instinctively prefer the best; and it is only by having a good cook that we can be sure of enjoying a comfortable life."

This silenced me; it being evident that the enjoyment we have in eating, especially in good eating, is one of the few unimpaired innate immunities of the species; and that

my wife was quite right in her estimate of a cook.

With the single exception of this brief discussion, we never had a word which shewed the least difference of opinion between us : indeed, I had no occasion to contradict her ; she always submitted to my pleasure, and so maintained, in an amiable manner, the peace of our house.

Although the accordance of my conduct to the promptings of nature, was generally, I may truly say always, reciprocated by Mrs. Butt, we yet had one serious controversy ; all others were uniformly of the most amicable kind. It only required a little firmness on my part to see that every thing was done as I desired ; for I never could abide to debate first principles in such trifles as household particularities. I anticipated all objections by the judicious serenity with which I announced my will and orders. But uniform tranquillity belongs not to man in his social condition.

In the course of the second year after our marriage, my first-born in wedlock, a son,

came to light. At that epoch there was a moderation in men's minds, such as had not been experienced for some years. The French, under the fatal dominion of Napoleon, had lost much of their interesting character. He had degraded himself by a union with the sentenced blood of Austria; and those who had once thought they saw in him the deliverer of the human race, were mortified by his apostacy. The effect of this made me, as well as all of my way of thinking, shrink back into ourselves, and seek to obscure our particular opinions by a practical adherence to the existing customs of the world—errors and prejudices which we never forgot they were.

It thus happened, when Mrs. Butt proposed to me that our child should be baptized, I made no objection; only remarking, that it was a usage to which we must submit, and the expense being inconsiderable, it was not a case in which we should shew ourselves different from our neighbours.

Sometimes before, I had observed that she was not very well satisfied with an occasional

word which dropped from me respecting priestcraft and ecclesiastical usurpation ; but as my father was a Presbyterian, she ascribed those accidental strictures to the tenets of his sect, supposing me of the same persuasion. But that I should speak of baptism as deserving of consideration only on account of the fees, produced an effect for which I was not prepared.

She was standing when she put the question, and I was reading the book of a recent continental traveller, a man of liberal principles, who had shrewdly inspected the world, and correctly discerned its prevalent errors and abuses ; for it was, indeed, chiefly from such travellers that I obtained right expositions of these controverted topics. Without raising my eyes over the edge of the leaves, I gave her the answer quoted ; to which she made no reply, but, retreating backwards to the elbow-chair opposite, sat down and drew a deep sigh.

Not expecting that any thing particular was about to take place, I took no other notice of her consternation than by casting

a glance over the top of the book ; which she observed, and, wiping her eyes, suddenly rose and went away, and wrote to my mother on the subject. In the course of two or three days, on the evening before the day appointed for the christening, the old lady made her appearance ; having come, as she unhesitatingly declared, to witness the solemnity.

I welcomed her as she justly merited to be from me ; for although in some things she was wilful, as most parents are, she nevertheless had made herself, by her kindnesses, a cosy corner in my bosom, and I was sincerely glad to see her, — a little surprised, however, at her unexpected visit.

Early next morning my father also arrived by the mail. He had travelled all night, and seemed in rather an irksome humour. After swallowing a hasty breakfast, he went directly to my uncle ; saying, in a manner that struck me as emphatical, that they would both dine with us, adding, “ The ceremony must be deferred till the evening ; ” and, grinning with vehemence,

he shook his stick at me as he left the room, adding, "You blasphemer, to break my heart in this manner!"

The secret motive of the visit was thus immediately disclosed; for no sooner was his back turned, than my mother and Mrs. Butt took out their handkerchiefs—as evidently preparatory to a scene, as the drawing up of the curtain is to a tragedy.

"Much has your poor wife, Nathan Butt, endured; but this is beyond pardon. I have come a long journey, and your worthy father has travelled all night—a dreadful thing at his age. We can, however, forgive all that; but who will forgive you for making the baptism of your first-born a consideration of parish fees, with no more reverence for religion than if you were a sucking turkey?"

"Do turkeys suck?" said I: "that they are irreligious is doubtful. I have often myself noticed that they, as well as other poultry, never take even a drink of water from the dub, without lifting their heads and eyes towards the heavens in thankfulness."

"Oh, Nathan, Nathan!" was her ex-

clamation, in an accent of grief that smote my very heart, " what will become of you and your poor baby ? for now ye're the head of a family. Oh, oh !"

I made no answer ; but I could not help wondering at the folly of the general world in thinking religion something different from the forms and genuflexions in which its offices are performed ; or that there was aught in it beyond the ingenuity of those who in different ages had invented its several rites, as a mode of levying taxes for the maintenance of their order. And I turned to my wife, who was sitting hard by, and, with really more asperity than I ever made use of to her before, said, " What is the meaning of this ? Surely you very well knew that I was quite neutral in my wishes on the subject. If you desired our boy to be made a Christian, I had no objection : by making him undergo the ceremony, he could not therefore be less a man. You might have spared me from the reproaches of my father and mother, whose prejudices, at their time of life, it is vain to assail, and

allowed the infant to be baptized quietly, and without more ado."

Her reply filled me with amazement: "In all temporal things, Nathan Butt, I considered it a duty—a sworn duty—to obey you, and never till this occasion have I ever felt a wish to depart from the strictness of my marriage vow. But, Nathan, this is not an earthly and mortal matter; the soul may be in danger of hell-fire by us; and religion admonishes me, yea strengthens me, poor, weak, and silly thing that I am, to give this sentenced scion of a fallen race the chance of salvation."

I was confounded by her energy, and I pricked up my ears, for her manner was full of a fine enthusiasm, and she spoke like the Pythia. My mother then took up the strain, but with more familiar rhythm.

"She entreated your father and me," said the old lady, "to come to her aid; for she could not in conscience allow you, in your present state of unbelief, to take upon you the baptismal vows. Your father and uncle are to be the sponsors."

“ And am not I to have any thing to say in this affair ? ” replied I, a little fervently ; for it seemed to me then, as it has done ever since, something beyond all toleration, that a father should, by any occult influence of the theocracy, be thus deprived of his natural right.

“ Do you deserve to have any ? ” cried my mother.

My answer was sedate : “ I do not reckon on what I may deserve, but only on what is due to me as a parent.”

“ This, Nathan,” said my wife, “ is not what is due to a parent. God has revealed that by baptism the condemned souls of the tainted race of Adam will again be rendered acceptable to his love ; but wherefore it has been made the qualification for that election is a mystery. Yes, Nathan, I may in this be a disobedient wife, but there is holiness in the disobedience ; and I hope that our dear baby, by receiving the sign and impress required by the Redeemer, will become eligible to partake of the blessing.”

“ Why should there be mysteries in the world ?” said I.

“ Why should you be in the world ?” exclaimed my mother.

“ Hem !” was all I could say to this jargon ; but, to do my wife justice, she spoke as it were with the voice of an oracle. At other times the terms of her phrases were like those of other women—simple, and not more to the point than needful ; but that day her mien and elocution were impassioned, and her accent high, yet melancholy, like that of the afflicting spirit in a painful task of mercy.

I grew uneasy with her exhortations, and being irked too by my mother’s vituperative persuasion, rose and went away.

CHAPTER XI.

I HAVE no reminiscence of my early life that still affects me like the recollections of that discussion; for although many arguments of the women were feminine enough, there was a solemnity about my wife that I had never seen any thing like before. I saw clearly that she was not only resolved to have the child christened, but that she meditated something more—what that was, the sequel will shew; but I could not help reflecting, as I walked along, on the inveteracy of religious prejudice, which could so disguise the various taxes by which it was upheld, that even very shrewd persons were unable to discern its object or tendency.

Instead of strolling towards the town on this occasion, although it was near the hour

when the London mail and news usually arrived, I bent my steps towards the fields.

At all times since my childhood I have been a lover of Nature; and when my feelings have been chafed by the effects of the existing system, I have sought solace and soothing from the beauty and calm of the landscape. But on this occasion its wonted sweet influences were stale; for in my bosom there was a bitter controversy, in which conscious rectitude, and adherence to my own notions of the right, would not intermingle. Something decisive was, however, requisite; and at last calling to mind how much nobler it is to sacrifice one's own sentiments to those which are dear to others, I resolved to make no farther objection either to the fees or the baptismal performance; and accordingly returned home in this benevolent resolution, where, finding my wife alone in our bed-chamber, I bade her wipe her tears, and do in the whole affair as she thought fit, adding, "I am ready to do my part—the father's

part in the ceremony—since to you and the old people it is so important.”

Instead of returning me any answer, she began to weep still more grievously, which seemed very inexplicable; and I expressed my regret, with some surprise, that she should receive my concession with so little satisfaction.

“ O Nathan !” cried she, “ speak not to me in that manner : although you are my husband, the father of my child, and one whom I have vowed at the holy altar to love and obey—it will yet make me turn from you with feelings that I dare not entertain. Your concession fills me with horror. In the ceremony you have no part ; and it is the dreadful thought, that it is I who must object to you, which makes these tears to flow.”

“ What do you mean ?” cried I ; “ you are incomprehensible.”

“ Ah ! in that lies much of my grief. Your irreligious opinions—I will call them by no harsher name—disqualify you to

take the Christian vows. Your father and uncle are to stand in your place.”

“Come, come,” said I, somewhat disconcerted; “this is carrying the joke too far: I assure you, my dear, that I will do what I ought, and all that you can desire.”

“But you shall not. No, Nathan Butt, it is I that bar you from the altar. You are not fit to take upon you the sacred obligations for your own child. Your father and uncle must incur them for you.”

I was not pleased to hear this bigotry, and was on the point of replying with more sternness than I had ever felt towards her before; but at that moment a housemaid announced that the two gentlemen, with a third, the Rev. Mr. Trial, a Presbyterian preacher, whose church my uncle regularly attended, had returned.

I went immediately to the drawing-room, into which they had been shewn; and on making my appearance, my father came towards me, and taking me by the hand, in a manner which affected me with sad-

ness, said: "We have brought with us a religious man, who will converse with you alone before dinner. The ceremony is to be performed in the evening by Dr. Colridge, the rector. Your wife being of the Establishment, surely you will not object: I am willing to indulge her in this little matter of mere form."

"The whole affair," said I, "is a matter of no importance to me."

"So I see," rejoined my father, with a severe accent; and taking my uncle by the arm, led him out of the room, and left me with the Presbyterian minister.

It would be a tedious story to relate the conversation that then ensued between us; for he was a narrow-minded man, and spoke of a future state as confidently as of to-morrow; which shewed how little his mind had been accustomed to examine opinions unsupported by fact. But, saving this weak credulity, he was not so austere in his notions as many others of his cloth that I have met with; for, in answer to a remark of mine, expressive of wonder that he should

so readily consent that Dr. Colridge should receive all the fees, he in a very gentlemanly manner said, these were of no importance in the question ; “ the point of difference,” he added, “ between Dr. Colridge and me is a mere etiquette ; and no sensible man, either of the Scottish or English persuasion, attaches to it much importance. In the scruples of Mrs. Butt, however, we are both deeply interested : she is a pious woman ; and to reason with her respecting the state of her conscience in this matter, would be to disturb her, yea, perhaps, to shake the foundation of her faith.”

Language of this sort, seeming so liberal, on a subject that is any thing but liberal, perplexed me not a little ; but when I called to mind that the poor man’s stipend and welfare were at stake in his doctrine, I so far complied with what at the time appeared as a domestic duty, that I said he was very right.

“ Mr. Trial, what you have expressed,” said I, “ is very edifying ; but you know in a matter of this sort a man cannot be too

delicate; and I would not altogether like to take upon me obligations, which in my conscience I felt were susceptible of doubt."

I could perceive by his manner that the reverend gentleman was much troubled with the force of my observations; for, after a pause of some time, he rose and said, "We had better join the company; our respective opinions are not to be easily reconciled I perceive, Mr. Butt; only it is some sign of a promise of grace, that you are not so strongly opposed to the principles of your wife, as to resist her in this solemn matter."

We then joined the company in the drawing-room, where I observed Mr. Trial and Dr. Colridge soon after enter into conversation by themselves, which I could not fail to discern, by their side-long glances, was all about me. Nevertheless, dinner passed over with a little less pleasantry on all hands than might have been expected on such an occasion; and in the evening the ceremony took place, my father, uncle, and mother, being the sponsors. I stood a mere spectator, not very well comprehending the

utility of what passed. But from that time till our son had come to years of discretion, his mother ingrained him, I am sorry to say, with such obsolete notions, that I doubt, now when our moral courage ought to be lively and alert, that he is not among the number of those who will prove themselves the emancipators of the human race.

But to return to the effect which public measures and events had upon me, I must beg the intrepid reader to attend to what I felt at the progress of Napoleon — that great bad man, who so singularly threw away the world.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Napoleon came upon the scene as a monarch, it was an epoch of the drama wherein he bore the principal part. From the moment in which he assumed the imperial attributes, I had my doubts of his integrity; for I beheld then that the star of ancient things was again in the ascendant. I trembled at his restorations—I grieved at his institutions; and I saw only a revival of thralldom for mankind, especially when he blended his fortunes, by marriage, with the fated progeny of the doomed. But when, after that lapse, he again stepped forth in his glory, conquering and to conquer, a new hope dawned upon me. Alas! it proved but the glare of that false light, which streams up in the northern sky, and is succeeded by no day. The Russian campaign disappointed my

dreams; and the havoc and storm which pursued him to the Isle of Elba, smote me with consternation. All around seemed blasted; and my sad ears heard no sound but the riveting again of shackles and fetters on the wrists and ankles of man.

In this dismal crisis, when the cry arose that the captive Eagle was again on the wing, and the wrens and sparrows cowering and flying before him, inadequate is the utterance of my pen to express what I then felt. The primeval energy of my spirit blazed up, and I anticipated the renewal of all those fond illusions which I had cherished with enthusiasm in former years. But the fortune of the world is like the destiny of individuals—a very shuttlecock. Brief indeed was the flattering hope that the return of Napoleon to the Tuileries, and the flight of Louis to Ghent, inspired.

The battle of Waterloo blighted my expectations; and with a sick and humbled heart, I acknowledged that the cause of philanthropy was, in consequence, suspended. But I had yet the embers of secret conso-

lation unquenched at the bottom of my heart.

“The cause of man,” said I to myself, “is a sacred cause—a cause to which the heavens themselves are propitious; and this very eclipse that has darkened its splendour, is a proof that it is in progress, and will hereafter shine forth with more refulgent lustre. It is to make the world sensible of the blessing shed by the French revolution, that the restoration of malevolent things is permitted. Another revolution—the bright breaking of another—and all will go well!”

The comfort I derived from the foresight of these reflections was soon realised. The revulsion which took place after the peace, was, in its calamities, convincing to me that I had thought with sagacity; and the rumours which then began to rise of discontents in the manufacturing districts, assured me that the great cause still lived, and that the candle, though low in the socket, was not extinct.

“Even in their ashes live their wonted fires,” said I to myself, when I considered the bold

front with which men, determined to have their wrongs redressed, assembled at the convocations of those advocates of reform who vindicated the rights of their brethren.

The adversaries of freedom and equality were not blind to the danger kindling around them. With the same disregard of eternal principles which had enabled them to come victors out of the war, they exerted their utmost to stifle the rising spirit—and undoubtedly for a time they succeeded. Smother it they could not, for it is a divine flame; but they certainly did manage for a while to put down what they sarcastically called the “Radical uproar.” I shall not, however, speak of the promiscuous blood which, at their instigation, was shed, nor of the persecution to which the bold and free were consigned. The reader will recollect them all.

Still, even in those triumphs and victories, as the adversaries of emancipation deemed them, there was consolation to the subdued and oppressed. It was clearly visible that the champions of freedom were not yet in cir-

cumstances to contend with the usurpers of property, and the possessors of power. Measures, therefore, more consonant to our condition, were forced upon our consideration by the ineffectuality of the Scottish Radical campaign. To strive with those who in the field commanded the sinews of war, required a peculiar, and new as peculiar, system of tactics. But the same untired genius that ever delighted to re-illuminate our darkening hopes, was still amongst us. Taught by it, we retired from the battle of blows, and with a unanimity that will be remarked by posterity as among the wonders of the time, we had recourse to the weapons of reason, and the intellectual contests of argument. Yet in this retreat we did not escape contemptuously. On the contrary, we were treated as if we had been subjugated; and in the endurance of that exultation, we acquired the patience which is now giving us a foretaste of at last becoming in our turn the conquerors.

Well do I recollect the ineffable sneer with which my father, at this time an old

man, attempted to rebuke me while describing to a party at his table the glories of the French revolution, and how much the world had lost by its failure,—the effect of the unprepared elements it had to work with.

“It was,” said I, “a new era—the revelation of better truths and dogmas, when the spirit of liberty, which had long struggled in the bowels of despotism, burst forth at Paris with an explosion that astonished the whole earth.”

“Truly, Nathan,” interposed my father, “French liberty was indeed a fundamental error.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“EXPERIENCE teaches fools;” and her lessons were not lost upon me, nor upon those who, like me, were stimulated by an innate antipathy to that oppression which it is the effect of the social state, in its existing structure, to entail on man.

It was evident that Nature, ever wise and beneficent, rejected the design of advocating her cause by force. Nothing but this palpable truth can explain the disasters which befell our arms. But, though late, instruction came at last; we saw that our weapons were arguments, and our artillery reasons; and accordingly we suited our belligerency to our means.

After the fatal turbulence displayed in the manufacturing districts, and the apparently subdued bravery with which we retired from the hostile demonstration of

mobs with clubs, we instinctively turned our valour to intellectual controversy.

No man could deny the burdens of the nation — all felt them, and augmented the general cry. Nothing could be more galling to the latent indignation of the country, than that so many should enjoy the fruit of the taxes — should revel in elegance, or wallow in opulence, on the hard-won earnings of the industrious poor; and we took up this obvious truth as our theme.

“What did it avail,” we said, “that these persons, supported by the taxes, had either served the state by themselves or relations? More honourable it had been for them, had they employed themselves in the arts or honest trades, and provided for their friends from their individual gains, rather than have deemed themselves, from the accident of their being servants of the public, entitled to pasture their kindred near them on the same common.”

This argument took: Whigs and Tories, subdued by its plausibility, joined in the cry; and retrenchment became the universal

shout. It never once occurred to these wittings, that retrenchment could not be made to touch the public establishments without affecting individuals; and they both, regardless of consequences, urged and clamoured for it as an unmingled blessing.

This was serving our purpose, and recruiting our ranks. Every one who was cast upon his own resources by retrenchment, became added to the phalanx of Reform. The more the cry for it prevailed, the stronger we waxed in numbers; while the two poor, short-sighted, rival factions were devouring each other—the Tories, by yielding to the representations of the Whigs, and the Whigs, by goading on the Tories into measures that were one day to leave them both without that influence in society, which it is the nature of patronage to ensure, and of property to beget. The more that the one was provoked by the taunts of the other to sanction retrenchment, their respective powers were diminished. But the infatuated saw not this. The Whigs cried out for reduction; the Tories, in their ineffectual

endeavours to appease them, discharged and reduced the adherents of Government, or, in other words, lessened the number of the mercenaries in the system of oppression, and made it in some sort defenceless.

A rational war like this was the only war we ever should have waged. But at first,—as the child, who grows conscious of strength, instinctively employs it in mischief,—we unfortunately were not aware that physical coercion never could accomplish moral purposes; and yet to attain them we had recourse to physical means. When our reason, however, grew to maturity, we saw our error; and the indefatigable use of the mere word “retrenchment,” did more for the restoration of natural privileges than all the crimson struggles of the early French revolution—the insubordination of the manufacturing districts—and the abortive endeavours of embodied multitudes to intimidate the law. It enchanted the Tories to part with their guards—it left the Whigs without a pretext to take them into their service; and the victims of what was considered

national policy, in their destitution and bereavement, flocked to our standard. It was this, thank Heaven, that made us what we now are—that put us in a condition to render the Whigs subservient to our will, and the Tories, in their astonishment, the objects of our derision. Too late have the latter discovered, that in yielding to retrenchment, they but multiplied discontent. But in vain is all their bravery; we have wrested from them the sceptre—one struggle more, and it is broken for ever.

When the effect of the cry for retrenchment became visible, I remember a discussion that I had at the time with my old friend Mr. Grudger—a true man he was, with all his feelings palpitating and obvious: Spagnoletti never painted one of his skinless subjects with muscles more strikingly articulated than Mr. Grudger, with his throbbing sensibilities, always appeared to me.

“No doubt, Mr. Butt,” said he, “from the manner in which retrenchment is administered, as you observe, the general in-

terests of the human race may derive great advantage; but think how very nearly it has endangered the Radical cause. Had the aristocracy of the Tories seen the thing in its true light, they would have made a stout stand against retrenchment in the very beginning, or would have begun their reductions with plucking, what one of the most strenuous advocates of retrenchment calls "the birds of prey." Instead, however, of doing so, they have always regarded the desire in man for the re-establishment of equality as a temporary cholera; and, partly from folly mixed with sordidness, they began their reductions with their dependants. Had they set about lopping their own salaries and sinecures, and given up to their inferiors something, instead of taking from them every thing, the feeling towards them would have been very different. The age required that men who had large private properties should have resigned what they drew from the public purse. But the Tories have acted otherwise; and as they have sown, so shall they reap. As for the Whigs,

their conduct has, in principle, been still more efficacious, though unintended. They have never lost an occasion on which they could decry the cupidity of their adversaries, and thus have fought our battles; little aware, that, when the time should come that office was to be at their acceptance, the very words which they employed against the grasping of the Tories, would be used as javelins and barbed arrows against themselves. By their arguments they have advocated our cause; and the Tories by their conduct were also, unconsciously, our auxiliaries."

"What you remark, Mr. Grudger, is very true; had the Tories done, as you say they might have done, the very course of proceeding that makes for us, might have been otherwise; for then retrenchment, in that case, would have taken the sacred character of sacrifice, and the hearts of men might have rallied to uphold a system productive of such beautiful results. But, my dear sir, you forget that corruption, which it is the aim of every philanthropist to remove, pre-

vented the Tories from doing what you say ; and the Whigs in employing the means they have done to drive their rivals from place, happily forgot that the school-master was abroad, and in oblivion of that circumstance, they spoke to his unwashed pupils, the populace, as their predecessors, the Whigs of other days, cajoled the country gentlemen. The commonalty now are at least equal in understanding to the De Coverleys and Westerns of other years."

My friend seemed a little thoughtful as I said this, and, disinclined to continue the conversation, subjoined, " It would take a wiser head than mine to say what course would now be most salutary for the world ; but let us hope that it cannot be an evil thing which so many are pursuing with such ardour."

CHAPTER XIV.

SUBSEQUENTLY to the discussion with Mr. Grudger, it often occurred to me that retrenchment alone was not sufficient to account for the visible strengthening of our cause; and I began, in consequence, to look into the secret workings of the world, both as they affected man, and man affected them. The result was consolatory.

It appeared to me, by this study, that a moral transmutation was taking place, at least equal in importance to that political change which had at first attracted my attention. The olden and the revered were no longer regarded with the same sentiment as in other times; and men's minds, instead of considering what might be for the good of society, began to question whether society itself, organised as it was with error, could be of any good at all. I frequently won-

dered how it came to pass that mankind ever consented to endure artificial arrangements subversive of the rights of nature ; for there can be no doubt that the arrangements which result from the social structure are corrosive of individual powers and endowments. Privilege is but a poor substitute for faculty ; and it is as much the nature of society to subvert individual faculty, as it is of education to extinguish original genius.

Not, however, to enlarge on this interesting subject, I perceived a growing doubt in the world as to the utility of many things which our ancestors held in veneration ; and to search out the root of that doubt was, for some time, with me an object of peculiar solicitude. In the investigation I was well rewarded ; for it afforded me a striking assurance that prejudice was becoming obsolete.

Among other changes, at the same time, which I observed taking place in society, was an ebb or subsidence of anxiety for the interests of posterity, — an ancestral error in the feeling of patriotism or public spirit,

which occupied a high station in the minds of our predecessors. For example, it had been deemed the very acmè of human wisdom to put off the evil day always as far as possible ; and accordingly the nation incurred debt, and the more freely, too, as posterity could not complain of the condition to which it would by it be borne, not having any experience of better circumstances. But when the truth of the case was discerned, it became the general opinion that we should remove the taxes that were to relieve, by the Sinking Fund, our progeny from the debt, to enjoy the fruits of that removal ourselves. Many taxes were, in consequence, reduced and taken off, and the debt left for posterity to deal with as might be seen fit. But, strange enough, it came to pass, that as the taxes were extinguished, both public and private distress increased,—a phenomenon that has yet to be explained.

The distress which flowed from retrenchment was obvious and explicable ; but that a similar result should be a consequence of reducing the public burdens, puzzled many

sound heads ; nor could it be deemed accounted for, when it was said, that the greater the amount of taxation, the quicker is the circulation of money ; and in proportion to the velocity of the circulation is the vivacity of prosperity.

I did not, however, perplex myself with investigating the causes of this effect. I was pleased with the moral issues to which it tended, inasmuch as with them was a more legitimate progress of right thinking, than from the sordid discontent generated by retrenchment. But with many of my friends the satisfaction was not so decided. They saw in the afflictions occasioned by the stagnation, only evils, which I regarded but as the calamities of a battle, where victory promotes a righteous cause,—for it seems to be an ordinance of Nature, that evil should be ever the precursor of good.

One day as I was speaking on this topic with a neighbour, and expressing my wonder to Mr. Thole, how it so happened that the community became in all its manifold interests more and more depressed by the

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measures intended to repair its elasticity, he, who was not altogether of a sound and sane way of thinking on many points, said, after some cogitation, that he thought I made a mistake, by attributing the distress to one cause, which by its results was evidently the consequence of another.

“ It is manifest, Mr. Butt,” continued he, “ that if the taxes be burdensome and a grievance, their removal should lighten a load ; and therefore I do think it stands to reason, that if when they are removed an increased weight be felt, and a grievance becomes more galling, something else than the taxes must be in fault.”

I was a little in doubt as to the answer I should make to this, which looked so like reason, and said, “ Very true, Mr. Thole ; but as Radicalism thrives by it, and the general world is turned more towards the question of permitting property to continue in such large masses, we need not trouble ourselves as to what may be the real source of that suffering, which seems to come of reducing the taxes. It is sufficient that it does come,

and if not the spring of the distress, it is certainly a sign."

"I cannot be of that opinion," replied Mr. Thole; "for although I have in many cases great reliance on your judgment, it startles me to hear you ascribe to one cause an effect which clearly belongs to another: I cannot away with that."

"Then what do you think," said I, "can be the origin of the distress, which, if it does not arise from abridging the circulation by taking off the taxes, is coeval with it? for I am willing to admit that the phenomenon is perplexing."

"I am not a man, Mr. Butt, as you know well, much addicted to abstruse matters; I have, however, a notion, that unless rents are reduced in an equal degree universally with the taxes, much of the distress may be owing to that circumstance. The newspapers now and then tell us of this gentleman, and that nobleman, who on his audit-day remitted so many per cents to his tenantry; but I doubt if the fashion has yet become common."

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“ Then, Mr. Thole, does not that convince you of the badness of that state of things wherein the few have the power of producing such affliction to the many? No, sir: whatever be the cause of so much and such general distress, it cannot be doubted that the breaking into pieces of the great masses of property would essentially contribute to alleviate the grievances. Get change for a shilling, and you may relieve four-and-twenty beggars; but while you have only the shilling entire, where is your charity? Let the great properties be smashed, what will then be the effect of the fragments distributed among the million?”

I had him here on the hip—he could not controvert the inference; and I added, as a clencher, which for that time closed the discussion, “ Is it not something to know the cause of the distress of the world? for knowing the cause, we may bethink ourselves of removing it. Yes: you are right. The taxes have nothing to do with the distress; the rents!—the rents! should be looked to! and can that be done without

ing form of things, and caused him to dislike changes, as fraught with danger, was destined, in the shock of commerce, to sustain molestation. He had retired from active life; but he left his name and a large portion of his capital in the concern, of which I of course became the head and manager. The system worked well, and I had only to see that the wheels were properly oiled. The course of Nature in the seasons was not more trustworthy than the regularity with which our affairs produced their accustomed harvest; but as in the former the Universal Mother sometimes goes awry, we had also to endure accidents; and thus it happened, that an old and esteemed correspondent, who was deeply in our debt, and of whose solvency we had never a doubt, suddenly died; and on examining his books, it appeared that the general decay of trade had so preyed upon his means for some years, that his assets were not adequate, by a considerable sum, to the discharge of his obligations. Our loss was great, so great that it materially injured

our fortune, and caused a depression of spirits, and the most gloomy forebodings, to fasten on my uncle's mind.

For some time he bore up against the calamity with an energy that was encouraging to contemplate in an aged man, and I was nerved by his example; but in the course of the following winter his health began to give way, and he fell into a black and pale despondency of the most funereal kind. The disease slowly but still increasing, grew apace as his strength declined; and at last the doctor told me that he could not live long.

At this period my uncle resided a few miles from the town, in a country-house which he had purchased to enjoy his freedom when he quitted active life, and I had not seen him for some time. On receiving the physician's intimation, however, I went to him immediately—for I was more affected by the tidings than a strict philosophy could justify. Nature had, by old age, so plainly served her writ upon him, that he could no longer postpone the payment of her debt.

It was the evening—a winter night—as I approached his dwelling, a handsome mansion, situated in a respectable park. The leaves were all fallen, and the wind blew gusty through the branches, as I rode up the avenue. I saw a light in his bed-room as I approached the house, and by several of the windows I could perceive persons with candles in their hands moving to and fro in the house. From my earliest years I have been accustomed, by some inscrutable association, to connect such numerous and moving lights, dimly gleaming from the windows of silent houses, with ideas of anguish and misfortune, and the mysteries of death. My mind was, accordingly, at the time full of these solemnities, to which the warning of the doctor had given the most saddening probability. I alighted at the door with awe and sorrow; for the old man had always been very kind to me.

The servant, who took my horse, answered to my eager inquiry, that my uncle, his master, was still alive; and, without ceremony, I softly ascended the stairs and

hastened into his bed-chamber; but a feeling of uncontrollable dread seized me as I entered, and I could not advance towards the couch,—and yet I shall never forget the scene that was before me.

On a table, with a shaded lamp, stood a mass of Esculapian mummary—labelled phials, open papers of the apothecary, with pill-boxes, tea-cups, and a small basin with a spoon. A Presbyterian clergyman, an old friend of the dying man, sat at his pillow, and on the coverlet lay the New Testament open; while Mrs. Guidance, the venerable housekeeper, grasping the curtain with one hand, and holding a handkerchief in the other, stood gazing in the old man's face, whose fixed and glassy eye glittered as with the reflection of a ray—but it was not of the mind.

My consternation, for I have no other name to give to what I felt, dissolved away, and I advanced. The suppressed noise of my movement for a moment excited attention. The minister looked up; Mrs. Guidance towards me behind her; and as I bent

forward, the good old man, whose time was come, turned his eye upon me with a gleam of intelligence, and expired.

For some time I was so agitated with the thought of having been almost too late, that I could not recover my scattered senses. I had never been so impressively affected before; and though it is impossible to say wherefore, I sat down on a chair, and my tears began to flow. At this crisis, Mr. Trial, the clergyman alluded to, left his seat beside the dead man's pillow, and coming towards me, took me in a merciful manner by the hand.

“ You must go with me,” said he; “ the women are coming, and it is not meet that we should at this time remain longer here: let us go down stairs. He has had a pleasant departure, and has been blessed with that hope in death which can only be earned by a well-spent life. Come, let us go together; his latest words were of pity concerning you, and I promised to repeat to you his last request.”

Having, all my days, had a judicious

suspicion of ecclesiastical craftiness, this expression put me on my guard; and I replied, "At some more convenient season, Mr. Trial, I shall be most happy to receive any communication you may have to make; but at present the fatigue of my ride, and the mournful spectacle we have just witnessed, render me unfit to give proper attention."

"It was his wish," said Mr. Trial, "that I should take the very first moment, when the impression of his death was strongest, to deliver to you his last solemn advice."

I felt this as a little importunate, and replied, "No doubt it is natural that you, Mr. Trial, should be eager to perform your duty; but you are a sensible man, and know well that the wisest in the crisis of death are not in the best situation to give advice."

"Sir," cried he, drawing up, as if I had offended him, "men in all ages have ever deemed a death-bed admonition deserving of more than common consideration."

"I know what you say is the prevalent opinion of the world," replied I, "and the

gentlemen of your cloth have found an advantage in upholding it; but the truth, notwithstanding, is, that a man in the throes of death has quite enough to do with his own pains and fears, without thinking much about what may be for the benefit of others. I shall, however, in the morning be in a better condition to hear what you have to say to me from my uncle, than I am at this moment."

Without making any answer, he looked at me for a short space of time with the wonted self-sufficiency of his order; and seeing I was serious, and indisposed to farther conversation, he turned on his heel, and with an air that would have become a pope or metropolitan, bade me good night, and immediately left the house.

Since that incident, I have studiously kept myself aloof from all the different denominations of the priesthood; for I never so clearly saw as I did on that occasion, that there is something in their office which leads them to imagine themselves superior to the commonalty of mankind, or prompts

them to desire that the world should believe so. It is only by individuals commencing in their respective spheres the work of reformation, that it ever can be accomplished. Were all men to treat the members of the privileged orders as I have done, the nuisance of being troubled with them would soon be abated.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE natural extinction of my uncle, as may be easily deduced from the foregoing chapter, forms an era in my life. The cause which hastened on the event had great influence on my conduct; and the event itself, as I have shewn, induced me to determine on finally separating myself from the ecclesiastical order. With the aristocracy I had never much communion, and accordingly no particular estrangement was requisite towards them.

The same cause which accelerated the exit of the worthy old man, acted on me in a twofold manner. It abridged my means, and, by obliging me to attend with more sordid eagerness to mercantile concerns, diminished the time I had to spare for loftier pursuits. The result was manifest on my fortune; and I soon saw that I must abandon

trade or politics. The election to a liberal mind was not difficult: I retired with a competency below what, had I continued, would probably have been my portion; small, however, is the enough for a philosopher:

“ Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.”

But the domestic tribulation which I still suffered, from the effects of the ecclesiastical dogmas on the mind of my wife, was not so easily alleviated; for she never ceased to express her grief at the insensibility with which she alleged I treated my eternal interests.

In vain did I often tell her, that marriage was but a temporal arrangement, the necessary consequence of those laws of inheritance which the mistaken founders of society had imposed upon the innate freedom of the species; and that beyond the duration of the legal tie there could be no reciprocal obligation on the one to care for the other. “ Besides, Mrs. Butt,” said I, “ why do you think I regard my soul less, if I have one, than you do yours? Truly you

give yourself too much thought on this head."

Thus it happened, though I cleared myself of that occasional interference of the priests, with which I had been molested from the baptism of my son, I was yet compelled to endure from Mrs. Butt a constancy of remonstrance on the subject, the more afflicting, as the poor woman was really sincere, and seemed to think that belief in her doctrines could be brought about by exhortation. But her error in this respect at last became intolerable; my instinctive sense of liberty revolted at such unvaried anxiety concerning matters of which the evidence, to say the least of it, is concealed in mystery; and I resolved to revert to first principles, and rid myself of the grievance.

"Mrs. Butt," said I, one night as we were sitting by the parlour fire-side, "it is a very extraordinary thing, that now, when I am free from the cares of business, and can give my full attention to the solitudes of philanthropy, I experience no increase of ease."

“How, indeed, Nathan, can you ever expect it—you whose only trust is in the things of this world—things, too, that are but possibilities in the future time? Were you, Nathan, to set your heart on the stabilities of that future which lies beyond time, the case would be far different with you.”

“That, Mrs. Butt, is just a repetition of what you have said times without number; and you would not lower yourself in my good opinion, were you to forbear such reiteration; for, let me tell you, I begin to think that much of the molestation of my condition comes of your incessant probing and pricking of what you are pleased to call my infidelity. There must be an end of the plague.”

“What end, Nathan? Can I ever give up my regard for your immortal welfare?”

“If that is your opinion, Mrs. Butt, the sooner we come to a right understanding the better.”

“What mean you?”

“It is needless,” said I, “to repeat, that I am too much of a philosopher to

think of enduring afflictions which may be shunned."

"Would indeed that you were less in some things! But what is it in the troubles of human life that you can shun?"

"You," was my court reply.

To this she made no answer; but looking in my face with a smile tinged with sadness, she took hold of my hand; I had, however, fortitude to add, "It is not to be disguised, Mrs. Butt, that your way of thinking—indeed the very substance of your thoughts—is different from mine; and we should both act prudently, before coming to an open quarrel, were we to break up our domicile."

I need not relate what then ensued; but she said that surely I was beside myself, to carry my phantastical notions to such an extremity; and concluded, "But I will never consent,—I am your wedded wife:" and then she added, jocularly,—"the law will not allow it."

"You do not suppose," replied I, "that in a rational matter of this kind I would

have recourse to the law; I only put it to you, as a sensible woman, how much more expedient it would be for us to live in different houses, than to be worrying the life out of one another in this way."

"And who do you intend to put in my place?"

"That's a very feminine suspicion," said I, coolly; and seeing she was at the time in a very irrational mood, I rose and left her to ruminate on what we had been talking of.

As usual, when disturbed, I walked into the garden; for although the season was advanced, the night was clear and pleasant—the stars were all out, and the new moon, the sickle of time, in its brightest polish, hung sharp on the horizon. The still air was bracing, without being cold; and, after I had taken two or three turns, I felt myself in a composed and judicious mood and course for calm reflection.

"Without question," said I to myself, as I paced the walk, "the woman is in the right; and the yoke that galls me is not of

her nature, but is plainly one of those evils which result from the institutions of property, as well as from the ascendancy of the pontifical order, whose influence, more or less, pervades in all things the condition of man. By those fatal laws which have riveted husband and wife together, a dependency is induced of the weaker on the stronger; and, to make it the more indissoluble, it has been consecrated. As a general institution it may perhaps be susceptible of some defence; but between two enlightened and intellectual beings, like my wife and me, surely neither of us should set so much store on an ancient custom, as to punish ourselves by adhering to it."

Having thus reasoned myself into the fullest conviction, that in our case there was manifest folly in doing as the world did, I went into the house with the intent of coming to an explicit understanding; but, much to my surprise, I found Mrs. Butt sitting in the dark, in her own chamber, and weeping very bitterly. I had at the time a candle in my hand, and I placed it on the

dressing-table, and inquired, in a soft voice, what had happened.

“Need you ask, Nathan?” was her reply. “But it is not the first time I have noticed, with awe, that you have allowed light words to drop from you concerning the marriage-vow. What have I done, that you should speak of sending me away? Am not I your wife, the mother of your children? And, in all things save the claim of Heaven, I have been ever to you true and faithful. Your conscience cannot accuse me of any deficiency. Why, then, do you harbour such cruel and disreputable thoughts against me?”

“You take a wrong view of the matter altogether, my dear,” was my considerate reply. “I am only anxious that we both should try our natural rights; and your very blamelessness is with me a reason for proposing it; for there is nothing which the world can impute to you in disparagement, but every thing to render the step respectable in the eyes of our neighbours. It is just such a pair as we have ever been, that

should shew an example of superiority to prejudice.”

“Nathan Butt,” was her answer, wiping her eyes — “if I had not always heard you spoken of as a man of talents—nay, a man of genius, with nothing more to object to than a few of those innocent crotchets inseparable from that temperament, I should think you either a bad or a mad man. Just content yourself with me; for I’ll never consent to a separation, which only crime or necessity can justify—and neither of us has a plea of that sort to set up.”

Seeing that she was thus so obstinate in her prejudices, I refrained from pressing the subject; for there is much good reason in forbearance, when you see your argument falls ineffectual, like water spilt on the ground.

CHAPTER XVII.

IF I did not in every thing meet with that compliancy in my domestic circle, after I quitted business, that I had so much cause, from my philosophical sobriety, to expect, out of doors my character and name were increasing; and I perceived that many of my neighbours were inclined to my way of thinking. We did not, as on former occasions, hold meetings to display our strength and numbers: we pursued a more effectual and impressive course, and saw clearly before us, that, even if we failed to vindicate the jurisdiction of Nature over society, we should yet better the condition of mankind, by persevering in our efforts to procure reform.

I ought, however, in justice to the unaltered integrity of my principles, to mention, that I was not quite satisfied to concur

in the compromise which this implied. I still remained as convinced as ever, that the prize and goal of our pursuit should be nothing less than the emancipation of the human race from the trammels and bondage of the social law; although, certainly, I did abet rational undertakings to procure parliamentary reform, as among the means by which my own great and high purpose might be attained. It thus came to pass that, notwithstanding the celebrity I acquired among the Reformers, I was not, in fact, a strict member of the sect: my heart beat warmly towards them, but my hopes went far beyond their desires. I saw in the accomplishment of their objects that a new stepping-stone would be established to help on to mine.

The truth is, that the Reformers and the Radicals are two very different parties. It is not impossible—and I say so, having studied their predilections—that the former may hereafter amalgamate themselves with the Whigs and Tories, which the latter never can. Radicalism is an organic passion, and

cannot be changed in its tendencies ; it goes to the root of the evil that is in the world, and discerns that, without an abolition of the laws and institutes which it has been so long the erroneous object of society to uphold, the resuscitation of first principles can never be effected ; and nothing less than that resuscitation will be satisfactory.

Once, when I happened to say so to my neighbour Mr. Cobble, who was not a Radical, but only a Reformer, he made a remarkable observation, which I have never been able properly to digest.

“ Radicalism, then,” said he, “ is but that desire for further improvement which is the result of improvement, and can have no end or limitation : whereas the reform that I seek is a moderate measure of amendment in things that have fallen into abuse. Yours is a new system—a revolution ; but we seek no overthrow ; we only would repair the dilapidation of ages, and the tear and wear of time. We would not have society put on a new aspect, or greatly depart from her wont ; but you behold evil in all

things, and aim at their total removal. I doubt, Mr. Butt, that if the Reformers once suspect your party of being actuated by such ambition, they will make no scruple of joining our common adversaries to repress them."

I pondered on this speech; and being unable to understand it properly, I exclaimed to myself, "Can any two things be more dissimilar than society and a state of nature? Is not society the creation of mere human wisdom, and therefore defective? but is not nature endowed with a divine fatality, which is constantly operating to the confusion and overthrow of the artificial state? What is meant by the spirit of one age being milder than that of another, but that the progress of knowledge has taught men to relax the fetters that society has placed on nature?"

In short, the remark of Mr. Cobble troubled me, and opened my eyes to many things which perhaps my sanguine temper had made me overlook. Hitherto it had been too much my habit to consider the simple Reformers as of our party, and only a luke-

warm class of them; but from his expressions I discerned the inherent difference, but did not perceive for some time how much that difference was intrinsic; and when I did discover that it was vital and elementary, my mind was far from content. In fact, it was obvious that if the Radicals were under the influence of a misconception, the Reformers committed no very hazardous mistake in reckoning them in their association; but the case was unfortunately otherwise, when the Radicals imagined that the Reformers were with them: a difference to be remembered.

This detection, as I would call it, gave me great uneasiness; for as soon as the suggestion was confirmed, by what may be described as auricular demonstration, I was sensible of the necessity of changing our course.

“Sooner or later,” said I, “these timid Reformers will be absorbed by the Whigs and Tories; and out of the amalgamation a fourth party will be coagulated, stronger than either, the denomination of which is as yet dormant in the womb of time. It be-

hoves us, therefore, to be wary; and as the Whigs have used the Reformers for their own ends, and the Reformers have treated us with as little principle, we must, in our great cause, make no scruple of fighting them all with their own weapons."

The force of this opinion I took an early opportunity of testing among friends who were thorough philanthropists; and, by its effect on them, I saw that the true course which we ought to take, was to intermingle ourselves still more, and systematically, with the Reformers, and avail ourselves of every judicious opportunity of sowing among them the seeds of our regenerative philosophy. This esoteric doctrine, or rather the practice directed by it, soon became general in the country, and it is since quite extraordinary with what rapidity it has spread. I do not, however, say that all Reformers now are in their hearts Radicals; but many who did at first believe that a reform of the Commons' House would extinguish all grievances, are now fully persuaded that it will not even lessen them; and that, unless there

shall be some perennial fount of first principles established, at which legislation can be refreshed,—the reform will have only the effect of subtracting from the wise few that power which, in the possession of the foolish many, may lead to interminable consequences.

It is, however, more in accordance with the scope of these sketches, to illustrate by incidents than to enforce by theory; I shall therefore abstain, at present, from farther dissertation, to give some account of the result on the conduct, both of my friends and myself, as it came to pass, when we discovered how much the Reformers, those ephemeral philosophers, were making tools of us, whose principles are as indestructible as the atoms of light—for truth is light—moral light, and its particles eternal!

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN this state of doubtful opinion as to the strength of parties, I had a few confidential friends one day to dinner; and our conversation, after Mrs. Butt had retired, was in the highest style of philosophy. Few topics connected with the condition of man were left untouched: the West India question of slavery; the inconvenience arising to the boldest and the best men, by the political subdivision of the world; and the insurmountable barrier which so many different languages present to the progress of knowledge,—were all discussed as they should be, and in some instances with an intrepidity of argument that was quite invigorating.

Mr. Blazon was particularly eloquent on that most abominable tax on knowledge, which renders the newspapers, those oracles of a wisdom not materially manacled by

education, so costly, that seven pence is demanded for what would be dear at a penny; concluding his peroration with a prophetic vista of the time when the English language, by the American States, and the Oriental Colonies, would be universal over all the earth; maintaining that we should regard it as one of our greatest duties to promote a consummation so devoutly to be wished.

- Often have I thought since, that the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge had its origin from what passed on that occasion; for soon after, one of the party visited London, where he no doubt met with many remarkable men, to whom, as a matter of course, he probably related what he had heard, and thus sowed the seeds of that most pregnant institution; an institution which may with propriety be referred to as a well-head of the human mind, which it is now purifying. Its cheap tracts are worth the recondite quartos of a former age. Can philosophy desire a better proof of the perfectibility of man?

On the occasion alluded to, after we had handled several interesting topics with powerful effect, Mr. Asper, a shrewd but cautious man, most invaluable as a neighbour for his suggestions, though little inclined to take a very active part in the measures of which he was the father, said the time was come in which it was befitting our cause that we should assume more ostentation in the world; and proposed that we should for the future advocate the enterprises of the Reformers, but in such a manner as to leaven them to our own purposes. On this proposition there was a great deal of sound opinion offered; but it took no effect with any of the party till the middle of the summer following, when it was determined that three of us, a post chaise full, should together visit some of the most excited parts of the country, and place ourselves before the people.

When this was determined on, I resolved to be one of the three; for my talent lay in the hardihood with which I always, from my very youth, went through adventures of

bravery. Not that I was either froward or forward; but it delighted me to have a task of stratagem or difficulty—a spirit which lay dormant while I was in business, but awakened and came forth in revived vigour when I became my own independent master.

Accordingly, when the fixed period arrived, Mr. Blazon, Mr. Asper, and I, set out for the north. It was concerted among us that we should be a considerable distance from our own neighbourhood before we entered on our vocation. Not that any particular diffidence affected us; but we called to mind the old saying, that prophets are not respected in their own countries; and on the hint of Mr. Asper, resolved to keep our lantern shut till we were in a proper situation.

At this time we had received some information, which led us to believe that the men of Old-Port were verging to a right way of thinking; and we resolved to begin with them. Two reasons led to this. The first was, that in the neighbourhood of that town lived a Whig gentleman, whose house

and board were ever open and free to men earnest in the good work ; and the other was no less cogent, — the corporation of the place, however liberal and enlightened the citizens, was strictly Tory. But it was apprehended a change would soon come to pass ; as the chief magistrate, who had been particularly fierce in his opinions, had recently died ; and the other who survived was reported to be an easy man, and not very stern in his opposition to the display of popular feeling. We were therefore induced to select Old-Port as our first scene for these reasons, that if a change in the sentiments of the town were manifested, we might have the credit of being instrumental in producing it. The result, however, was not exactly as we had anticipated.

Mr. Greedison, our Whig friend, lived about a couple of miles from the town. His mansion was one of the best in that part of the country ; but his servants were rather notorious for their arrogance ; indeed, he was a man himself of an austere temperament, and perhaps encouraged them a little

in their failing, by his example. Nevertheless, he received us in the most hospitable manner, and it was evident that our arrival was an epoch to his household.

We had purposely so arranged it that we should reach Mr. Greedison's some time before dinner, having announced to him by letter, that in our tour to ascertain the state of public opinion in that quarter, we intended to hold a meeting next day in Old-Port. It accordingly happened, that being thus apprised of our intention, he had sent notice concerning us to the town, where a great expectation was awakened, and every heart beat high with the most exalted feelings. "It is truly delightful," said Mr. Greedison, "to see the enthusiasm which awaits you; but I am rather surprised that no answer has been sent to the letter I wrote to the magistrate to announce the object of your visit."

In this, however, he was not long left to marvel; for while we were at dinner, a letter came from the town-clerk, announcing that the surviving magistrate had not altogether

made up his mind to let the meeting take place at all. Such a communication was most provoking; but Mr. Greedison declared that he would not be disappointed; and with great manfulness, he upon the instant sent two servants to the town to give notice that the meeting should still take place next day in his park, which should be open to every British subject that chose to attend.

This was, no doubt, spirited of him; but it was not just what we wanted. We could not say in his park what we intended—we felt that the genius of the place would compel us to say more of Reform and Whiggery than consisted with our design. But it could not be helped; and Mr. Asper suggested, during the evening, that the two orators, Mr. Blazon and myself, could enlarge on many grievances without difficulty, and give such a turn to them as would help our own cause. But it will be as well to relate what took place next day, rather than to enter into a description of what passed among ourselves.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEXT morning a cart was drawn out to the bottom of a rising ground in the park, and the congregation both of men and women, in their best apparel, from Old-Port, was extraordinary. Mr. Greedison, who, like all the Whigs, was accustomed to open-air meetings, estimated the multitude at some thousands. This was highly gratifying; it would indeed have been a great disappointment had the assembly that day been thin: fortunately it was otherwise; for the good people of Old-Port, never having had before a reform meeting, were moved alike by principle and curiosity to come forward on this occasion.

Mr. Greedison himself announced the object of our visit, stating that the time was come when every man should boldly stand forth in the defence of his own and of his

neighbours' rights. His sentences were pithily put—as all of his party well know how to do, when addressing a multitude; and he was listened to with the greatest attention, and concluded amidst the loudest applauses.

Mr. Blazon followed: his speech was much to the purpose. He likened the nation to Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, plunging, and struggling, and staggering through the Slough of Despond, with a grievous burden on his back. His description was most pathetic; and many in the crowd shed tears of sympathy with the ineffectual endeavours of poor oppressed John Bull to reach a steadfast footing. But it is not for me to describe the effect of the different topics on which he descanted: one thing, however, is certain, that all his auditors were fully convinced by his oration—as, indeed, how could it be otherwise?—that the British people were the most deluded and oppressed of the earth. No demonstration could be clearer, than that we stood in a false position with respect to our situation. In our prosperity there was no soundness—

it was but a hectic glow, foreboding decay—a crimson cloudy morning, that betokened a tempest: even our national improvements were all of the most fatal description—expensive to prodigality—and when executed, destitute of use. These facts were detailed with energy and a graphic precision: no one could listen to the least of them without alarm. But it is useless for me to attempt even a summary of what he said; let it suffice, that it was most eloquent and striking, affording his hearers the utmost satisfaction. They were sensible that as a nation we were the derision of the world, and that our name was become a by-word and reproach in foreign countries.

When the cheering which attended his peroration had subsided, I presented myself, with a downcast look and modest air, to the attention of the multitude. I spoke with gentle accents, and in a conciliatory manner. Truth was my object, and truth needs no heralding where she asserts her dominion. I told the crowd that I was a man plain in speech, sober in my philosophy, and had all

my days been addicted to the contemplation of the right side of things.

“That we are a ruined people,” said I, “there can be no doubt. You have heard from my friend that we are so; and after what he has stated so perspicuously, who can question the fact? In truth, fellow-countrymen, even language amongst us is corrupted to the core; its meaning is perverted, and by that perversion we are credulous to the most amazing improbabilities. Has it not been an axiom, from the beginning of time, that the wise are few, and the foolish numerous? and yet how little does the opinion of the few avail in our public affairs?—the majority rules all. If there be any truth in the remark—and who shall deny it?—that the minority of mankind are the wise, what but some unspeakable metamorphosis causes, in every stage of our legislation, the judicious sentiments of the wise to be rejected, while the blazing declamations of the foolish are received with plaudits and invested with power. Yes! my fellow-subjects, till on this point a right

understanding is established, violence and outrage will continue to rule the earth. Let, then, your first efforts in the sacred cause of reform be directed to this point; for, until all questions, whether of public or of private life, are determined by the opinion of the few, it is in vain to expect that we shall be able to accomplish any consequential change."

This clause of my speech was heard with the most profound attention—to myself that attention was delightful; and the moveless eyes and open mouths before me, were signs that would have made a Demosthenes proud on the Areopagus.

Then, after a brief pause, I applied the sense of what I had been stating to the condition of those who were, like myself, impressed with its truth. "We are, my friends, probably but a small party in this great nation," I resumed; "but each of you must be conscious that we are therefore not the less correct in our opinions: That consideration should be encouragement to our perseverance; for even were we fewer in number than we are, the con-

viction that wisdom is with the few, should alone make us superior to our adversaries. But let us not be deceived, even by the clearest conclusions of our understandings. The world is ruled by force, which is by nature clothed with physical means, and therefore, however wise, or just, or right, we may be, still we must employ the physical means to attain our ends."——

Just as I said this, a kind of burr and clattering of hoofs was heard, and I discovered a squadron of cavalry coming furiously up the avenue; and in the same moment the crowd began to disperse, like chaff before the wind; insomuch that in the twinkling of an eye only the triumvirate of visitors, with Mr. Greedison, were left on the spot; all the park was dotted with fugitives.

In this crisis, and before we had time to alight and run, the dragoons surrounded our rostrum. In the course of a few seconds a post-chaise hove in sight, and from it descended the surviving magistrate, attended by the town-clerk, and, with terror in his looks and trepidation in his limbs, read the

riot-act, and at the conclusion called to the officer commanding the troops, with a fearful voice, to do his duty ; whereupon he directed his men to return their swords into the scabbards, and they rode back with an easy canter to Old-Port.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN the dragoons had disappeared, Mr. Greedison went to the surviving magistrate of Old-Port, and reproached him for his intemperate conduct; and without shewing him the slightest courtesy, allowed him and the town-clerk, with the riot-act in his pocket, to depart in their post-chaise, while we returned into the house.

That we were all indignant at having been so interrupted, the reader does not require to be told; and the aggression on the liberty of the subject was justly condemned in the most veracious London papers. But it was a mistake both in the Government journals and in those on our side, to say that the massacre was appalling. There was in fact no massacre at all; and I have a suspicion that our adversaries only made their statement to insinuate that we were turbulent,

and that in consequence a massacre was probable; while our friends—those at least who conceived they were so—made their representation to awaken sympathy for our cause, and to enhance the public antipathy against our foes. Be this, however, as it may, it must be allowed that the whole affair proved nugatory; for the people in the neighbourhood talked so much about the uproar created by the dragoons, that no one seemed to have received any impression whatever from the doctrines we attempted to inculcate.

But although we had failed, and been frustrated in our intent, the effect on that part of the country was most salutary. Several respectable persons from Old-Port came to Mr. Greedison's house in the evening, and, complaining bitterly of the contumelious treatment we had received from the surviving magistrate, proposed that we should hold another meeting of the same kind in a timber-yard belonging to one of them, and in which, being enclosed and private property, he assured us the magistrate would

not dare to shew his face. An offer of this kind was truly patriotic, and we accordingly accepted it; but nothing in human affairs ever runs smooth in its anticipated channel.

By the post, on the morning of the appointed day, I received a letter, requesting me to return immediately home, as my mother lay at the point of death, and was anxious to see me before she closed her eyes. Public spirit and personal affection were thus set at war in my bosom. "If I delay obedience to the summons," thought I, "till after the meeting, I shall justly incur the imputation of neglecting private predilections for public duties; but then, though in the eye of affection I may incur blame, the action will rank me with the Bruti; but if I obey the summons, and fly as it were from the performance of the public obligations, the case will be quite the reverse."

I hesitated; and it was not till the multitude had begun to assemble, that I recollected how in all things the incitements of nature should be held in reverence above the usages

of society. "It is true," said I to myself, when I reflected on the dilemma in which I was placed, "that there always must be something wrong where nature in the heart goes against the calls of society. Were not the social state egregiously perverted, there could exist no cause for the public meeting we intend to hold; and as that public meeting springs rather from a wish to avenge the wrongs of nature than from a direct suggestion of the goddess herself, the claim upon me to visit my expiring parent is clearly more direct, and in so far ought to be allowed a proper predominance." This reflection decided my hesitation; I resolved not to go to the timber-yard, but to return immediately home.

I was afterwards informed that Mr. Blazon made a very affecting use of the incident, and thereby greatly ingratiated both himself and me with his numerous auditors.

Singular as it may appear, it is to this simple circumstance that I owe my enviable situation in the House of Commons. Had I attended the meeting, many would have

thought that the report of my mother's illness was not so alarming, and would not have given me credit for that abstinence of feeling which I really might have deserved ; but when the struggle with which natural and social duty agitated my bosom was represented by Mr. Blazon, it was moving to hear how much the multitude were touched with commiseration.

The report that Mr. Greedison sent me, by the next post, of what had taken place, was wonderfully interesting. The neighbouring borough of Mothy, in which the elective franchise was in the potwallopers, was softened, as he said, so much in my favour, that it was openly spoken of at a public supper, which was held the same evening in Old-Port, in a manner so gratifying, that Mr. Asper, in proposing my health, suggested that no borough, which possessed its proper freedom, could choose for its representative a more amiable man, or one more pure in principle or firm in purpose.

“ I am well persuaded,” added Mr. Gree-

dison, " that, as a dissolution of parliament is soon expected, were you to allow yourself to be put in nomination on the popular interest at Mothy, you would be assuredly returned."

But this letter did not reach me in an auspicious moment ; it came when my feelings were racked, and I threw it into my scrutoire as a trifle, to be examined at a more convenient season :—indeed, it could not have come upon me at a worse period ; for, as I have already prepared the reader to expect, when I reached my father's house, I found the good lady just upon the point of making her exit from the mortal stage.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON leaving Old-Port, instead of proceeding to my own home, the letters I had received concerning the condition of my mother induced me to go straight to her residence. My father being dead some time before, and his end in no way remarkable, it was not necessary to be noticed when it took place ; but the poor good lady's departure happened in a crisis which rendered it particularly impressive. In truth, the death of a mother is always much more affecting to her children than that of a father, and I felt the influence of the universal rule.

On my arrival at her door, I requested the aged servant who admitted me, and who had from time out of mind been in the family, to conduct me to her mistress. Without reply, she did so at once, and, on entering the room, I found the invalid

sitting in her bed supported by pillows; in her appearance less, however, as one on the eve of embarking for another world than I had prepared myself to see.

As she had always been very kind to me, ever seeking to discover some gentle excuse for many of those actions which my father, of a severer humour, loudly condemned, I was in rather an unphilosophical state of agitation at the sight of her emaciated features, and the ghastly satisfaction with which she glared on me when she discovered my approach.

It required no long contemplation to perceive that her last sands were nearly all ebbcd; and yet there was a speculation in her eyes which shewed that the undying spirit, as she called it herself, was still vivid within.

She raised her hand when she saw me, and stretched it out to welcome me; but her decayed strength would not second the effort, and it fell in feebleness on the coverlet, before I could reach forward to snatch it. This touched with coldness my heart; but

her voice, weak and broken, had still consistency enough to sustain the maternal sentiment that she endeavoured to convey: my feelings were then irrationally strong.

“Nathan Butt,” said she, “I am glad to see you. It was my prayer that you might be at my death-bed, and the goodness of Heaven is manifested,—you are here:—sit down. You have ever been a wayward and ungracious lad, with a warmer heart than you were conscious of possessing, and a weaker head than you ever suspected. Nothing but his conviction of that made your poor father remain, to his death, your kind friend, though rough was the husk in which, no doubt, you often thought he shewed himself.”

Not knowing what she intended to add, I said, in the pause which occurred after she had thus spoken, “Madam, I never was insensible to my father’s kindness;—but what would you say?—although I have often had reason to think he was not the most enlightened of mankind.”

“He was the best of fathers!” was her

emphatic reply. "The only dregs in his cup of life were the fears that he entertained lest your recklessness would draw you into danger. But, Nathan, I have not strength left to tell you how sincerely he was your father."

By this effort her strength was exhausted, and her head dropped on her bosom, in which position she continued so long that my heart became sore with looking at her. At last she again rallied, and added, "But, Nathan, I have not time to importune you with exhortations. I must bid you farewell. You have been from your childhood a better-hearted creature than the world, from your actions, has a plea to think; and if you reflect on this truth, you will soon discover that riding up and down the land, making a street-talk of yourself, is not the way to raise a respectable character. Nathan, my dear, as you are a lad but of an indifferent understanding, and the part you have chosen for yourself in the world is not exactly the one that befits your talents and capacity, I would advise you ——"

I was rather surprised to hear my mother disparage me in this manner; but I remained silent, for I saw she was seized with the throes of death, and in that crisis the reason is not in the best of conditions. When she had some time spoken to me in the irrelevant manner that I have described, and during which I was very strangely affected, she then pronounced a blessing, and said,

“ Now, Nathan, go away, leave me; for I have not long to live, and I have an account to reckon up before I quit this inn—for such has the world ever been. I have always felt in it that I was on a journey to another country—my home in this but a stage.”

I could say nothing; and for a minute she looked in my face very tenderly,

“ Oh! Nathan Butt, are you that blithe and innocent boy that gladdened my heart so long ago?”—and she turned her face aside from me, and, after a few words murmured in pity, she became still.

I then left the room, and went to my own chamber, where, after a season, I grew impatient at my softness, and cried out, with

a grudge, "Why is it that man alone should be molested with such scenes?" But, do what I would, and resolutely as I nerved myself, I could not check the current of my thoughts and tears. This was undoubtedly an unbecoming imbecility; and for a time, in spite of myself, I was obliged to give way to the mood that fell upon me. In the sequel, however, I recovered my self-possession; and it is salutary to reflect how soon, after the grave has closed on the truest of friends—a parent—a man regains his accustomed wont. No doubt, the shrinking sense of grief is afterwards felt occasionally in the lone and the sad hour, and I have not been without the experience of its icy touch; but sorrow is not a habitude of nature, and, to confess the fact, I really felt that the demise of my worthy mother left me freer to pursue the course of my endeavours to improve the condition of man; for while she lived, my dread of giving any cause of uneasiness to her made me shy to undertake many enterprises of pith and moment that the heritage of the world so wofully requires.

CHAPTER XXII.

DURING the space of time that I was employed in settling the domestic affairs which the demise of my mother had occasioned, my friends in Old-Port, and their connexions in the neighbouring borough of Mothy, were not idle. Mr. Asper, who had considerable influence in that quarter, went about among his relations, and represented me to them as a man of no ordinary calibre of understanding; and Mr. Blazon held frequent meetings with influential persons in Mothy, where he made earnest speeches, and persuaded his hearers that they could not, in the event of an election, choose a better man to represent them in parliament.

From time to time I heard what was going on; and, to say the truth, was none displeased to observe that my reputation was rising amongst them; and the natural exultation

produced by this was most pleasant, especially when I read the following paragraph in the county newspaper, then published weekly in the borough of Mothy.

“ We have great satisfaction in announcing to our readers and this part of the kingdom in general, that Mr. Butt, whose remarkable oratory made so great an impression at the Chevy Chase of Greedison Park, is likely to offer himself, on the popular interest, as a candidate to represent our venerable borough in the next parliament.”

This notification was, in many respects, highly conciliatory to my feelings; it delicately insinuated that my powers of elocution were duly appreciated, and that they had been exerted with impressive effect on a memorable occasion. But no man is deservedly an object of praise, in this corrupted world, without at the same time being an object of animadversion.

In the town of Old-Port there was at this time a detractive newspaper, published also weekly. The sale, to be sure, was not considerable; for it was a Tory concern, and

supported by certain gentlemen of large fortunes and little ideas, who resided in the neighbourhood. No sooner had the Mothy weekly "Oracle" published its unprejudiced opinion of my qualifications, in the paragraph quoted, than the malignant editor of the Old-Port "Champion" resolved to give, not me, but the Oracle itself, a most unmannerly thrust. Accordingly, in his very next Number, he had the following most impertinent remarks on the subject :

" A neighbouring contemporary, not distinguished for his perspicacity, has, in the playful vagaries of his lively imagination, actually conceived that there was some chance of the ancient and respectable borough of Mothy electing one Butt to represent it in the next parliament. We have some reason to believe that the protégé of our friend is the same individual that proved himself such a theoretical fool at the hurly-burly in Greedison Park. Poor man ! his return will be an emphatic lesson to the community at large, of the kind of representatives that may be expected in Parliament if

the popular influence is allowed to predominate. We recollect that the speech of this sage personage went to shew the abstruse fact, that the majority ought always to rule the world."

Now, could a greater perversion be made of what I maintained ought to be the ascendancy of the few? The vulgar abuse, however, left no impression upon me—I was above that, and, moreover, I expected it: but for the purblind scribe to charge me with opinions so diametrically opposite to what I had ever cherished, was really a little too much. Nor was my indignation at the calumny at all appeased by the manner in which the weak man, unconsciously to himself, advocated my very doctrine. It was plain, by his expression, that he meant the very reverse of what he uttered; for, in ascribing to me, with a sneer, the absurdity of asserting the superiority of the irrational many over the enlightened few, he clearly, unknown to himself, was secretly of my opinion. I therefore pardoned him the sneer, certain that by it he would mitigate that antipathy which the

soundness and novelty of my speculations were calculated to awaken.

Still—though, upon consideration, the nefarious paragraph fell like an ineffectual javelin from the mail of philosophical temper in which I had encased myself—yet it was exceedingly provoking to be annoyed by one who had only impudence to recommend him.

But, whatever were my own sentiments on this undeserved and unprovoked attack, the effect on my friends was most stimulative. They saw that I was ordained to be a subject of Tory persecution, and they came forward in a most manful manner in my defence.

No sooner was the *Old-Port Champion* published, with its most aggressive paragraph, than my friends, both in *Mothy* and *Old-Port*, and in the vicinity, met, as it were with one accord, and at once, without any correspondence with me, nominated me a candidate, and sent, by the next post, an invitation to stand at the election, which they declared should not cost me a penny; adding, they were determined to bring in a

member who should prove himself at once a man of integrity in principle, of talent in endowment, and in virtue that honour to human nature, which I had so courageously shewn myself to be.

Such a solicitation, I frankly confess, I felt myself unable to withstand. My reply overflowed with feelings of gratitude : but, to avoid the expression of sentiments that might be construed as egotistical, I reserve for another chapter the details of the transactions in which I was in consequence soon after engaged.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE dissolution of parliament took place more abruptly than we were quite prepared for; but still I was none daunted. Immediately on receiving the news, I hurried off to Mothy, where I lost no time in apprising my friends there of my arrival: nor had I to long for their presence; for they immediately came flocking around, and all was hurry, talk, and activity, instantly, in the town.

That evening I was rather fatigued with my journey, which had been performed with uncommon celerity; but Mr. Greedison proposed that we should convene some of the leading characters in the place, men of well-known Whig principles and intrepid patriotism. To this, tired as I was, I offered no objection; because I had made up my mind to be, during the election, all things to all men; for it is necessary, on such occasions,

to swerve a little from the straightforwardness of principles.

I acknowledge this, because, in fact, I never have been very partial to the Whigs, not being endowed with sagacity enough to discern in what respect they differed essentially from the Tories; farther than that, while the latter endeavoured to preserve things as they are, the Whigs have only been anxious to make changes in forms, without altering the substance, merely to contrive new places and employments for their partisans.

The distinction between the Radicals and the rival factions is obvious. By us, anxious to restore to mankind the salutary operation of primitive principles, an honesty and simplicity of purpose are strikingly evinced. Our object is not to preserve old things, or to recast them into new shapes; but to remove them entirely away: in this respect we differ. It were as easy for a Radical, without infringing his integrity, to unite with the Tories, who admit of no change, as for him to join the Whigs, who are for all change,—they both look only to the bullion.

The Tories are of opinion that the ancient gorgeous cups and cans are of a taste and pattern that cannot be improved ; and the Whigs think the bullion in them would be more useful were it converted into forks and spoons. The Radicals are of a wiser caste : such luxuries we justly condemn ; and our intent is, if we can, to make the material into coin, and add it to the circulating medium. But I forget that it was not of our respective opinions I intended to speak, but only relative to what happened that night in the Red Lion inn at Mothy.

In the course of a short time, by the means and emissaries of Mr. Greedison, a considerable company was assembled ; and, as it was expected I should in some sort make an exposition of my public motives, I was requested to ascend a table and address the crowd. This I did with good humour.

I reminded them of our early longings for the epoch that had at last come to pass, and that the object of all our wishes seemed to be now within our reach. " Reform," said I, " which a few years ago was as the un-

substantial vision of a dream, has taken consistency, and become a thing of flesh and blood. It is no longer a phantom—but a friend and a visitor. Every one recognises it—all welcome it: it blithens our hearths; it gives hilarity to our boards; and realises the beautiful mythology of antiquity, which describes the gods as holding familiar intercourse with man, and the heavens on visiting terms with the earth.”——

By some accident, a rank Tory, one Mr. Rivet, had got in among us, and, just as I said this, being standing opposite to me, he looked, in my face, and, with satirical sobriety, inquired whether, on these occasions, tea or punch together was the go? Another, then, of the same inordinate sect, whose name I never learnt—for I did not afterwards choose to make him of so much importance, as to seem that I had noticed him—also looked up and said, derisively, that the earth, however, never returned the visit.

This interruption was resented by my friends; and ultimately the two intrusive

strangers were compelled to withdraw ; and when order was restored, I resumed my speech, which, by cheers and applause, was acknowledged to be very much to the point. I concluded by assuring the company, that it was my fixed determination, if returned to parliament, to support every measure of reform, without scruple ; so much did I regard that great desideratum paramount to every other measure.

The orators who followed were, in their respective strains, to the same effect. But it was not till late, and towards the close of the business, that the name of the opposing candidate to me was ascertained. It had been known for some time, that the anti-reformers were resolved to contest the borough ; that they had applied, without success, to Lord James Feudal to stand against me ; and that old Sir Vicary Stale had also been entreated in vain. Several other Tory gentlemen were likewise solicited ; but at last they persuaded Sir Ormsby Carcase to venture.

Their choice excited some surprise ; for,

although he was undoubtedly a Tory, addicted to the society and parties of the neighbouring aristocracy, it was thought that he could not be otherwise than a friend of the people at heart—being a new man; his father, the first baronet of the family, having raised himself by mud-larking, as it was called, in the common sewers of trade; and he himself was more distinguished for the round, bold shape of his head than for the specimens he now and then produced of its contents. However, not to dwell on personalities, the announcement of Sir Ormsby Carcase as my adversary was heard with evident surprise and some tokens of disapprobation; but when the first emotion subsided, the effect was cheering; a faint murmur ran round the room—a more audible buzz succeeded—and at last, from all sides, vehement voices broke out, declaring resolutions that would overwhelm him with disgrace.

“Had he been of the old gentry,” cried one, “it would have been nothing, for they are naturally Tories.” “It is an insult to

the people of England," exclaimed another, "that such a man dares to think he may resist their unanimous will!" "He shall rue, with punishment, his presumption," said a lean little man, grinning with acrimony, and shaking his fist. In short, the indignation which the intelligence kindled was individualised in its symptoms by the characteristics of every man present; and before the meeting broke up, there was a mutual pledge given, to exert both heart and hand to procure my return. A subscription opened on the spot for that purpose was surprisingly liberal.

This affair of the subscription was not, however, entirely satisfactory to me. I could not see why it should be deemed requisite; for it certainly implied something not quite so sound among us as might have been wished among men zealous in a good cause, and resolute to assert their rights.

I had always, till the subscription was mentioned, believed the Tories to be the only party in the state who generally made use of bribery. Now and then I did, indeed,

hear of Whig elections having cost a ruinous deal of money ; but that the Radicals were to have recourse to the same delinquent expedients was distressing ; and I told Mr. Asper, who was there, and who was the author of the subscription, that I was reluctant to lend myself to men who thought their principles stood in need of corrupt operations. He, however, said that it was not until reform should be established, that we could venture to trust only to virtue.

“ Recollect, Mr. Butt, that we must fight our battles with weapons as effective as those of the enemy. In physical war, the best moral argument falls effectless, compared to the energy of a cannon-ball ; and, depend upon't, if we do not employ as good reasons as those of our foes, we shall be beaten. No, no, Mr. Butt ; purity of election is a blessing of future days. In the meantime, our wisdom is to use the world as we find it.”

These remarks very solemnly affected me ; and when I retired to sleep, fatigued as I then was, I could not shut my eyes for reflect-

ing on the deleterious influence of these principles on society ; since here, in my own case, was a striking example of the force of custom in practice over precept in principle.

“ Oh, world,” said I to myself, “ how corrupt thou art ! The globe itself is but one foul pustule—a pimple on the face and beauty of Universal Nature.” Soon after, I fell asleep, murmuring to myself, with a pathetic subsidence of sense, from one of my friend John Galt’s unfortunate tragedies, which, like many other good things in the world, have only been distinguished for their blemishes :

“ Oh, holy Nature ! thee I do acquit
Of all the foul that stains thy minion here :
How fair, how nobly hast thou done thy part !
How bright and glorious shines the generous sun !
How rich and soft earth’s carpeting of flowers !
How fresh and joyous to the corporal sense
The all-embracing dalliance of the air !
Contrasted with the base device of courts,
The dire cabal, and midnight craft of guilt !”

CHAPTER XXIV.

FROM that moment of my early life in which I first discerned that all the evils inherited by man spring from the impediments opposed by the institutions of society to the eternal workings of nature—as pure streams and flowing currents are interrupted by rocks and cataracts in their course—I studiously endeavoured to obey the sympathies and antipathies implanted in my bosom. Often and often have I said to myself—“Of what use are penal laws? Is not the remorse with which bad and wicked actions are remembered, sufficient of itself to deter every well-regulated mind from committing them, without the artifice of legal penalties? And do not the kind feelings of affection constitute a motive to cherish it with constancy and in purity?”

I will not, however, deny that, independ-

ently of the instigations which the institutions of society excite in the human race, there are individuals of that species who receive from nature malignant propensities. But the adder and the malevolent man are of similar naturalities: the one can no more prevent death from following its bite, than the other mischief from his practice — both are alike unconscious of the ill within them. Such men are as little apt to be improved by punishment, as the venomous reptile is by the missiles with which children, in their innate aversion, attempt its destruction.

I am led to make this observation, owing to a very trifling incident, which might have changed the entire complexion of my subsequent life.

It has been mentioned, that I received the invitation to be a candidate for the borough of Mothy at a time when my mind was disturbed by the death of my mother, and the anxieties which that event entailed upon my attention. The letter, as I said, was thrown carelessly from me; and I forgot to acknowledge the receipt, till one day the

recollection of it flashed like lightning across my mind. I was absolutely thunderstruck at my own negligence; I had no words to express my vexation; and was just on the point of sitting down to answer it, with heartfelt contrition—when, lo! at the very instant, the postman brought another letter on the same subject from Mr. Greedison, expressing the sincerest apprehension lest the original letter had miscarried. Thus was I, by a stroke of good fortune, relieved from a most embarrassing predicament.

I immediately again took up my pen, which I had laid down when the letter was brought in; and, instead of the penitential eloquence which I had prepared myself to utter, I merely informed him, that I had received his letter of the 29th current, and would be with him, with all my heart and the resolution that every honest man should feel in a good cause, on the 2d proximo.

On the same day that this happened, Parliament was dissolved, and I hastened to the contest.

The interval which had taken place be-

tween the date of the first and second letter was so much lost time to me; to the rival candidate it was all gain: nevertheless, with undismayed courage, my friends and I proceeded to the canvass, in which, certainly, we were very successful; but my rival being ahead, it was by no means a decided case—indeed, it was almost desperate: insomuch that Mr. Greedison proposed, that, as the sessions were near at hand, and the jail full of prisoners, chiefly the paper-capt potentates of the town, we should make a demand for them to be allowed to vote at the election.

This ingenious suggestion was proposed in conclave; but it was deemed expedient that the real political leaning of the prisoners should be first ascertained; because, as Mr. Greedison justly said, if they are men of Tory principles, as all rogues necessarily are, then it would only be to strengthen the cause of our adversary to require them. But Mr. Asper, who was with me—a sly and dry old man—remarked, that he had no doubt they were all Whigs, inasmuch as they had a particular predilection for the

property of others ; for what else can be said of taking away from the possessors pensions and places, to help themselves or their friends from the plunder? I saw Mr. Greedison redden with displeasure at this insinuation ; and I said, that although the election was vested in the pot-wallopers and inhabitants at large of the borough, a stronger objection might be urged against the stratagem, — as it could not be maintained that such of the freemen as were then incarcerated could be described as inhabitants at large of the borough.

The other gentlemen of the committee were of the same opinion ; but Mr. Greedison argued, that by the ancient and common law of England (a Whig doctrine), every man was deemed innocent until found guilty, and could not therefore be deprived of any of his legitimate rights before trial and conviction : all the prisoners were in this state. “None of them,” said he, “have yet been brought to trial, and therefore they are all innocent, and in the full possession of every privilege which belongs to a British subject.”

“ You had better try,” said Mr. Cannykin, a fat old justice of the peace, a Whig by profession, but in practice a vitriolic Tory ; adding, “ My good friends, let us not waste time ; for whether the inmates of the prison be or be not inhabitants of the town at large, no magistrate will venture to send them to us for their votes.”

I was greatly struck with this most shrewd remark :— can any thing, indeed, be more absurd than to consider a delinquent innocent until he is proved guilty ? It may be well enough in the eye of a lawyer to see this untruth on paper ; but the moral sense of mankind revolts at the preposterous supposition. However, not to become tedious with details,—in the end, after a neck and neck race, I was returned duly elected.

CHAPTER XXV.

EVERY body knows that soon after the general election, the new Parliament was assembled. Great expectations were entertained of the good it would do; and all the members repaired to their posts with the utmost alacrity. I, of course, went to mine also; and my feelings on the occasion were, no doubt, in unison with those of the others who had been returned for the first time. But, whatever may have been the state of theirs, mine were not of the most harmonious tenor.

The thought of the House was constantly present with me. I heard the voice of great orators in the ear of my spirit, round, sweet, and vehement. I was afraid; and when I went down to see the halls of Parliament, on the day before they were opened for business, a chilly dread overawed me. I

beheld the green leathern cushions on the benches of the House of Commons as things that betokened a mystery ; and in the shape of the speaker's chair there was a phantasma that inspired me with a strange imagination of something as it were begotten between a pulpit and a tomb.

Mr. Greedison had kindly taken me under his wing, and came to town with me, that there might be no lack in the respectability of my introduction ; for he had great influence with the ministers, and several of the most distinguished orators among the Whigs were his friends. Accordingly I went into the House between Mr. Bletherington, that popular man, and Mr. Assert, than whom there is not in Parliament a member of greater talent at the invention of facts.

On the third day after Parliament had met, I took the oaths and my seat.

In the meantime, my rival, who had so nearly been triumphant, Mr. Oakdale, a Tory, had not been idle. A rumour had gone forth, from the close of the poll, that not only he intended to petition against my

return, but that even some of his friends were no less resolved. Against this menace, the party on my side were equally determined: but as it did not consort with the notions that I entertain of what the purity of election should be, I told them frankly that I would not myself take any step in the business, stating my reasons, which won from them great applause, and nerved them to be intrepid in supporting my cause.

It is but fair, however, to acknowledge that I was not thoroughly content at hearing my rival was every day growing bolder; and little was I prepared for such a shock as I received, when, about an hour after I had taken my seat, an old member came to the bar with a paper in his hand, which he almost immediately, in the body of the House, announced was a petition, respectably signed, against my return, as effected—not by bribery and corruption, for that's the Tory practice—but by perjury of the grossest kind.

I shook like the aspen on hearing this;

for it instantly struck me that there was some probability in the charge; inasmuch as the party which I represented were not in obvious circumstances to practise much bribery; which rendered it the more likely that perjury had been employed. Not, however, to waste time in needless narration, a committee was appointed to try the merits of the case; and as it was necessary to meet the petition bravely, I announced the event by the post of that evening to many of my friends.

I cannot describe the exact effect which the incident of the petition had upon me; but I said to Mr. Greedison, who called at my lodgings in Abingdon Street, the same evening, that I was perplexed and uneasy. "I cannot conceive," observed I to him, "the use of the rules of Parliament concerning bribery or perjury at elections. Things are bad according to the circumstances in which they arise; but nothing can be more obnoxious to common sense than the hair-on-end looks which Parliament puts on, when that old woman hears either of the one

term or the other. If a man has a vote, has he not a property, and may he not sell that property? In what respect, then, can the voter be more unconstitutional than the votee, who buys it, and in turn takes a place for himself or kindred of a satisfactory value? And then," said I, "this horror of perjury is only a proof of the inveteracy of the evil which springs from our unnatural system of government; for, if it be abstractly true that every man should have a vote, it is as clear as the sun at noonday, that society is to blame for any ill that may be in the perjury by which he asserts his natural right."

"Very true," said Mr. Greedison, "very true, Mr. Butt; but, nevertheless, the law makes both offences heinous, and we must submit to the law while it exists. It therefore signifies very little to you or me whether the thing be right or wrong in principle—our task is to fight with our adversaries as dexterously, by law, as possible. Who is in the right? is not the question; but who can be proved to have violated the law?"

"Ah! Mr. Greedison," replied I, "you

make a sad comment on the ways of the world : for my part, the right is what I will always stand by. The expedient in legislation is an abuse that I shall ever stoutly resist ; but, as you say, it is the way of the world. The man that robs a crown with violence, is, in the eyes of the world, raised into worship ; but the poor fool that filches only half-a-crown, is sent to the correction-house. No, no, Mr. Greedison ; when the time arrives that I shall be heard fulminating, many are the preposterous customs that deform legislation, which it shall be my study to blight, overwhelm, and extirpate."

CHAPTER XXVI.

DURING the time that my election committee was sitting, the Reform Bill, which the unanimous nation so loudly applauds and so vehemently demands, was introduced into the House. Wearied, troubled, and irritated as I was in the forenoon with the inquiries of the Committee, I never missed my place in the evening. Night after night I attended there; uniform was my support of the great measure; but I was not so well seconded as I expected. The main body of the Tories were to the full as frightened as any rational person could expect. The Whigs, over against them, were no less loquacious, though in a different strain, on the merits of the bill. A few country gentlemen were as short-sightedly selfish as the squirarchy in general are on all questions of national improvement; only a very few

were truly of my way of thinking. Several, no doubt, sported opinions not unlike those that I have ever entertained ; but none—no, not one—courageously struck at the root of the evil.

I was disconcerted at observing how far the House was influenced in its deliberations by obsolete maxims, which, in this enlightened age, should have been discarded ; and for some time I was unaffectedly in doubt whether the bill was, indeed, that salutary panacea so much the theme of universal applause. But, after considering the subject carefully, I began to form a different opinion of its efficacy.

“ The bill,” said I to myself, “ is not to be regarded as the medicine which the state requires ; the consequences that must flow from it, when it shall have passed, are the ingredients of the purge that will renovate the hopes and brighten the anticipations of man.

“ When this bill is passed, and a new Parliament under it is assembled, will not that Parliament be more in a condition to pass another liberal bill than the present Parlia-

ment is to pass this one? Well, what next? for after the second bill, is it not consistent with nature, that the new Parliament assembled under it should pass another, still more congenial to the oppressed and the needful?"

"Under that third bill," said I to a gentleman one night in the lobby, who had been instrumental in returning me to Parliament, "it is my opinion, the scourge of the poor-laws will be abolished; no reformed Parliament, of the third degree, will be daring enough to sanction such a preposterous measure, as supporting the poor by a tax upon those who are themselves in difficulties, while the parks, palaces, and grandeur of the aristocracy exist. No, my friend; in the bright vista of the future I perceive what must, of a natural necessity, come to pass. Last Sunday I was up the river; and I saw, in passing, Zion House and its magnificent conservatory. Why, said I, should such environment be maintained for an individual? The reflection brought in array before me

all the blessed successive reforms which are destined to be the consequences of this bill.”

“ I doubt,” replied the gentleman, “ that you extend your views too far : there may be a time when all things concurring shall effect such an alteration on the phasis of society ; but that is a work for posterity. If we get a measure of reform that will better our condition, we ought to be thankful and content.”

I started aghast to hear this, for he had the reputation of being an indefatigable Reformer ; and I replied, with unaffected astonishment, that I was surprised to hear him say so. “ I thought, sir, your views were of a braver kind, and that, like me, you considered this bill but as a forerunner — ‘ the morning star, day’s harbinger.’ ”

“ I will not deny,” was his answer, “ that I have been strenuous in urging a greater reformation than even what is proposed to be accomplished by the bill ; but it was because I was well aware, that if we did not demand a great deal, we should only receive

very little. The world, Mr. Butt, is far from being so ripely philosophical as you seem to think; and I fear, from what I have observed in the spirit of the late debates, that, make what reform, by act of Parliament, the ministers choose, no more of that act will be carried into effect than the nation is prepared to receive. However, let us get what we can; and if it be too little to satisfy the age, we must struggle for more."

Something at this moment drew me aside from the friend with whom I was conversing, and he went away. I felt, however, that he had left his mantle behind. I thought and cogitated much on what he had said; and it did then seem to me that there was great truth in his remark; for the human mind, in welling itself clear, purifies the law. No member of Parliament would now venture to propose some of those Draco enactments which still disgrace the statute-book. Even the late Lord Londonderry, who was not easily daunted by circumstances, facetiously proposed the abolition of the statutes against

witchcraft—yea, at the witching time of night. The law is an oracle that speaks only the will of the majority.

Next morning, however, I was able to investigate the subject more coolly; and it did not appear that it could, for a moment, be admitted that legislation should be regulated by expediency, or made subservient to temporary exigencies. “It must,” I exclaimed, “be regulated by eternal principles; and it is because it has been for so many ages adapted to the wants of occasion, rather than to the necessities of nature, that it has been, instead of a protection to mankind, an ever-flowing fountain of bitter waters.”

CONCLUSION.

THE investigation of my case proceeded in a parallel with that of the Reform bill; but as the probability of the latter passing the House was more and more developed, I am sorry to say my chance of success diminished. This was altogether owing to those obsolete and artificial restrictions which the laws of the realm and the rules of Parliament have imposed for the regulation of elections,—a consideration not the more consolatory to me, who might be among the last victims; and for two reasons.

First, it is not congenial to the human mind to be in any thing disappointed; and secondly, I was most earnest in wishing to give my vote at the third reading of the bill, that I might go down to posterity, in red ink on Ridgway the bookseller's list, as an illustrious benefactor of the human race.

No doubt, the number of those ambitious of this distinction was rather too great to make the honour remarkable ; but few, in their aim, were actuated, like me, by a pure and noble passion. Many, indeed, were under the influence of sordid fear, and thought more of obtaining a seat in the next Parliament, than a niche in the temple of fame. Yet there certainly was no want of members about the House—chiefly of the Tory temperament, however—who were exceedingly provoking by their constant reiteration of the old proverb, that only foul birds file their own nests—alluding to the manner in which many had declared the House of Commons naught ; but with such I entertained no communion of sentiment. It was not on account of any thing in the House itself that I supported the bill through thick and thin ; but solely and entirely because I foresaw it would be the parent of a more comprehensive measure, destructive of those pernicious inheritances that I had been born to abominate.

The day before the bill was to be read

a third time, the committee on my election decided, on grounds which no rational man could approve, that I had been returned by most flagitious perjury. And what greatly surprised me—which it should not have done, considering how such things are administered—although bribery and corruption was clearly proven against my rival's party in several instances, not a word was said on that head in mitigation of the delinquency with which my friends had been charged. However, I was not entirely forlorn nor discomfited by the result, as I had the best assurances from those who acted with and for me, that at the first election under the Reform bill, I might count on being returned with triumph and glory.

The anticipation of this result has, undoubtedly, sweetened the bitterness of my regrets. The bill is an era—a mile-stone in the highway of perfectibility, and is worthy of all acceptation. To the Tories, unquestionably, it is objectionable, inasmuch as it may have the effect of strengthening the legislative influence of their

rivals, who have availed themselves of the means of office to achieve a great advantage. To some of the Radicals, likewise, it may not be quite satisfactory, being, in fact, greatly short of what we desire. But, nevertheless, as a resting-place, from which we may look far along the future road, it affords an exhilarating prospect; even although it be not easy to describe in what the benefit expected shall consist. I cannot therefore, deficient as it may be, resist the delight of congratulating my countrymen in particular, and mankind in general, on the boon which at last awaits us. For certain it is, or ought to be, that every relaxation in law is a concession to freedom; and I regard the bill as, in its tendencies on the nature of things, calculated to promote that irresponsible liberty of action, without which man is but the slave of statutes and the thrall of individual caprice and arrogance.

Alas! how fluctuating are human hopes!
The bill—the immortal elixir that was to

renovate liberty into its pristine vigour, is spilled in the very act of being poured from the phial into the spoon. Dark clouds have again fallen on our prospects. The sun is eclipsed. But still let us not despair. Neither Peers nor prejudices can extinguish Nature. The vestal fire is eternal, for it is an element ; and the time is still coming on when every man shall sit under his own vine and fig-tree. This should console us ; and with this assurance at heart I am none daunted by the disaster. My only apprehension lest it may never be destined to come to pass in this country, is, that in the cold climate of England the fig-tree grows not to such a size as to afford shelter or enjoyment in the shadow of its branches.

THE END.

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