

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Anthony Hollopner



Walter Radcliffe.



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AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY



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# AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

IN TWO VOLUMES

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## CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

CHAP.	PAGE
XI. 'THE CLAVERINGS,' THE 'PALL MALL GAZETTE,' 'NINA BALATKA,' AND 'LINDA TRESSEL,' .	1
XII. ON NOVELS AND THE ART OF WRITING THEM, .	25
XIII. ON ENGLISH NOVELISTS OF THE PRESENT DAY,	63
XIV. ON CRITICISM, . . . . .	88
XV. 'THE LAST CHRONICLE OF BARSET'—LEAVING THE POST OFFICE—'ST PAUL'S MAGAZINE,' .	101
XVI. BEVERLEY, . . . . .	127
XVII. THE AMERICAN POSTAL TREATY—THE QUES- TION OF COPYRIGHT WITH AMERICA—FOUR MORE NOVELS, . . . . .	146
XVIII. 'THE VICAR OF BULLHAMPTON'—'SIR HARRY HOTSPUR'—'AN EDITOR'S TALES'—'CÆSAR,'	170
XIX. 'RALPH THE HEIR'—'THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS' —'LADY ANNA'—'AUSTRALIA,' . . . . .	192
XX. 'THE WAY WE LIVE NOW' AND 'THE PRIME MINISTER'—CONCLUSION, . . . . .	208



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OF  
ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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CHAPTER XI.

‘THE CLAVERINGS,’ THE ‘PALL MALL GAZETTE,’  
‘NINA BALATKA,’ AND ‘LINDA TRESSEL.’

*The Claverings*, which came out in 1866 and 1867, was the last novel which I wrote for the *Cornhill*; and it was for this that I received the highest rate of pay that was ever accorded to me. It was the same length as *Framley Parsonage*, and the price was £2800. Whether much or little, it was offered by the proprietor of the magazine, and was paid in a single cheque.

In the *Claverings* I did not follow the habit which had now become very common

to me, of introducing personages whose names are already known to the readers of novels, and whose characters were familiar to myself. If I remember rightly, no one appears here who had appeared before or who has been allowed to appear since. I consider the story as a whole to be good, though I am not aware that the public has ever corroborated that verdict. The chief character is that of a young woman who has married manifestly for money and rank, — so manifestly that she does not herself pretend, even while she is making the marriage, that she has any other reason. The man is old, disreputable, and a worn-out debauchee. Then comes the punishment natural to the offence. When she is free, the man whom she had loved, and who had loved her, is engaged to another woman. He vacillates and is weak,—in which weakness is the fault of the book, as he plays the part of hero. But she is strong—strong in her purpose, strong in her desires, and strong in her consciousness that the punishment which comes upon her has been deserved.

But the chief merit of *The Claverings* is in the genuine fun of some of the scenes. Hum-

our has not been my forte, but I am inclined to think that the characters of Captain Boodle, Archie Claving, and Sophie Gordeloup are humorous. Count Pateroff, the brother of Sophie, is also good, and disposes of the young hero's interference in a somewhat masterly manner. In *The Claverings*, too, there is a wife whose husband is a brute to her, who loses an only child—his heir—and who is rebuked by her lord because the boy dies. Her sorrow is, I think, pathetic. From beginning to end the story is well told. But I doubt now whether any one reads *The Claverings*. When I remember how many novels I have written, I have no right to expect that above a few of them shall endure even to the second year beyond publication. This story closed my connection with the *Cornhill Magazine*;—but not with its owner, Mr George Smith, who subsequently brought out a further novel of mine in a separate form, and who about this time established the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to which paper I was for some years a contributor.

It was in 1865 that the *Pall Mall Gazette* was commenced, the name having been taken

from a fictitious periodical, which was the offspring of Thackeray's brain. It was set on foot by the unassisted energy and resources of George Smith, who had succeeded by means of his magazine and his publishing connection in getting around him a society of literary men who sufficed, as far as literary ability went, to float the paper at once under favourable auspices. His two strongest staffs probably were "Jacob Omnium," whom I regard as the most forcible newspaper writer of my days, and Fitz-James Stephen, the most conscientious and industrious. To them the *Pall Mall Gazette* owed very much of its early success,—and to the untiring energy and general ability of its proprietor. Among its other contributors were George Lewes, Hannay,—who, I think, came up from Edinburgh for employment on its columns,—Lord Houghton, Lord Strangford, Charles Merivale, Greenwood the present editor, Greg, myself, and very many others;—so many others, that I have met at a Pall Mall dinner a crowd of guests who would have filled the House of Commons more respectably than I have seen it filled even on important occasions. There are many who now

remember—and no doubt when this is published there will be left some to remember—the great stroke of business which was done by the revelations of a visitor to one of the casual wards in London. A person had to be selected who would undergo the misery of a night among the usual occupants of a casual ward in a London poor-house, and who should at the same time be able to record what he felt and saw. The choice fell upon Mr Greenwood's brother, who certainly possessed the courage and the powers of endurance. The description, which was very well given, was, I think, chiefly written by the brother of the Casual himself. It had a great effect, which was increased by secrecy as to the person who encountered all the horrors of that night. I was more than once assured that Lord Houghton was the man. I heard it asserted also that I myself had been the hero. At last the unknown one could no longer endure that his honours should be hidden, and revealed the truth,—in opposition, I fear, to promises to the contrary, and instigated by a conviction that if known he could turn his honours to account. In the meantime, how-

ever, that record of a night passed in a work-house had done more to establish the sale of the journal than all the legal lore of Stephen, or the polemical power of Higgins, or the critical acumen of Lewes.

My work was very various. I wrote much on the subject of the American War, on which my feelings were at the time very keen,—subscribing, if I remember right, my name to all that I wrote. I contributed also some sets of sketches, of which those concerning hunting found favour with the public. They were republished afterwards, and had a considerable sale, and may, I think, still be recommended to those who are fond of hunting, as being accurate in their description of the different classes of people who are to be met in the hunting-field. There was also a set of clerical sketches, which was considered to be of sufficient importance to bring down upon my head the critical wrath of a great dean of that period. The most ill-natured review that was ever written upon any work of mine appeared in the *Contemporary Review* with reference to these Clerical Sketches. The critic told me that I did not understand Greek. That charge



has been made not unfrequently by those who have felt themselves strong in that pride-producing language. It is much to read Greek with ease, but it is not disgraceful to be unable to do so. To pretend to read it without being able,—that is disgraceful. The critic, however, had been driven to wrath by my saying that Deans of the Church of England loved to revisit the glimpses of the metropolitan moon.

I also did some critical work for the *Pall Mall*,—as I did also for *The Fortnightly*. It was not to my taste, but was done in conformity with strict conscientious scruples. I read what I took in hand, and said what I believed to be true,—always giving to the matter time altogether incommensurate with the pecuniary result to myself. In doing this for the *Pall Mall*, I fell into great sorrow. A gentleman, whose wife was dear to me as if she were my own sister, was in some trouble as to his conduct in the public service. He had been blamed, as he thought unjustly, and vindicated himself in a pamphlet. This he handed to me one day, asking me to read it, and express my opinion about it if I found that I had an opinion. I thought the request injudicious,

and I did not read the pamphlet. He met me again, and, handing me a second pamphlet, pressed me very hard. I promised him that I would read it, and that if I found myself able I would express myself;—but that I must say not what I wished to think, but what I did think. To this of course he assented. I then went very much out of my way to study the subject,—which was one requiring study. I found, or thought that I found, that the conduct of the gentleman in his office had been indiscreet; but that charges made against himself affecting his honour were baseless. This I said, emphasising much more strongly than was necessary the opinion which I had formed of his indiscretion,—as will so often be the case when a man has a pen in his hand. It is like a club or a sledge-hammer,—in using which, either for defence or attack, a man can hardly measure the strength of the blows he gives. Of course there was offence,—and a breaking off of intercourse between loving friends,—and a sense of wrong received, and I must own, too, of wrong done. It certainly was not open to me to whitewash with honesty him whom I did not find to be white; but there was no

duty incumbent on me to declare what was his colour in my eyes,—no duty even to ascertain. But I had been ruffled by the persistency of the gentleman's request,—which should not have been made,—and I punished him for his wrong-doing by doing a wrong myself. I must add, that before he died his wife succeeded in bringing us together.

In the early days of the paper, the proprietor, who at that time acted also as chief editor, asked me to undertake a duty,—of which the agony would indeed at no one moment have been so sharp as that endured in the casual ward, but might have been prolonged until human nature sank under it. He suggested to me that I should during an entire season attend the May meetings in Exeter Hall, and give a graphic and, if possible, amusing description of the proceedings. I did attend one,—which lasted three hours,—and wrote a paper which I think was called *A Zulu in Search of a Religion*. But when the meeting was over I went to that spirited proprietor, and begged him to impose upon me some task more equal to my strength. Not even on behalf of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was

very dear to me, could I go through a second May meeting,—much less endure a season of such martyrdom.

I have to acknowledge that I found myself unfit for work on a newspaper. I had not taken to it early enough in life to learn its ways and bear its trammels. I was fidgety when any word was altered in accordance with the judgment of the editor, who, of course, was responsible for what appeared. I wanted to select my own subjects,—not to have them selected for me; to write when I pleased,—and not when it suited others. As a permanent member of a staff I was no use, and after two or three years I dropped out of the work.

From the commencement of my success as a writer, which I date from the beginning of the *Cornhill Magazine*, I had always felt an injustice in literary affairs which had never afflicted me or even suggested itself to me while I was unsuccessful. It seemed to me that a name once earned carried with it too much favour. I indeed had never reached a height to which praise was awarded as a matter of course; but there were others who

sat on higher seats to whom the critics brought unmeasured incense and adulation, even when they wrote, as they sometimes did write, trash which from a beginner would not have been thought worthy of the slightest notice. I hope no one will think that in saying this I am actuated by jealousy of others. Though I never reached that height, still I had so far progressed that that which I wrote was received with too much favour. The injustice which struck me did not consist in that which was withheld from me, but in that which was given to me. I felt that aspirants coming up below me might do work as good as mine, and probably much better work, and yet fail to have it appreciated. In order to test this, I determined to be such an aspirant myself, and to begin a course of novels anonymously, in order that I might see whether I could obtain a second identity, —whether as I had made one mark by such literary ability as I possessed, I might succeed in doing so again. In 1865 I began a short tale called *Nina Balatka*, which in 1866 was published anonymously in *Blackwood's Magazine*. In 1867 this was followed by another of the same length, called *Linda Tressel*. I

will speak of them together, as they are of the same nature and of nearly equal merit. Mr Blackwood, who himself read the MS. of *Nina Balatka*, expressed an opinion that it would not from its style be discovered to have been written by me ;—but it was discovered by Mr Hutton of the *Spectator*, who found the repeated use of some special phrase which had rested upon his ear too frequently when reading for the purpose of criticism other works of mine. He declared in his paper that *Nina Balatka* was by me, showing I think more sagacity than good nature. I ought not, however, to complain of him, as of all the critics of my work he has been the most observant, and generally the most eulogistic. *Nina Balatka* never rose sufficiently high in reputation to make its detection a matter of any importance. Once or twice I heard the story mentioned by readers who did not know me to be the author, and always with praise ; but it had no real success. The same may be said of *Linda Tressel*. Blackwood, who of course knew the author, was willing to publish them, trusting that works by an experienced writer would make their way, even

without the writer's name, and he was willing to pay me for them, perhaps half what they would have fetched with my name. But he did not find the speculation answer, and declined a third attempt, though a third such tale was written for him.

Nevertheless I am sure that the two stories are good. Perhaps the first is somewhat the better, as being the less lachrymose. They were both written very quickly, but with a considerable amount of labour; and both were written immediately after visits to the towns in which the scenes are laid,—Prague, mainly, and Nuremberg. Of course I had endeavoured to change not only my manner of language, but my manner of story-telling also; and in this, *pace* Mr Hutton, I think that I was successful. English life in them there was none. There was more of romance proper than had been usual with me. And I made an attempt at local colouring, at descriptions of scenes and places, which has not been usual with me. In all this I am confident that I was in a measure successful. In the loves, and fears, and hatreds, both of Nina and of Linda, there is much that is pathetic. Prague

is Prague, and Nuremberg is Nuremberg. I know that the stories are good, but they missed the object with which they had been written. Of course there is not in this any evidence that I might not have succeeded a second time as I succeeded before, had I gone on with the same dogged perseverance. Mr Blackwood, had I still further reduced my price, would probably have continued the experiment. Another ten years of unpaid unflagging labour might have built up a second reputation. But this at any rate did seem clear to me, that with all the increased advantages which practice in my art must have given me, I could not at once induce English readers to read what I gave to them, unless I gave it with my name.

I do not wish to have it supposed from this that I quarrel with public judgment in affairs of literature. It is a matter of course that in all things the public should trust to established reputation. It is as natural that a novel reader wanting novels should send to a library for those by George Eliot or Wilkie Collins, as that a lady when she wants a pie for a picnic should go to Fortnum & Mason.



Fortnum & Mason can only make themselves Fortnum & Mason by dint of time and good pies combined. If Titian were to send us a portrait from the other world, as certain dead poets send their poetry, by means of a medium, it would be some time before the art critic of the *Times* would discover its value. We may sneer at the want of judgment thus displayed, but such slowness of judgment is human and has always existed. I say all this here because my thoughts on the matter have forced upon me the conviction that very much consideration is due to the bitter feelings of disappointed authors.

We who have succeeded are so apt to tell new aspirants not to aspire, because the thing to be done may probably be beyond their reach. "My dear young lady, had you not better stay at home and darn your stockings?" "As, sir, you have asked for my candid opinion, I can only counsel you to try some other work of life which may be better suited to your abilities." What old-established successful author has not said such words as these to humble aspirants for critical advice, till they have become almost formulas? No doubt there

is cruelty in such answers ; but the man who makes them has considered the matter within himself, and has resolved that such cruelty is the best mercy. No doubt the chances against literary aspirants are very great. It is so easy to aspire,—and to begin ! A man cannot make a watch or a shoe without a variety of tools and many materials. He must also have learned much. But any young lady can write a book who has a sufficiency of pens and paper. It can be done anywhere ; in any clothes—which is a great thing ; at any hours—to which happy accident in literature I owe my success. And the success, when achieved, is so pleasant ! The aspirants, of course, are very many ; and the experienced councillor, when asked for his candid judgment as to this or that effort, knows that among every hundred efforts there will be ninety-nine failures. Then the answer is so ready : “ My dear young lady, do darn your stockings ; it will be for the best.” Or perhaps, less tenderly, to the male aspirant : “ You must earn some money, you say. Don't you think that a stool in a counting-house might be better ? ” The advice will probably be good advice,—probably, no

doubt, as may be proved by the terrible majority of failures. But who is to be sure that he is not expelling an angel from the heaven to which, if less roughly treated, he would soar,—that he is not dooming some Milton to be mute and inglorious, who, but for such cruel ill-judgment, would become vocal to all ages?

The answer to all this seems to be ready enough. The judgment, whether cruel or tender, should not be ill-judgment. He who consents to sit as judge should have capacity for judging. But in this matter no accuracy of judgment is possible. It may be that the matter subjected to the critic is so bad or so good as to make an assured answer possible. "You, at any rate, cannot make this your vocation;" or "You, at any rate, can succeed, if you will try." But cases as to which such certainty can be expressed are rare. The critic who wrote the article on the early verses of Lord Byron, which produced the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, was justified in his criticism by the merits of the *Hours of Idleness*. The lines had nevertheless been written by that Lord Byron who became our

Byron. In a little satire called *The Biliad*, which, I think, nobody knows, are the following well-expressed lines :—

“ When Payne Knight's *Taste* was issued to the town,  
A few Greek verses in the text set down  
Were torn to pieces, mangled into hash,  
Doomed to the flames as execrable trash,—  
In short, were butchered rather than dissected,  
And several false quantities detected,—  
Till, when the smoke had vanished from the cinders,  
'Twas just discovered that—*the lines were Pindar's!*”

There can be no assurance against cases such as these ; and yet we are so free with our advice, always bidding the young aspirant to desist.

There is perhaps no career of life so charming as that of a successful man of letters. Those little unthought of advantages which I just now named are in themselves attractive. If you like the town, live in the town, and do your work there ; if you like the country, choose the country. It may be done on the top of a mountain or in the bottom of a pit. It is compatible with the rolling of the sea and the motion of a railway. The clergyman, the lawyer, the doctor, the member of Parliament, the clerk in a public office, the trades-

man, and even his assistant in the shop, must dress in accordance with certain fixed laws; but the author need sacrifice to no grace, hardly even to Propriety. He is subject to no bonds such as those which bind other men. Who else is free from all shackle as to hours? The judge must sit at ten, and the attorney-general, who is making his £20,000 a year, must be there with his bag. The Prime Minister must be in his place on that weary front bench shortly after prayers, and must sit there, either asleep or awake, even though — or — should be addressing the House. During all that Sunday which he maintains should be a day of rest, the active clergyman toils like a galley-slave. The actor, when eight o'clock comes, is bound to his footlights. The Civil Service clerk must sit there from ten till four,—unless his office be fashionable, when twelve to six is just as heavy on him. The author may do his work at five in the morning when he is fresh from his bed, or at three in the morning before he goes there. And the author wants no capital, and encounters no risks. When once he is afloat, the publisher finds all that;—and indeed, unless he be rash, finds it

whether he be afloat or not. But it is in the consideration which he enjoys that the successful author finds his richest reward. He is, if not of equal rank, yet of equal standing with the highest; and if he be open to the amenities of society, may choose his own circles. He without money can enter doors which are closed against almost all but him and the wealthy. I have often heard it said that in this country the man of letters is not recognised. I believe the meaning of this to be that men of letters are not often invited to be knights and baronets. I do not think that they wish it;—and if they had it they would, as a body, lose much more than they would gain. I do not at all desire to have letters put after my name, or to be called Sir Anthony, but if my friends Tom Hughes and Charles Reade became Sir Thomas and Sir Charles, I do not know how I might feel,—or how my wife might feel, if we were left unbedecked. As it is, the man of letters who would be selected for titular honour, if such bestowal of honours were customary, receives from the general respect of those around him a much more pleasant recognition of his worth.

If this be so,—if it be true that the career of the successful literary man be thus pleasant,—it is not wonderful that many should attempt to win the prize. But how is a man to know whether or not he has within him the qualities necessary for such a career? He makes an attempt, and fails; repeats his attempt, and fails again! So many have succeeded at last who have failed more than once or twice! Who will tell him the truth as to himself? Who has power to find out that truth? The hard man sends him off without a scruple to that office-stool; the soft man assures him that there is much merit in his MS.

Oh, my young aspirant,—if ever such a one should read these pages,—be sure that no one can tell you! To do so it would be necessary not only to know what there is now within you, but also to foresee what time will produce there. This, however, I think may be said to you, without any doubt as to the wisdom of the counsel given, that if it be necessary for you to live by your work, do not begin by trusting to literature. Take the stool in the office as recommended to you by the hard man; and then, in such

leisure hours as may belong to you, let the praise which has come from the lips of that soft man induce you to persevere in your literary attempts. Should you fail, then your failure will not be fatal,—and what better could you have done with the leisure hours had you not so failed? Such double toil, you will say, is severe. Yes; but if you want this thing, you must submit to severe toil.

Sometime before this I had become one of the Committee appointed for the distribution of the moneys of the Royal Literary Fund, and in that capacity I heard and saw much of the sufferings of authors. I may in a future chapter speak further of this Institution, which I regard with great affection, and in reference to which I should be glad to record certain convictions of my own; but I allude to it now, because the experience I have acquired in being active in its cause forbids me to advise any young man or woman to enter boldly on a literary career in search of bread. I know how utterly I should have failed myself had my bread not been earned elsewhere while I was making my efforts. During ten years of work, which I commenced with some aid from



the fact that others of my family were in the same profession, I did not earn enough to buy me the pens, ink, and paper which I was using; and then when, with all my experience in my art, I began again as from a new springing point, I should have failed again unless again I could have given years to the task. Of course there have been many who have done better than I,—many whose powers have been infinitely greater. But then, too, I have seen the failure of many who were greater.

The career, when success has been achieved, is certainly very pleasant; but the agonies which are endured in the search for that success are often terrible. And the author's poverty is, I think, harder to be borne than any other poverty. The man, whether rightly or wrongly, feels that the world is using him with extreme injustice. The more absolutely he fails, the higher, it is probable, he will reckon his own merits; and the keener will be the sense of injury in that he whose work is of so high a nature cannot get bread, while they whose tasks are mean are lapped in luxury. "I, with my well-filled mind, with my clear intellect, with all my gifts, cannot earn a poor crown a

day, while that fool, who simpers in a little room behind a shop, makes his thousands every year." The very charity, to which he too often is driven, is bitterer to him than to others. While he takes it he almost spurns the hand that gives it to him, and every fibre of his heart within him is bleeding with a sense of injury.

The career, when successful, is pleasant enough certainly; but when unsuccessful, it is of all careers the most agonising.

## CHAPTER XII.

ON NOVELS AND THE ART OF WRITING THEM.

IT is nearly twenty years since I proposed to myself to write a history of English prose fiction. I shall never do it now, but the subject is so good a one that I recommend it heartily to some man of letters, who shall at the same time be indefatigable and light-handed. I acknowledge that I broke down in the task, because I could not endure the labour in addition to the other labours of my life. Though the book might be charming, the work was very much the reverse. It came to have a terrible aspect to me, as did that proposition that I should sit out all the May meetings of a season. According to my plan of such a history it would be necessary to read an infinity of novels, and not only to read them, but so to read them as to point out the excellences of those which

are most excellent, and to explain the defects of those which, though defective, had still reached sufficient reputation to make them worthy of notice. I did read many after this fashion,—and here and there I have the criticisms which I wrote. In regard to many, they were written on some blank page within the book. I have not, however, even a list of the books so criticised. I think that the *Arcadia* was the first, and *Ivanhoe* the last. My plan, as I settled it at last, had been to begin with *Robinson Crusoe*, which is the earliest really popular novel which we have in our language, and to continue the review so as to include the works of all English novelists of reputation, except those who might still be living when my task should be completed. But when Dickens and Bulwer died, my spirit flagged, and that which I had already found to be very difficult had become almost impossible to me at my then period of life.

I began my own studies on the subject with works much earlier than *Robinson Crusoe*, and made my way through a variety of novels which were necessary for my purpose, but

which in the reading gave me no pleasure whatever. I never worked harder than at the *Arcadia*, or read more detestable trash than the stories written by Mrs Aphra Behn; but these two were necessary to my purpose, which was not only to give an estimate of the novels as I found them, but to describe how it had come to pass that the English novels of the present day have become what they are, to point out the effects which they have produced, and to inquire whether their great popularity has on the whole done good or evil to the people who read them. I still think that the book is one well worthy to be written.

I intended to write that book to vindicate my own profession as a novelist, and also to vindicate that public taste in literature which has created and nourished the profession which I follow. And I was stirred up to make such an attempt by a conviction that there still exists among us Englishmen a prejudice in respect to novels which might, perhaps, be lessened by such a work. This prejudice is not against the reading of novels, as is proved by their general acceptance among us. But it exists strongly in reference to the

appreciation in which they are professed to be held; and it robs them of much of that high character which they may claim to have earned by their grace, their honesty, and good teaching.

No man can work long at any trade without being brought to consider much whether that which he is daily doing tends to evil or to good. I have written many novels, and have known many writers of novels, and I can assert that such thoughts have been strong with them and with myself. But in acknowledging that these writers have received from the public a full measure of credit for such genius, ingenuity, or perseverance as each may have displayed, I feel that there is still wanting to them a just appreciation of the excellence of their calling, and a general understanding of the high nature of the work which they perform.

By the common consent of all mankind who have read, poetry takes the highest place in literature. That nobility of expression, and all but divine grace of words, which she is bound to attain before she can make her footing good, is not compatible with prose. Indeed

it is that which turns prose into poetry. When that has been in truth achieved, the reader knows that the writer has soared above the earth, and can teach his lessons somewhat as a god might teach. He who sits down to write his tale in prose makes no such attempt, nor does he dream that the poet's honour is within his reach;—but his teaching is of the same nature, and his lessons all tend to the same end. By either, false sentiments may be fostered; false notions of humanity may be engendered; false honour, false love, false worship may be created; by either, vice instead of virtue may be taught. But by each, equally, may true honour, true love, true worship, and true humanity be inculcated; and that will be the greatest teacher who will spread such truth the widest. But at present, much as novels, as novels, are bought and read, there exists still an idea, a feeling which is very prevalent, that novels at their best are but innocent. Young men and women,—and old men and women too,—read more of them than of poetry, because such reading is easier than the reading of poetry; but they read them,—as men eat pastry after dinner,—not without

some inward conviction that the taste is vain if not vicious. I take upon myself to say that it is neither vicious nor vain.

But all writers of fiction who have desired to think well of their own work, will probably have had doubts on their minds before they have arrived at this conclusion. Thinking much of my own daily labour and of its nature, I felt myself at first to be much afflicted and then to be deeply grieved by the opinion expressed by wise and thinking men as to the work done by novelists. But when, by degrees, I dared to examine and sift the sayings of such men, I found them to be sometimes silly and often arrogant. I began to inquire what had been the nature of English novels since they first became common in our own language, and to be desirous of ascertaining whether they had done harm or good. I could well remember that, in my own young days, they had not taken that undisputed possession of drawing-rooms which they now hold. Fifty years ago, when George IV. was king, they were not indeed treated as Lydia had been forced to treat them in the preceding reign, when, on the approach of elders, *Pere-*



*grine Pickle* was hidden beneath the bolster, and *Lord Ainsworth* put away under the sofa. But the families in which an unrestricted permission was given for the reading of novels were very few, and from many they were altogether banished. The high poetic genius and correct morality of Walter Scott had not altogether succeeded in making men and women understand that lessons which were good in poetry could not be bad in prose. I remember that in those days an embargo was laid upon novel-reading as a pursuit, which was to the novelist a much heavier tax than that want of full appreciation of which I now complain.

There is, we all know, no such embargo now. May we not say that people of an age to read have got too much power into their own hands to endure any very complete embargo? Novels are read right and left, above stairs and below, in town houses and in country parsonages, by young countesses and by farmer's daughters, by old lawyers and by young students. It has not only come to pass that a special provision of them has to be made for the godly, but that the provision so made must

now include books which a few years since the godly would have thought to be profane. It was this necessity which, a few years since, induced the editor of *Good Words* to apply to me for a novel,—which, indeed, when supplied was rejected, but which now, probably, owing to further change in the same direction, would have been accepted.

If such be the case—if the extension of novel-reading be so wide as I have described it—then very much good or harm must be done by novels. The amusement of the time can hardly be the only result of any book that is read, and certainly not so with a novel, which appeals especially to the imagination, and solicits the sympathy of the young. A vast proportion of the teaching of the day,—greater probably than many of us have acknowledged to ourselves,—comes from these books, which are in the hands of all readers. It is from them that girls learn what is expected from them, and what they are to expect when lovers come; and also from them that young men unconsciously learn what are, or should be, or may be, the charms of love,—though I fancy that few young men will think

so little of their natural instincts and powers as to believe that I am right in saying so. Many other lessons also are taught. In these times, when the desire to be honest is pressed so hard, is so violently assaulted by the ambition to be great; in which riches are the easiest road to greatness; when the temptations to which men are subjected dulls their eyes to the perfected iniquities of others; when it is so hard for a man to decide vigorously that the pitch, which so many are handling, will defile him if it be touched;—men's conduct will be actuated much by that which is from day to day depicted to them as leading to glorious or inglorious results. The woman who is described as having obtained all that the world holds to be precious, by lavishing her charms and her caresses unworthily and heartlessly, will induce other women to do the same with theirs,—as will she who is made interesting by exhibitions of bold passion teach others to be spuriously passionate. The young man who in a novel becomes a hero, perhaps a Member of Parliament, and almost a Prime Minister, by trickery, falsehood, and flash cleverness, will have many followers, whose at-

tempts to rise in the world ought to lie heavily on the conscience of the novelists who create fictitious Cagliostros. There are Jack Shepards other than those who break into houses and out of prisons,—Macheaths, who deserve the gallows more than Gay's hero.

Thinking of all this, as a novelist surely must do,—as I certainly have done through my whole career,—it becomes to him a matter of deep conscience how he shall handle those characters by whose words and doings he hopes to interest his readers. It will very frequently be the case that he will be tempted to sacrifice something for effect, to say a word or two here, or to draw a picture there, for which he feels that he has the power, and which when spoken or drawn would be alluring. The regions of absolute vice are foul and odious. The savour of them, till custom has hardened the palate and the nose, is disgusting. In these he will hardly tread. But there are outskirts on these regions, on which sweet-smelling flowers seem to grow, and grass to be green. It is in these border-lands that the danger lies. The novelist may not be dull. If he commit that fault he can do neither harm nor good. He must

please, and the flowers and the grass in these neutral territories sometimes seem to give him so easy an opportunity of pleasing!

The writer of stories must please, or he will be nothing. And he must teach whether he wish to teach or no. How shall he teach lessons of virtue and at the same time make himself a delight to his readers? That sermons are not in themselves often thought to be agreeable we all know. Nor are disquisitions on moral philosophy supposed to be pleasant reading for our idle hours. But the novelist, if he have a conscience, must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergyman, and must have his own system of ethics. If he can do this efficiently, if he can make virtue alluring and vice ugly, while he charms his readers instead of wearying them, then I think Mr Carlyle need not call him distressed, nor talk of that long ear of fiction, nor question whether he be or not the most foolish of existing mortals.

I think that many have done so; so many that we English novelists may boast as a class that such has been the general result of our own work. Looking back to the past generation,

I may say with certainty that such was the operation of the novels of Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen, and Walter Scott. Coming down to my own times, I find such to have been the teaching of Thackeray, of Dickens, and of George Eliot. Speaking, as I shall speak to any who may read these words, with that absence of self-personality which the dead may claim, I will boast that such has been the result of my own writing. Can any one by search through the works of the six great English novelists I have named, find a scene, a passage, or a word that would teach a girl to be immodest, or a man to be dishonest? When men in their pages have been described as dishonest and women as immodest, have they not ever been punished? It is not for the novelist to say, baldly and simply: "Because you lied here, or were heartless there, because you Lydia Bennet forgot the lessons of your honest home, or you Earl Leicester were false through your ambition, or you Beatrice loved too well the glitter of the world, therefore you shall be scourged with scourges either in this world or in the next;" but it is for him to show, as he carries on his tale, that

his Lydia, or his Leicester, or his Beatrix, will be dishonoured in the estimation of all readers by his or her vices. Let a woman be drawn clever, beautiful, attractive,—so as to make men love her, and women almost envy her,—and let her be made also heartless, unfeminine, and ambitious of evil grandeur, as was Beatrix, what a danger is there not in such a character! To the novelist who shall handle it, what peril of doing harm! But if at last it have been so handled that every girl who reads of Beatrix shall say: “Oh! not like that;—let me not be like that!” and that every youth shall say: “Let me not have such a one as that to press my bosom, anything rather than that!”—then will not the novelist have preached his sermon as perhaps no clergyman can preach it?

Very much of a novelist’s work must appertain to the intercourse between young men and young women. It is admitted that a novel can hardly be made interesting or successful without love. Some few might be named, but even in those the attempt breaks down, and the softness of love is found to be necessary to complete the story. *Pickwick*

has been named as an exception to the rule, but even in *Pickwick* there are three or four sets of lovers, whose little amatory longings give a softness to the work. I tried it once with *Miss Mackenzie*, but I had to make her fall in love at last. In this frequent allusion to the passion which most stirs the imagination of the young, there must be danger. Of that the writer of fiction is probably well aware. Then the question has to be asked, whether the danger may not be so averted that good may be the result,—and to be answered.

In one respect the necessity of dealing with love is advantageous,—advantageous from the very circumstance which has made love necessary to all novelists. It is necessary because the passion is one which interests or has interested all. Every one feels it, has felt it, or expects to feel it,—or else rejects it with an eagerness which still perpetuates the interest. If the novelist, therefore, can so handle the subject as to do good by his handling, as to teach wholesome lessons in regard to love, the good which he does will be very wide. If I can teach politicians that they can do their business better by truth than by falsehood,



I do a great service; but it is done to a limited number of persons. But if I can make young men and women believe that truth in love will make them happy, then, if my writings be popular, I shall have a very large class of pupils. No doubt the cause for that fear which did exist as to novels arose from an idea that the matter of love would be treated in an inflammatory and generally unwholesome manner. "Madam," says Sir Anthony in the play, "a circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge. It blossoms through the year; and depend on it, Mrs Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves will long for the fruit at last." Sir Anthony was no doubt right. But he takes it for granted that the longing for the fruit is an evil. The novelist who writes of love thinks differently, and thinks that the honest love of an honest man is a treasure which a good girl may fairly hope to win,—and that if she can be taught to wish only for that, she will have been taught to entertain only wholesome wishes.

I can easily believe that a girl should be taught to wish to love by reading how Laura

Bell loved Pendennis. Pendennis was not in truth a very worthy man, nor did he make a very good husband ; but the girl's love was so beautiful, and the wife's love when she became a wife so womanlike, and at the same time so sweet, so unselfish, so wifely, so worshipful,—in the sense in which wives are told that they ought to worship their husbands,—that I cannot believe that any girl can be injured, or even not benefited, by reading of Laura's love.

There once used to be many who thought, and probably there still are some, even here in England, who think that a girl should hear nothing of love till the time come in which she is to be married. That, no doubt, was the opinion of Sir Anthony Absolute and of Mrs Malaprop. But I am hardly disposed to believe that the old system was more favourable than ours to the purity of manners. Lydia Languish, though she was constrained by fear of her aunt to hide the book, yet had *Peregrine Pickle* in her collection. While human nature talks of love so forcibly it can hardly serve our turn to be silent on the subject. “Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque

recurret." There are countries in which it has been in accordance with the manners of the upper classes that the girl should be brought to marry the man almost out of the nursery—or rather perhaps out of the convent—without having enjoyed that freedom of thought which the reading of novels and of poetry will certainly produce ; but I do not know that the marriages so made have been thought to be happier than our own.

Among English novels of the present day, and among English novelists, a great division is made. There are sensational novels and anti-sensational, sensational novelists and anti-sensational, sensational readers and anti-sensational. The novelists who are considered to be anti-sensational are generally called realistic. I am realistic. My friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational. The readers who prefer the one are supposed to take delight in the elucidation of character. Those who hold by the other are charmed by the continuation and gradual development of a plot. All this is, I think, a mistake,—which mistake arises from the inability of the imperfect artist to be at the same time realistic

and sensational. A good novel should be both, and both in the highest degree. If a novel fail in either, there is a failure in art. Let those readers who believe that they do not like sensational scenes in novels think of some of those passages from our great novelists which have charmed them most:—of Rebecca in the castle with Ivanhoe; of Burley in the cave with Morton; of the mad lady tearing the veil of the expectant bride, in *Jane Eyre*; of Lady Castlewood as, in her indignation, she explains to the Duke of Hamilton Henry Esmond's right to be present at the marriage of his Grace with Beatrix;—may I add, of Lady Mason, as she makes her confession at the feet of Sir Peregrine Orme? Will any one say that the authors of these passages have sinned in being over-sensational? No doubt, a string of horrible incidents, bound together without truth in detail, and told as affecting personages without character, — wooden blocks, who cannot make themselves known to the reader as men and women,—does not instruct or amuse, or even fill the mind with awe. Horrors heaped upon horrors, and which are horrors only in them-

selves, and not as touching any recognised and known person, are not tragic, and soon cease even to horrify. And such would-be tragic elements of a story may be increased without end, and without difficulty. I may tell you of a woman murdered,—murdered in the same street with you, in the next house,—that she was a wife murdered by her husband,—a bride not yet a week a wife. I may add to it for ever. I may say that the murderer roasted her alive. There is no end to it. I may declare that a former wife was treated with equal barbarity; and may assert that, as the murderer was led away to execution, he declared his only sorrow, his only regret to be, that he could not live to treat a third wife after the same fashion. There is nothing so easy as the creation and the cumulation of fearful incidents after this fashion. If such creation and cumulation be the beginning and the end of the novelist's work,—and novels have been written which seem to be without other attractions,—nothing can be more dull or more useless. But not on that account are we averse to tragedy in prose fiction. As in poetry, so in prose, he who can deal adequately with tragic elements

is a greater artist and reaches a higher aim than the writer whose efforts never carry him above the mild walks of everyday life. The *Bride of Lammermoor* is a tragedy throughout, in spite of its comic elements. The life of Lady Castlewood, of whom I have spoken, is a tragedy. Rochester's wretched thralldom to his mad wife, in *Jane Eyre*, is a tragedy. But these stories charm us not simply because they are tragic, but because we feel that men and women with flesh and blood, creatures with whom we can sympathise, are struggling amidst their woes. It all lies in that. No novel is anything, for the purposes either of comedy or tragedy, unless the reader can sympathise with the characters whose names he finds upon the pages. Let an author so tell his tale as to touch his reader's heart and draw his tears, and he has, so far, done his work well. Truth let there be,—truth of description, truth of character, human truth as to men and women. If there be such truth, I do not know that a novel can be too sensational.

I did intend when I meditated that history of English fiction to include within its pages

some rules for the writing of novels;—or I might perhaps say, with more modesty, to offer some advice on the art to such tyros in it as might be willing to take advantage of the experience of an old hand. But the matter would, I fear, be too long for this episode, and I am not sure that I have as yet got the rules quite settled in my own mind. I will, however, say a few words on one or two points which my own practice has pointed out to me.

I have from the first felt sure that the writer, when he sits down to commence his novel, should do so, not because he has to tell a story, but because he has a story to tell. The novelist's first novel will generally have sprung from the right cause. Some series of events, or some development of character, will have presented itself to his imagination,—and this he feels so strongly that he thinks he can present his picture in strong and agreeable language to others. He sits down and tells his story because he has a story to tell; as you, my friend, when you have heard something which has at once tickled your fancy or moved your pathos, will hurry to tell it to the first person you meet. But when that first novel

has been received graciously by the public and has made for itself a success, then the writer, naturally feeling that the writing of novels is within his grasp, looks about for something to tell in another. He cudgels his brains, not always successfully, and sits down to write, not because he has something which he burns to tell, but because he feels it to be incumbent on him to be telling something. As you, my friend, if you are very successful in the telling of that first story, will become ambitious of further story-telling, and will look out for anecdotes,—in the narration of which you will not improbably sometimes distress your audience.

So it has been with many novelists, who, after some good work, perhaps after very much good work, have distressed their audience because they have gone on with their work till their work has become simply a trade with them. Need I make a list of such, seeing that it would contain the names of those who have been greatest in the art of British novel-writing. They have at last become weary of that portion of a novelist's work which is of all the most essential to success. That a man as he grows old should feel the labour of writing



to be a fatigue is natural enough. But a man to whom writing has become a habit may write well though he be fatigued. But the weary novelist refuses any longer to give his mind to that work of observation and reception from which has come his power, without which work his power cannot be continued,—which work should be going on not only when he is at his desk, but in all his walks abroad, in all his movements through the world, in all his intercourse with his fellow-creatures. He has become a novelist, as another has become a poet, because he has in those walks abroad, unconsciously for the most part, been drawing in matter from all that he has seen and heard. But this has not been done without labour, even when the labour has been unconscious. Then there comes a time when he shuts his eyes and shuts his ears. When we talk of memory fading as age comes on, it is such shutting of eyes and ears that we mean. The things around cease to interest us, and we cannot exercise our minds upon them. To the novelist thus wearied there comes the demand for further novels. He does not know his own defect, and even if he did he does not wish to

abandon his own profession. He still writes; but he writes because he has to tell a story, not because he has a story to tell. What reader of novels has not felt the "woodenness" of this mode of telling? The characters do not live and move, but are cut out of blocks and are propped against the wall. The incidents are arranged in certain lines—the arrangement being as palpable to the reader as it has been to the writer—but do not follow each other as results naturally demanded by previous action. The reader can never feel—as he ought to feel—that only for that flame of the eye, only for that angry word, only for that moment of weakness, all might have been different. The course of the tale is one piece of stiff mechanism, in which there is no room for a doubt.

These, it may be said, are reflections which I, being an old novelist, might make useful to myself for discontinuing my work, but can hardly be needed by those tyros of whom I have spoken. That they are applicable to myself I readily admit, but I also find that they apply to many beginners. Some of us who are old fail at last because we are old.

It would be well that each of us should say to himself,

“Solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne  
Peccet ad extremum ridendus.”

But many young fail also, because they endeavour to tell stories when they have none to tell. And this comes from idleness rather than from innate incapacity. The mind has not been sufficiently at work when the tale has been commenced, nor is it kept sufficiently at work as the tale is continued. I have never troubled myself much about the construction of plots, and am not now insisting specially on thoroughness in a branch of work in which I myself have not been very thorough. I am not sure that the construction of a perfected plot has been at any period within my power. But the novelist has other aims than the elucidation of his plot. He desires to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creatures of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living, human creatures. This he can never do unless he know those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know them unless he can live with them in the full real-

ity of established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep, and as he wakes from his dreams. He must learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them, and even submit to them. He must know of them whether they be cold-blooded or passionate, whether true or false, and how far true, and how far false. The depth and the breadth, and the narrowness and the shallowness of each should be clear to him. And, as here, in our outer world, we know that men and women change,—become worse or better as temptation or conscience may guide them,—so should these creations of his change, and every change should be noted by him. On the last day of each month recorded, every person in his novel should be a month older than on the first. If the would-be novelist have aptitudes that way, all this will come to him without much struggling;—but if it do not come, I think he can only make novels of wood.

It is so that I have lived with my characters, and thence has come whatever success I have obtained. There is a gallery of them, and of all in that gallery I may say that I

know the tone of the voice, and the colour of the hair, every flame of the eye, and the very clothes they wear. Of each man I could assert whether he would have said these or the other words; of every woman, whether she would then have smiled or so have frowned. When I shall feel that this intimacy ceases, then I shall know that the old horse should be turned out to grass. That I shall feel it when I ought to feel it, I will by no means say. I do not know that I am at all wiser than Gil Blas' canon; but I do know that the power indicated is one without which the teller of tales cannot tell them to any good effect.

The language in which the novelist is to put forth his story, the colours with which he is to paint his picture, must of course be to him matter of much consideration. Let him have all other possible gifts,—imagination, observation, erudition, and industry,—they will avail him nothing for his purpose, unless he can put forth his work in pleasant words. If he be confused, tedious, harsh, or unharmonious, readers will certainly reject him. The reading of a volume of history or on science may represent itself as a duty; and though the duty

may by a bad style be made very disagreeable, the conscientious reader will perhaps perform it. But the novelist will be assisted by no such feeling. Any reader may reject his work without the burden of a sin. It is the first necessity of his position that he make himself pleasant. To do this, much more is necessary than to write correctly. He may indeed be pleasant without being correct,—as I think can be proved by the works of more than one distinguished novelist. But he must be intelligible,—intelligible without trouble; and he must be harmonious.

Any writer who has read even a little will know what is meant by the word intelligible. It is not sufficient that there be a meaning that may be hammered out of the sentence, but that the language should be so pellucid that the meaning should be rendered without an effort of the reader;—and not only some proposition of meaning, but the very sense, no more and no less, which the writer has intended to put into his words. What Macaulay says should be remembered by all writers: “How little the all-important art of making meaning pellucid is studied now! Hardly any popular

author except myself thinks of it." The language used should be as ready and as efficient a conductor of the mind of the writer to the mind of the reader as is the electric spark which passes from one battery to another battery. In all written matter the spark should carry everything ; but in matters recondite the recipient will search to see that he misses nothing, and that he takes nothing away too much. The novelist cannot expect that any such search will be made. A young writer, who will acknowledge the truth of what I am saying, will often feel himself tempted by the difficulties of language to tell himself that some one little doubtful passage, some single collocation of words, which is not quite what it ought to be, will not matter. I know well what a stumbling-block such a passage may be. But he should leave none such behind him as he goes on. The habit of writing clearly soon comes to the writer who is a severe critic to himself.

As to that harmonious expression which I think is required, I shall find it more difficult to express my meaning. It will be granted, I think, by readers that a style may be rough, and yet both forcible and intelligible ; but it

will seldom come to pass that a novel written in a rough style will be popular,—and less often that a novelist who habitually uses such a style will become so. The harmony which is required must come from the practice of the ear. There are few ears naturally so dull that they cannot, if time be allowed to them, decide whether a sentence, when read, be or be not harmonious. And the sense of such harmony grows on the ear, when the intelligence has once informed itself as to what is, and what is not harmonious. The boy, for instance, who learns with accuracy the prosody of a Sapphic stanza, and has received through his intelligence a knowledge of its parts, will soon tell by his ear whether a Sapphic stanza be or be not correct. Take a girl, endowed with gifts of music, well instructed in her art, with perfect ear, and read to her such a stanza with two words transposed, as, for instance—

Mercuri, nam te docilis magistro  
 Movit Amphion *canendo lapides,*  
 Tuque testudo resonare septem  
 Callida nervis—

and she will find no halt in the rhythm. But a schoolboy with none of her musical acquirements or capacities, who has, however, become



familiar with the metres of the poet, will at once discover the fault. And so will the writer become familiar with what is harmonious in prose. But in order that familiarity may serve him in his business, he must so train his ear that he shall be able to weigh the rhythm of every word as it falls from his pen. This, when it has been done for a time, even for a short time, will become so habitual to him that he will have appreciated the metrical duration of every syllable before it shall have dared to show itself upon paper. The art of the orator is the same. He knows beforehand how each sound which he is about to utter will affect the force of his climax. If a writer will do so he will charm his readers, though his readers will probably not know how they have been charmed.

In writing a novel the author soon becomes aware that a burden of many pages is before him. Circumstances require that he should cover a certain and generally not a very confined space. Short novels are not popular with readers generally. Critics often complain of the ordinary length of novels,—of the three volumes to which they are subjected;

but few novels which have attained great success in England have been told in fewer pages. The novel-writer who sticks to novel-writing as his profession will certainly find that this burden of length is incumbent on him. How shall he carry his burden to the end? How shall he cover his space? Many great artists have by their practice opposed the doctrine which I now propose to preach;—but they have succeeded I think in spite of their fault and by dint of their greatness. There should be no episodes in a novel. Every sentence, every word, through all those pages, should tend to the telling of the story. Such episodes distract the attention of the reader, and always do so disagreeably. Who has not felt this to be the case even with *The Curious Impertinent* and with the *History of the Man of the Hill*. And if it be so with Cervantes and Fielding, who can hope to succeed? Though the novel which you have to write must be long, let it be all one. And this exclusion of episodes should be carried down into the smallest details. Every sentence and every word used should tend to the telling of the story. “But,” the young novelist will say, “with so many

pages before me to be filled, how shall I succeed if I thus confine myself;—how am I to know beforehand what space this story of mine will require? There must be the three volumes, or the certain number of magazine pages which I have contracted to supply. If I may not be discursive should occasion require, how shall I complete my task? The painter suits the size of his canvas to his subject, and must I in my art stretch my subject to my canvas?" This undoubtedly must be done by the novelist; and if he will learn his business, may be done without injury to his effect. He may not paint different pictures on the same canvas, which he will do if he allow himself to wander away to matters outside his own story; but by studying proportion in his work, he may teach himself so to tell his story that it shall naturally fall into the required length. Though his story should be all one, yet it may have many parts. Though the plot itself may require but few characters, it may be so enlarged as to find its full development in many. There may be subsidiary plots, which shall all tend to the elucidation of the main story, and which will take their places

as part of one and the same work,—as there may be many figures on a canvas which shall not to the spectator seem to form themselves into separate pictures.

There is no portion of a novelist's work in which this fault of episodes is so common as in the dialogue. It is so easy to make any two persons talk on any casual subject with which the writer presumes himself to be conversant! Literature, philosophy, politics, or sport, may thus be handled in a loosely discursive style; and the writer, while indulging himself and filling his pages, is apt to think that he is pleasing his reader. I think he can make no greater mistake. The dialogue is generally the most agreeable part of a novel; but it is only so as long as it tends in some way to the telling of the main story. It need not seem to be confined to that, but it should always have a tendency in that direction. The unconscious critical acumen of a reader is both just and severe. When a long dialogue on extraneous matter reaches his mind, he at once feels that he is being cheated into taking something which he did not bargain to accept when he took up that novel. He does not at that

moment require politics or philosophy, but he wants his story. He will not perhaps be able to say in so many words that at some certain point the dialogue has deviated from the story; but when it does so he will feel it, and the feeling will be unpleasant. Let the intending novel-writer, if he doubt this, read one of Bulwer's novels,—in which there is very much to charm,—and then ask himself whether he has not been offended by devious conversations.

And the dialogue, on which the modern novelist in consulting the taste of his probable readers must depend most, has to be constrained also by other rules. The writer may tell much of his story in conversations, but he may only do so by putting such words into the mouths of his personages as persons so situated would probably use. He is not allowed for the sake of his tale to make his characters give utterance to long speeches, such as are not customarily heard from men and women. The ordinary talk of ordinary people is carried on in short sharp expressive sentences, which very frequently are never completed,—the language of which even among educated

people is often incorrect. The novel-writer in constructing his dialogue must so steer between absolute accuracy of language—which would give to his conversation an air of pedantry, and the slovenly inaccuracy of ordinary talkers, which if closely followed would offend by an appearance of grimace—as to produce upon the ear of his readers a sense of reality. If he be quite real he will seem to attempt to be funny. If he be quite correct he will seem to be unreal. And above all, let the speeches be short. No character should utter much above a dozen words at a breath,—unless the writer can justify to himself a longer flood of speech by the speciality of the occasion.

In all this human nature must be the novel-writer's guide. No doubt effective novels have been written in which human nature has been set at defiance. I might name *Caleb Williams* as one and *Adam Blair* as another. But the exceptions are not more than enough to prove the rule. But in following human nature he must remember that he does so with a pen in his hand, and that the reader who will appreciate human nature will also demand artistic ability and literary aptitude.

The young novelist will probably ask, or more probably bethink himself how he is to acquire that knowledge of human nature which will tell him with accuracy what men and women would say in this or that position. He must acquire it as the compositor, who is to print his words, has learned the art of distributing his type—by constant and intelligent practice. Unless it be given to him to listen and to observe,—so to carry away, as it were, the manners of people in his memory, as to be able to say to himself with assurance that these words might have been said in a given position, and that those other words could not have been said,—I do not think that in these days he can succeed as a novelist.

And then let him beware of creating tedium! Who has not felt the charm of a spoken story up to a certain point, and then suddenly become aware that it has become too long and is the reverse of charming. It is not only that the entire book may have this fault, but that this fault may occur in chapters, in passages, in pages, in paragraphs. I know no guard against this so likely to be effective as the feeling of the writer himself. When once the

sense that the thing is becoming long has grown upon him, he may be sure that it will grow upon his readers. I see the smile of some who will declare to themselves that the words of a writer will never be tedious to himself. Of the writer of whom this may be truly said, it may be said with equal truth that he will always be tedious to his readers.



## CHAPTER XIII.

ON ENGLISH NOVELISTS OF THE PRESENT DAY.

IN this chapter I will venture to name a few successful novelists of my own time, with whose works I am acquainted; and will endeavour to point whence their success has come, and why they have failed when there has been failure.

I do not hesitate to name Thackeray the first. His knowledge of human nature was supreme, and his characters stand out as human beings, with a force and a truth which has not, I think, been within the reach of any other English novelist in any period. I know no character in fiction, unless it be Don Quixote, with whom the reader becomes so intimately acquainted as with Colonel Newcombe. How great a thing it is to be a gentleman at all parts! How we admire the

man of whom so much may be said with truth ! Is there any one of whom we feel more sure in this respect than of Colonel Newcombe ? It is not because Colonel Newcombe is a perfect gentleman that we think Thackeray's work to have been so excellent, but because he has had the power to describe him as such, and to force us to love him, a weak and silly old man, on account of this grace of character.

It is evident from all Thackeray's best work that he lived with the characters he was creating. He had always a story to tell until quite late in life ; and he shows us that this was so, not by the interest which he had in his own plots,—for I doubt whether his plots did occupy much of his mind,—but by convincing us that his characters were alive to himself. With Becky Sharpe, with Lady Castlewood and her daughter, and with Esmond, with Warrington, Pendennis, and the Major, with Colonel Newcombe, and with Barry Lyndon, he must have lived in perpetual intercourse. Therefore he has made these personages real to us.

Among all our novelists his style is the purest, as to my ear it is also the most harmo-

nious. Sometimes it is disfigured by a slight touch of affectation, by little conceits which smell of the oil;—but the language is always lucid. The reader, without labour, knows what he means, and knows all that he means. As well as I can remember, he deals with no episodes. I think that any critic, examining his work minutely, would find that every scene, and every part of every scene, adds something to the clearness with which the story is told. Among all his stories there is not one which does not leave on the mind a feeling of distress that women should ever be immodest or men dishonest,—and of joy that women should be so devoted and men so honest. How we hate the idle selfishness of Pendennis, the worldliness of Beatrix, the craft of Becky Sharpe!—how we love the honesty of Colonel Newcombe, the nobility of Esmond, and the devoted affection of Mrs Pendennis! The hatred of evil and love of good can hardly have come upon so many readers without doing much good.

Late in Thackeray's life,—he never was an old man, but towards the end of his career,—he failed in his power of charming, because he

allowed his mind to become idle. In the plots which he conceived, and in the language which he used, I do not know that there is any perceptible change; but in *The Virginians* and in *Philip* the reader is introduced to no character with which he makes a close and undying acquaintance. And this, I have no doubt, is so because Thackeray himself had no such intimacy. His mind had come to be weary of that fictitious life which is always demanding the labour of new creation, and he troubled himself with his two *Virginians* and his *Philip* only when he was seated at his desk.

At the present moment George Eliot is the first of English novelists, and I am disposed to place her second of those of my time. She is best known to the literary world as a writer of prose fiction, and not improbably whatever of permanent fame she may acquire will come from her novels. But the nature of her intellect is very far removed indeed from that which is common to the tellers of stories. Her imagination is no doubt strong, but it acts in analysing rather than in creating. Everything that comes before her is pulled to pieces so that the inside of it shall be seen, and be seen if

possible by her readers as clearly as by herself. This searching analysis is carried so far that, in studying her latter writings, one feels oneself to be in company with some philosopher rather than with a novelist. I doubt whether any young person can read with pleasure either *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch*, or *Daniel Deronda*. I know that they are very difficult to many that are not young.

Her personifications of character have been singularly terse and graphic, and from them has come her great hold on the public,—though by no means the greatest effect which she has produced. The lessons which she teaches remain, though it is not for the sake of the lessons that her pages are read. Seth Bede, Adam Bede, Maggie and Tom Tulliver, old Silas Marner, and, much above all, Tito, in *Romola*, are characters which, when once known, can never be forgotten. I cannot say quite so much for any of those in her later works, because in them the philosopher so greatly overtops the portrait-painter, that, in the dissection of the mind, the outward signs seem to have been forgotten. In her, as yet, there is no symptom whatever of that weariness of mind

which, when felt by the reader, induces him to declare that the author has written himself out. It is not from decadence that we do not have another Mrs Poyser, but because the author soars to things which seem to her to be higher than Mrs Poyser.

It is, I think, the defect of George Eliot that she struggles too hard to do work that shall be excellent. She lacks ease. Latterly the signs of this have been conspicuous in her style, which has always been and is singularly correct, but which has become occasionally obscure from her too great desire to be pungent. It is impossible not to feel the struggle, and that feeling begets a flavour of affectation. In *Daniel Deronda*, of which at this moment only a portion has been published, there are sentences which I have found myself compelled to read three times before I have been able to take home to myself all that the writer has intended. Perhaps I may be permitted here to say, that this gifted woman was among my dearest and most intimate friends. As I am speaking here of novelists, I will not attempt to speak of George Eliot's merit as a poet.

There can be no doubt that the most popular novelist of my time—probably the most popular English novelist of any time—has been Charles Dickens. He has now been dead nearly six years, and the sale of his books goes on as it did during his life. The certainty with which his novels are found in every house—the familiarity of his name in all English-speaking countries—the popularity of such characters as Mrs Gamp, Micawber, and Pecksniff, and many others whose names have entered into the English language and become well-known words—the grief of the country at his death, and the honours paid to him at his funeral,—all testify to his popularity. Since the last book he wrote himself, I doubt whether any book has been so popular as his biography by John Forster. There is no withstanding such testimony as this. Such evidence of popular appreciation should go for very much, almost for everything, in criticism on the work of a novelist. The primary object of a novelist is to please; and this man's novels have been found more pleasant than those of any other writer. It might of course be objected to this,

that though the books have pleased they have been injurious, that their tendency has been immoral and their teaching vicious; but it is almost needless to say that no such charge has ever been made against Dickens. His teaching has ever been good. From all which, there arises to the critic a question whether, with such evidence against him as to the excellence of this writer, he should not subordinate his own opinion to the collected opinion of the world of readers. To me it almost seems that I must be wrong to place Dickens after Thackeray and George Eliot, knowing as I do that so great a majority put him above those authors.

My own peculiar idiosyncrasy in the matter forbids me to do so. I do acknowledge that Mrs Gamp, Micawber, Pecksniff, and others have become household words in every house, as though they were human beings; but to my judgment they are not human beings, nor are any of the characters human which Dickens has portrayed. It has been the peculiarity and the marvel of this man's power, that he has invested his puppets with a charm that has enabled him to dispense with human



nature. There is a drollery about them, in my estimation, very much below the humour of Thackeray, but which has reached the intellect of all; while Thackeray's humour has escaped the intellect of many. Nor is the pathos of Dickens human. It is stagey and melodramatic. But it is so expressed that it touches every heart a little. There is no real life in Smike. His misery, his idiotcy, his devotion for Nicholas, his love for Kate, are all overdone and incompatible with each other. But still the reader sheds a tear. Every reader can find a tear for Smike. Dickens's novels are like Boucicault's plays. He has known how to draw his lines broadly, so that all should see the colour.

He, too, in his best days, always lived with his characters;—and he, too, as he gradually ceased to have the power of doing so, ceased to charm. Though they are not human beings, we all remember Mrs Gamp and Pickwick. The Boffins and Veneerings do not, I think, dwell in the minds of so many.

Of Dickens's style it is impossible to speak in praise. It is jerky, ungrammatical, and created by himself in defiance of rules—almost

as completely as that created by Carlyle. To readers who have taught themselves to regard language, it must therefore be unpleasant. But the critic is driven to feel the weakness of his criticism, when he acknowledges to himself—as he is compelled in all honesty to do—that with the language, such as it is, the writer has satisfied the great mass of the readers of his country. Both these great writers have satisfied the readers of their own pages; but both have done infinite harm by creating a school of imitators. No young novelist should ever dare to imitate the style of Dickens. If such a one wants a model for his language, let him take Thackeray.

Bulwer, or Lord Lytton,—but I think that he is still better known by his earlier name,—was a man of very great parts. Better educated than either of those I have named before him, he was always able to use his erudition, and he thus produced novels from which very much not only may be but must be learned by his readers. He thoroughly understood the political status of his own country, a subject on which, I think, Dickens was marvelously ignorant, and which Thackeray had

never studied. He had read extensively, and was always apt to give his readers the benefit of what he knew. The result has been that very much more than amusement may be obtained from Bulwer's novels. There is also a brightness about them—the result rather of thought than of imagination, of study and of care, than of mere intellect—which has made many of them excellent in their way. It is perhaps improper to class all his novels together, as he wrote in varied manners, making in his earlier works, such as *Pelham* and *Ernest Maltravers*, pictures of a fictitious life, and afterwards pictures of life as he believed it to be, as in *My Novel* and *The Caxtons*. But from all of them there comes the same flavour of an effort to produce effect. The effects are produced, but it would have been better if the flavour had not been there.

I cannot say of Bulwer as I have of the other novelists whom I have named that he lived with his characters. He lived with his work, with the doctrines which at the time he wished to preach, thinking always of the effects which he wished to produce; but I do not think he ever knew his own personages,

—and therefore neither do we know them. Even Pelham and Eugene Aram are not human beings to us, as are Pickwick, and Colonel Newcombe, and Mrs Poyser.

In his plots Bulwer has generally been simple, facile, and successful. The reader never feels with him, as he does with Wilkie Collins, that it is all plot, or, as with George Eliot, that there is no plot. The story comes naturally without calling for too much attention, and is thus proof of the completeness of the man's intellect. His language is clear, good, intelligible English, but it is defaced by mannerism. In all that he did, affectation was his fault.

How shall I speak of my dear old friend Charles Lever, and his rattling, jolly, joyous, swearing Irishmen. Surely never did a sense of vitality come so constantly from a man's pen, nor from man's voice, as from his! I knew him well for many years, and whether in sickness or in health, I have never come across him without finding him to be running over with wit and fun. Of all the men I have encountered, he was the surest fund of drollery. I have known many witty men,

many who could say good things, many who would sometimes be ready to say them when wanted, though they would sometimes fail;—but he never failed. Rouse him in the middle of the night, and wit would come from him before he was half awake. And yet he never monopolised the talk, was never a bore. He would take no more than his own share of the words spoken, and would yet seem to brighten all that was said during the night. His earlier novels—the later I have not read—are just like his conversation. The fun never flags, and to me, when I read them, they were never tedious. As to character he can hardly be said to have produced it. Corney Delaney, the old man-servant, may perhaps be named as an exception.

Lever's novels will not live long,—even if they may be said to be alive now,—because it is so. What was his manner of working I do not know, but I should think it must have been very quick, and that he never troubled himself on the subject, except when he was seated with a pen in his hand.

Charlotte Brontë was surely a marvellous woman. If it could be right to judge the

work of a novelist from one small portion of one novel, and to say of an author that he is to be accounted as strong as he shows himself to be in his strongest morsel of work, I should be inclined to put Miss Brontë very high indeed. I know no interest more thrilling than that which she has been able to throw into the characters of Rochester and the governess, in the second volume of *Jane Eyre*. She lived with those characters, and felt every fibre of the heart, the longings of the one and the sufferings of the other. And therefore, though the end of the book is weak, and the beginning not very good, I venture to predict that *Jane Eyre* will be read among English novels when many whose names are now better known shall have been forgotten. *Jane Eyre*, and *Esmond*, and *Adam Bede* will be in the hands of our grandchildren, when *Pickwick*, and *Pelham*, and *Harry Lorrequer* are forgotten; because the men and women depicted are human in their aspirations, human in their sympathies, and human in their actions.

In *Villette*, too, and in *Shirley*, there is to be found human life as natural and as real,

though in circumstances not so full of interest as those told in *Jane Eyre*. The character of Paul in the former of the two is a wonderful study. She must herself have been in love with some Paul when she wrote the book, and have been determined to prove to herself that she was capable of loving one whose exterior circumstances were mean and in every way unprepossessing.

There is no writer of the present day who has so much puzzled me by his eccentricities, impracticabilities, and capabilities as Charles Reade. I look upon him as endowed almost with genius, but as one who has not been gifted by nature with ordinary powers of reasoning. He can see what is grandly noble and admire it with all his heart. He can see, too, what is foully vicious and hate it with equal ardour. But in the common affairs of life he cannot see what is right or wrong; and as he is altogether unwilling to be guided by the opinion of others, he is constantly making mistakes in his literary career, and subjecting himself to reproach which he hardly deserves. He means to be honest. He means to be especially honest,—more honest than other people. He

has written a book called *The Eighth Commandment* on behalf of honesty in literary transactions,—a wonderful work, which has I believe been read by a very few. I never saw a copy except that in my own library, or heard of any one who knew the book. Nevertheless it is a volume that must have taken very great labour, and have been written,—as indeed he declares that it was written,—without the hope of pecuniary reward. He makes an appeal to the British Parliament and British people on behalf of literary honesty, declaring that should he fail—“I shall have to go on blushing for the people I was born among.” And yet of all the writers of my day he has seemed to me to understand literary honesty the least. On one occasion, as he tells us in this book, he bought for a certain sum from a French author the right of using a plot taken from a play,—which he probably might have used without such purchase, and also without infringing any international copyright act. The French author not unnaturally praises him for the transaction, telling him that he is “un



vrai gentleman." The plot was used by Reade in a novel; and a critic discovering the adaptation, made known his discovery to the public. Whereupon the novelist became angry, called his critic a pseudonymuncle, and defended himself by stating the fact of his own purchase. In all this he seems to me to ignore what we all mean when we talk of literary plagiarism and literary honesty. The sin of which the author is accused is not that of taking another man's property, but of passing off as his own creation that which he does not himself create. When an author puts his name to a book he claims to have written all that there is therein, unless he makes direct signification to the contrary. Some years subsequently there arose another similar question, in which Mr Reade's opinion was declared even more plainly, and certainly very much more publicly. In a tale which he wrote he inserted a dialogue which he took from Swift, and took without any acknowledgment. As might have been expected, one of the critics of the day fell foul of him for this barefaced plagiarism. The author, however, defended

himself, with much abuse of the critic, by asserting, that whereas Swift had found the jewel he had supplied the setting;—an argument in which there was some little wit, and would have been much excellent truth, had he given the words as belonging to Swift and not to himself.

The novels of a man possessed of so singular a mind must themselves be very strange,—and they are strange. It has generally been his object to write down some abuse with which he has been particularly struck,—the harshness, for instance, with which paupers or lunatics are treated, or the wickedness of certain classes,—and he always, I think, leaves upon his readers an idea of great earnestness of purpose. But he has always left at the same time on my mind so strong a conviction that he has not really understood his subject, that I have ever found myself taking the part of those whom he has accused. So good a heart, and so wrong a head, surely no novelist ever before had combined! In story-telling he has occasionally been almost great. Among his novels I would especially recommend *The*

*Cloister and the Hcarth.* I do not know that in this work, or in any, that he has left a character that will remain; but he has written some of his scenes so brightly that to read them would always be a pleasure.

Of Wilkie Collins it is impossible for a true critic not to speak with admiration, because he has excelled all his contemporaries in a certain most difficult branch of his art; but as it is a branch which I have not myself at all cultivated, it is not unnatural that his work should be very much lost upon me individually. When I sit down to write a novel I do not at all know, and I do not very much care, how it is to end. Wilkie Collins seems so to construct his that he not only, before writing, plans everything on, down to the minutest detail, from the beginning to the end; but then plots it all back again, to see that there is no piece of necessary dove-tailing which does not dove-tail with absolute accuracy. The construction is most minute and most wonderful. But I can never lose the taste of the construction. The author seems always to be warning me to remember that something happened at

exactly half-past two o'clock on Tuesday morning; or that a woman disappeared from the road just fifteen yards beyond the fourth milestone. One is constrained by mysteries and hemmed in by difficulties, knowing, however, that the mysteries will be made clear, and the difficulties overcome at the end of the third volume. Such work gives me no pleasure. I am, however, quite prepared to acknowledge that the want of pleasure comes from fault of my intellect.

There are two ladies of whom I would fain say a word, though I feel that I am making my list too long, in order that I may declare how much I have admired their work. They are Annie Thackeray and Rhoda Broughton. I have known them both, and have loved the former almost as though she belonged to me. No two writers were ever more dissimilar,—except in this that they are both feminine. Miss Thackeray's characters are sweet, charming, and quite true to human nature. In her writings she is always endeavouring to prove that good produces good, and evil evil. There is not a line of which she need be ashamed,—not

a sentiment of which she should not be proud. But she writes like a lazy writer who dislikes her work, and who allows her own want of energy to show itself in her pages.

Miss Broughton, on the other hand, is full of energy,—though she too, I think, can become tired over her work. She, however, does take the trouble to make her personages stand upright on the ground. And she has the gift of making them speak as men and women do speak. “You beast!” said Nancy, sitting on the wall, to the man who was to be her husband,—thinking that she was speaking to her brother. Now Nancy, whether right or wrong, was just the girl who would, as circumstances then were, have called her brother a beast. There is nothing wooden about any of Miss Broughton’s novels; and in these days so many novels are wooden! But they are not sweet-savoured as are those by Miss Thackeray, and are, therefore, less true to nature. In Miss Broughton’s determination not to be mawkish and missish, she has made her ladies do and say things which ladies would not do and say. They throw themselves at

men's heads, and when they are not accepted only think how they may throw themselves again. Miss Broughton is still so young that I hope she may live to overcome her fault in this direction.

There is one other name, without which the list of the best known English novelists of my own time would certainly be incomplete, and that is the name of the present Prime Minister of England. Mr Disraeli has written so many novels, and has been so popular as a novelist that, whether for good or for ill, I feel myself compelled to speak of him. He began his career as an author early in life, publishing *Vivian Grey* when he was twenty-three years old. He was very young for such work, though hardly young enough to justify the excuse that he makes in his own preface, that it is a book written by a boy. Dickens was, I think, younger when he wrote his *Sketches by Boz*, and as young when he was writing the *Pickwick Papers*. It was hardly longer ago than the other day when Mr Disraeli brought out *Lothair*, and between the two there were eight or ten others. To me they have all had

the same flavour of paint and unreality. In whatever he has written he has affected something which has been intended to strike his readers as uncommon and therefore grand. Because he has been bright and a man of genius, he has carried his object as regards the young. He has struck them with astonishment and aroused in their imagination ideas of a world more glorious, more rich, more witty, more enterprising, than their own. But the glory has been the glory of pasteboard, and the wealth has been a wealth of tinsel. The wit has been the wit of hairdressers, and the enterprise has been the enterprise of mountebanks. An audacious conjurer has generally been his hero,—some youth who, by wonderful cleverness, can obtain success by every intrigue that comes to his hand. Through it all there is a feeling of stage properties, a smell of hair-oil, an aspect of buhl, a remembrance of tailors, and that pricking of the conscience which must be the general accompaniment of paste diamonds. I can understand that Mr Disraeli should by his novels have instigated many a young man and many

a young woman on their way in life, but I cannot understand that he should have instigated any one to good. Vivian Grey has had probably as many followers as Jack Sheppard, and has led his followers in the same direction.

*Lothair*, which is as yet Mr Disraeli's last work, and, I think, undoubtedly his worst, has been defended on a plea somewhat similar to that by which he has defended *Vivian Grey*. As that was written when he was too young, so was the other when he was too old,—too old for work of that nature, though not too old to be Prime Minister. If his mind were so occupied with greater things as to allow him to write such a work, yet his judgment should have sufficed to induce him to destroy it when written. Here that flavour of hair-oil, that flavour of false jewels, that remembrance of tailors, comes out stronger than in all the others. *Lothair* is falser even than *Vivian Grey*, and *Lady Corisande*, the daughter of the Duchess, more inane and unwomanlike than *Venetia* or *Henrietta Temple*. It is the very bathos of story-telling. I have often lamented, and have as often excused to myself, that lack



of public judgment which enables readers to put up with bad work because it comes from good or from lofty hands. I never felt the feeling so strongly, or was so little able to excuse it, as when a portion of the reading public received *Lothair* with satisfaction.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## ON CRITICISM.

LITERARY criticism in the present day has become a profession,—but it has ceased to be an art. Its object is no longer that of proving that certain literary work is good and other literary work is bad, in accordance with rules which the critic is able to define. English criticism at present rarely even pretends to go so far as this. It attempts, in the first place, to tell the public whether a book be or be not worth public attention; and, in the second place, so to describe the purport of the work as to enable those who have not time or inclination for reading it to feel that by a short cut they can become acquainted with its contents. Both these objects, if fairly well carried out, are salutary. Though the critic may not be a profound judge himself; though not unfre-

quently he be a young man making his first literary attempts, with tastes and judgment still unfix'd, yet he probably has a conscience in the matter, and would not have been selected for that work had he not shown some aptitude for it. Though he may be not the best possible guide to the undiscerning, he will be better than no guide at all. Real substantial criticism must, from its nature, be costly, and that which the public wants should at any rate be cheap. Advice is given to many thousands, which, though it may not be the best advice possible, is better than no advice at all. Then that description of the work criticised, that compressing of the much into very little,—which is the work of many modern critics or reviewers,—does enable many to know something of what is being said, who without it would know nothing.

I do not think it is incumbent on me at present to name periodicals in which this work is well done, and to make complaints of others by which it is scamped. I should give offence, and might probably be unjust. But I think I may certainly say that as some of these

periodicals are certainly entitled to great praise for the manner in which the work is done generally, so are others open to very severe censure,—and that the praise and that the censure are chiefly due on behalf of one virtue and its opposite vice. It is not critical ability that we have a right to demand, or its absence that we are bound to deplore. Critical ability for the price we pay is not attainable. It is a faculty not peculiar to Englishmen, and when displayed is very frequently not appreciated. But that critics should be honest we have a right to demand, and critical dishonesty we are bound to expose. If the writer will tell us what he thinks, though his thoughts be absolutely vague and useless, we can forgive him; but when he tells us what he does not think, actuated either by friendship or by animosity, then there should be no pardon for him. This is the sin in modern English criticism of which there is most reason to complain.

It is a lamentable fact that men and women lend themselves to this practice who are neither vindictive nor ordinarily dishonest. It has become “the custom of the trade,” under the

veil of which excuse so many tradesmen justify their malpractices! When a struggling author learns that so much has been done for A by the *Barssetshire Gazette*, so much for B by the *Dillsborough Herald*, and, again, so much for C by that powerful metropolitan organ the *Evening Pulpit*, and is told also that A and B and C have been favoured through personal interest, he also goes to work among the editors, or the editors' wives,—or perhaps, if he cannot reach their wives, with their wives' first or second cousins. When once the feeling has come upon an editor or a critic that he may allow himself to be influenced by other considerations than the duty he owes to the public, all sense of critical or of editorial honesty falls from him at once. *Facilis descensus Averni*. In a very short time that editorial honesty becomes ridiculous to himself. It is for other purpose that he wields the power; and when he is told what is his duty, and what should be his conduct, the preacher of such doctrine seems to him to be quixotic. "Where have you lived, my friend, for the last twenty years," he says in spirit, if not in word, "that you come out now with such stuff

as old-fashioned as this?" And thus dishonesty begets dishonesty, till dishonesty seems to be beautiful. How nice to be good-natured! How glorious to assist struggling young authors, especially if the young author be also a pretty woman! How gracious to oblige a friend! Then the motive, though still pleasing, departs further from the border of what is good. In what way can the critic better repay the hospitality of his wealthy literary friend than by good-natured criticism,—or more certainly ensure for himself a continuation of hospitable favours?

Some years since a critic of the day, a gentleman well known then in literary circles, showed me the manuscript of a book recently published,—the work of a popular author. It was handsomely bound, and was a valuable and desirable possession. It had just been given to him by the author as an acknowledgment for a laudatory review in one of the leading journals of the day. As I was expressly asked whether I did not regard such a token as a sign of grace both in the giver and in the receiver, I said that I thought it should neither have been

given nor have been taken. My theory was repudiated with scorn, and I was told that I was strait-laced, visionary, and impracticable! In all that the damage did not lie in the fact of that one present, but in the feeling on the part of the critic that his office was not debased by the acceptance of presents from those whom he criticised. This man was a professional critic, bound by his contract with certain employers to review such books as were sent to him. How could he, when he had received a valuable present for praising one book, censure another by the same author?

While I write this I well know that what I say, if it be ever noticed at all, will be taken as a straining at gnats, as a pretence of honesty, or at any rate as an exaggeration of scruples. I have said the same thing before, and have been ridiculed for saying it. But none the less am I sure that English literature generally is suffering much under this evil. All those who are struggling for success have forced upon them the idea that their strongest efforts should be made in touting for praise. Those who are not familiar with the lives of authors will hardly believe how low will be the

forms which their struggles will take:—how little presents will be sent to men who write little articles; how much flattery may be expended even on the keeper of a circulating library; with what profuse and distant genuflexions approaches are made to the outside railing of the temple which contains within it the great thunderer of some metropolitan periodical publication! The evil here is not only that done to the public when interested counsel is given to them, but extends to the debasement of those who have at any rate considered themselves fit to provide literature for the public.

I am satisfied that the remedy for this evil must lie in the conscience and deportment of authors themselves. If once the feeling could be produced that it is disgraceful for an author to ask for praise,—and demands for praise are, I think, disgraceful in every walk of life,—the practice would gradually fall into the hands only of the lowest, and that which is done only by the lowest soon becomes despicable even to them. The sin, when perpetuated with unflagging labour, brings with it at best very poor reward. That work of running after



critics, editors, publishers, the keepers of circulating libraries, and their clerks, is very hard, and must be very disagreeable. He who does it must feel himself to be dishonoured,—or she. It may perhaps help to sell an edition, but can never make an author successful.

I think it may be laid down as a golden rule in literature that there should be no intercourse at all between an author and his critic. The critic, as critic, should not know his author, nor the author, as author, his critic. As censure should beget no anger, so should praise beget no gratitude. The young author should feel that criticisms fall upon him as dew or hail from heaven,—which, as coming from heaven, man accepts as fate. Praise let the author try to obtain by wholesome effort; censure let him avoid, if possible, by care and industry. But when they come, let him take them as coming from some source which he cannot influence, and with which he should not meddle.

I know no more disagreeable trouble into which an author may plunge himself than of a quarrel with his critics, or any more useless labour than that of answering them. It is

wise to presume, at any rate, that the reviewer has simply done his duty, and has spoken of the book according to the dictates of his conscience. Nothing can be gained by combating the reviewer's opinion. If the book which he has disparaged be good, his judgment will be condemned by the praise of others; if bad, his judgment will be confirmed by others. Or if, unfortunately, the criticism of the day be in so evil a condition generally that such ultimate truth cannot be expected, the author may be sure that his efforts made on behalf of his own book will not set matters right. If injustice be done him, let him bear it. To do so is consonant with the dignity of the position which he ought to assume. To shriek, and scream, and sputter, to threaten actions, and to swear about the town that he has been belied and defamed in that he has been accused of bad grammar or a false metaphor, of a dull chapter, or even of a borrowed heroine, will leave on the minds of the public nothing but a sense of irritated impotence.

If, indeed, there should spring from an author's work any assertion by a critic injurious to the author's honour, if the author be

accused of falsehood or of personal motives which are discreditable to him, then, indeed, he may be bound to answer the charge. It is hoped, however, that he may be able to do so with clean hands, or he will so stir the mud in the pool as to come forth dirtier than he went into it.

I have lived much among men by whom the English criticism of the day has been vehemently abused. I have heard it said that to the public it is a false guide, and that to authors it is never a trustworthy Mentor. I do not concur in this wholesale censure. There is, of course, criticism and criticism. There are at this moment one or two periodicals to which both public and authors may safely look for guidance, though there are many others from which no spark of literary advantage may be obtained. But it is well that both public and authors should know what is the advantage which they have a right to expect. There have been critics,—and there probably will be again, though the circumstances of English literature do not tend to produce them,—with power sufficient to entitle them to speak with authority. These great men have declared,

*tanquam ex cathedrâ*, that such a book has been so far good and so far bad, or that it has been altogether good or altogether bad;—and the world has believed them. When making such assertions they have given their reasons, explained their causes, and have carried conviction. Very great reputations have been achieved by such critics, but not without infinite study and the labour of many years.

Such are not the critics of the day, of whom we are now speaking. In the literary world as it lives at present some writer is selected for the place of critic to a newspaper, generally some young writer, who for so many shillings a column shall review whatever book is sent to him and express an opinion,—reading the book through for the purpose, if the amount of honorarium as measured with the amount of labour will enable him to do so. A labourer must measure his work by his pay or he cannot live. From criticism such as this must for the most part be, the general reader has no right to expect philosophical analysis, or literary judgment on which confidence may be placed. But he probably may believe that the books praised will be better than the books

censured, and that those which are praised by periodicals which never censure are better worth his attention than those which are not noticed. And readers will also find that by devoting an hour or two on Saturday to the criticisms of the week, they will enable themselves to have an opinion about the books of the day. The knowledge so acquired will not be great, nor will that little be lasting ; but it adds something to the pleasure of life to be able to talk on subjects of which others are speaking ; and the man who has sedulously gone through the literary notices in the *Spectator* and the *Saturday* may perhaps be justified in thinking himself as well able to talk about the new book as his friend who has brought that new book on the *tapis*, and who, not improbably, obtained his information from the same source.

As an author, I have paid careful attention to the reviews which have been written on my own work ; and I think that now I well know where I may look for a little instruction, where I may expect only greasy adulation, where I shall be cut up into mince-meat for the delight of those who love sharp invective, and where

I shall find an equal mixture of praise and censure so adjusted, without much judgment, as to exhibit the impartiality of the newspaper and its staff. Among it all there is much chaff, which I have learned how to throw to the winds, with equal disregard whether it praises or blames ;—but I have also found some corn, on which I have fed and nourished myself, and for which I have been thankful.

## CHAPTER XV.

‘THE LAST CHRONICLE OF BARSET’—LEAVING  
THE POST OFFICE—‘ST PAUL’S MAGAZINE.’

I WILL now go back to the year 1867, in which I was still living at Waltham Cross. I had some time since bought the house there which I had at first hired, and added rooms to it, and made it for our purposes very comfortable. It was, however, a rickety old place, requiring much repair, and occasionally not as weather-tight as it should be. We had a domain there sufficient for the cows, and for the making of our butter and hay. For strawberries, asparagus, green peas, out-of-door peaches, for roses especially, and such everyday luxuries, no place was ever more excellent. It was only twelve miles from London, and admitted therefore of frequent intercourse with the metropolis. It was also near enough

to the Roothing country for hunting purposes. No doubt the Shoreditch Station, by which it had to be reached, had its drawbacks. My average distance also to the Essex meets was twenty miles. But the place combined as much or more than I had a right to expect. It was within my own postal district, and had, upon the whole, been well chosen.

The work I did during the twelve years that I remained there, from 1859 to 1871, was certainly very great. I feel confident that in amount no other writer contributed so much during that time to English literature. Over and above my novels, I wrote political articles, critical, social, and sporting articles, for periodicals, without number. I did the work of a surveyor of the General Post Office, and so did it as to give the authorities of the department no slightest pretext for fault-finding. I hunted always at least twice a week. I was frequent in the whist-room at the Garrick. I lived much in society in London, and was made happy by the presence of many friends at Waltham Cross. In addition to this we always spent six weeks at least out of England. Few men, I think, ever lived a fuller



life. And I attribute the power of doing this altogether to the virtue of early hours. It was my practice to be at my table every morning at 5.30 A.M.; and it was also my practice to allow myself no mercy. An old groom, whose business it was to call me, and to whom I paid £5 a year extra for the duty, allowed himself no mercy. During all those years at Waltham Cross he was never once late with the coffee which it was his duty to bring me. I do not know that I ought not to feel that I owe more to him than to any one else for the success I have had. By beginning at that hour I could complete my literary work before I dressed for breakfast.

All those I think who have lived as literary men,—working daily as literary labourers,—will agree with me that three hours a day will produce as much as a man ought to write. But then he should so have trained himself that he shall be able to work continuously during those three hours,—so have tutored his mind that it shall not be necessary for him to sit nibbling his pen, and gazing at the wall before him, till he shall have found the

words with which he wants to express his ideas. It had at this time become my custom,—and it still is my custom, though of late I have become a little lenient to myself,—to write with my watch before me, and to require from myself 250 words every quarter of an hour. I have found that the 250 words have been forthcoming as regularly as my watch went. But my three hours were not devoted entirely to writing. I always began my task by reading the work of the day before, an operation which would take me half an hour, and which consisted chiefly in weighing with my ear the sound of the words and phrases. I would strongly recommend this practice to all tyros in writing. That their work should be read after it has been written is a matter of course,—that it should be read twice at least before it goes to the printers, I take to be a matter of course. But by reading what he has last written, just before he recommences his task, the writer will catch the tone and spirit of what he is then saying, and will avoid the fault of seeming to be unlike himself. This division of time allowed me to produce over ten pages of an ordinary

novel volume a day, and if kept up through ten months, would have given as its results three novels of three volumes each in the year;—the precise amount which so greatly acerbated the publisher in Paternoster Row, and which must at any rate be felt to be quite as much as the novel-readers of the world can want from the hands of one man.

I have never written three novels in a year, but by following the plan above described I have written more than as much as three volumes; and by adhering to it over a course of years, I have been enabled to have always on hand,—for some time back now,—one or two or even three unpublished novels in my desk beside me. Were I to die now there are three such besides *The Prime Minister*, half of which has only yet been issued. One of these has been six years finished, and has never seen the light since it was first tied up in the wrapper which now contains it. I look forward with some grim pleasantry to its publication after another period of six years, and to the declaration of the critics that it has been the work of a period of life at which the power of writing novels had passed from me.

Not improbably, however, these pages may be printed first.

In 1866 and 1867 *The Last Chronicle of Barset* was brought out by George Smith in sixpenny monthly numbers. I do not know that this mode of publication had been tried before, or that it answered very well on this occasion. Indeed the shilling magazines had interfered greatly with the success of novels published in numbers without other accompanying matter. The public finding that so much might be had for a shilling, in which a portion of one or more novels was always included, were unwilling to spend their money on the novel alone. Feeling that this certainly had become the case in reference to novels published in shilling numbers, Mr Smith and I determined to make the experiment with sixpenny parts. As he paid me £3000 for the use of my MS., the loss, if any, did not fall upon me. If I remember right, the enterprise was not altogether successful.

Taking it as a whole, I regard this as the best novel I have written. I was never quite satisfied with the development of the plot, which consisted in the loss of a cheque, of a

charge made against a clergyman for stealing it, and of absolute uncertainty on the part of the clergyman himself as to the manner in which the cheque had found its way into his hands. I cannot quite make myself believe that even such a man as Mr Crawley could have forgotten how he got it; nor would the generous friend who was anxious to supply his wants have supplied them by tendering the cheque of a third person. Such fault I acknowledge, — acknowledging at the same time that I have never been capable of constructing with complete success the intricacies of a plot that required to be unravelled. But while confessing so much, I claim to have portrayed the mind of the unfortunate man with great accuracy and great delicacy. The pride, the humility, the manliness, the weakness, the conscientious rectitude and bitter prejudices of Mr Crawley were, I feel, true to nature and well described. The surroundings too are good. Mrs Proudie at the palace is a real woman; and the poor old dean dying at the deanery is also real. The archdeacon in his victory is very real. There is a true savour of English country life all through the

book. It was with many misgivings that I killed my old friend Mrs Proudie. I could not, I think, have done it, but for a resolution taken and declared under circumstances of great momentary pressure.

It was thus that it came about. I was sitting one morning at work upon the novel at the end of the long drawing-room of the Athenæum Club,—as was then my wont when I had slept the previous night in London. As I was there, two clergymen, each with a magazine in his hand, seated themselves, one on one side of the fire and one on the other, close to me. They soon began to abuse what they were reading, and each was reading some part of some novel of mine. The gravamen of their complaint lay in the fact that I reintroduced the same characters so often! "Here," said one, "is that archdeacon whom we have had in every novel he has ever written." "And here," said the other, "is the old duke whom he has talked about till everybody is tired of him. If I could not invent new characters, I would not write novels at all." Then one of them fell foul of Mrs Proudie. It was impossible for me not to hear their words, and almost

impossible to hear them and be quiet. I got up, and standing between them, I acknowledged myself to be the culprit. "As to Mrs Proudie," I said, "I will go home and kill her before the week is over." And so I did. The two gentlemen were utterly confounded, and one of them begged me to forget his frivolous observations.

I have sometimes regretted the deed, so great was my delight in writing about Mrs Proudie, so thorough was my knowledge of all the little shades of her character. It was not only that she was a tyrant, a bully, a would-be priestess, a very vulgar woman, and one who would send headlong to the nethermost pit all who disagreed with her; but that at the same time she was conscientious, by no means a hypocrite, really believing in the brimstone which she threatened, and anxious to save the souls around her from its horrors. And as her tyranny increased so did the bitterness of the moments of her repentance increase, in that she knew herself to be a tyrant,—till that bitterness killed her. Since her time others have grown up equally dear to me,—Lady Glencora and her husband, for

instance; but I have never dissevered myself from Mrs Proudie, and still live much in company with her ghost.

I have in a previous chapter said how I wrote *Can You Forgive Her?* after the plot of a play which had been rejected,—which play had been called *The Noble Filt*. Some year or two after the completion of *The Last Chronicle*, I was asked by the manager of a theatre to prepare a piece for his stage, and I did so, taking the plot of this novel. I called the comedy *Did He Steal It?* But my friend the manager did not approve of my attempt. My mind at this time was less attentive to such a matter than when dear old George Bartley nearly crushed me by his criticism,—so that I forget the reason given. I have little doubt but that the manager was right. That he intended to express a true opinion, and would have been glad to have taken the piece had he thought it suitable, I am quite sure.

I have sometimes wished to see during my lifetime a combined republication of those tales which are occupied with the fictitious county of Barsetshire. These would be *The Warden*, *Barchester Towers*, *Doctor Thorne*,



*Framley Parsonage*, and *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. But I have hitherto failed. The copyrights are in the hands of four different persons, including myself, and with one of the four I have not been able to prevail to act in concert with the others.<sup>1</sup>

In 1867 I made up my mind to take a step in life which was not unattended with peril, which many would call rash, and which, when taken, I should be sure at some period to regret. This step was the resignation of my place in the Post Office. I have described how it was that I contrived to combine the performance of its duties with my other avocations in life. I got up always very early; but even this did not suffice. I worked always on Sundays,—as to which no scruple of religion made me unhappy,—and not unfrequently I was driven to work at night. In the winter when hunting was going on, I had to keep myself very much on the alert. And during the London season, when I was generally two or three days of the week in town, I found the official

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written I have made arrangements for doing as I have wished, and the first volume of the series will now very shortly be published.

work to be a burden. I had determined some years previously, after due consideration with my wife, to abandon the Post Office when I had put by an income equal to the pension to which I should be entitled if I remained in the department till I was sixty. That I had now done, and I sighed for liberty.

The exact time chosen, the autumn of 1867, was selected because I was then about to undertake other literary work in editing a new magazine,—of which I shall speak very shortly. But in addition to these reasons there was another, which was, I think, at last the actuating cause. When Sir Rowland Hill left the Post Office, and my brother-in-law, Mr Tilley, became Secretary in his place, I applied for the vacant office of Under-Secretary. Had I obtained this I should have given up my hunting, have given up much of my literary work,—at any rate would have edited no magazine,—and would have returned to the habit of my youth in going daily to the General Post Office. There was very much against such a change in life. The increase of salary would not have amounted to above £400 a year, and I should have lost much

more than that in literary remuneration. I should have felt bitterly the slavery of attendance at an office, from which I had then been exempt for five-and-twenty years. I should, too, have greatly missed the sport which I loved. But I was attached to the department, had imbued myself with a thorough love of letters,—I mean the letters which are carried by the post,—and was anxious for their welfare as though they were all my own. In short, I wished to continue the connection. I did not wish, moreover, that any younger officer should again pass over my head. I believed that I had been a valuable public servant, and I will own to a feeling existing at that time that I had not altogether been well treated. I was probably wrong in this. I had been allowed to hunt,—and to do as I pleased, and to say what I liked, and had in that way received my reward. I applied for the office, but Mr Scudamore was appointed to it. He no doubt was possessed of gifts which I did not possess. He understood the manipulation of money and the use of figures, and was a great accountant. I think that I might have been more useful in regard to

the labours and wages of the immense body of men employed by the Post Office. However, Mr Scudamore was appointed; and I made up my mind that I would fall back upon my old intention, and leave the department. I think I allowed two years to pass before I took the step; and the day on which I sent the letter was to me most melancholy.

The rule of the service in regard to pensions is very just. A man shall serve till he is sixty before he is entitled to a pension,—unless his health fail him. At that age he is entitled to one-sixtieth of his salary for every year he has served up to forty years. If his health do fail him so that he is unfit for further work before the age named, then he may go with a pension amounting to one-sixtieth for every year he has served. I could not say that my health had failed me, and therefore I went without any pension. I have since felt occasionally that it has been supposed that I left the Post Office under pressure,—because I attended to hunting and to my literary work rather than to postal matters. As it had for many years been my ambition to be a thoroughly good servant to the public, and to

give to the public much more than I took in the shape of salary, this feeling has sometimes annoyed me. And as I am still a little sore on the subject, and as I would not have it imagined after my death that I had slighted the public service to which I belonged, I will venture here to give the reply which was sent to the letter containing my resignation.

“GENERAL POST OFFICE,  
*October 9th, 1867.*”

“SIR,—I have received your letter of the 3d inst., in which you tender your resignation as Surveyor in the Post Office service, and state as your reason for this step that you have adopted another profession, the exigencies of which are so great as to make you feel you cannot give to the duties of the Post Office that amount of attention which you consider the Postmaster-General has a right to expect.

“You have for many years ranked among the most conspicuous members of the Post Office, which, on several occasions when you have been employed on large and difficult matters, has reaped much benefit from the great abilities which you have been able to

place at its disposal; and in mentioning this, I have been especially glad to record that, notwithstanding the many calls upon your time, you have never permitted your other avocations to interfere with your Post Office work, which has been faithfully and indeed energetically performed." (There was a touch of irony in this word "energetically," but still it did not displease me.)

"In accepting your resignation, which he does with much regret, the Duke of Montrose desires me to convey to you his own sense of the value of your services, and to state how alive he is to the loss which will be sustained by the department in which you have long been an ornament, and where your place will with difficulty be replaced.

(Signed) J. TILLEY."

Readers will no doubt think that this is official flummery; and so in fact it is. I do not at all imagine that I was an ornament to the Post Office, and have no doubt that the secretaries and assistant-secretaries very often would have been glad to be rid of me; but the letter may be taken as evidence that I did

not allow my literary enterprises to interfere with my official work. A man who takes public money without earning it is to me so odious that I can find no pardon for him in my heart. I have known many such, and some who have craved the power to do so. Nothing would annoy me more than to think that I should even be supposed to have been among the number.

And so my connection was dissolved with the department to which I had applied the thirty-three best years of my life ;—I must not say devoted, for devotion implies an entire surrender, and I certainly had found time for other occupations. It is however absolutely true that during all those years I had thought very much more about the Post Office than I had of my literary work, and had given to it a more unflagging attention. Up to this time I had never been angry, never felt myself injured or unappreciated in that my literary efforts were slighted. But I had suffered very much bitterness on that score in reference to the Post Office ; and I had suffered not only on my own personal behalf, but also and more bitterly when I could not promise to be done

the things which I thought ought to be done for the benefit of others. That the public in little villages should be enabled to buy postage stamps; that they should have their letters delivered free and at an early hour; that pillar letter-boxes should be put up for them (of which accommodation in the streets and ways of England I was the originator, having, however, got the authority for the erection of the first at St Heliers in Jersey); that the letter-carriers and sorters should not be overworked; that they should be adequately paid, and have some hours to themselves, especially on Sundays; above all, that they should be made to earn their wages; and latterly that they should not be crushed by what I thought to be the damnable system of so-called merit;—these were the matters by which I was stirred to what the secretary was pleased to call energetic performance of my duties. How I loved, when I was contradicted,—as I was very often and no doubt very properly,—to do instantly as I was bid, and then to prove that what I was doing was fatuous, dishonest, expensive, and impracticable! And then there were feuds,—such delicious feuds! I was always



an anti-Hillite, acknowledging, indeed, the great thing which Sir Rowland Hill had done for the country, but believing him to be entirely unfit to manage men or to arrange labour. It was a pleasure to me to differ from him on all occasions ;—and looking back now, I think that in all such differences I was right.

Having so steeped myself, as it were, in postal waters, I could not go out from them without a regret. I wonder whether I did anything to improve the style of writing in official reports! I strove to do so gallantly, never being contented with the language of my own reports unless it seemed to have been so written as to be pleasant to be read. I took extreme delight in writing them, not allowing myself to re-copy them, never having them re-copied by others, but sending them up with their original blots and erasures,—if blots and erasures there were. It is hardly manly, I think, that a man should search after a fine neatness at the expense of so much waste labour ; or that he should not be able to exact from himself the necessity of writing words in the form in which they should be read. If a copy be required, let it be taken

afterwards,—by hand or by machine, as may be. But the writer of a letter, if he wish his words to prevail with the reader, should send them out as written by himself, by his own hand, with his own marks, his own punctuation, correct or incorrect, with the evidence upon them that they have come out from his own mind.

And so the cord was cut, and I was a free man to run about the world where I would.

A little before the date of my resignation, Mr James Virtue, the printer and publisher, had asked me to edit a new magazine for him, and had offered me a salary of £1000 a year for the work, over and above what might be due to me for my own contributions. I had known something of magazines, and did not believe that they were generally very lucrative. They were, I thought, useful to some publishers as bringing grist to the mill; but as Mr Virtue's business was chiefly that of a printer, in which he was very successful, this consideration could hardly have had much weight with him. I very strongly advised him to abandon the project, pointing out to him that a large expenditure would be necessary to carry on the

magazine in accordance with my views,—that I could not be concerned in it on any other understanding, and that the chances of an adequate return to him of his money were very small. He came down to Waltham, listened to my arguments with great patience, and then told me that if I would not do the work he would find some other editor.

Upon this I consented to undertake the duty. My terms as to salary were those which he had himself proposed. The special stipulations which I demanded were: firstly, that I should put whatever I pleased into the magazine, or keep whatever I pleased out of it, without interference; secondly, that I should from month to month give in to him a list of payments to be made to contributors, and that he should pay them, allowing me to fix the amounts; and thirdly, that the arrangement should remain in force at any rate for two years. To all this he made no objection; and during the time that he and I were thus bound together, he not only complied with these stipulations, but also with every suggestion respecting the magazine that I made to him. If the use of large capital, combined

with wide liberality and absolute confidence on the part of the proprietor, and perpetual good humour, would have produced success, our magazine certainly would have succeeded.

In all such enterprises the name is the first great difficulty. There is the name which has a meaning and the name which has none,—of which two the name that has none is certainly the better, as it never belies itself. *The Liberal* may cease to be liberal, or *The Fortnightly*, alas! to come out once a fortnight. But *The Cornhill* and *The Argosy* are under any set of circumstances as well adapted to these names as under any other. Then there is the proprietary name, or possibly the editorial name, which is only amiss because the publication may change hands. *Blackwood's* has indeed always remained *Blackwood's*, and *Fraser's*, though it has been bought and sold, still does not sound amiss. Mr Virtue, fearing the too attractive qualities of his own name, wished the magazine to be called *Anthony Trollope's*. But to this I objected eagerly. There were then about the town—still are about the town—two or three literary gentlemen, by whom to have had myself

editored would have driven me an exile from my country. After much discussion, we settled on *St Paul's* as the name for our bantling,—not as being in any way new, but as enabling it to fall easily into the ranks with many others. If we were to make ourselves in any way peculiar, it was not by our name that we were desirous of doing so.

I do not think that we did make ourselves in any way peculiar,—and yet there was a great struggle made. On the part of the proprietor, I may say that money was spent very freely. On my own part, I may declare that I omitted nothing which I thought might tend to success. I read all manuscripts sent to me, and endeavoured to judge impartially. I succeeded in obtaining the services of an excellent literary corps. During the three years and a half of my editorship I was assisted by Mr Goschen, Captain Brackenbury, Edward Dicey, Percy Fitzgerald, H. A. Layard, Allingham, Leslie Stephen, Mrs Lynn Linton, my brother, T. A. Trollope, and his wife, Charles Lever, E. Arnold, Austin Dobson, R. A. Proctor, Lady Pollock, G. H. Lewes, C. Mackay, Hardman (of the *Times*), George Mac-

donald, W. R. Greg, Mrs Oliphant, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Leoni Levi, Dutton Cook,—and others, whose names would make the list too long. It might have been thought that with such aid the *St Paul's* would have succeeded. I do not think that the failure—for it did fail—arose from bad editing. Perhaps too much editing might have been the fault. I was too anxious to be good, and did not enough think of what might be lucrative.

It did fail, for it never paid its way. It reached, if I remember right, a circulation of nearly 10,000—perhaps on one or two occasions may have gone beyond that. But the enterprise had been set on foot on a system too expensive to be made lucrative by anything short of a very large circulation. Literary merit will hardly set a magazine afloat, though when afloat it will sustain it. Time is wanted,—or the hubbub, and flurry, and excitement created by ubiquitous sesquipedalian advertisement. Merit and time together may be effective, but they must be backed by economy and patience.

I think, upon the whole, that publishers themselves have been the best editors of

magazines, when they have been able to give time and intelligence to the work. Nothing certainly has ever been done better than *Blackwood's*. The *Cornhill*, too, after Thackeray had left it and before Leslie Stephen had taken it, seemed to be in quite efficient hands,—those hands being the hands of proprietor and publisher. The proprietor, at any rate, knows what he wants and what he can afford, and is not so frequently tempted to fall into that worst of literary quicksands, the publishing of matter not for the sake of the readers, but for that of the writer. I did not so sin very often, but often enough to feel that I was a coward. “My dear friend, my dear friend, this is trash!” It is so hard to speak thus,—but so necessary for an editor! We all remember the thorn in his pillow of which Thackeray complained. Occasionally I know that I did give way on behalf of some literary aspirant whose work did not represent itself to me as being good; and as often as I did so, I broke my trust to those who employed me. Now, I think that such editors as Thackeray and myself—if I may for the moment be allowed to couple men so unequal—will always

be liable to commit such faults, but that the natures of publishers and proprietors will be less soft.

Nor do I know why the pages of a magazine should be considered to be open to any aspirant who thinks that he can write an article, or why the manager of a magazine should be doomed to read all that may be sent to him. The object of the proprietor is to produce a periodical that shall satisfy the public, which he may probably best do by securing the services of writers of acknowledged ability.



## CHAPTER XVI.

## BEVERLEY.

VERY early in life, very soon after I had become a clerk in St Martin's le Grand, when I was utterly impecunious and beginning to fall grievously into debt, I was asked by an uncle of mine, who was himself a clerk in the War Office, what destination I should like best for my future life. He probably meant to inquire whether I wished to live married or single, whether to remain in the Post Office or to leave it, whether I should prefer the town or the country. I replied that I should like to be a Member of Parliament. My uncle, who was given to sarcasm, rejoined that, as far as he knew, few clerks in the Post Office did become Members of Parliament. I think it was the remembrance of this jeer which stirred me up to look for a seat as soon as I

had made myself capable of holding one by leaving the public service. My uncle was dead, but if I could get a seat, the knowledge that I had done so might travel to that bourne from whence he was not likely to return, and he might there feel that he had done me wrong.

Independently of this, I have always thought that to sit in the British Parliament should be the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman. I do not by this mean to suggest that every educated Englishman should set before himself a seat in Parliament as a probable or even a possible career; but that the man in Parliament has reached a higher position than the man out,—that to serve one's country without pay is the grandest work that a man can do,—that of all studies the study of politics is the one in which a man may make himself most useful to his fellow-creatures,—and that of all lives, public political lives are capable of the highest efforts. So thinking,—though I was aware that fifty-three was too late an age at which to commence a new career,—I resolved with much hesitation that I would make the attempt.

Writing now at an age beyond sixty, I can say that my political feelings and convictions have never undergone any change. They are now what they became when I first began to have political feelings and convictions. Nor do I find in myself any tendency to modify them as I have found generally in men as they grow old. I consider myself to be an advanced, but still a Conservative - Liberal, which I regard not only as a possible but as a rational and consistent phase of political existence. I can, I believe, in a very few words, make known my political theory; and as I am anxious that any who know aught of me should know that, I will endeavour to do so.

It must, I think, be painful to all men to feel inferiority. It should, I think, be a matter of some pain to all men to feel superiority, unless when it has been won by their own efforts. We do not understand the operations of Almighty wisdom, and are therefore unable to tell the causes of the terrible inequalities that we see,—why some, why so many, should have so little to make life enjoyable, so much to make it painful, while a few others, not through their own merit, have had gifts

poured out to them from a full hand. We acknowledge the hand of God and His wisdom, but still we are struck with awe and horror at the misery of many of our brethren. We who have been born to the superior condition,—for in this matter I consider myself to be standing on a platform with dukes and princes, and all others to whom plenty and education and liberty have been given,—cannot, I think, look upon the inane, unintellectual, and tost-bound life of those who cannot even feed themselves sufficiently by their sweat, without some feeling of injustice, some feeling of pain.

This consciousness of wrong has induced in many enthusiastic but unbalanced minds a desire to set all things right by a proclaimed equality. In their efforts such men have shown how powerless they are in opposing the ordinances of the Creator. For the mind of the thinker and the student is driven to admit, though it be awestruck by apparent injustice, that this inequality is the work of God. Make all men equal to-day, and God has so created them that they shall be all unequal to-morrow. The so-called Conservative, the

conscientious philanthropic Conservative, seeing this, and being surely convinced that such inequalities are of divine origin, tells himself that it is his duty to preserve them. He thinks that the preservation of the welfare of the world depends on the maintenance of those distances between the prince and the peasant by which he finds himself to be surrounded ; —and perhaps, I may add, that the duty is not unpleasant, as he feels himself to be one of the princes.

But this man, though he sees something, and sees that very clearly, sees only a little. The divine inequality is apparent to him, but not the equally divine diminution of that inequality. That such diminution is taking place on all sides is apparent enough ; but it is apparent to him as an evil, the consummation of which it is his duty to retard. He cannot prevent it ; and therefore the society to which he belongs is, in his eyes, retrograding. He will even, at times, assist it ; and will do so conscientiously, feeling that, under the gentle pressure supplied by him, and with the drags and hold-fasts which he may add, the movement would be slower than it would become if subjected to

his proclaimed and absolute opponents. Such, I think, are Conservatives;—and I speak of men who, with the fear of God before their eyes and the love of their neighbours warm in their hearts, endeavour to do their duty to the best of their ability.

Using the term which is now common, and which will be best understood, I will endeavour to explain how the equally conscientious Liberal is opposed to the Conservative. He is equally aware that these distances are of divine origin, equally averse to any sudden disruption of society in quest of some Utopian blessedness;—but he is alive to the fact that these distances are day by day becoming less, and he regards this continual diminution as a series of steps towards that human millennium of which he dreams. He is even willing to help the many to ascend the ladder a little, though he knows, as they come up towards him, he must go down to meet them. What is really in his mind is,—I will not say equality, for the word is offensive, and presents to the imaginations of men ideas of communism, of ruin, and insane democracy,—but a tendency towards equality. In following that, however, he knows

that he must be hemmed in by safeguards, lest he be tempted to travel too quickly; and therefore he is glad to be accompanied on his way by the repressive action of a Conservative opponent. Holding such views, I think I am guilty of no absurdity in calling myself an advanced Conservative-Liberal. A man who entertains in his mind any political doctrine, except as a means of improving the condition of his fellows, I regard as a political intriguer, a charlatan, and a conjurer,—as one who thinks that, by a certain amount of wary wire-pulling, he may raise himself in the estimation of the world.

I am aware that this theory of politics will seem to many to be stilted, overstrained, and, as the Americans would say, high-faluten. Many will declare that the majority even of those who call themselves politicians,—perhaps even of those who take an active part in politics,—are stirred by no such feelings as these, and acknowledge no such motives. Men become Tories or Whigs, Liberals or Conservatives, partly by education,—following their fathers,—partly by chance, partly as openings come, partly in accordance with the bent

of their minds, but still without any far-fetched reasonings as to distances and the diminution of distances. No doubt it is so ;— and in the battle of politics, as it goes, men are led further and further away from first causes, till at last a measure is opposed by one simply because it is advocated by another, and members of Parliament swarm into lobbies, following the dictation of their leaders, and not their own individual judgments. But the principle is at work throughout. To many, though hardly acknowledged, it is still apparent. On almost all it has its effect ; though there are the intriguers, the clever conjurers, to whom politics is simply such a game as is billiards or rackets, only played with greater results. To the minds that create and lead and sway political opinion, some such theory is, I think, ever present.

The truth of all this I had long since taken home to myself. I had now been thinking of it for thirty years, and had never doubted. But I had always been aware of a certain visionary weakness about myself in regard to politics. A man, to be useful in Parliament, must be able to confine himself and conform



himself, to be satisfied with doing a little bit of a little thing at a time. He must patiently get up everything connected with the duty on mushrooms, and then be satisfied with himself when at last he has induced a Chancellor of the Exchequer to say that he will consider the impost at the first opportunity. He must be content to be beaten six times in order that, on a seventh, his work may be found to be of assistance to some one else. He must remember that he is one out of 650, and be content with 1-650th part of the attention of the nation. If he have grand ideas, he must keep them to himself, unless by chance he can work his way up to the top of the tree. In short, he must be a practical man. Now I knew that in politics I could never become a practical man. I should never be satisfied with a soft word from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but would always be flinging my over-taxed ketchup in his face.

Nor did it seem to me to be possible that I should ever become a good speaker. I had no special gifts that way, and had not studied the art early enough in life to overcome natural difficulties. I had found that, with infinite

labour, I could learn a few sentences by heart, and deliver them, monotonously indeed, but clearly. Or, again, if there were something special to be said, I could say it in a commonplace fashion,—but always as though I were in a hurry, and with the fear before me of being thought to be prolix. But I had no power of combining, as a public speaker should always do, that which I had studied with that which occurred to me at the moment. It must be all lesson,—which I found to be best; or else all impromptu,—which was very bad indeed, unless I had something special on my mind. I was thus aware that I could do no good by going into Parliament,—that the time for it, if there could have been a time, had gone by. But still I had an almost insane desire to sit there, and be able to assure myself that my uncle's scorn had not been deserved.

In 1867 it had been suggested to me that, in the event of a dissolution, I should stand for one division of the county of Essex; and I had promised that I would do so, though the promise at that time was as rash a one as a man could make. I was instigated to this by the late Charles Buxton, a man whom I greatly

loved, and who was very anxious that the county for which his brother had sat, and with which the family were connected, should be relieved from what he regarded as the thralldom of Toryism. But there was no dissolution then. Mr Disraeli passed his Reform Bill, by the help of the Liberal member for Newark, and the summoning of a new Parliament was postponed till the next year. By this new Reform Bill Essex was portioned out into three instead of two electoral divisions, one of which—that adjacent to London—would, it was thought, be altogether Liberal. After the promise which I had given, the performance of which would have cost me a large sum of money absolutely in vain, it was felt by some that I should be selected as one of the candidates for the new division,—and as such I was proposed by Mr Charles Buxton. But another gentleman, who would have been bound by previous pledges to support me, was put forward by what I believe to have been the defeating interest, and I had to give way. At the election this gentleman, with another Liberal, who had often stood for the county, were returned without a contest. Alas! alas! They were both

unseated at the next election, when the great Conservative reaction took place.

In the spring of 1868 I was sent to the United States on a postal mission, of which I will speak presently. While I was absent the dissolution took place. On my return I was somewhat too late to look out for a seat, but I had friends who knew the weakness of my ambition; and it was not likely, therefore, that I should escape the peril of being put forward for some impossible borough as to which the Liberal party would not choose that it should go to the Conservatives without a struggle. At last, after one or two others, Beverley was proposed to me, and to Beverley I went.

I must, however, exculpate the gentleman who acted as my agent, from undue persuasion exercised towards me. He was a man who thoroughly understood Parliament, having sat there himself,—and he sits there now at this moment. He understood Yorkshire,—or at least the East Riding of Yorkshire, in which Beverley is situated,—certainly better than any one alive. He understood all the mysteries of canvassing, and he knew well the traditions, the condition, and the prospect of the Liberal

party. I will not give his name, but they who knew Yorkshire in 1868 will not be at a loss to find it. "So," said he, "you are going to stand for Beverley?" I replied gravely that I was thinking of doing so. "You don't expect to get in?" he said. Again I was grave. I would not, I said, be sanguine, but nevertheless I was disposed to hope for the best. "Oh no!" continued he, with good-humoured raillery, "you won't get in. I don't suppose you really expect it. But there is a fine career open to you. You will spend £1000, and lose the election. Then you will petition, and spend another £1000. You will throw out the elected members. There will be a commission, and the borough will be disfranchised. For a beginner such as you are, that will be a great success." And yet, in the teeth of this, from a man who knew all about it, I persisted in going to Beverley!

The borough, which returned two members, had long been represented by Sir Henry Edwards, of whom, I think, I am justified in saying that he had contracted a close intimacy with it for the sake of the seat. There had been many contests, many petitions, many void

elections, many members, but, through it all, Sir Henry had kept his seat, if not with permanence, yet with a fixity of tenure next door to permanence. I fancy that with a little management between the parties the borough might at this time have returned a member of each colour quietly;—but there were spirits there who did not love political quietude, and it was at last decided that there should be two Liberal and two Conservative candidates. Sir Henry was joined by a young man of fortune in quest of a seat, and I was grouped with Mr Maxwell, the eldest son of Lord Herries, a Scotch Roman Catholic peer who lives in the neighbourhood.

When the time came I went down to canvass, and spent, I think, the most wretched fortnight of my manhood. In the first place, I was subject to a bitter tyranny from grinding vulgar tyrants. They were doing what they could, or said that they were doing so, to secure me a seat in Parliament, and I was to be in their hands for at any rate the period of my candidature. On one day both of us, Mr Maxwell and I, wanted to go out hunting. We proposed to ourselves but the one holiday

during this period of intense labour; but I was assured, as was he also, by a publican who was working for us, that if we committed such a crime he and all Beverley would desert us. From morning to evening every day I was taken round the lanes and by-ways of that uninteresting town, canvassing every voter, exposed to the rain, up to my knees in slush, and utterly unable to assume that air of triumphant joy with which a jolly, successful candidate should be invested. At night, every night I had to speak somewhere,—which was bad; and to listen to the speaking of others,—which was much worse. When, on one Sunday, I proposed to go to the Minster Church, I was told that was quite useless, as the Church party were all certain to support Sir Henry! “Indeed,” said the publican, my tyrant, “he goes there in a kind of official profession, and you had better not allow yourself to be seen in the same place.” So I stayed away and omitted my prayers. No Church of England church in Beverley would on such an occasion have welcomed a Liberal candidate. I felt myself to be a kind of pariah in the borough, to whom was opposed

all that was pretty, and all that was nice, and all that was—ostensibly—good.

But perhaps my strongest sense of discomfort arose from the conviction that my political ideas were all leather and prunella to the men whose votes I was soliciting. They cared nothing for my doctrines, and could not be made to understand that I should have any. I had been brought to Beverley either to beat Sir Henry Edwards,—which, however, no one probably thought to be feasible,—or to cause him the greatest possible amount of trouble, inconvenience, and expense. There were, indeed, two points on which a portion of my wished-for supporters seemed to have opinions, and on both these two points I was driven by my opinions to oppose them. Some were anxious for the Ballot,—which had not then become law,—and some desired the Permissive Bill. I hated, and do hate, both these measures, thinking it to be unworthy of a great people to free itself from the evil results of vicious conduct by unmanly restraints. Undue influence on voters is a great evil from which this country had already done much to emancipate itself by extended electoral divi-



sions and by an increase of independent feeling. These, I thought, and not secret voting, were the weapons by which electoral intimidation should be overcome. And as for drink, I believe in no Parliamentary restraint; but I do believe in the gradual effect of moral teaching and education. But a Liberal, to do any good at Beverley, should have been able to swallow such gnats as those. I would swallow nothing, and was altogether the wrong man.

I knew, from the commencement of my candidature, how it would be. Of course that well-trained gentleman who condescended to act as my agent, had understood the case, and I ought to have taken his thoroughly kind advice. He had seen it all, and had told himself that it was wrong that one so innocent in such ways as I, so utterly unable to fight such a battle, should be carried down into Yorkshire merely to spend money and to be annoyed. He could not have said more than he did say, and I suffered for my obstinacy. Of course I was not elected. Sir Henry Edwards and his comrade became members for Beverley, and I was at the bottom of the poll. I paid £400 for my expenses, and then returned to London.

My friendly agent in his raillery had of course exaggerated the cost. He had, when I arrived at Beverley, asked me for a cheque for £400, and told me that that sum would suffice. It did suffice. How it came to pass that exactly that sum should be required I never knew, but such was the case. Then there came a petition,—not from me, but from the town. The inquiry was made, the two gentlemen were unseated, the borough was disfranchised, Sir Henry Edwards was put on his trial for some kind of Parliamentary offence and was acquitted. In this way Beverley's privilege as a borough and my Parliamentary ambition were brought to an end at the same time.

When I knew the result I did not altogether regret it. It may be that Beverley might have been brought to political confusion and Sir Henry Edwards relegated to private life without the expenditure of my hard-earned money, and without that fortnight of misery; but connecting the things together, as it was natural that I should do, I did flatter myself that I had done some good. It had seemed to me that nothing could be worse, nothing more unpatriotic, nothing more absolutely opposed to the

system of representative government, than the time-honoured practices of the borough of Beverley. It had come to pass that political cleanliness was odious to the citizens. There was something grand in the scorn with which a leading Liberal there turned up his nose at me when I told him that there should be no bribery, no treating, not even a pot of beer on one side. It was a matter for study to see how at Beverley politics were appreciated because they might subserve electoral purposes, and how little it was understood that electoral purposes, which are in themselves a nuisance, should be endured in order that they may subserve politics. And then the time, the money, the mental energy, which had been expended in making the borough a secure seat for a gentleman who had realised the idea that it would become him to be a member of Parliament! This use of the borough seemed to be realised and approved in the borough generally. The inhabitants had taught themselves to think that it was for such purposes that boroughs were intended! To have assisted in putting an end to this, even in one town, was to a certain extent a satisfaction.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE AMERICAN POSTAL TREATY—THE QUESTION OF COPYRIGHT WITH AMERICA—FOUR MORE NOVELS.

IN the spring of 1868,—before the affair of Beverley, which, as being the first direct result of my resignation of office, has been brought in a little out of its turn,—I was requested to go over to the United States and make a postal treaty at Washington. This, as I had left the service, I regarded as a compliment, and of course I went. It was my third visit to America, and I have made two since. As far as the Post Office work was concerned, it was very far from being agreeable. I found myself located at Washington, a place I do not love, and was harassed by delays, annoyed by incompetence, and opposed by what I felt to be personal and not national views. I had to deal with two men,—with one who was a

working officer of the American Post Office, than whom I have never met a more zealous, or, as far as I could judge, a more honest public servant. He had his views and I had mine, each of us having at heart the welfare of the service in regard to his own country,—each of us also having certain orders which we were bound to obey. But the other gentleman, who was in rank the superior,—whose executive position was dependent on his official status, as is the case with our own Ministers,—did not recommend himself to me equally. He would make appointments with me and then not keep them, which at last offended me so grievously, that I declared at the Washington Post Office that if this treatment were continued, I would write home to say that any further action on my part was impossible. I think I should have done so had it not occurred to me that I might in this way serve his purpose rather than my own, or the purposes of those who had sent me. The treaty, however, was at last made,—the purport of which was, that everything possible should be done, at a heavy expenditure on the part of England, to expedite the mails from England to America,

and that nothing should be done by America to expedite the mails from thence to us. The expedition I believe to be now equal both ways; but it could not be maintained as it is without the payment of a heavy subsidy from Great Britain, whereas no subsidy is paid by the States.<sup>1</sup>

I had also a commission from the Foreign Office, for which I had asked, to make an effort on behalf of an international copyright between the United States and Great Britain,—the want of which is the one great impediment to pecuniary success which still stands in the way of successful English authors. I cannot say that I have never had a shilling of American money on behalf of reprints of my work; but I have been conscious of no such payment. Having found many years ago—in 1861, when I made a struggle on the subject, being then in the States, the details of which are sufficiently amusing<sup>2</sup>—that I could not

<sup>1</sup> This was a state of things which may probably have appeared to American politicians to be exactly that which they should try to obtain. The whole arrangement has again been altered since the time of which I have spoken.

<sup>2</sup> In answer to a question from myself, a certain American publisher—he who usually reprinted my works—promised me that *if any other American publisher republished my work on America before he had done*

myself succeed in dealing with American booksellers, I have sold all foreign right to the English publishers; and though I do not know that I have raised my price against them on that score, I may in this way have had some indirect advantage from the American market. But I do know that what the publishers have received here is very trifling. I doubt whether Messrs Chapman & Hall, my present publishers, get for early sheets sent to the States as much as 5 per cent on the price they pay me for my manuscript. But the American readers are more numerous than the English, and taking them all through, are probably more wealthy. If I can get £1000 for a book here (exclusive of their market), I ought to be able to get as much there. If a man supply 600 customers with shoes in place of 300, there is no question as

*so*, he would not bring out a competing edition, though there would be no law to hinder him. I then entered into an agreement with another American publisher, stipulating to supply him with early sheets; and he stipulating to supply me a certain royalty on his sales, and to supply me with accounts half-yearly. I sent the sheets with energetic punctuality, and the work was brought out with equal energy and precision—by my old American publishers. The gentleman who made the promise had not broken his word. No other American edition had come out before his. I never got any account, and, of course, never received a dollar.

to such result. Why not, then, if I can supply 60,000 readers instead of 30,000?

I fancied that I knew that the opposition to an international copyright was by no means an American feeling, but was confined to the bosoms of a few interested Americans. All that I did and heard in reference to the subject on this further visit,—and having a certain authority from the British Secretary of State with me I could hear and do something,—altogether confirmed me in this view. I have no doubt that if I could poll American readers, or American senators,—or even American representatives, if the polling could be unbiassed,—or American booksellers,<sup>1</sup> that an assent to an international copyright would be the result. The state of things as it is is crushing to American authors, as the publishers will not pay them on a liberal scale, knowing that they can supply their customers with modern English literature without paying for it. The English amount of production so much exceeds the American, that the rate at which the

<sup>1</sup> I might also say American publishers, if I might count them by the number of heads, and not by the amount of work done by the firms.



former can be published rules the market. It is equally injurious to American booksellers,—except to two or three of the greatest houses. No small man can now acquire the exclusive right of printing and selling an English book. If such a one attempt it, the work is printed instantly by one of the leviathans,—who alone are the gainers. The argument of course is, that the American readers are the gainers,—that as they can get for nothing the use of certain property, they would be cutting their own throats were they to pass a law debarring themselves from the power of such appropriation. In this argument all idea of honesty is thrown to the winds. It is not that they do not approve of a system of copyright,—as many great men have disapproved,—for their own law of copyright is as stringent as is ours. A bold assertion is made that they like to appropriate the goods of other people; and that, as in this case, they can do so with impunity, they will continue to do so. But the argument, as far as I have been able to judge, comes not from the people, but from the book-selling leviathans, and from those politicians whom the leviathans are able to attach to their

interests. The ordinary American purchaser is not much affected by slight variations in price. He is at any rate too high-hearted to be affected by the prospect of such variation. It is the man who wants to make money, not he who fears that he may be called upon to spend it, who controls such matters as this in the United States. It is the large speculator who becomes powerful in the lobbies of the House, and understands how wise it may be to incur a great expenditure either in the creation of a great business, or in protecting that which he has created from competition. Nothing was done in 1868,—and nothing has been done since (up to 1876). A Royal Commission on the law of copyright is now about to sit in this country, of which I have consented to be a member; and the question must then be handled, though nothing done by a Royal Commission here can affect American legislators. But I do believe that if the measure be consistently and judiciously urged, the enemies to it in the States will gradually be overcome. Some years since we had some *quasi* private meetings, under the presidency of Lord Stanhope, in Mr John Murray's

dining-room, on the subject of international copyright. At one of these I discussed this matter of American international copyright with Charles Dickens, who strongly declared his conviction that nothing would induce an American to give up the power he possesses of pirating British literature. But he was a man who, seeing clearly what was before him, would not realise the possibility of shifting views. Because in this matter the American decision had been, according to his thinking, dishonest, therefore no other than dishonest decision was to be expected from Americans. Against that idea I protested, and now protest. American dishonesty is rampant ; but it is rampant only among a few. It is the great misfortune of the community that those few have been able to dominate so large a portion of the population among which all men can vote, but so few can understand for what they are voting.

Since this was written the Commission on the law of copyright has sat and made its report. With the great body of it I agree, and could serve no reader by alluding here at length to matters which are discussed there.

But in regard to this question of international copyright with the United States, I think that we were incorrect in the expression of an opinion that fair justice,—or justice approaching to fairness,—is now done by American publishers to English authors by payments made by them for early sheets. I have just found that £20 was paid to my publisher in England for the use of the early sheets of a novel for which I received £1600 in England. When asked why he accepted so little, he assured me that the firm with whom he dealt would not give more. “Why not go to another firm?” I asked. No other firm would give a dollar, because no other firm would care to run counter to that great firm which had assumed to itself the right of publishing my books. I soon after received a copy of my own novel in the American form, and found that it was published for 7½d. That a great sale was expected can be argued from the fact that without a great sale the paper and printing necessary for the republication of a three-volume novel could not be supplied. Many thousand copies must have been sold. But from these the author received not one shil-

ling. I need hardly point out that the sum of £20 would not do more than compensate the publisher for his trouble in making the bargain. The publisher here no doubt might have refused to supply the early sheets, but he had no means of exacting a higher price than that offered. I mention the circumstance here because it has been boasted, on behalf of the American publishers, that though there is no international copyright, they deal so liberally with English authors as to make it unnecessary that the English author should be so protected. With the fact of the £20 just brought to my knowledge, and with the copy of my book published at 7½d. now in my hands, I feel that an international copyright is very necessary for my protection.

They among Englishmen who best love and most admire the United States, have felt themselves tempted to use the strongest language in denouncing the sins of Americans. Who can but love their personal generosity, their active and far-seeking philanthropy, their love of education, their hatred of ignorance, the general convictions in the minds of all of them that a man should be enabled to walk upright,

fearing no one and conscious that he is responsible for his own actions? In what country have grander efforts been made by private munificence to relieve the sufferings of humanity? Where can the English traveller find any more anxious to assist him than the normal American, when once the American shall have found the Englishman to be neither sullen nor fastidious? Who, lastly, is so much an object of heart-felt admiration of the American man and the American woman as the well-mannered and well-educated Englishwoman or Englishman? These are the ideas which I say spring uppermost in the minds of the unprejudiced English traveller as he makes acquaintance with these near relatives. Then he becomes cognisant of their official doings, of their politics, of their municipal scandals, of their great ring-robberies, of their lobbyings and briberies, and the infinite baseness of their public life. There at the top of everything he finds the very men who are the least fit to occupy high places. American public dishonesty is so glaring that the very friends he has made in the country are not slow to acknowledge it,—speaking of

public life as a thing apart from their own existence, as a state of dirt in which it would be an insult to suppose that they are concerned! In the midst of it all the stranger, who sees so much that he hates and so much that he loves, hardly knows how to express himself.

“It is not enough that you are personally clean,” he says, with what energy and courage he can command,—“not enough though the clean outnumber the foul as greatly as those gifted with eyesight outnumber the blind, if you that can see allow the blind to lead you. It is not by the private lives of the millions that the outside world will judge you, but by the public career of those units whose venality is allowed to debase the name of your country. There never was plainer proof given than is given here, that it is the duty of every honest citizen to look after the honour of his State.”

Personally, I have to own that I have met Americans,—men, but more frequently women,—who have in all respects come up to my ideas of what men and women should be: energetic, having opinions of their own, quick in speech, with some dash of sarcasm at their

command, always intelligent, sweet to look at (I speak of the women), fond of pleasure, and each with a personality of his or her own which makes no effort necessary on my own part in remembering the difference between Mrs Walker and Mrs Green, or between Mr Smith and Mr Johnson. They have faults. They are self-conscious, and are too prone to prove by ill-concealed struggles that they are as good as you,—whereas you perhaps have been long acknowledging to yourself that they are much better. And there is sometimes a pretence at personal dignity among those who think themselves to have risen high in the world which is deliciously ludicrous. I remember two old gentlemen,—the owners of names which stand deservedly high in public estimation,—whose deportment at a public funeral turned the occasion into one for irresistible comedy. They are suspicious at first, and fearful of themselves. They lack that simplicity of manners which with us has become a habit from our childhood. But they are never fools, and I think that they are seldom ill-natured.

There is a woman, of whom not to speak



in a work purporting to be a memoir of my own life would be to omit all allusion to one of the chief pleasures which has graced my later years. In the last fifteen years she has been, out of my family, my most chosen friend. She is a ray of light to me, from which I can always strike a spark by thinking of her. I do not know that I should please her or do any good by naming her. But not to allude to her in these pages would amount almost to a falsehood. I could not write truly of myself without saying that such a friend had been vouchsafed to me. I trust she may live to read the words I have now written, and to wipe away a tear as she thinks of my feeling while I write them.

I was absent on this occasion something over three months, and on my return I went back with energy to my work at the *St Paul's Magazine*. The first novel in it from my own pen was called *Phineas Finn*, in which I commenced a series of semi-political tales. As I was debarred from expressing my opinions in the House of Commons, I took this method of declaring myself. And as I could not take my seat on those benches where

I might possibly have been shone upon by the Speaker's eye, I had humbly to crave his permission for a seat in the gallery, so that I might thus become conversant with the ways and doings of the House in which some of my scenes were to be placed. The Speaker was very gracious, and gave me a running order for, I think, a couple of months. It was enough, at any rate, to enable me often to be very tired,—and, as I have been assured by members, to talk of the proceedings almost as well as though Fortune had enabled me to fall asleep within the House itself.

In writing *Phineas Finn*, and also some other novels which followed it, I was conscious that I could not make a tale pleasing chiefly, or perhaps in any part, by politics. If I write politics for my own sake, I must put in love and intrigue, social incidents, with perhaps a dash of sport, for the benefit of my readers. In this way I think I made my political hero interesting. It was certainly a blunder to take him from Ireland—into which I was led by the circumstance that I created the scheme of the book during a visit to Ireland. There was nothing to be gained by

the peculiarity, and there was an added difficulty in obtaining sympathy and affection for a politician belonging to a nationality whose politics are not respected in England. But in spite of this Phineas succeeded. It was not a brilliant success,—because men and women not conversant with political matters could not care much for a hero who spent so much of his time either in the House of Commons or in a public office. But the men who would have lived with Phineas Finn read the book, and the women who would have lived with Lady Laura Standish read it also. As this was what I had intended, I was contented. It is all fairly good except the ending,—as to which till I got to it I made no provision. As I fully intended to bring my hero again into the world, I was wrong to marry him to a simple pretty Irish girl, who could only be felt as an encumbrance on such return. When he did return I had no alternative but to kill the simple pretty Irish girl, which was an unpleasant and awkward necessity.

In writing *Phineas Finn* I had constantly before me the necessity of progression in character,—of marking the changes in men and

women which would naturally be produced by the lapse of years. In most novels the writer can have no such duty, as the period occupied is not long enough to allow of the change of which I speak. In *Ivanhoe*, all the incidents of which are included in less than a month, the characters should be, as they are, consistent throughout. Novelists who have undertaken to write the life of a hero or heroine have generally considered their work completed at the interesting period of marriage, and have contented themselves with the advance in taste and manners which are common to all boys and girls as they become men and women. Fielding, no doubt, did more than this in *Tom Jones*, which is one of the greatest novels in the English language, for there he has shown how a noble and sanguine nature may fall away under temptation and be again strengthened and made to stand upright. But I do not think that novelists have often set before themselves the state of progressive change,—nor should I have done it, had I not found myself so frequently allured back to my old friends. So much of my inner life was passed in their company, that I was continu-

ally asking myself how this woman would act when this or that event had passed over her head, or how that man would carry himself when his youth had become manhood, or his manhood declined to old age. It was in regard to the old Duke of Omnium, of his nephew and heir, and of his heir's wife, Lady Glencora, that I was anxious to carry out this idea; but others added themselves to my mind as I went on, and I got round me a circle of persons as to whom I knew not only their present characters, but how those characters were to be affected by years and circumstances. The happy motherly life of Violet Effingham, which was due to the girl's honest but long-restrained love; the tragic misery of Lady Laura, which was equally due to the sale she made of herself in her wretched marriage; and the long suffering but final success of the hero, of which he had deserved the first by his vanity, and the last by his constant honesty, had been foreshadowed to me from the first. As to the incidents of the story, the circumstances by which these personages were to be effected, I knew nothing. They were created for the most part as they

were described. I never could arrange a set of events before me. But the evil and the good of my puppets, and how the evil would always lead to evil, and the good produce good,—that was clear to me as the stars on a summer night.

Lady Laura Standish is the best character in *Phineas Finn* and its sequel *Phineas Redux*,—of which I will speak here together. They are, in fact, but one novel, though they were brought out at a considerable interval of time and in different form. The first was commenced in the *St Paul's Magazine* in 1867, and the other was brought out in the *Graphic* in 1873. In this there was much bad arrangement, as I had no right to expect that novel-readers would remember the characters of a story after an interval of six years, or that any little interest which might have been taken in the career of my hero could then have been renewed. I do not know that such interest was renewed. But I found that the sequel enjoyed the same popularity as the former part, and among the same class of readers. Phineas, and Lady Laura, and Lady Chiltern—as Violet had become—

and the old duke,—whom I killed gracefully, and the new duke, and the young duchess, either kept their old friends or made new friends for themselves. *Phineas Finn*, I certainly think, was successful from first to last. I am aware, however, that there was nothing in it to touch the heart like the abasement of Lady Mason when confessing her guilt to her old lover, or any approach in delicacy of delineation to the character of Mr Crawley.

*Phineas Finn*, the first part of the story, was completed in May 1867. In June and July I wrote *Linda Tressel* for *Blackwood's Magazine*, of which I have already spoken. In September and October I wrote a short novel, called *The Golden Lion of Grandpère*, which was intended also for *Blackwood*,—with a view of being published anonymously; but Mr Blackwood did not find the arrangement to be profitable, and the story remained on my hands, unread and unthought of, for a few years. It appeared subsequently in *Good Words*. It was written on the model of *Nina Balatka* and *Linda Tressel*, but is very inferior to either of them. In November of the same year, 1867, I began a very long novel, which I called *He*

*Knew He Was Right*, and which was brought out by Mr Virtue, the proprietor of the *St Paul's Magazine*, in sixpenny numbers, every week. I do not know that in any literary effort I ever fell more completely short of my own intention than in this story. It was my purpose to create sympathy for the unfortunate man who, while endeavouring to do his duty to all around him, should be led constantly astray by his unwillingness to submit his own judgment to the opinion of others. The man is made to be unfortunate enough, and the evil which he does is apparent. So far I did not fail, but the sympathy has not been created yet. I look upon the story as being nearly altogether bad. It is in part redeemed by certain scenes in the house and vicinity of an old maid in Exeter. But a novel which in its main parts is bad cannot, in truth, be redeemed by the vitality of subordinate characters.

This work was finished while I was at Washington in the spring of 1868, and on the day after I finished it, I commenced *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, a novel which I wrote for Messrs Bradbury & Evans. This I completed in November 1868, and at once began *Sir Harry*



*Hotspur of Humblethwaite*, a story which I was still writing at the close of the year. I look upon these two years, 1867 and 1868, of which I have given a somewhat confused account in this and the two preceding chapters, as the busiest in my life. I had indeed left the Post Office, but though I had left it I had been employed by it during a considerable portion of the time. I had established the *St Paul's Magazine*, in reference to which I had read an enormous amount of manuscript, and for which, independently of my novels, I had written articles almost monthly. I had stood for Beverley and had made many speeches. I had also written five novels, and had hunted three times a week during each of the winters. And how happy I was with it all! I had suffered at Beverley, but I had suffered as a part of the work which I was desirous of doing, and I had gained my experience. I had suffered at Washington with that wretched American Postmaster, and with the mosquitoes, not having been able to escape from that capital till July; but all that had added to the activity of my life. I had often groaned over those manuscripts; but I had read them,

considering it—perhaps foolishly—to be a part of my duty as editor. And though in the quick production of my novels I had always ringing in my ears that terrible condemnation and scorn produced by the great man in Pater-noster Row, I was nevertheless proud of having done so much. I always had a pen in my hand. Whether crossing the seas, or fighting with American officials, or tramping about the streets of Beverley, I could do a little, and generally more than a little. I had long since convinced myself that in such work as mine the great secret consisted in acknowledging myself to be bound to rules of labour similar to those which an artisan or a mechanic is forced to obey. A shoemaker when he has finished one pair of shoes does not sit down and contemplate his work in idle satisfaction. “There is my pair of shoes finished at last! What a pair of shoes it is!” The shoemaker who so indulged himself would be without wages half his time. It is the same with a professional writer of books. An author may of course want time to study a new subject. He will at any rate assure himself that there is some such good reason why he should pause.

He does pause, and will be idle for a month or two while he tells himself how beautiful is that last pair of shoes which he has finished ! Having thought much of all this, and having made up my mind that I could be really happy only when I was at work, I had now quite accustomed myself to begin a second pair as soon as the first was out of my hands.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

'THE VICAR OF BULLHAMPTON'—'SIR HARRY  
HOTSPUR'—'AN EDITOR'S TALES'—'CÆSAR.'

IN 1869 I was called on to decide, in council with my two boys and their mother, what should be their destination in life. In June of that year the elder, who was then twenty-three, was called to the Bar; and as he had gone through the regular courses of lecturing tuition and study, it might be supposed that his course was already decided. But, just as he was called, there seemed to be an opening for him in another direction; and this, joined to the terrible uncertainty of the Bar, the terror of which was not in his case lessened by any peculiar forensic aptitudes, induced us to sacrifice dignity in quest of success. Mr Frederic Chapman, who was then the sole representative of the publishing house

known as Messrs Chapman & Hall, wanted a partner, and my son Henry went into the firm. He remained there three years and a half; but he did not like it, nor do I think he made a very good publisher. At any rate he left the business with perhaps more pecuniary success than might have been expected from the short period of his labours, and has since taken himself to literature as a profession. Whether he will work at it so hard as his father, and write as many books, may be doubted.

My second son, Frederic, had very early in life gone out to Australia, having resolved on a colonial career when he found that boys who did not grow so fast as he did got above him at school. This departure was a great pang to his mother and me; but it was permitted on the understanding that he was to come back when he was twenty-one, and then decide whether he would remain in England or return to the Colonies. In the winter of 1868 he did come to England, and had a season's hunting in the old country; but there was no doubt in his own mind as to his settling in Australia. His purpose was fixed, and in the

spring of 1869 he made his second journey out. As I have since that date made two journeys to see him,—of one of which at any rate I shall have to speak, as I wrote a long book on the Australasian Colonies,—I will have an opportunity of saying a word or two further on of him and his doings.

*The Vicar of Bullhampton* was written in 1868 for publication in *Once a Week*, a periodical then belonging to Messrs Bradbury & Evans. It was not to come out till 1869, and I, as was my wont, had made my terms long previously to the proposed date. I had made my terms and written my story and sent it to the publisher long before it was wanted; and so far my mind was at rest. The date fixed was the first of July, which date had been named in accordance with the exigencies of the editor of the periodical. An author who writes for these publications is bound to suit himself to these exigencies, and can generally do so without personal loss or inconvenience, if he will only take time by the forelock. With all the pages that I have written for magazines I have never been a day late, nor have I ever caused inconvenience by sending

less or more matter than I had stipulated to supply. But I have sometimes found myself compelled to suffer by the irregularity of others. I have endeavoured to console myself by reflecting that such must ever be the fate of virtue. The industrious must feed the idle. The honest and simple will always be the prey of the cunning and fraudulent. The punctual, who keep none waiting for them, are doomed to wait perpetually for the unpunctual. But these earthly sufferers know that they are making their way heavenwards, — and their oppressors their way elsewards. If the former reflection does not suffice for consolation, the deficiency is made up by the second. I was terribly aggrieved on the matter of the publication of my new Vicar, and had to think very much of the ultimate rewards of punctuality and its opposite. About the end of March 1869 I got a dolorous letter from the editor. All the *Once a Week* people were in a terrible trouble. They had bought the right of translating one of Victor Hugo's modern novels, *L'Homme Qui Rit*; they had fixed a date, relying on positive pledges from the French publishers; and now the great French author had

postponed his work from week to week and from month to month, and it had so come to pass that the Frenchman's grinning hero would have to appear exactly at the same time as my clergyman. Was it not quite apparent to me, the editor asked, that *Once a Week* could not hold the two? Would I allow my clergyman to make his appearance in the *Gentleman's Magazine* instead?

My disgust at this proposition was, I think, chiefly due to Victor Hugo's latter novels, which I regard as pretentious and untrue to nature. To this perhaps was added some feeling of indignation that I should be asked to give way to a Frenchman. The Frenchman had broken his engagement. He had failed to have his work finished by the stipulated time. From week to week and from month to month he had put off the fulfilment of his duty. And because of these laches on his part,—on the part of this sententious French Radical,—I was to be thrown over! Virtue sometimes finds it difficult to console herself even with the double comfort. I would not come out in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and as the Grinning



Man could not be got out of the way, my novel was published in separate numbers.

The same thing has occurred to me more than once since. "You no doubt are regular," a publisher has said to me, "but Mr —— is irregular. He has thrown me out, and I cannot be ready for you till three months after the time named." In these emergencies I have given perhaps half what was wanted, and have refused to give the other half. I have endeavoured to fight my own battle fairly, and at the same time not to make myself unnecessarily obstinate. But the circumstances have impressed on my mind the great need there is that men engaged in literature should feel themselves to be bound to their industry as men know that they are bound in other callings. There does exist, I fear, a feeling that authors, because they are authors, are relieved from the necessity of paying attention to everyday rules. A writer, if he be making £800 a year, does not think himself bound to live modestly on £600, and put by the remainder for his wife and children. He does not understand that he should sit down at his desk at a certain hour. He imagines that publishers and booksellers should keep all

their engagements with him to the letter;—but that he, as a brain-worker, and conscious of the subtle nature of the brain, should be able to exempt himself from bonds when it suits him. He has his own theory about inspiration which will not always come, — especially will not come if wine-cups overnight have been too deep. All this has ever been odious to me, as being unmanly. A man may be frail in health, and therefore unable to do as he has contracted in whatever grade of life. He who has been blessed with physical strength to work day by day, year by year—as has been my case—should pardon deficiencies caused by sickness or infirmity. I may in this respect have been a little hard on others,—and, if so, I here record my repentance. But I think that no allowance should be given to claims for exemption from punctuality, made if not absolutely on the score still with the conviction of intellectual superiority.

The *Vicar of Bullhampton* was written chiefly with the object of exciting not only pity but sympathy for a fallen woman, and of raising a feeling of forgiveness for such in the minds of other women. I could not venture

to make this female the heroine of my story. To have made her a heroine at all would have been directly opposed to my purpose. It was necessary therefore that she should be a second-rate personage in the tale;—but it was with reference to her life that the tale was written, and the hero and the heroine with their belongings are all subordinate. To this novel I affixed a preface,—in doing which I was acting in defiance of my old-established principle. I do not know that any one read it; but as I wish to have it read, I will insert it here again:—

“I have introduced in the *Vicar of Bullhampton* the character of a girl whom I will call,—for want of a truer word that shall not in its truth be offensive,—a castaway. I have endeavoured to endow her with qualities that may create sympathy, and I have brought her back at last from degradation, at least to decency. I have not married her to a wealthy lover, and I have endeavoured to explain that though there was possible to her a way out of perdition, still things could not be with her as they would have been had she not fallen.

“There arises, of course, the question whether a novelist, who professes to write for

the amusement of the young of both sexes, should allow himself to bring upon his stage a character such as that of Carry Brattle. It is not long since,—it is well within the memory of the author,—that the very existence of such a condition of life as was hers, was supposed to be unknown to our sisters and daughters, and was, in truth, unknown to many of them. Whether that ignorance was good may be questioned; but that it exists no longer is beyond question. Then arises the further question,—how far the conditions of such unfortunates should be made a matter of concern to the sweet young hearts of those whose delicacy and cleanliness of thought is a matter of pride to so many of us. Cannot women, who are good, pity the sufferings of the vicious, and do something perhaps to mitigate and shorten them without contamination from the vice? It will be admitted probably by most men who have thought upon the subject that no fault among us is punished so heavily as that fault, often so light in itself but so terrible in its consequences to the less faulty of the two offenders, by which a woman falls. All her own sex is against her, and all those of the other sex in whose veins runs the

blood which she is thought to have contaminated, and who, of nature, would befriend her, were her trouble any other than it is.

“She is what she is, and she remains in her abject, pitiless, unutterable misery, because this sentence of the world has placed her beyond the helping hand of Love and Friendship. It may be said, no doubt, that the severity of this judgment acts as a protection to female virtue,—detering, as all known punishments do deter, from vice. But this punishment, which is horrible beyond the conception of those who have not regarded it closely, is not known beforehand. Instead of the punishment, there is seen a false glitter of gaudy life,—a glitter which is damnably false,—and which, alas! has been more often portrayed in glowing colours, for the injury of young girls, than have those horrors which ought to deter, with the dark shadowings which belong to them.

“To write in fiction of one so fallen as the noblest of her sex, as one to be rewarded because of her weakness, as one whose life is happy, bright, and glorious, is certainly to allure to vice and misery. But it may per-

haps be possible that if the matter be handled with truth to life, some girl, who would have been thoughtless, may be made thoughtful, or some parent's heart may be softened."

Those were my ideas when I conceived the story, and with that feeling I described the characters of Carry Brattle and of her family. I have not introduced her lover on the scene, nor have I presented her to the reader in the temporary enjoyment of any of those fallacious luxuries, the longing for which is sometimes more seductive to evil than love itself. She is introduced as a poor abased creature, who hardly knows how false were her dreams, with very little of the Magdalene about her—because though there may be Magdalenes they are not often found—but with an intense horror of the sufferings of her position. Such being her condition, will they who naturally are her friends protect her? The vicar who has taken her by the hand endeavours to excite them to charity; but father, and brother, and sister are alike hard-hearted. It had been my purpose at first that the hand of every Brattle should be against her; but my own heart was too soft to enable me to make the

mother cruel,—or the unmarried sister who had been the early companion of the forlorn one.

As regards all the Brattles, the story is, I think, well told. The characters are true, and the scenes at the mill are in keeping with human nature. For the rest of the book I have little to say. It is not very bad, and it certainly is not very good. As I have myself forgotten what the heroine does and says—except that she tumbles into a ditch—I cannot expect that any one else should remember her. But I have forgotten nothing that was done or said by any of the Brattles.

The question brought in argument is one of fearful importance. As to the view to be taken first, there can, I think, be no doubt. In regard to a sin common to the two sexes, almost all the punishment and all the disgrace is heaped upon the one who in nine cases out of ten has been the least sinful. And the punishment inflicted is of such a nature that it hardly allows room for repentance. How is the woman to return to decency to whom no decent door is opened? Then comes the answer: It is to the severity of the punishment alone that we can trust to keep women from falling. Such is the

argument used in favour of the existing practice, and such the excuse given for their severity by women who will relax nothing of their harshness. But in truth the severity of the punishment is not known beforehand; it is not in the least understood by women in general, except by those who suffer it. The gaudy dirt, the squalid plenty, the contumely of familiarity, the absence of all good words and all good things, the banishment from honest labour, the being compassed round with lies, the flaunting glare of fictitious revelry, the weary pavement, the horrid slavery to some horrid tyrant,—and then the quick depreciation of that one ware of beauty, the substituted paint, garments bright without but foul within like painted sepulchres, hunger, thirst, and strong drink, life without a hope, without the certainty even of a morrow's breakfast, utterly friendless, disease, starvation, and a quivering fear of that coming hell which still can hardly be worse than all that is suffered here! This is the life to which we doom our erring daughters, when because of their error we close our door upon them! But for our erring sons we find pardon easily enough.



Of course there are houses of refuge, from which it has been thought expedient to banish everything pleasant, as though the only repentance to which we can afford to give a place must necessarily be one of sackcloth and ashes. It is hardly thus that we can hope to recall those to decency who, if they are to be recalled at all, must be induced to obey the summons before they have reached the last stage of that misery which I have attempted to describe. To me the mistake which we too often make seems to be this,—that the girl who has gone astray is put out of sight, out of mind if possible, at any rate out of speech, as though she had never existed, and that this ferocity comes not only from hatred of the sin, but in part also from a dread of the taint which the sin brings with it. Very low as is the degradation to which a girl is brought when she falls through love or vanity, or perhaps from a longing for luxurious ease, still much lower is that to which she must descend perforce when, through the hardness of the world around her, she converts that sin into a trade. Mothers and sisters, when the misfortune comes upon them of a fallen female from among their

number, should remember this, and not fear contamination so strongly as did Carry Brattle's married sister and sister-in-law.

In 1870 I brought out three books,—or rather of the latter of the three I must say that it was brought out by others, for I had nothing to do with it except to write it. These were *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite*, *An Editor's Tales*, and a little volume on Julius Cæsar. *Sir Harry Hotspur* was written on the same plan as *Nina Balatka* and *Linda Tressel*, and had for its object the telling of some pathetic incident in life rather than the portraiture of a number of human beings. *Nina* and *Linda Tressel* and *The Golden Lion* had been placed in foreign countries, and this was an English story. In other respects it is of the same nature, and was not, I think, by any means a failure. There is much of pathos in the love of the girl, and of paternal dignity and affection in the father.

It was published first in *Macmillan's Magazine*, by the intelligent proprietor of which I have since been told that it did not make either his fortune or that of his magazine. I am sorry that it should have been so; but I

fear that the same thing may be said of a good many of my novels. When it had passed through the magazine, the subsequent use of it was sold to other publishers by Mr Macmillan, and then I learned that it was to be brought out by them as a novel in two volumes. Now it had been sold by me as a novel in one volume, and hence there arose a correspondence.

I found it very hard to make the purchasers understand that I had reasonable ground for objection to the process. What was it to me? How could it injure me if they stretched my pages by means of lead and margin into double the number I had intended. I have heard the same argument on other occasions. When I have pointed out that in this way the public would have to suffer, seeing that they would have to pay Mudie for the use of two volumes in reading that which ought to have been given to them in one, I have been assured that the public are pleased with literary short measure, that it is the object of novel-readers to get through novels as fast as they can, and that the shorter each volume is the better! Even this, however, did not overcome me, and

I stood to my guns. *Sir Harry* was published in one volume, containing something over the normal 300 pages, with an average of 220 words to a page,—which I had settled with my conscience to be the proper length of a novel volume. I may here mention that on one occasion, and on one occasion only, a publisher got the better of me in a matter of volumes. He had a two-volume novel of mine running through a certain magazine, and had it printed complete in three volumes before I knew where I was,—before I had seen a sheet of the letterpress. I stormed for a while, but I had not the heart to make him break up the type.

The *Editor's Tales* was a volume republished from the *St Paul's Magazine*, and professed to give an editor's experience of his dealings with contributors. I do not think that there is a single incident in the book which could bring back to any one concerned the memory of a past event. And yet there is not an incident in it the outline of which was not presented to my mind by the remembrance of some fact:—how an ingenious gentleman got into conversation with me, I not knowing that

he knew me to be an editor, and pressed his little article on my notice; how I was addressed by a lady with a becoming pseudonym and with much equally becoming audacity; how I was appealed to by the dearest of little women whom here I have called Mary Gresley; how in my own early days there was a struggle over an abortive periodical which was intended to be the best thing ever done; how terrible was the tragedy of a poor drunkard, who with infinite learning at his command made one sad final effort to reclaim himself, and perished while he was making it; and lastly how a poor weak editor was driven nearly to madness by threatened litigation from a rejected contributor. Of these stories *The Spotted Dog*, with the struggles of the drunkard scholar, is the best. I know now, however, that when the things were good they came out too quick one upon another to gain much attention;—and so also, luckily, when they were bad.

The *Cæsar* was a thing of itself. My friend John Blackwood had set on foot a series of small volumes called *Ancient Classics for English Readers*, and had placed the editing of

them, and the compiling of many of them, in the hands of William Lucas Collins, a clergyman who, from my connection with the series, became a most intimate friend. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had already come out when I was at Edinburgh with John Blackwood, and, on my expressing my very strong admiration for those two little volumes,—which I here recommend to all young ladies as the most charming tales they can read,—he asked me whether I would not undertake one myself. *Herodotus* was in the press, but, if I could get it ready, mine should be next. Whereupon I offered to say what might be said to the readers of English on *The Commentaries of Julius Cæsar*.

I at once went to work, and in three months from that day the little book had been written. I began by reading through the Commentaries twice, which I did without any assistance either by translation or English notes. Latin was not so familiar to me then as it has since become,—for from that date I have almost daily spent an hour with some Latin author, and on many days many hours. After the reading what my author had left behind him, I fell into the reading of what others had

written about him, in Latin, in English, and even in French,—for I went through much of that most futile book by the late Emperor of the French. I do not know that for a short period I ever worked harder. The amount I had to write was nothing. Three weeks would have done it easily. But I was most anxious, in this soaring out of my own peculiar line, not to disgrace myself. I do not think that I did disgrace myself. Perhaps I was anxious for something more. If so, I was disappointed.

The book I think to be a good little book. It is readable by all, old and young, and it gives, I believe accurately, both an account of Cæsar's Commentaries,—which of course was the primary intention,—and the chief circumstances of the great Roman's life. A well-educated girl who had read it and remembered it would perhaps know as much about Cæsar and his writings as she need know. Beyond the consolation of thinking as I do about it, I got very little gratification from the work. Nobody praised it. One very old and very learned friend to whom I sent it thanked me for my "comic Cæsar," but said no more. I do not suppose that he intended to run a dag-

ger into me. Of any suffering from such wounds, I think, while living, I never showed a sign; but still I have suffered occasionally. There was, however, probably present to my friend's mind, and to that of others, a feeling that a man who had spent his life in writing English novels could not be fit to write about Cæsar. It was as when an amateur gets a picture hung on the walls of the Academy. What business had I there? *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*. In the press it was most faintly damned by most faint praise. Nevertheless, having read the book again within the last month or two, I make bold to say that it is a good book. The series, I believe, has done very well. I am sure that it ought to do well in years to come, for, putting aside Cæsar, the work has been done with infinite scholarship, and very generally with a light hand. With the leave of my sententious and sonorous friend, who had not endured that subjects which had been grave to him should be treated irreverently, I will say that such a work, unless it be light, cannot answer the purpose for which it is intended. It was not exactly a school-book that was wanted, but something



that would carry the purposes of the school-room even into the leisure hours of adult pupils. Nothing was ever better suited for such a purpose than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as done by Mr Collins. The *Virgil*, also done by him, is very good; and so is the *Aristophanes* by the same hand.

## CHAPTER XIX.

‘RALPH THE HEIR’—‘THE EUSTACE DIAMONDS’  
—‘LADY ANNA’—‘AUSTRALIA.’

IN the spring of 1871 we,—I and my wife,—had decided that we would go to Australia to visit our shepherd son. Of course before doing so I made a contract with a publisher for a book about the Colonies. For such a work as this I had always been aware that I could not fairly demand more than half the price that would be given for the same amount of fiction; and as such books have an indomitable tendency to stretch themselves, so that more is given than what is sold, and as the cost of travelling is heavy, the writing of them is not remunerative. This tendency to stretch comes not, I think, generally from the ambition of the writer, but from his inability to comprise the different parts in their allotted

spaces. If you have to deal with a country, a colony, a city, a trade, or a political opinion, it is so much easier to deal with it in twenty than in twelve pages ! I also made an engagement with the editor of a London daily paper to supply him with a series of articles,—which were duly written, duly published, and duly paid for. But with all this, travelling with the object of writing is not a good trade. If the travelling author can pay his bills, he must be a good manager on the road.

Before starting there came upon us the terrible necessity of coming to some resolution about our house at Waltham. It had been first hired, and then bought, primarily because it suited my Post Office avocations. To this reason had been added other attractions,—in the shape of hunting, gardening, and suburban hospitalities. Altogether the house had been a success, and the scene of much happiness. But there arose questions as to expense. Would not a house in London be cheaper ? There could be no doubt that my income would decrease, and was decreasing. I had thrown the Post Office, as it were, away, and the writing of novels could not go on for ever.

Some of my friends told me already that at fifty-five I ought to give up the fabrication of love-stories. The hunting, I thought, must soon go, and I would not therefore allow that to keep me in the country. And then, why should I live at Waltham Cross now, seeing that I had fixed on that place in reference to the Post Office? It was therefore determined that we would flit, and as we were to be away for eighteen months, we determined also to sell our furniture. So there was a packing up, with many tears, and consultations as to what should be saved out of the things we loved.

As must take place on such an occasion, there was some heart-felt grief. But the thing was done, and orders were given for the letting or sale of the house. I may as well say here that it never was let, and that it remained unoccupied for two years before it was sold. I lost by the transaction about £800. As I continually hear that other men make money by buying and selling houses, I presume I am not well adapted for transactions of that sort. I have never made money by selling anything except a manuscript. In matters of horseflesh I am so

inefficient that I have generally given away horses that I have not wanted.

When we started from Liverpool, in May 1871, *Ralph the Heir* was running through the *St Paul's*. This was the novel of which Charles Reade afterwards took the plot and made on it a play. I have always thought it to be one of the worst novels I have written, and almost to have justified that dictum that a novelist after fifty should not write love-stories. It was in part a political novel; and that part which appertains to politics, and which recounts the electioneering experiences of the candidates at Percycross, is well enough. Percycross and Beverley were, of course, one and the same place. Neefit, the breeches-maker, and his daughter, are also good in their way,—and Moggs, the daughter's lover, who was not only lover, but also one of the candidates at Percycross as well. But the main thread of the story,—that which tells of the doings of the young gentlemen and young ladies,—the heroes and the heroines,—is not good. Ralph the heir has not much life about him; while Ralph who is not the heir, but is intended to be the real hero, has none. The same may be

said of the young ladies,—of whom one, she who was meant to be the chief, has passed utterly out of my mind, without leaving a trace of remembrance behind.

I also left in the hands of the editor of *The Fortnightly*, ready for production on the 1st of July following, a story called *The Eustace Diamonds*. In that I think that my friend's dictum was disproved. There is not much love in it; but what there is, is good. The character of Lucy Morris is pretty; and her love is as genuine and as well told as that of Lucy Robarts or Lily Dale.

But *The Eustace Diamonds* achieved the success which it certainly did attain, not as a love-story, but as a record of a cunning little woman of pseudo-fashion, to whom, in her cunning, there came a series of adventures, unpleasant enough in themselves, but pleasant to the reader. As I wrote the book, the idea constantly presented itself to me that Lizzie Eustace was but a second Becky Sharpe; but in planning the character I had not thought of this, and I believe that Lizzie would have been just as she is though Becky Sharpe had never been described. The plot of the diamond

necklace is, I think, well arranged, though it produced itself without any forethought. I had no idea of setting thieves after the bauble till I had got my heroine to bed in the inn at Carlisle; nor of the disappointment of the thieves, till Lizzie had been wakened in the morning with the news that her door had been broken open. All these things, and many more, Wilkie Collins would have arranged before with infinite labour, preparing things present so that they should fit in with things to come. I have gone on the very much easier plan of making everything as it comes fit in with what has gone before. At any rate, the book was a success, and did much to repair the injury which I felt had come to my reputation in the novel-market by the works of the last few years. I doubt whether I had written anything so successful as *The Eustace Diamonds* since *The Small House at Allington*. I had written what was much better,—as, for instance, *Phineas Finn* and *Nina Balatka*; but that is by no means the same thing.

I also left behind, in a strong box, the manuscript of *Phineas Redux*, a novel of which I have already spoken, and which I subsequently

sold to the proprietors of the *Graphic* newspaper. The editor of that paper greatly disliked the title, assuring me that the public would take Redux for the gentleman's surname,—and was dissatisfied with me when I replied that I had no objection to them doing so. The introduction of a Latin word, or of a word from any other language, into the title of an English novel is undoubtedly in bad taste; but after turning the matter much over in my own mind, I could find no other suitable name.

I also left behind me, in the same strong box, another novel, called *An Eye for an Eye*, which then had been some time written, and of which, as it has not even yet been published, I will not further speak. It will probably be published some day, though, looking forward, I can see no room for it, at any rate, for the next two years.

If therefore the Great Britain, in which we sailed for Melbourne, had gone to the bottom, I had so provided that there would be new novels ready to come out under my name for some years to come. This consideration, however, did not keep me idle while I was at sea. When making long journeys, I have always



succeeded in getting a desk put up in my cabin, and this was done ready for me in the Great Britain, so that I could go to work the day after we left Liverpool. This I did; and before I reached Melbourne I had finished a story called *Lady Anna*. Every word of this was written at sea, during the two months required for our voyage, and was done day by day—with the intermission of one day's illness—for eight weeks, at the rate of 66 pages of manuscript in each week, every page of manuscript containing 250 words. Every word was counted. I have seen work come back to an author from the press with terrible deficiencies as to the amount supplied. Thirty-two pages have perhaps been wanted for a number, and the printers with all their art could not stretch the matter to more than twenty-eight or -nine! The work of filling up must be very dreadful. I have sometimes been ridiculed for the methodical details of my business. But by these contrivances I have been preserved from many troubles; and I have saved others with whom I have worked—editors, publishers, and printers—from much trouble also.

A month or two after my return home, *Lady Anna* appeared in *The Fortnightly*, following *The Eustace Diamonds*. In it a young girl, who is really a lady of high rank and great wealth, though in her youth she enjoyed none of the privileges of wealth or rank, marries a tailor who had been good to her, and whom she had loved when she was poor and neglected. A fine young noble lover is provided for her, and all the charms of sweet living with nice people are thrown in her way, in order that she may be made to give up the tailor. And the charms are very powerful with her. But the feeling that she is bound by her troth to the man who had always been true to her overcomes everything,—and she marries the tailor. It was my wish of course to justify her in doing so, and to carry my readers along with me in my sympathy with her. But everybody found fault with me for marrying her to the tailor. What would they have said if I had allowed her to jilt the tailor and marry the good-looking young lord? How much louder, then, would have been the censure! The book was read, and I was satisfied. If I had not told my story well, there

would have been no feeling in favour of the young lord. The horror which was expressed to me at the evil thing I had done, in giving the girl to the tailor, was the strongest testimony I could receive of the merits of the story.

I went to Australia chiefly in order that I might see my son among his sheep. I did see him among his sheep, and remained with him for four or five very happy weeks. He was not making money, nor has he made money since. I grieve to say that several thousands of pounds which I had squeezed out of the pockets of perhaps too liberal publishers have been lost on the venture. But I rejoice to say that this has been in no way due to any fault of his. I never knew a man work with more persistent honesty at his trade than he has done.

I had, however, the further intentions of writing a book about the entire group of Australasian Colonies; and in order that I might be enabled to do that with sufficient information, I visited them all. Making my head-quarters at Melbourne, I went to Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania, then to

the very little known territory of Western Australia, and then, last of all, to New Zealand. I was absent in all eighteen months, and think that I did succeed in learning much of the political, social, and material condition of these countries. I wrote my book as I was travelling, and brought it back with me to England all but completed in December 1872.

It was a better book than that which I had written eleven years before on the American States, but not so good as that on the West Indies in 1859. As regards the information given, there was much more to be said about Australia than the West Indies. Very much more is said,—and very much more may be learned from the latter than from the former book. I am sure that any one who will take the trouble to read the book on Australia, will learn much from it. But the West Indian volume was readable. I am not sure that either of the other works are, in the proper sense of that word. When I go back to them I find that the pages drag with me ;—and if so with me, how must it be with others who have none of that love which a father feels even for his ill-favoured offspring. Of all the

needs a book has the chief need is that it be readable.

Feeling that these volumes on Australia were dull and long, I was surprised to find that they had an extensive sale. There were, I think, 2000 copies circulated of the first expensive edition; and then the book was divided into four little volumes, which were published separately, and which again had a considerable circulation. That some facts were stated inaccurately, I do not doubt; that many opinions were crude, I am quite sure; that I had failed to understand much which I attempted to explain, is possible. But with all these faults the book was a thoroughly honest book, and was the result of unflagging labour for a period of fifteen months. I spared myself no trouble in inquiry, no trouble in seeing, and no trouble in listening. I thoroughly imbued my mind with the subject, and wrote with the simple intention of giving trustworthy information on the state of the Colonies. Though there be inaccuracies,—those inaccuracies to which work quickly done must always be subject,—I think I did give much valuable information.

I came home across America from San Francisco to New York, visiting Utah and Brigham Young on the way. I did not achieve great intimacy with the great polygamist of the Salt Lake City. I called upon him, sending to him my card, apologising for doing so without an introduction, and excusing myself by saying that I did not like to pass through the territory without seeing a man of whom I had heard so much. He received me in his doorway, not asking me to enter, and inquired whether I were not a miner. When I told him that I was not a miner, he asked me whether I earned my bread. I told him I did. "I guess you're a miner," said he. I again assured him that I was not. "Then how do you earn your bread?" I told him that I did so by writing books. "I'm sure you're a miner," said he. Then he turned upon his heel, went back into the house, and closed the door. I was properly punished, as I was vain enough to conceive that he would have heard my name.

I got home in December 1872, and in spite of any resolution made to the contrary, my mind was full of hunting as I came back. No

real resolutions had in truth been made, for out of a stud of four horses I kept three, two of which were absolutely idle through the two summers and winter of my absence. Immediately on my arrival I bought another, and settled myself down to hunting from London three days a week. At first I went back to Essex, my old country, but finding that to be inconvenient, I took my horses to Leighton Buzzard, and became one of that numerous herd of sportsmen who rode with the "Baron" and Mr Selby Lowndes. In those days Baron Meyer was alive, and the riding with his hounds was very good. I did not care so much for Mr Lowndes. During the winters of 1873, 1874, and 1875, I had my horses back in Essex, and went on with my hunting, always trying to resolve that I would give it up. But still I bought fresh horses, and, as I did not give it up, I hunted more than ever. Three times a week the cab has been at my door in London very punctually, and not unfrequently before seven in the morning. In order to secure this attendance, the man has always been invited to have his breakfast in the hall. I have gone to the Great Eastern Railway,—

ah! so often with the fear that frost would make all my exertions useless, and so often too with that result! And then, from one station or another station, have travelled on wheels at least a dozen miles. After the day's sport, the same toil has been necessary to bring me home to dinner at eight. This has been work for a young man and a rich man, but I have done it as an old man and comparatively a poor man. Now at last, in April 1876, I do think that my resolution has been taken. I am giving away my old horses, and anybody is welcome to my saddles and horse-furniture.

“Singula de nobis anni prædantur euntes;  
Eripere jocos, venerem, convivia, ludum;  
Tendunt extorquere poemata.”

“Our years keep taking toll as they move on;  
My feasts, my frolics, are already gone,  
And now, it seems, my verses must go too.”

This is Conington's translation, but it seems to me to be a little flat.

“Years as they roll cut all our pleasures short;  
Our pleasant mirth, our loves, our wine, our sport.  
And then they stretch their power, and crush at last  
Even the power of singing of the past.”



I think that I may say with truth that I  
rode hard to my end.

“Vixi puellis nuper idoneus,  
Et militavi non sine gloria ;  
Nunc arma defunctumque bello  
Barbiton hic paries habebit.”

“I've lived about the covert side,  
I've ridden straight, and ridden fast ;  
Now breeches, boots, and scarlet pride  
Are but mementoes of the past.”

## CHAPTER XX.

‘THE WAY WE LIVE NOW’ AND ‘THE PRIME  
MINISTER’—CONCLUSION.

IN what I have said at the end of the last chapter about my hunting, I have been carried a little in advance of the date at which I had arrived. We returned from Australia in the winter of 1872, and early in 1873 I took a house in Montagu Square,—in which I hope to live and hope to die. Our first work in settling there was to place upon new shelves the books which I had collected round myself at Waltham. And this work, which was in itself great, entailed also the labour of a new catalogue. As all who use libraries know, a catalogue is nothing unless it show the spot on which every book is to be found,—information which every volume also ought to give as to itself. Only those who have done

it know how great is the labour of moving and arranging a few thousand volumes. At the present moment I own about 5000 volumes, and they are dearer to me even than the horses which are going, or than the wine in the cellar, which is very apt to go, and upon which I also pride myself.

When this was done, and the new furniture had got into its place, and my little book-room was settled sufficiently for work, I began a novel, to the writing of which I was instigated by what I conceived to be the commercial profligacy of the age. Whether the world does or does not become more wicked as years go on, is a question which probably has disturbed the minds of thinkers since the world began to think. That men have become less cruel, less violent, less selfish, less brutal, there can be no doubt;—but have they become less honest? If so, can a world, retrograding from day to day in honesty, be considered to be in a state of progress. We know the opinion on this subject of our philosopher Mr Carlyle. If he be right, we are all going straight away to darkness and the dogs. But then we do not put very much faith in

Mr Carlyle,—nor in Mr Ruskin and his other followers. The loudness and extravagance of their lamentations, the wailing and gnashing of teeth which comes from them, over a world which is supposed to have gone altogether shoddy-wards, are so contrary to the convictions of men who cannot but see how comfort has been increased, how health has been improved, and education extended,—that the general effect of their teaching is the opposite of what they have intended. It is regarded simply as Carlylism to say that the English-speaking world is growing worse from day to day. And it is Carlylism to opine that the general grand result of increased intelligence is a tendency to deterioration.

Nevertheless a certain class of dishonesty, dishonesty magnificent in its proportions, and climbing into high places, has become at the same time so rampant and so splendid that there seems to be reason for fearing that men and women will be taught to feel that dishonesty, if it can become splendid, will cease to be abominable. If dishonesty can live in a gorgeous palace with pictures on all its

walls, and gems in all its cupboards, with marble and ivory in all its corners, and can give Apician dinners, and get into Parliament, and deal in millions, then dishonesty is not disgraceful, and the man dishonest after such a fashion is not a low scoundrel. Instigated, I say, by some such reflections as these, I sat down in my new house to write *The Way We Live Now*. And as I had ventured to take the whip of the satirist into my hand, I went beyond the iniquities of the great speculator who robs everybody, and made an onslaught also on other vices,—on the intrigues of girls who want to get married, on the luxury of young men who prefer to remain single, and on the puffing propensities of authors who desire to cheat the public into buying their volumes.

The book has the fault which is to be attributed to almost all satires, whether in prose or verse. The accusations are exaggerated. The vices are coloured, so as to make effect rather than to represent truth. Who, when the lash of oburgation is in his hands, can so moderate his arm as never to strike harder than justice would require? The spirit which produces the

satire is honest enough, but the very desire which moves the satirist to do his work energetically makes him dishonest. In other respects *The Way We Live Now* was, as a satire, powerful and good. The character of Melmotte is well maintained. The Beargarden is amusing,—and not untrue. The Longestaffe girls and their friend, Lady Monogram, are amusing,—but exaggerated. Dolly Longestaffe, is, I think, very good. And Lady Carbury's literary efforts are, I am sorry to say, such as are too frequently made. But here again the young lady with her two lovers is weak and vapid. I almost doubt whether it be not impossible to have two absolutely distinct parts in a novel, and to imbue them both with interest. If they be distinct, the one will seem to be no more than padding to the other. And so it was in *The Way We Live Now*. The interest of the story lies among the wicked and foolish people,—with Melmotte and his daughter, with Dolly and his family, with the American woman, Mrs Hurtle, and with John Crumb and the girl of his heart. But Roger Carbury, Paul Montague, and Henrietta Carbury are

uninteresting. Upon the whole, I by no means look upon the book as one of my failures; nor was it taken as a failure by the public or the press.

While I was writing *The Way We Live Now*, I was called upon by the proprietors of the *Graphic* for a Christmas story. I feel, with regard to literature, somewhat as I suppose an upholsterer and undertaker feels when he is called upon to supply a funeral. He has to supply it, however distasteful it may be. It is his business, and he will starve if he neglect it. So have I felt that, when anything in the shape of a novel was required, I was bound to produce it. Nothing can be more distasteful to me than to have to give a relish of Christmas to what I write. I feel the humbug implied by the nature of the order. A Christmas story, in the proper sense, should be the ebullition of some mind anxious to instil others with a desire for Christmas religious thought, or Christmas festivities,—or, better still, with Christmas charity. Such was the case with Dickens when he wrote his two first Christmas stories. But since that the things written annually—all of which have been fixed to Christ-

mas like children's toys to a Christmas tree—have had no real savour of Christmas about them. I had done two or three before. Alas! at this very moment I have one to write, which I have promised to supply within three weeks of this time,—the picture-makers always require a long interval,—as to which I have in vain been cudgelling my brain for the last month. I can't send away the order to another shop, but I do not know how I shall ever get the coffin made.

For the *Graphic*, in 1873, I wrote a little story about Australia. Christmas at the antipodes is of course midsummer, and I was not loth to describe the troubles to which my own son had been subjected, by the mingled accidents of heat and bad neighbours, on his station in the bush. So I wrote *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil*, and was well through my labour on that occasion. I only wish I may have no worse success in that which now hangs over my head.

When *Harry Heathcote* was over, I returned with a full heart to Lady Glencora and her husband. I had never yet drawn the completed picture of such a statesman as my



imagination had conceived. The personages with whose names my pages had been familiar, and perhaps even the minds of some of my readers—the Brocks, De Terriers, Monks, Greshams, and Daubeneyes—had been more or less portraits, not of living men, but of living political characters. The strong-minded, thick-skinned, useful, ordinary member, either of the Government or of the Opposition, had been very easy to describe, and had required no imagination to conceive. The character reproduces itself from generation to generation ; and as it does so, becomes shorn in a wonderful way of those little touches of humanity which would be destructive of its purposes. Now and again there comes a burst of human nature, as in the quarrel between Burke and Fox ; but, as a rule, the men submit themselves to be shaped and fashioned, and to be formed into tools, which are used either for building up or pulling down, and can generally bear to be changed from this box into the other, without, at any rate, the appearance of much personal suffering. Four-and-twenty gentlemen will amalgamate themselves into one whole, and work for one purpose, having

each of them to set aside his own idiosyncrasy, and to endure the close personal contact of men who must often be personally disagreeable, having been thoroughly taught that in no other way can they serve either their country or their own ambition. These are the men who are publicly useful, and whom the necessities of the age supply,—as to whom I have never ceased to wonder that stones of such strong calibre should be so quickly worn down to the shape and smoothness of rounded pebbles.

Such have been to me the Brocks and the Mildmays, about whom I have written with great pleasure, having had my mind much exercised in watching them. But I had also conceived the character of a statesman of a different nature—of a man who should be in something perhaps superior, but in very much inferior, to these men—of one who could not become a pebble, having too strong an identity of his own. To rid one's self of fine scruples—to fall into the traditions of a party—to feel the need of subservience, not only in acting but also even in thinking—to be able to be a bit, and at first only a very little bit,—these

are the necessities of the growing statesman. The time may come, the glorious time when some great self action shall be possible, and shall be even demanded, as when Peel gave up the Corn Laws ; but the rising man, as he puts on his harness, should not allow himself to dream of this. To become a good, round, smooth, hard, useful pebble is his duty, and to achieve this he must harden his skin and swallow his scruples. But every now and again we see the attempt made by men who cannot get their skins to be hard—who after a little while generally fall out of the ranks. The statesman of whom I was thinking—of whom I had long thought—was one who did not fall out of the ranks, even though his skin would not become hard. He should have rank, and intellect, and parliamentary habits, by which to bind him to the service of his country ; and he should also have unblemished, unextinguishable, inexhaustible love of country. That virtue I attribute to our statesmen generally. They who are without it are, I think, mean indeed. This man should have it as the ruling principle of his life ; and it should so rule him that all other things should

be made to give way to it. But he should be scrupulous, and, being scrupulous, weak. When called to the highest place in the council of his Sovereign, he should feel with true modesty his own insufficiency; but not the less should the greed of power grow upon him when he had once allowed himself to taste and enjoy it. Such was the character I endeavoured to depict in describing the triumph, the troubles, and the failure of my Prime Minister. And I think that I have succeeded. What the public may think, or what the press may say, I do not yet know, the work having as yet run but half its course.<sup>1</sup>

That the man's character should be understood as I understand it—or that of his wife's, the delineation of which has also been a matter of much happy care to me—I have no right to expect, seeing that the operation of describing has not been confined to one novel, which

<sup>1</sup> Writing this note in 1878, after a lapse of nearly three years, I am obliged to say that, as regards the public, *The Prime Minister* was a failure. It was worse spoken of by the press than any novel I had written. I was specially hurt by a criticism on it in the *Spectator*. The critic who wrote the article I know to be a good critic, inclined to be more than fair to me; but in this case I could not agree with him, so much do I love the man whose character I had endeavoured to portray.

might perhaps be read through by the majority of those who commenced it. It has been carried on through three or four, each of which will be forgotten even by the most zealous reader almost as soon as read. In *The Prime Minister*, my Prime Minister will not allow his wife to take office among, or even over, those ladies who are attached by office to the Queen's court. "I should not choose," he says to her, "that my wife should have any duties unconnected with our joint family and home." Who will remember in reading those words that, in a former story, published some years before, he tells his wife, when she has twitted him with his willingness to clean the Premier's shoes, that he would even allow her to clean them if it were for the good of the country? And yet it is by such details as these that I have, for many years past, been manufacturing within my own mind the characters of the man and his wife.

I think that Plantagenet Palliser, Duke of Omnium, is a perfect gentleman. If he be not, then am I unable to describe a gentleman. She is by no means a perfect lady; but if she be not all over a woman, then am I not able

to describe a woman. I do not think it probable that my name will remain among those who in the next century will be known as the writers of English prose fiction ;—but if it does, that permanence of success will probably rest on the character of Plantagenet Palliser, Lady Glencora, and the Rev. Mr Crawley.

I have now come to the end of that long series of books written by myself, with which the public is already acquainted. Of those which I may hereafter be able to add to them I cannot speak ; though I have an idea that I shall even yet once more have recourse to my political hero as the mainstay of another story. When *The Prime Minister* was finished, I at once began another novel, which is now completed in three volumes, and which is called *Is He Popenjoy ?* There are two Popenjoys in the book, one succeeding to the title held by the other ; but as they are both babies, and do not in the course of the story progress beyond babyhood, the future readers, should the tale ever be published, will not be much interested in them. Nevertheless the story, as a story, is not, I think, amiss. Since that I have written still another three-volume

novel, to which, very much in opposition to my publisher, I have given the name of *The American Senator*.<sup>1</sup> It is to appear in *Temple Bar*, and is to commence its appearance on the first of next month. Such being its circumstances, I do not know that I can say anything else about it here.

And so I end the record of my literary performances,—which I think are more in amount than the works of any other living English author. If any English authors not living have written more—as may probably have been the case—I do not know who they are. I find that, taking the books which have appeared under our names, I have published much more than twice as much as Carlyle. I have also published considerably more than Voltaire, even including his letters. We are told that Varro, at the age of eighty, had written 480 volumes, and that he went on writing for eight years longer. I wish I knew what was the length of Varro's volumes; I

<sup>1</sup> *The American Senator* and *Popenjoy* have appeared, each with fair success. Neither of them has encountered that reproach which, in regard to *The Prime Minister*, seemed to tell me that my work as a novelist should be brought to a close. And yet I feel assured that they are very inferior to *The Prime Minister*.

comfort myself by reflecting that the amount of manuscript described as a book in Varro's time was not much. Varro, too, is dead, and Voltaire; whereas I am still living, and may add to the pile.

The following is a list of the books I have written, with the dates of publication and the sums I have received for them. The dates given are the years in which the works were published as a whole, most of them having appeared before in some serial form.

Names of Works.	Date of Publication.	Total Sums Received.
The Macdermots of Ballycloran, .	1847	£48 6 9
The Kellys and the O'Kellys, .	1848	123 19 5
La Vendée, . . . . .	1850	20 0 0
The Warden, . . . . .	1855 }	727 11 3
Barchester Towers, . . . . .	1857 }	
The Three Clerks, . . . . .	1858	250 0 0
Doctor Thorne, . . . . .	1858	400 0 0
The West Indies and the Spanish Main, . . . . .	1859	250 0 0
The Bertrams, . . . . .	1859	400 0 0
Castle Richmond, . . . . .	1860	600 0 0
Framley Parsonage, . . . . .	1861	1000 0 0
Tales of All Countries—1st Series,	1861 }	1830 0 0
"          "      2d " . . . . .	1863 }	
"          "      3d " . . . . .	1870 }	
Orley Farm, . . . . .	1862	3135 0 0
North America, . . . . .	1862	1250 0 0
Carry forward,		£10,034 17 5



Names of Works.	Date of Publication.	Total Sums Received.
Brought forward,		£10,034 17 5
Rachel Ray, . . . . .	1863	1645 0 0
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<sup>1</sup> This was given by me as a present to my friend John Blackwood.

It will not, I am sure, be thought that, in making my boast as to quantity, I have endeavoured to lay claim to any literary excellence. That, in the writing of books, quantity without quality is a vice and a misfortune, has been too manifestly settled to leave a doubt on such a matter. But I do lay claim to whatever merit should be accorded to me for persevering diligence in my profession. And I make the claim, not with a view to my own glory, but for the benefit of those who may read these pages, and when young may intend to follow the same career. *Nulla dies sine lineâ*. Let that be their motto. And let their work be to them as is his common work to the common labourer. No gigantic efforts will then be necessary. He need tie no wet towels round his brow, nor sit for thirty hours at his desk without moving,—as men have sat, or said that they have sat. More than nine-tenths of my literary work has been done in the last twenty years, and during twelve of those years I followed another profession. I have never been a slave to this work, giving due time, if not more than due time, to the amusements I have loved. But I have been constant,—and

constancy in labour will conquer all difficulties.  
*Gutta cavat lapidem non vi, sed sæpe cadendo.*

It may interest some if I state that during the last twenty years I have made by literature something near £70,000. As I have said before in these pages, I look upon the result as comfortable, but not splendid.

It will not, I trust, be supposed by any reader that I have intended in this so-called autobiography to give a record of my inner life. No man ever did so truly,—and no man ever will. Rousseau probably attempted it, but who doubts but that Rousseau has confessed in much the thoughts and convictions rather than the facts of his life? If the rustle of a woman's petticoat has ever stirred my blood; if a cup of wine has been a joy to me; if I have thought tobacco at midnight in pleasant company to be one of the elements of an earthly paradise; if now and again I have somewhat recklessly fluttered a £5 note over a card-table;—of what matter is that to any reader? I have betrayed no woman. Wine has brought me to no sorrow. It has been the companionship of smoking that I have loved, rather than the habit. I have never

desired to win money, and I have lost none. To enjoy the excitement of pleasure, but to be free from its vices and ill effects,—to have the sweet, and leave the bitter untasted,—that has been my study. The preachers tell us that this is impossible. It seems to me that hitherto I have succeeded fairly well. I will not say that I have never scorched a finger,—but I carry no ugly wounds.

For what remains to me of life I trust for my happiness still chiefly to my work—hoping that when the power of work be over with me, God may be pleased to take me from a world in which, according to my view, there can be no joy; secondly, to the love of those who love me; and then to my books. That I can read and be happy while I am reading, is a great blessing. Could I remember, as some men do, what I read, I should have been able to call myself an educated man. But that power I have never possessed. Something is always left,—something dim and inaccurate,—but still something sufficient to preserve the taste for more. I am inclined to think that it is so with most readers.

Of late years, putting aside the Latin clas-

sics, I have found my greatest pleasure in our old English dramatists,—not from any excessive love of their work, which often irritates me by its want of truth to nature, even while it shames me by its language,—but from curiosity in searching their plots and examining their character. If I live a few years longer, I shall, I think, leave in my copies of these dramatists, down to the close of James I., written criticisms on every play. No one who has not looked closely into it knows how many there are.

Now I stretch out my hand, and from the further shore I bid adieu to all who have cared to read any among the many words that I have written.

THE END.

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