BOOK THE FIFTH. THE FATAL LECTURE

CHAPTER 1

Late that night Amelius sat alone in his room, making notes for the lecture which he had now formally engaged himself to deliver in a week's time.

Thanks to his American education (as Rufus had supposed), he had not been without practice in the art of public speaking. He had learnt to face his fellow-creatures in the act of oratory, and to hear the sound of his own voice in a silent assembly, without trembling from head to foot. English newspapers were regularly sent to Tadmor, and English politics were frequently discussed in the little parliament of the Community. The prospect of addressing a new audience, with their sympathies probably against him at the outset, had its terrors undoubtedly. But the more formidable consideration, to the mind of Amelius, was presented by the limits imposed on him in the matter of time. The lecture was to be succeeded (at the request of a clerical member of the Institution) by a public discussion; and the secretary's experience suggested that the lecturer would do well to reduce his address within the compass of an hour. "Socialism is a large subject to be squeezed into that small space," Amelius had objected. And the secretary sighed, and answered, "They won't listen any longer."

Making notes, from time to time, of the points on which it was most desirable to insist, and on the relative positions which they should occupy in his lecture, the memory of Amelius became more and more absorbed in recalling the scenes in which his early life had been passed.

He laid down his pen, as the clock of the nearest church struck the first dark hour of the morning, and let his thoughts take him back again, without interruption or restraint, to the hills and vales of Tadmor. Once more the kind old Elder Brother taught him the noble lessons of Christianity as they came from the inspired Teacher's own lips; once more he took his turn of healthy work in the garden and the field; once more the voices of his companions joined with him in the evening songs, and the timid little figure of Mellicent stood at his side, content to hold the music-book and listen. How poor, how corrupt, did the life look that he was leading now, by comparison with the life that he had led in those earlier and happier days!

How shamefully he had forgotten the simple precepts of Christian humility, Christian sympathy, and Christian self-restraint, in which his teachers had trusted as the safeguards that were to preserve him from the foul contact of the world! Within the last two days only, he had refused to make merciful allowance for the errors of a man, whose life had been wasted in the sordid struggle upward from poverty to wealth. And, worse yet, he had cruelly distressed the poor girl who loved him, at the prompting of those selfish passions which it was his first and foremost duty to restrain. The bare remembrance of it was unendurable to him, in his present frame of mind. With his customary impetuosity, he snatched up the pen, to make atonement before he went to rest that night. He wrote in few words to Mr. Farnaby, declaring that he regretted having spoken impatiently and contemptuously at the interview between them, and expressing the hope that their experience of each other, in the time to come, might perhaps lead to acceptable concessions on either side. His letter to Regina was written, it is needless to say, in warmer terms and at much greater length: it was the honest outpouring of his love and his penitence. When the letters were safe in their envelopes he was not satisfied, even yet. No matter what the hour might be, there was no ease of mind for Amelius, until he had actually posted his letters. He stole downstairs, and softly unbolted the door, and hurried away to the nearest letter-box. When he had let himself in again with his latch-key, his mind was relieved at last. "Now," he thought, as he lit his bed-room candle, "I can go to sleep!"

A visit from Rufus was the first event of the day.

The two set to work together to draw out the necessary advertisement of the lecture. It was well calculated to attract attention in certain quarters. The announcement addressed itself, in capital letters, to all honest people who were poor and discontented. "Come, and hear the remedy which Christian Socialism provides for your troubles, explained to you by a friend and a brother; and pay no more than sixpence for the place that you occupy." The necessary information as to time and place followed this appeal; including the offer of reserved seats at higher prices. By advice of the secretary, the advertisement was not sent to any journal having its circulation among the wealthier classes of society. It appeared prominently in one daily paper and in two weekly papers; the three possessing an aggregate sale of four hundred thousand copies. "Assume only five readers to each copy," cried sanguine Amelius, "and we appeal to an audience of two millions. What a magnificent publicity!"

There was one inevitable result of magnificent publicity which Amelius failed to consider. His advertisements were certain to bring people together, who

might otherwise never have met in the great world of London, under one roof. All over England, Scotland, and Ireland, he invited unknown guests to pass the evening with him. In such circumstances, recognitions may take place between persons who have lost sight of each other for years; conversations may be held, which might otherwise never have been exchanged; and results may follow, for which the hero of the evening may be innocently responsible, because two or three among his audience happen to be sitting to hear him on the same bench. A man who opens his doors, and invites the public indiscriminately to come in, runs the risk of playing with inflammable materials, and can never be sure at what time or in what direction they may explode.

Rufus himself took the fair copies of the advertisement to the nearest agent. Amelius stayed at home to think over his lecture.

He was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Farnaby's answer to his letter. The man of the oily whiskers wrote courteously and guardedly. He was evidently flattered and pleased by the advance that had been made to him; and he was quite willing "under the circumstances" to give the lovers opportunities of meeting at his house. At the same time, he limited the number of the opportunities. "Once a week, for the present, my dear sir. Regina will doubtless write to you, when she returns to London."

Regina wrote, by return of post. The next morning Amelius received a letter from her which enchanted him. She had never loved him as she loved him now; she longed to see him again; she had prevailed on Mrs. Ormond to let her shorten her visit, and to intercede for her with the authorities at home. They were to return together to London on the afternoon of the next day. Amelius would be sure to find her, if he arranged to call in time for five-o'clock tea.

Towards four o'clock on the next day, while Amelius was putting the finishing touches to his dress, he was informed that "a young person wished to see him." The visitor proved to be Phoebe, with her handkerchief to her eyes; indulging in grief, in humble imitation of her young mistress's gentle method of proceeding on similar occasions.

"Good God!" cried Amelius, "has anything happened to Regina?"

"No, sir," Phoebe murmured behind the handkerchief. "Miss Regina is at home, and well."

"Then what are you crying about?"

Phoebe forgot her mistress's gentle method. She answered, with an explosion of sobs, "I'm ruined, sir!"

"What do you mean by being ruined? Who's done it?"

"You've done it, sir!"

Amelius started. His relations with Phoebe had been purely and entirely of the pecuniary sort. She was a showy, pretty girl, with a smart little figure--but with some undeniably bad lines, which only observant physiognomists remarked, about her eyebrows and her mouth. Amelius was not a physiognomist; but he was in love with Regina, which at his age implied faithful love. It is only men over forty who can court the mistress, with reserves of admiration to spare for the maid.

"Sit down," said Amelius; "and tell me in two words what you mean."

Phoebe sat down, and dried her eyes. "I have been infamously treated, sir, by Mrs. Farnaby," she began--and stopped, overpowered by the bare remembrance of her wrongs. She was angry enough, at that moment, to be off her guard. The vindictive nature that was in the girl found its way outward, and showed itself in her face. Amelius perceived the change, and began to doubt whether Phoebe was quite worthy of the place which she had hitherto held in his estimation.

"Surely there must be some mistake," he said. "What opportunity has Mrs. Farnaby had of ill-treating you? You have only just got back to London."

"I beg your pardon, sir, we got back sooner than we expected. Mrs. Ormond had business in town: and she left Miss Regina at her own door, nearly two hours since."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, I had hardly taken off my bonnet and shawl, when I was sent for by Mrs. Farnaby. 'Have you unpacked your box yet?' says she. I told her I hadn't had time to do so. 'You needn't trouble yourself to unpack,' says she. 'You are no longer in Miss Regina's service. There are your wages--with a month's wages besides, in place of the customary warning.' I'm only a poor girl, sir, but I up and spoke to her as plain as she spoke to me. 'I want to know,' I says, 'why I am sent away in this uncivil manner?' I couldn't possibly repeat what she said. My blood boils when I think of it," Phoebe

declared, with melodramatic vehemence. "Somebody has found us out, sir. Somebody has told Mrs. Farnaby of your private meeting with Miss Regina in the shrubbery, and the money you kindly gave me. I believe Mrs. Ormond is at the bottom of it; you remember nobody knew where she was, when I thought she was in the house speaking to the cook. That's guess-work, I allow, so far. What is certain is, that I have been spoken to as if I was the lowest creature that walks the streets. Mrs. Farnaby refuses to give me a character, sir. She actually said she would call in the police, if I didn't leave the house in half an hour. How am I to get another place, without a character? I'm a ruined girl, that's what I am--and all through You!"

Threatened at this point with an illustrative outburst of sobbing Amelius was simple enough to try the consoling influence of a sovereign. "Why don't you speak to Miss Regina?" he asked. "You know she will help you."

"She has done all she can, sir. I have nothing to say against Miss Regina--she's a good creature. She came into the room, and begged, and prayed, and took all the blame on herself. Mrs. Farnaby wouldn't hear a word. 'I'm mistress here,' she says; 'you had better go back to your room.' Ah, Mr. Amelius, I can tell you Mrs. Farnaby is your enemy as well as mine! you'll never marry her niece if she can stop it. Mark my words, sir, that's the secret of the vile manner in which she has used me. My conscience is clear, thank God. I've tried to serve the cause of true love--and I'm not ashamed of it. Never mind! my turn is to come. I'm only a poor servant, sent adrift in the world without a character. Wait a little! you see if I am not even (and better than even) with Mrs. Farnaby, before long! I know what I know. I am not going to say any more than that. She shall rue the day," cried Phoebe, relapsing into melodrama again, "when she turned me out of the house like a thief!"

"Come! come!" said Amelius, sharply, "you mustn't speak in that way."

Phoebe had got her money: she could afford to be independent. She rose from her chair. The insolence which is the almost invariable accompaniment of a sense of injury among Englishwomen of her class expressed itself in her answer to Amelius. "I speak as I think, sir. I have some spirit in me; I am not a woman to be trodden underfoot--and so Mrs. Farnaby shall find, before she is many days older."

"Phoebe! Phoebe! you are talking like a heathen. If Mrs. Farnaby has behaved to you with unjust severity, set her an example of moderation on your side. It's your duty as a Christian to forgive injuries."

Phoebe burst out laughing. "Hee-hee-hee! Thank you, sir, for a sermon as well as a sovereign. You have been most kind, indeed!" She changed suddenly from irony to anger. "I never was called a heathen before! Considering what I have done for you, I think you might at least have been civil. Good afternoon, sir." She lifted her saucy little snub-nose, and walked with dignity out of the room.

For the moment, Amelius was amused. As he heard the house-door closed, he turned laughing to the window, for a last look at Phoebe in the character of an injured Christian. In an instant the smile left his lips--he drew back from the window with a start.

A man had been waiting for Phoebe, in the street. At the moment when Amelius looked out, she had just taken his arm. He glanced back at the house, as they walked away together. Amelius immediately recognised, in Phoebe's companion (and sweetheart), a vagabond Irishman, nicknamed Jervy, whose face he had last seen at Tadmor. Employed as one of the agents of the Community in transacting their business with the neighbouring town, he had been dismissed for misconduct, and had been unwisely taken back again, at the intercession of a respectable person who believed in his promises of amendment. Amelius had suspected this man of being the spy who officiously informed against Mellicent and himself, but having discovered no evidence to justify his suspicions, he had remained silent on the subject. It was now quite plain to him that Jervy's appearance in London could only be attributed to a second dismissal from the service of the Community, for some offence sufficiently serious to oblige him to take refuge in England. A more disreputable person it was hardly possible for Phoebe to have become acquainted with. In her present vindictive mood, he would be emphatically a dangerous companion and counsellor. Amelius felt this so strongly, that he determined to follow them, on the chance of finding out where Jervy lived. Unhappily, he had only arrived at this resolution after a lapse of a minute or two. He ran into the street but it was too late; not a trace of them was to be discovered. Pursuing his way to Mr. Farnaby's house, he decided on mentioning what had happened to Regina. Her aunt had not acted wisely in refusing to let the maid refer to her for a character. She would do well to set herself right with Phoebe, in this particular, before it was too late.

CHAPTER 2

Mrs. Farnaby stood at the door of her own room, and looked at her niece with an air of contemptuous curiosity.

"Well? You and your lover have had a fine time of it together, I suppose? What do you want here?"

"Amelius wishes particularly to speak to you, aunt."

"Tell him to save himself the trouble. He may reconcile your uncle to his marriage--he won't reconcile Me."

"It's not about that, aunt; it's about Phoebe."

"Does he want me to take Phoebe back again?"

At that moment Amelius appeared in the hall, and answered the question himself. "I want to give you a word of warning," he said.

Mrs. Farnaby smiled grimly. "That excites my curiosity," she replied. "Come in. I don't want you," she added, dismissing her niece at the door. "So you're willing to wait ten years for Regina?" she continued, when Amelius was alone with her. "I'm disappointed in you; you're a poor weak creature, after all. What about that young hussy, Phoebe?"

Amelius told her unreservedly all that had passed between the discarded maid and himself, not forgetting, before he concluded, to caution her on the subject of the maid's companion. "I don't know what that man may not do to mislead Phoebe," he said. "If I were you, I wouldn't drive her into a corner."

Mrs. Farnaby eyed him scornfully from head to foot. "You used to have the spirit of a man in you," she answered. "Keeping company with Regina has made you a milksop already. If you want to know what I think of Phoebe and her sweetheart--" she stopped, and snapped her fingers. "There!" she said, "that's what I think! Now go back to Regina. I can tell you one thing--she will never be your wife."

Amelius looked at her in quiet surprise. "It seems odd," he remarked, "that you should treat me as you do, after what you said to me, the last time I was in this room. You expect me to help you in the dearest wish of your life--and

you do everything you can to thwart the dearest wish of my life. A man can't keep his temper under continual provocation. Suppose I refuse to help you?"

Mrs. Farnaby looked at him with the most exasperating composure. "I defy you to do it," she answered.

"You defy me to do it!" Amelius exclaimed.

"Do you take me for a fool?" Mrs. Farnaby went on. "Do you think I don't know you better than you know yourself?" She stepped up close to him; her voice sank suddenly to low and tender tones. "If that last unlikely chance should turn out in my favour," she went on; "if you really did meet with my poor girl, one of these days, and knew that you had met with her--do you mean to say you could be cruel enough, no matter how badly I behaved to you, to tell me nothing about it? Is that the heart I can feel beating under my hand? Is that the Christianity you learnt at Tadmor? Pooh, pooh, you foolish boy! Go back to Regina; and tell her you have tried to frighten me, and you find it won't do."

The next day was Saturday. The advertisement of the lecture appeared in the newspapers. Rufus confessed that he had been extravagant enough, in the case of the two weekly journals, to occupy half a page. "The public," he explained, "have got a nasty way of overlooking advertisements of a modest and retiring character. Hit 'em in the eyes when they open the paper, or you don't hit 'em at all."

Among the members of the public attracted by the new announcement, Mrs. Farnaby was one. She honoured Amelius with a visit at his lodgings. "I called you a poor weak creature yesterday" (these were her first words on entering the room); "I talked like a fool. You're a splendid fellow; I respect your courage, and I shall attend your lecture. Never mind what Mr. Farnaby and Regina say. Regina's poor little conventional soul is shaken, I dare say; you needn't expect to have my niece among your audience. But Farnaby is a humbug, as usual. He affects to be horrified; he talks big about breaking off the match. In his own self, he's bursting with curiosity to know how you will get through with it. I tell you this--he will sneak into the hall and stand at the back where nobody can see him. I shall go with him; and, when you're on the platform, I'll hold up my handkerchief like this. Then you'll know he's there. Hit him hard, Amelius--hit him hard! Where is your friend Rufus? just gone away? I like that American. Give him my love, and tell him to come and see me." She left the room as abruptly as she had entered it. Amelius looked after her in amazement. Mrs. Farnaby was not like herself; Mrs. Farnaby was in good spirits!

Regina's opinion of the lecture arrived by post.

Every other word in her letter was underlined; half the sentences began with "Oh!"; Regina was shocked, astonished, ashamed, alarmed. What would Amelius do next? Why had he deceived her, and left her to find it out in the papers? He had undone all the good effect of those charming letters to her father and herself. He had no idea of the disgust and abhorrence which respectable people would feel at his odious Socialism. Was she never to know another happy moment? and was Amelius to be the cause of it? and so on, and so on.

Mr. Farnaby's protest followed, delivered by Mr. Farnaby himself. He kept his gloves on when he called; he was solemn and pathetic; he remonstrated, in the character of one of the ancestors of Amelius; he pitied the ancient family "mouldering in the silent grave," he would abstain from deciding in a hurry, but his daughter's feelings were outraged, and he feared it might be his duty to break off the match. Amelius, with perfect good temper, offered him a free admission, and asked him to hear the lecture and decide for himself whether there was any harm in it. Mr. Farnaby turned his head away from the ticket as if it was something indecent. "Sad! sad!" That was his only farewell to the gentleman-Socialist.

On the Sunday (being the only day in London on which a man can use his brains without being interrupted by street music), Amelius rehearsed his lecture. On the Monday, he paid his weekly visit to Regina.

She was reported--whether truly or not it was impossible for him to discover--to have gone out in the carriage with Mrs. Ormond. Amelius wrote to her in soothing and affectionate terms, suggesting, as he had suggested to her father, that she should wait to hear the lecture before she condemned it. In the mean time, he entreated her to remember that they had promised to be true to one another, in time and eternity--Socialism notwithstanding.

The answer came back by private messenger. The tone was serious. Regina's principles forbade her to attend a Socialist lecture. She hoped Amelius was in earnest in writing as he did about time and eternity. The subject was very awful to a rightly-constituted mind. On the next page, some mitigation of this severity followed in a postscript. Regina would wait at home to see Amelius, the day after his "regrettable appearance in public."

The evening of Tuesday was the evening of the lecture.

Rufus posted himself at the ticket-taker's office, in the interests of Amelius. "Even sixpences do sometimes stick to a man's fingers, on their way from the public to the money-box," he remarked. The sixpences did indeed flow in rapidly; the advertisements had, so far, produced their effect. But the reserved seats sold very slowly. The members of the Institution, who were admitted for nothing, arrived in large numbers, and secured the best places. Towards eight o'clock (the hour at which the lecture was to begin), the sixpenny audience was still pouring in. Rufus recognised Phoebe among the late arrivals, escorted by a person in the dress of a gentleman, who was palpably a blackguard nevertheless. A short stout lady followed, who warily shook hands with Rufus, and said, "Let me introduce you to Mr. Farnaby." Mr. Farnaby's mouth and chin were shrouded in a wrapper; his hat was over his eyebrows. Rufus observed that he looked as if he was ashamed of himself. A gaunt, dirty, savage old woman, miserably dressed, offered her sixpence to the moneytaker, while the two gentlemen were shaking hands; the example, it is needless to say, being set by Rufus. The old woman looked attentively at all that was visible of Mr. Farnaby--that is to say, at his eyes and his whiskers--by the gas-lamp hanging in the corridor. She instantly drew back, though she had got her ticket; waited until Mr. Farnaby had paid for his wife and himself, and then followed close behind them, into the hall.

And why not? The advertisements addressed this wretched old creature as one of the poor and discontented public. Sixteen years ago, John Farnaby had put his own child into that woman's hands at Ramsgate, and had never seen either of them since.

CHAPTER 3

Entering the hall, Mr. Farnaby discovered without difficulty the position of modest retirement of which he was in search.

The cheap seats were situated, as usual, on that part of the floor of the building which was farthest from the platform. A gallery at this end of the hall threw its shadow over the hindermost benches and the gangway by which they were approached. In the sheltering obscurity thus produced, Mr. Farnaby took his place; standing in the corner formed by the angle it which the two walls of the building met, with his dutiful wife at his side.

Still following them, unnoticed in the crowd, the old woman stopped at the extremity of the hindermost bench, looked close at a smartly-dressed young man who occupied the last seat at the end, and who paid marked attention to a pretty girl sitting by him, and whispered in his ear, "Now then, Jervy! can't you make room for Mother Sowler?"

The man started and looked round. "You here?" he exclaimed, with an oath.

Before he could say more, Phoebe whispered to him on the other side, "What a horrid old creature! How did you ever come to know her?"

At the same moment, Mrs. Sowler reiterated her request in more peremptory language. "Do you hear, Jervy--do you hear? Sit a little closer."

Jervy apparently had his reasons for treating the expression of Mrs. Sowler's wishes with deference, shabby as she was. Making abundant apologies, he asked his neighbours to favour him by sitting a little nearer to each other, and so contrive to leave a morsel of vacant space at the edge of the bench.

Phoebe, making room under protest, began to whisper again. "What does she mean by calling you Jervy? She looks like a beggar. Tell her your name is Jervis."

The reply she received did not encourage her to say more. "Hold your tongue; I have reasons for being civil to her--you be civil too."

He turned to Mrs. Sowler, with the readiest submission to circumstances. Under the surface of his showy looks and his vulgar facility of manner, there lay hidden a substance of callous villainy and impenetrable cunning. He had

in him the materials out of which the clever murderers are made, who baffle the police. If he could have done it with impunity, he would have destroyed without remorse the squalid old creature who sat by him, and who knew enough of his past career in England to send him to penal servitude for life. As it was, he spoke to her with a spurious condescension and good humour. "Why, it must be ten years, Mrs. Sowler, since I last saw you! What have you been doing?"

The woman frowned at him as she answered. "Can't you look at me, and see? Starving!" She eyed his gaudy watch and chain greedily. "Money don't seem to be scarce with you. Have you made your fortune in America?"

He laid his hand on her arm, and pressed it warningly. "Hush!" he said, under his breath. "We'll talk about that, after the lecture." His bright shifty black eyes turned furtively towards Phoebe--and Mrs. Sowler noticed it. The girl's savings in service had paid for his jewelry and his fine clothes. She silently resented his rudeness in telling her to "hold her tongue"; sitting, sullen, with her impudent little nose in the air. Jervy tried to include her indirectly in his conversation with his shabby old friend. "This young lady," he said, "knows Mr. Goldenheart. She feels sure he'll break down; and we've come here to see the fun. I don't hold with Socialism myself--I am for, what my favourite newspaper calls, the Altar and the Throne. In short, my politics are Conservative."

"Your politics are in your girl's pocket," muttered Mrs. Sowler. "How long will her money last?"

Jervy turned a deaf ear to the interruption. "And what has brought you here?" he went on, in his most ingratiating way. "Did you see the advertisement in the papers?"

Mrs. Sowler answered loud enough to be heard above the hum of talking in the sixpenny places. "I was having a drop of gin, and I saw the paper at the public-house. I'm one of the discontented poor. I hate rich people; and I'm ready to pay my sixpence to hear them abused."

"Hear, hear!" said a man near, who looked like a shoemaker.

"I hope he'll give it to the aristocracy," added one of the shoemaker's neighbours, apparently a groom out of place.

"I'm sick of the aristocracy," cried a woman with a fiery face and a crushed bonnet. "It's them as swallows up the money. What business have they with

their palaces and their parks, when my husband's out of work, and my children hungry at home?"

The acquiescent shoemaker listened with admiration. "Very well put," he said; "very well put."

These expressions of popular feeling reached the respectable ears of Mr. Farnaby. "Do you hear those wretches?" he said to his wife.

Mrs. Farnaby seized the welcome opportunity of irritating him. "Poor things!" she answered. "In their place, we should talk as they do."

"You had better go into the reserved seats," rejoined her husband, turning from her with a look of disgust. "There's plenty of room. Why do you stop here?"

"I couldn't think of leaving you, my dear! How did you like my American friend?"

"I am astonished at your taking the liberty of introducing him to me. You knew perfectly well that I was here incognito. What do I care about a wandering American?"

Mrs. Farnaby persisted as maliciously as ever. "Ah, but you see, I like him. The wandering American is my ally."

"Your ally! What do you mean?"

"Good heavens, how dull you are! don't you know that I object to my niece's marriage engagement? I was quite delighted when I heard of this lecture, because it's an obstacle in the way. It disgusts Regina, and it disgusts You--and my dear American is the man who first brought it about. Hush! here's Amelius. How well he looks! So graceful and so gentlemanlike," cried Mrs. Farnaby, signalling with her handkerchief to show Amelius their position in the hall. "I declare I'm ready to become a Socialist before he opens his lips!"

The personal appearance of Amelius took the audience completely by surprise. A man who is young and handsome is not the order of man who is habitually associated in the popular mind with the idea of a lecture. After a moment of silence, there was a spontaneous burst of applause. It was renewed when Amelius, first placing on his table a little book, announced his intention of delivering the lecture extempore. The absence of the inevitable manuscript was in itself an act of mercy that cheered the public at

starting.

The orator of the evening began.

"Ladies and gentlemen, thoughtful people accustomed to watch the signs of the times in this country, and among the other nations of Europe, are (so far as I know) agreed in the conclusion, that serious changes are likely to take place in present forms of government, and in existing systems of society, before the century in which we live has reached its end. In plain words, the next revolution is not so unlikely, and not so far off, as it pleases the higher and wealthier classes among European populations to suppose. I am one of those who believe that the coming convulsion will take the form, this time, of a social revolution, and that the man at the head of it will not be a military or a political man--but a Great Citizen, sprung from the people, and devoted heart and soul to the people's cause. Within the limits assigned to me to-night, it is impossible that I should speak to you of government and society among other nations, even if I possessed the necessary knowledge and experience to venture on so vast a subject. All that I can now attempt to do is (first) to point out some of the causes which are paving the way for a coming change in the social and political condition of this country; and (secondly) to satisfy you that the only trustworthy remedy for existing abuses is to be found in the system which Christian Socialism extracts from this little book on my table--the book which you all know under the name of The New Testament. Before, however, I enter on my task, I feel it a duty to say one preliminary word on the subject of my claim to address you, such as it is. I am most unwilling to speak of myself--but my position here forces me to do so. I am a stranger to all of you; and I am a very young man. Let me tell you, then, briefly, what my life has been, and where I have been brought up--and then decide for yourselves whether it is worth your while to favour me with your attention, or not."

"A very good opening," remarked the shoemaker.

"A nice-looking fellow," said the fiery-faced woman, "I should like to kiss him."

"He's too civil by half," grumbled Mrs. Sowler; "I wish I had my sixpence back in my pocket."

"Give him time." whispered Jervy, "and he'll warm up. I say, Phoebe, he doesn't begin like a man who is going to break down. I don't expect there will be much to laugh at to-night."

"What an admirable speaker!" said Mrs. Farnaby to her husband. "Fancy such a man as that, being married to such an idiot as Regina!"

"There's always a chance for him," returned Mr. Farnaby, savagely, "as long as he's not married to such a woman as You!"

In the mean time, Amelius had claimed national kindred with his audience as an Englishman, and had rapidly sketched his life at Tadmor, in its most noteworthy points. This done, he put the question whether they would hear him. His frankness and freshness had already won the public: they answered by a general shout of applause.

"Very well," Amelius proceeded, "now let us get on. Suppose we take a glance (we have no time to do more) at the present state of our religious system, first. What is the public aspect of the thing called Christianity, in the England of our day? A hundred different sects all at variance with each other. An established church, rent in every direction by incessant wrangling--disputes about black gowns or white; about having candlesticks on tables, or off tables; about bowing to the east or bowing to the west; about which doctrine collects the most respectable support and possesses the largest sum of money, the doctrine in my church, or the doctrine in your church, or the doctrine in the church over the way. Look up, if you like, from this multitudinous and incessant squabbling among the rank and file, to the high regions in which the right reverend representatives of state religion sit apart. Are they Christians? If they are, show me the Bishop who dare assert his Christianity in the House of Lords, when the ministry of the day happens to see its advantage in engaging in a war! Where is that Bishop, and how many supporters does he count among his own order? Do you blame me for using intemperate language--language which I cannot justify? Take a fair test, and try me by that. The result of the Christianity of the New Testament is to make men true, humane, gentle, modest, strictly scrupulous and strictly considerate in their dealings with their neighbours. Does the Christianity of the churches and the sects produce these results among us? Look at the staple of the country, at the occupation which employs the largest number of Englishmen of all degrees--Look at our Commerce. What is its social aspect, judged by the morality which is in this book in my hand? Let those organised systems of imposture, masquerading under the disguise of banks and companies, answer the question--there is no need for me to answer it. You know what respectable names are associated, year after year, with the shameless falsification of accounts, and the merciless ruin of thousands on thousands of victims. You know how our poor Indian customer finds his cotton-print dress a sham that falls to pieces; how the savage who deals honestly with us for his weapon finds his gun a delusion

that bursts; how the half-starved needlewoman who buys her reel of thread finds printed on the label a false statement of the number of yards that she buys; you know that, in the markets of Europe, foreign goods are fast taking the place of English goods, because the foreigner is the most honest manufacturer of the two--and, lastly, you know, what is worse than all, that these cruel and wicked deceptions, and many more like them, are regarded, on the highest commercial authority, as 'forms of competition' and justifiable proceedings in trade. Do you believe in the honourable accumulation of wealth by men who hold such opinions and perpetrate such impostures as these? I don't! Do you find any brighter and purer prospect when you look down from the man who deceives you and me on the great scale, to the man who deceives us on the small? I don't! Everything we eat, drink, and wear is a more or less adulterated commodity; and that very adulteration is sold to us by the tradesmen at such outrageous prices, that we are obliged to protect ourselves on the Socialist principle, by setting up cooperative shops of our own. Wait! and hear me out, before you applaud. Don't mistake the plain purpose of what I am saying to you; and don't suppose that I am blind to the brighter side of the dark picture that I have drawn. Look within the limits of private life, and you will find true Christians, thank God, among clergymen and laymen alike; you will find men and women who deserve to be called, in the highest sense of the word, disciples of Christ. But my business is not with private life--my business is with the present public aspect of the religion, morals, and politics of this country; and again I say it, that aspect presents one wide field of corruption and abuse, and reveals a callous and shocking insensibility on the part of the nation at large to the spectacle of its own demoralisation and disgrace."

There Amelius paused, and took his first drink of water.

Reserved seats at public performances seem, by some curious affinity, to be occupied by reserved persons. The select public, seated nearest to the orator, preserved discreet silence. But the hearty applause from the sixpenny places made ample amends. There was enough of the lecturer's own vehemence and impetuosity in this opening attack--sustained as it undeniably was by a sound foundation of truth--to appeal strongly to the majority of his audience. Mrs. Sowler began to think that her sixpence had been well laid out, after all; and Mrs. Farnaby pointed the direct application to her husband of all the hardest hits at commerce, by nodding her head at him as they were delivered.

Amelius went on.

"The next thing we have to discover is this: Will our present system of

government supply us with peaceable means for the reform of the abuses which I have already noticed? not forgetting that other enormous abuse, represented by our intolerable national expenditure, increasing with every year. Unless you insist on it, I do not propose to waste our precious time by saying anything about the House of Lords, for three good reasons. In the first place, that assembly is not elected by the people, and it has therefore no right of existence in a really free country. In the second place, out of its four hundred and eighty-five members, no less than one hundred and eighty-four directly profit by the expenditure of the public money; being in the annual receipt, under one pretence or another, of more than half a million sterling. In the third place, if the assembly of the Commons has in it the will, as well as the capacity, to lead the way in the needful reforms, the assembly of the Lords has no alternative but to follow, or to raise the revolution which it only escaped, by a hair's-breadth, some forty years since. What do you say? Shall we waste our time in speaking of the House of Lords?"

Loud cries from the sixpenny benches answered No; the ostler and the fiery-faced woman being the most vociferous of all. Here and there, certain dissentient individuals raised a little hiss--led by Jervy, in the interests of "the Altar and the Throne."

Amelius resumed.

"Well, will the House of Commons help us to get purer Christianity, and cheaper government, by lawful and sufficient process of reform? Let me again remind you that this assembly has the power--if it has the will. Is it so constituted at present as to have the will? There is the question! The number of members is a little over six hundred and fifty. Out of this muster, one fifth only represent (or pretend to represent) the trading interests of the country. As for the members charged with the interests of the working class, they are more easily counted still--they are two in number! Then, in heaven's name (you will ask), what interest does the majority of members in this assembly represent? There is but one answer--the military and aristocratic interest. In these days of the decay of representative institutions, the House of Commons has become a complete misnomer. The Commons are not represented; modern members belong to classes of the community which have really no interest in providing for popular needs and lightening popular burdens. In one word, there is no sort of hope for us in the House of Commons. And whose fault is this? I own it with shame and sorrow--it is emphatically the fault of the people. Yes, I say to you plainly, it is the disgrace and the peril of England that the people themselves have elected the representative assembly which ignores the people's wants! You voters, in

town and county alike, have had every conceivable freedom and encouragement secured to you in the exercise of your sacred trust--and there is the modern House of Commons to prove that you are thoroughly unworthy of it!"

These bold words produced an outbreak of disapprobation from the audience, which, for the moment, completely overpowered the speaker's voice. They were prepared to listen with inexhaustible patience to the enumeration of their virtues and their wrongs--but they had not paid sixpence each to be informed of the vicious and contemptible part which they play in modern politics. They yelled and groaned and hissed--and felt that their handsome young lecturer had insulted them!

Amelius waited quietly until the disturbance had worn itself out.

"I am sorry I have made you angry with me," he said, smiling. "The blame for this little disturbance really rests with the public speakers who are afraid of you and who flatter you--especially if you belong to the working classes. You are not accustomed to have the truth told you to your faces. Why, my good friends, the people in this country, who are unworthy of the great trust which the wise and generous English constitution places in their hands, are so numerous that they can be divided into distinct classes! There is the highly-educated class which despairs, and holds aloof. There is the class beneath--without self-respect, and therefore without public spirit--which can be bribed indirectly, by the gift of a place, by the concession of a lease, even by an invitation to a party at a great house which includes the wives and the daughters. And there is the lower class still--mercenary, corrupt, shameless to the marrow of its bones--which sells itself and its liberties for money and drink. When I began this discourse, and adverted to great changes that are to come, I spoke of them as revolutionary changes. Am I an alarmist? Do I unjustly ignore the capacity for peaceable reformation which has preserved modern England from revolutions, thus far? God forbid that I should deny the truth, or that I should alarm you without need! But history tells me, if I look no farther back than to the first French Revolution, that there are social and political corruptions, which strike their roots in a nation so widely and so deeply, that no force short of the force of a revolutionary convulsion can tear them up and cast them away. And I do personally fear (and older and wiser men than I agree with me), that the corruptions at which I have only been able to hint, in this brief address, are fast extending themselves--in England, as well as in Europe generally--beyond the reach of that lawful and bloodless reform which has served us so well in past years. Whether I am mistaken in this view (and I hope with all my heart it may be so), or whether events yet in the future will prove that I am right, the remedy

in either case, the one sure foundation on which a permanent, complete, and worthy reformation can be built--whether it prevents a convulsion or whether it follows a convulsion--is only to be found within the covers of this book. Do not, I entreat you, suffer yourselves to be persuaded by those purblind philosophers who assert that the divine virtue of Christianity is a virtue which is wearing out with the lapse of time. It is the abuse and corruption of Christianity that is wearing out--as all falsities and all impostures must and do wear out. Never, since Christ and his apostles first showed men the way to be better and happier, have the nations stood in sorer need of a return to that teaching, in its pristine purity and simplicity, than now! Never, more certainly than at this critical time, was it the interest as well as the duty of mankind to turn a deaf ear to the turmoil of false teachers, and to trust in that all-wise and all-merciful Voice which only ceased to exalt, console, and purify humanity, when it expired in darkness under the torture of the cross! Are these the wild words of an enthusiast? Is this the dream of an earthly Paradise in which it is sheer folly to believe? I can tell you of one existing community (one among others) which numbers some hundreds of persons; and which has found prosperity and happiness, by reducing the whole art and mystery of government to the simple solution set forth in the New Testament--fear God, and love thy neighbour as thyself."

By these gradations Amelius arrived at the second of the two parts into which he had divided his address.

He now repeated, at greater length and with a more careful choice of language, the statement of the religious and social principles of the Community at Tadmor, which he had already addressed to his two fellow-travellers on the voyage to England. While he confined himself to plain narrative, describing a mode of life which was entirely new to his hearers, he held the attention of the audience. But when he began to argue the question of applying Christian Socialism to the government of large populations as well as small--when he inquired logically whether what he had proved to be good for some hundreds of persons was not also good for some thousands, and, conceding that, for some hundreds of thousands, and so on until he had arrived, by dint of sheer argument, at the conclusion that what had succeeded at Tadmor must necessarily succeed on a fair trial in London--then the public interest began to flag. People remembered their coughs and colds, and talked in whispers, and looked about them with a vague feeling of relief in staring at each other. Mrs. Sowler, hitherto content with furtively glancing at Mr. Farnaby from time to time, now began to look at him more boldly, as he stood in his corner with his eyes fixed sternly on the platform at the other end of the hall. He too began to feel that the lecture was

changing its tone. It was no longer the daring outbreak which he had come to hear, as his sufficient justification (if necessary) for forbidding Amelius to enter his house. "I have had enough of it," he said, suddenly turning to his wife, "let us go."

If Mrs. Farnaby could have been forewarned that she was standing in that assembly of strangers, not as one of themselves, but as a woman with a formidable danger hanging over her head--or if she had only happened to look towards Phoebe, and had felt a passing reluctance to submit herself to the possibly insolent notice of a discharged servant--she might have gone out with her husband, and might have so escaped the peril that had been lying in wait for her, from the fatal moment when she first entered the hall. As it was she refused to move. "You forget the public discussion," she said. "Wait and see what sort of fight Amelius makes of it when the lecture is over."

She spoke loud enough to be heard by some of the people seated nearest to her. Phoebe, critically examining the dresses of the few ladies in the reserved seats, twisted round on the bench, and noticed for the first time the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Farnaby in their dim corner. "Look!" she whispered to Jervy, "there's the wretch who turned me out of her house without a character, and her husband with her."

Jervy looked round, in his turn, a little doubtful of the accuracy of his sweetheart's information. "Surely they wouldn't come to the sixpenny places," he said. "Are you certain it's Mr. and Mrs. Farnaby?"

He spoke in cautiously-lowered tones; but Mrs. Sowler had seen him look back at the lady and gentleman in the corner, and was listening attentively to catch the first words that fell from his lips.

"Which is Mr. Farnaby?" she asked.

"The man in the corner there, with the white silk wrapper over his mouth, and his hat down to his eyebrows."

Mrs. Sowler looked round for a moment--to make sure that Jervy's man and her man were one and the same.

"Farnaby?" she muttered to herself, in the tone of a person who heard the name for the first time. She considered a little, and leaning across Jervy, addressed herself to his companion. "My dear," she whispered, "did that gentleman ever go by the name of Morgan, and have his letters addressed to

the George and Dragon, in Tooley-street?"

Phoebe lifted her eyebrows with a look of contemptuous surprise, which was an answer in itself. "Fancy the great Mr. Farnaby going by an assumed name, and having his letters addressed to a public-house!" she said to Jervy.

Mrs. Sowler asked no more questions. She relapsed into muttering to herself, under her breath. "His whiskers have turned gray, to be sure--but I know his eyes again; I'll take my oath to it, there's no mistaking his eyes!" She suddenly appealed to Jervy. "Is Mr. Farnaby rich?" she asked.

"Rolling in riches!" was the answer.

"Where does he live?"

Jervy was cautious how he replied to that; he consulted Phoebe. "Shall I tell her?"

Phoebe answered petulantly, "I'm turned out of the house; I don't care what you tell her!"

Jervy again addressed the old woman, still keeping his information in reserve. "Why do you want to know where he lives?"

"He owes me money," said Mrs. Sowler.

Jervy looked hard at her, and emitted a long low whistle, expressive of blank amazement. The persons near, annoyed by the incessant whispering, looked round irritably, and insisted on silence. Jervy ventured nevertheless on a last interruption. "You seem to be tired of this," he remarked to Phoebe; "let's go and get some oysters." She rose directly. Jervy tapped Mrs. Sowler on the shoulder, as they passed her. "Come and have some supper," he said; "I'll stand treat."

The three were necessarily noticed by their neighbours as they passed out. Mrs. Farnaby discovered Phoebe--when it was too late. Mr. Farnaby happened to look first at the old woman. Sixteen years of squalid poverty effectually disguised her, in that dim light. He only looked away again, and said to his wife impatiently, "Let us go too!"

Mrs. Farnaby was still obstinate. "You can go if you like," she said; "I shall stay here."

CHAPTER 4

"Three dozen oysters, bread-and-butter, and bottled stout; a private room and a good fire." Issuing these instructions, on his arrival at the tavern, Jervy was surprised by a sudden act of interference on the part of his venerable guest. Mrs. Sowler actually took it on herself to order her own supper!

"Nothing cold to eat or drink for me," she said. "Morning and night, waking and sleeping, I can't keep myself warm. See for yourself, Jervy, how I've lost flesh since you first knew me! A steak, broiling hot from the gridiron, and gin-and-water, hotter still--that's the supper for me."

"Take the order, waiter," said Jervy, resignedly; "and let us see the private room."

The tavern was of the old-fashioned English sort, which scorns to learn a lesson of brightness and elegance from France. The private room can only be described as a museum for the exhibition of dirt in all its varieties. Behind the bars of the rusty little grate a dying fire was drawing its last breath. Mrs. Sowler clamoured for wood and coals; revived the fire with her own hands; and seated herself shivering as close to the fender as the chair would go. After a while, the composing effect of the heat began to make its influence felt: the head of the half-starved wretch sank: a species of stupor overcame her--half faintness, and half sleep.

Phoebe and her sweetheart sat together, waiting the appearance of the supper, on a little sofa at the other end of the room. Having certain objects to gain, Jervy put his arm round her waist, and looked and spoke in his most insinuating manner.

"Try and put up with Mother Sowler for an hour or two," he said. "My sweet girl, I know she isn't fit company for you! But how can I turn my back on an old friend?"

"That's just what surprises me," Phoebe answered. "I don't understand such a person being a friend of yours."

Always ready with the necessary lie, whenever the occasion called for it, Jervy invented a pathetic little story, in two short parts. First part: Mrs. Sowler, rich and respected; a widow inhabiting a villa-residence, and riding

in her carriage. Second part: a villainous lawyer; misplaced confidence; reckless investments; death of the villain; ruin of Mrs. Sowler. "Don't talk about her misfortunes when she wakes," Jervy concluded, "or she'll burst out crying, to a dead certainty. Only tell me, dear Phoebe, would you turn your back on a forlorn old creature because she has outlived all her other friends, and hasn't a farthing left in the world? Poor as I am, I can help her to a supper, at any rate."

Phoebe expressed her admiration of these noble sentiments by an inexpensive ebullition of tenderness, which failed to fulfill Jervy's private anticipations. He had aimed straight at her purse--and he had only hit her heart! He tried a broad hint next. "I wonder whether I shall have a shilling or two left to give Mrs. Sowler, when I have paid for the supper?" He sighed, and pulled out some small change, and looked at it in eloquent silence. Phoebe was hit in the right place at last. She handed him her purse. "What is mine will be yours, when we are married," she said; "why not now?" Jervy expressed his sense of obligation with the promptitude of a grateful man; he repeated those precious words, "My sweet girl!" Phoebe laid her head on his shoulder--and let him kiss her, and enjoyed it in silent ecstasy with half-closed eyes. The scoundrel waited and watched her, until she was completely under his influence. Then, and not till then, he risked the gradual revelation of the purpose which had induced him to withdraw from the hall, before the proceedings of the evening had reached their end.

"Did you hear what Mrs. Sowler said to me, just before we left the lecture?" he asked.

"No, dear."

"You remember that she asked me to tell her Farnaby's address?"

"Oh yes! And she wanted to know if he had ever gone by the name of Morgan. Ridiculous--wasn't it?"

"I'm not so sure of that, my dear. She told me, in so many words, that Farnaby owed her money. He didn't make his fortune all at once, I suppose. How do we know what he might have done in his young days, or how he might have humbugged a feeble woman. Wait till our friend there at the fire has warmed her old bones with some hot grog--and I'll find out something more about Farnaby's debt."

"Why, dear? What is it to you?"

Jervy reflected for a moment, and decided that the time had come to speak more plainly.

"In the first place," he said, "it would only be an act of common humanity, on my part, to help Mrs. Sowler to get her money. You see that, don't you? Very well. Now, I am no Socialist, as you are aware; quite the contrary. At the same time, I am a remarkably just man; and I own I was struck by what Mr. Goldenheart said about the uses to which wealthy people are put, by the Rules at Tadmor. 'The man who has got the money is bound, by the express law of Christian morality, to use it in assisting the man who has got none.' Those were his words, as nearly as I can remember them. He put it still more strongly afterwards; he said, 'A man who hoards up a large fortune, from a purely selfish motive--either because he is a miser, or because he looks only to the aggrandisement of his own family after his death--is, in either case, an essentially unchristian person, who stands in manifest need of enlightenment and control by Christian law.' And then, if you remember, some of the people murmured; and Mr. Goldenheart stopped them by reading a line from the New Testament, which said exactly what he had been saying--only in fewer words. Now, my dear girl, Farnaby seems to me to be one of the many people pointed at in this young gentleman's lecture. Judging by looks, I should say he was a hard man."

"That's just what he is--hard as iron! Looks at his servants as if they were dirt under his feet; and never speaks a kind word to them from one year's end to another."

"Suppose I guess again? He's not particularly free-handed with his money--is he?"

"He! He will spend anything on himself and his grandeur; but he never gave away a halfpenny in his life."

Jervy pointed to the fireplace, with a burst of virtuous indignation. "And there's that poor old soul starving for want of the money he owes her! Damn it, I agree with the Socialists; it's a virtue to make that sort of man bleed. Look at you and me! We are the very people he ought to help--we might be married at once, if we only knew where to find a little money. I've seen a deal of the world, Phoebe; and my experience tells me there's something about that debt of Farnaby's which he doesn't want to have known. Why shouldn't we screw a few five-pound notes for ourselves out of the rich miser's fears?"

Phoebe was cautious. "It's against the law--ain't it?" she said.

"Trust me to keep clear of the law," Jervy answered. "I won't stir in the matter till I know for certain that he daren't take the police into his confidence. It will be all easy enough when we are once sure of that. You have been long enough in the family to find out Farnaby's weak side. Would it do, if we got at him, to begin with, through his wife?"

Phoebe suddenly reddened to the roots of her hair. "Don't talk to me about his wife!" she broke out fiercely; "I've got a day of reckoning to come with that lady--" She looked at Jervy and checked herself. He was watching her with an eager curiosity, which not even his ready cunning was quick enough to conceal.

"I wouldn't intrude on your little secrets, darling, for the world!" he said, in his most persuasive tones. "But, if you want advice, you know that I am heart and soul at your service."

Phoebe looked across the room at Mrs. Sowler, still nodding over the fire.

"Never mind now," she said; "I don't think it's a matter for a man to advise about--it's between Mrs. Farnaby and me. Do what you like with her husband; I don't care; he's a brute, and I hate him. But there's one thing I insist on--I won't have Miss Regina frightened or annoyed; mind that! She's a good creature. There, read the letter she wrote to me yesterday, and judge for yourself."

Jervy looked at the letter. It was not very long. He resignedly took upon himself the burden of reading it.

"DEAR PHOEBE,

"Don't be downhearted. I am your friend always, and I will help you to get another place. I am sorry to say that it was indeed Mrs. Ormond who found us out that day. She had her suspicions, and she watched us, and told my aunt. This she owned to me with her own lips. She said, 'I would do anything, my dear, to save you from an ill-assorted marriage.' I am very wretched about it, because I can never look on her as my friend again. My aunt, as you know, is of Mrs. Ormond's way of thinking. You must make allowances for her hot temper. Remember, out of your kindness towards me, you had been secretly helping forward the very thing which she was most anxious to prevent. That made her very angry; but, never fear, she will come round in time. If you don't want to spend your little savings, while you are waiting for another situation, let me know. A share of my pocket-money is always at your service.

"Your friend,

"REGINA."

"Very nice indeed," said Jervy, handing the letter back, and yawning as he did it. "And convenient, too, if we run short of money. Ah, here's the waiter with the supper, at last! Now, Mrs. Sowler, there's a time for everything--it's time to wake up."

He lifted the old woman off her chair, and settled her before the table, like a child. The sight of the hot food and drink roused her to a tigerish activity. She devoured the meat with her eyes as well as her teeth; she drank the hot gin-and-water in fierce gulps, and set down the glass with audible gasps of relief. "Another one," she cried, "and I shall begin to feel warm again!"

Jervy, watching her from the opposite side of the table, with Phoebe close by him as usual, had his own motives for encouraging her to talk, by the easy means of encouraging her to drink. He sent for another glass of the hot grog. Phoebe, daintily picking up her oysters with her fork, affected to be shocked at Mrs. Sowler's coarse method of eating and drinking. She kept her eyes on her plate, and only consented to taste malt liquor under modest protest. When Jervy lit a cigar, after finishing his supper, she reminded him, in an impressively genteel manner, of the consideration which he owed to the presence of an elderly lady. "I like it myself, dear," she said mincingly; "but perhaps Mrs. Sowler objects to the smell?"

Mrs. Sowler burst into a hoarse laugh. "Do I look as if I was likely to be squeamish about smells?" she asked, with the savage contempt for her own poverty, which was one of the dangerous elements in her character. "See the place I live in, young woman, and then talk about smells if you like!"

This was indelicate. Phoebe picked a last oyster out of its shell, and kept her eyes modestly fixed on her plate. Observing that the second glass of gin-and-water was fast becoming empty, Jervy risked the first advances, on his way to Mrs. Sowler's confidence.

"About that debt of Farnaby's?" he began. "Is it a debt of long standing?"

Mrs. Sowler was on her guard. In other words, Mrs. Sowler's head was only assailable by hot grog, when hot grog was administered in large quantities. She said it was a debt of long standing, and she said no more.

"Has it been standing seven years?"

Mrs. Sowler emptied her glass, and looked hard at Jervy across the table. "My memory isn't good for much, at my time of life." She gave him that answer, and she gave him no more.

Jervy yielded with his best grace. "Try a third glass," he said; "there's luck, you know, in odd numbers."

Mrs. Sowler met this advance in the spirit in which it was made. She was obliging enough to consult her memory, even before the third glass made its appearance. "Seven years, did you say?" she repeated. "More than twice seven years, Jervy! What do you think of that?"

Jervy wasted no time in thinking. He went on with his questions.

"Are you quite sure that the man I pointed out to you, at the lecture, is the same man who went by the name of Morgan, and had his letters addressed to the public-house?"

"Quite sure. I'd swear to him anywhere--only by his eyes."

"And have you never yet asked him to pay the debt?"

"How could I ask him, when I never knew what his name was till you told me to-night?"

"What amount of money does he owe you?"

Whether Mrs. Sowler had her mind prophetically fixed on a fourth glass of grog, or whether she thought it time to begin asking questions on her own account, is not easy to say. Whatever her motive might be, she slyly shook her head, and winked at Jervy. "The money's my business," she remarked. "You tell me where he lives--and I'll make him pay me."

Jervy was equal to the occasion. "You won't do anything of the sort," he said.

Mrs. Sowler laughed defiantly. "So you think, my fine fellow!"

"I don't think at all, old lady--I'm certain. In the first place, Farnaby don't owe you the debt by law, after seven years. In the second place, just look at yourself in the glass there. Do you think the servants will let you in, when you knock at Farnaby's door? You want a clever fellow to help you--or you'll

never recover that debt."

Mrs. Sowler was accessible to reason (even half-way through her third glass of grog), when reason was presented to her in convincing terms. She came to the point at once. "How much do you want?" she asked.

"Nothing," Jervy answered; "I don't look to you to pay my commission."

Mrs. Sowler reflected a little--and understood him. "Say that again," she insisted, "in the presence of your young woman as witness."

Jervy touched his young woman's hand under the table, warning her to make no objection, and to leave it to him. Having declared for the second time that he would not take a farthing from Mrs. Sowler, he went on with his inquiries.

"I'm acting in your interests, Mother Sowler," he said; "and you'll be the loser, if you don't answer my questions patiently, and tell me the truth. I want to go back to the debt. What is it for?"

"For six weeks' keep of a child, at ten shillings a week."

Phoebe looked up from her plate.

"Whose child?" Jervy asked, noticing the sudden movement.

"Morgan's child--the same man you said was Farnaby."

"Do you know who the mother was?"

"I wish I did! I should have got the money out of her long ago."

Jervy stole a look at Phoebe. She had turned pale; she was listening, with her eyes riveted on Mrs. Sowler's ugly face.

"How long ago was it?" Jervy went on.

"Better than sixteen years."

"Did Farnaby himself give you the child?"

"With his own hands, over the garden-paling of a house at Ramsgate. He saw me and the child into the train for London. I had ten pounds from him,

and no more. He promised to see me, and settle everything, in a month's time. I have never set eyes on him from that day, till I saw him paying his money this evening at the door of the hall."

Jervy stole another look at Phoebe. She was still perfectly unconscious that he was observing her. Her attention was completely absorbed by Mrs. Sowler's replies. Speculating on the possible result, Jervy abandoned the question of the debt, and devoted his next inquiries to the subject of the child.

"I promise you every farthing of your money, Mother Sowler," he said, "with interest added to it. How old was the child when Farnaby gave it to you?"

"Old? Not a week old, I should say!"

"Not a week old?" Jervy repeated, with his eye on Phoebe. "Dear, dear me, a newborn baby, one may say!"

The girl's excitement was fast getting beyond control. She leaned across the table, in her eagerness to hear more.

"And how long was this poor child under your care?" Jervy went on.

"How can I tell you, at this distance of time? For some months, I should say. This I'm certain of--I kept it for six good weeks after the ten pounds he gave me were spent. And then--" she stopped, and looked at Phoebe.

"And then you got rid of it?"

Mrs. Sowler felt for Jervy's foot under the table, and gave it a significant kick. "I have done nothing to be ashamed of, miss," she said, addressing her answer defiantly to Phoebe. "Being too poor to keep the little dear myself, I placed it under the care of a good lady, who adopted it."

Phoebe could restrain herself no longer. She burst out with the next question, before Jervy could open his lips.

"Do you know where the lady is now?"

"No," said Mrs. Sowler shortly; "I don't."

"Do you know where to find the child?"

Mrs. Sowler slowly stirred up the remains of her grog. "I know no more than you do. Any more questions, miss?"

Phoebe's excitement completely blinded her to the evident signs of a change in Mrs. Sowler's temper for the worse. She went on headlong.

"Have you never seen the child since you gave her to the lady?"

Mrs. Sowler set down her glass, just as she was raising it to her lips. Jervy paused, thunderstruck, in the act of lighting a second cigar.

"Her?" Mrs. Sowler repeated slowly, her eyes fixed on Phoebe with a lowering expression of suspicion and surprise. "Her?" She turned to Jervy. "Did you ask me if the child was a girl or a boy?"

"I never even thought of it," Jervy replied.

"Did I happen to say it myself, without being asked?"

Jervy deliberately abandoned Phoebe to the implacable old wretch, before whom she had betrayed herself. It was the only likely way of forcing the girl to confess everything. "No," he answered; "you never said it without being asked."

Mrs. Sowler turned once more to Phoebe. "How do you know the child was a girl?" she inquired.

Phoebe trembled, and said nothing. She sat with her head down, and her hands, fast clasped together, resting on her lap.

"Might I ask, if you please," Mrs. Sowler proceeded, with a ferocious assumption of courtesy, "how old you are, miss? You're young enough and pretty enough not to mind answering to your age, I'm sure."

Even Jervy's villainous experience of the world failed to forewarn him of what was coming. Phoebe, it is needless to say, instantly fell into the trap.

"Twenty-four," she replied, "next birthday."

"And the child was put into my hands, sixteen years ago," said Mrs. Sowler. "Take sixteen from twenty-four, and eight remains. I'm more surprised than ever, miss, at your knowing it to be a girl. It couldn't have been your child--could it?"

Phoebe started to her feet, in a state of fury. "Do you hear that?" she cried, appealing to Jervy. "How dare you bring me here to be insulted by that drunken wretch?"

Mrs. Sowler rose, on her side. The old savage snatched up her empty glass--intending to throw it at Phoebe. At the same moment, the ready Jervy caught her by the arm, dragged her out of the room, and shut the door behind them.

There was a bench on the landing outside. He pushed Mrs. Sowler down on the bench with one hand, and took Phoebe's purse out of his pocket with the other. "Here's a pound," he said, "towards the recovery of that debt of yours. Go home quietly, and meet me at the door of this house tomorrow evening, at six."

Mrs. Sowler, opening her lips to protest, suddenly closed them again, fascinated by the sight of the gold. She clutched the coin, and became friendly and familiar in a moment. "Help me downstairs, deary," she said, "and put me into a cab. I'm afraid of the night air."

"One word more, before I put you into a cab," said Jervy. "What did you really do with the child?"

Mrs. Sowler grinned hideously, and whispered her reply, in the strictest confidence.

"Sold her to Moll Davies, for five-and-sixpence."

"Who was Moll Davis?"

"A cadger."

"And you really know nothing now of Moll Davis or the child?"

"Should I want you to help me if I did?" Mrs. Sowler asked contemptuously. "They may be both dead and buried, for all I know to the contrary."

Jervy put her into the cab, without further delay. "Now for the other one!" he said to himself, as he hurried back to the private room.

CHAPTER 5

Some men would have found it no easy task to console Phoebe, under the circumstances. Jervy had the immense advantage of not feeling the slightest sympathy for her: he was in full command of his large resources of fluent assurance and ready flattery. In less than five minutes, Phoebe's tears were dried, and her lover had his arm round her waist again, in the character of a cherished and forgiven man.

"Now, my angel!" he said (Phoebe sighed tenderly; he had never called her his angel before), "tell me all about it in confidence. Only let me know the facts, and I shall see my way to protecting you against any annoyance from Mrs. Sowler in the future. You have made a very extraordinary discovery. Come closer to me, my dear girl. Did it happen in Farnaby's house?"

"I heard it in the kitchen," said Phoebe.

Jervy started. "Did any one else hear it?" he asked.

"No. They were all in the housekeeper's room, looking at the Indian curiosities which her son in Canada had sent to her. I had left my bird on the dresser--and I ran into the kitchen to put the cage in a safe place, being afraid of the cat. One of the swinging windows in the skylight was open; and I heard voices in the back room above, which is Mrs. Farnaby's room."

"Whose voices did you hear?"

"Mrs. Farnaby's voice, and Mr. Goldenheart's."

"Mrs. Farnaby?" Jervy repeated, in surprise. "Are you sure it was Mrs.?"

"Of course I am! Do you think I don't know that horrid woman's voice? She was saying a most extraordinary thing when I first heard her--she was asking if there was anything wrong in showing her naked foot. And a man answered, and the voice was Mr. Goldenheart's. You would have felt curious to hear more, if you had been in my place, wouldn't you? I opened the second window in the kitchen, so as to make sure of not missing anything. And what do you think I heard her say?"

"You mean Mrs. Farnaby?"

"Yes. I heard her say, 'Look at my right foot--you see there's nothing the matter with it.' And then, after a while, she said, 'Look at my left foot--look between the third toe and the fourth.' Did you ever hear of such a audacious thing for a married woman to say to a young man?"

"Go on! go on! What did he say?"

"Nothing; I suppose he was looking at her foot."

"Her left foot?"

"Yes. Her left foot was nothing to be proud of, I can tell you! By her own account, she has some horrid deformity in it, between the third toe and the fourth. No; I didn't hear her say what the deformity was. I only heard her call it so--and she said her 'poor darling' was born with the same fault, and that was her defence against being imposed upon by rogues--I remember the very words--'in the past days when I employed people to find her.' Yes! she said 'her.' I heard it plainly. And she talked afterwards of her 'poor lost daughter', who might be still living somewhere, and wondering who her mother was. Naturally enough, when I heard that hateful old drunkard talking about a child given to her by Mr. Farnaby, I put two and two together. Dear me, how strangely you look! What's wrong with you?"

"I'm only very much interested--that's all. But there's one thing I don't understand. What had Mr. Goldenheart to do with all this?"

"Didn't I tell you?"

"No."

"Well, then, I tell you now. Mrs. Farnaby is not only a heartless wretch, who turns a poor girl out of her situation, and refuses to give her a character--she's a fool besides. That precious exhibition of her nasty foot was to inform Mr. Goldenheart of something she wanted him to know. If he happened to meet with a girl, in his walks or his travels, and if he found that she had the same deformity in the same foot, then he might know for certain--"

"All right! I understand. But why Mr. Goldenheart?"

"Because she had a dream that Mr. Goldenheart had found the lost girl, and because she thought there was one chance in a hundred that her dream might come true! Did you ever hear of such a fool before? From what I could make out, I believe she actually cried about it. And that same woman turns

me into the street to be ruined, for all she knows or cares. Mind this! I would have kept her secret--it was no business of mine, after all--if she had behaved decently to me. As it is, I mean to be even with her; and what I heard down in the kitchen is more than enough to help me to it. I'll expose her somehow--I don't quite know how; but that will come with time. You will keep the secret, dear, I'm sure. We are soon to have all our secrets in common, when we are man and wife, ain't we? Why, you're not listening to me! What is the matter with you?"

Jervy suddenly looked up. His soft insinuating manner had vanished; he spoke roughly and impatiently.

"I want to know something. Has Farnaby's wife got money of her own?"

Phoebe's mind was still disturbed by the change in her lover. "You speak as if you were angry with me," she said.

Jervy recovered his insinuating tones, with some difficulty. "My dear girl, I love you! How can I be angry with you? You've set me thinking--and it bothers me a little, that's all. Do you happen to know if Mrs. Farnaby has got money of her own?"

Phoebe answered this time. "I've heard Miss Regina say that Mrs. Farnaby's father was a rich man," she said.

"What was his name?"

"Ronald."

"Do you know when he died?"

"No."

Jervy fell into thought again, biting his nails in great perplexity. After a moment or two, an idea came to him. "The tombstone will tell me!" he exclaimed, speaking to himself. He turned to Phoebe, before she could express her surprise, and asked if she knew where Mr. Ronald was buried.

"Yes," said Phoebe, "I've heard that. In Highgate cemetery. But why do you want to know?"

Jervy looked at his watch. "It's getting late," he said; "I'll see you safe home."

"But I want to know--"

"Put on your bonnet, and wait till we are out in the street."

Jervy paid the bill, with all needful remembrance of the waiter. He was generous, he was polite; but he was apparently in no hurry to favour Phoebe with the explanation that he had promised. They had left the tavern for some minutes--and he was still rude enough to remain absorbed in his own reflections. Phoebe's patience gave way.

"I have told you everything," she said reproachfully; "I don't call it fair dealing to keep me in the dark after that."

He roused himself directly. "My dear girl, you entirely mistake me!"

The reply was as ready as usual; but it was spoken rather absently. Only that moment, he had decided on informing Phoebe (to some extent, at least) of the purpose which he was then meditating. He would infinitely have preferred using Mrs. Sowler as his sole accomplice. But he knew the girl too well to run that risk. If he refused to satisfy her curiosity, she would be deterred by no scruples of delicacy from privately watching him; and she might say something (either by word of month or by writing) to the kind young mistress who was in correspondence with her, which might lead to disastrous results. It was of the last importance to him, so far to associate Phoebe with his projected enterprise, as to give her an interest of her own in keeping his secrets.

"I have not the least wish," he resumed, "to conceal any thing from you. So far as I can see my way at present, you shall see it too." Reserving in this dexterous manner the freedom of lying, whenever he found it necessary to depart from the truth, he smiled encouragingly, and waited to be questioned.

Phoebe repeated the inquiry she had made at the tavern. "Why do you want to know where Mr. Ronald is buried?" she asked bluntly.

"Mr. Ronald's tombstone, my dear, will tell me the date of Mr. Ronald's death," Jervy rejoined. "When I have got the date, I shall go to a place near St. Paul's, called Doctors' Commons; I shall pay a shilling fee, and I shall have the privilege of looking at Mr. Ronald's will."

"And what good will that do you?"

"Very properly put, Phoebe! Even shillings are not to be wasted, in our position. But my shilling will buy two sixpennyworths of information. I shall find out what sum of money Mr. Ronald has left to his daughter; and I shall know for certain whether Mrs. Farnaby's husband has any power over it, or not."

"Well?" said Phoebe, not much interested so far--"and what then?"

Jervy looked about him. They were in a crowded thoroughfare at the time. He preserved a discreet silence, until they had arrived at the first turning which led down a quiet street.

"What I have to tell you," he said, "must not be accidentally heard by anybody. Here, my dear, we are all but out of the world--and here I can speak to you safely. I promise you two good things. You shall bring Mrs. Farnaby to that day of reckoning; and we will find money enough to marry on comfortably as soon as you like."

Phoebe's languid interest in the subject began to revive: she insisted on having a clearer explanation than this. "Do you mean to get the money out of Mr. Farnaby?" she inquired.

"I will have nothing to do with Mr. Farnaby--unless I find that his wife's money is not at her own disposal. What you heard in the kitchen has altered all my plans. Wait a minute--and you will see what I am driving at. How much do you think Mrs. Farnaby would give me, if I found that lost daughter of hers?"

Phoebe suddenly stood still, and looked at the sordid scoundrel who was tempting her in blank amazement.

"But nobody knows where the daughter is," she objected.

"You and I know that the daughter has a deformity in her left foot," Jervy replied; "and you and I know exactly in what part of the foot it is. There's not only money to be made out of that knowledge--but money made easily, without the slightest risk. Suppose I managed the matter by correspondence, without appearing in it personally? Don't you think Mrs. Farnaby would open her purse beforehand, if I mentioned the exact position of that little deformity, as a proof that I was to be depended on?"

Phoebe was unable, or unwilling, to draw the obvious conclusion, even now.

"But, what would you do," she said, "when Mrs. Farnaby insisted on seeing her daughter?"

There was something in the girl's tone--half fearful, half suspicious--which warned Jervy that he was treading on dangerous ground. He knew perfectly well what he proposed to do, in the case that had been so plainly put him. It was the simplest thing in the world. He had only to make an appointment with Mrs. Farnaby for a meeting on a future day, and to take to flight in the interval; leaving a polite note behind him to say that it was all a mistake, and that he regretted being too poor to return the money. Having thus far acknowledged the design he had in view, could he still venture on answering his companion without reserve? Phoebe was vain, Phoebe was vindictive; and, more promising still, Phoebe was a fool. But she was not yet capable of consenting to an act of the vilest infamy, in cold blood. Jervy looked at her--and saw that the foreseen necessity for lying had come at last.

"That's just the difficulty," he said; "that's just where I don't see my way plainly yet. Can you advise me?"

Phoebe started, and drew back from him. "I advise you!" she exclaimed. "It frightens me to think of it. If you make her believe she is going to see her daughter, and if she finds out that you have robbed and deceived her, I can tell you this--with her furious temper--you would drive her mad."

Jervy's reply was a model of well-acted indignation. "Don't talk of anything so horrible," he exclaimed. "If you believe me capable of such cruelty as that, go to Mrs. Farnaby, and warn her at once!"

"It's too bad to speak to me in that way!" Phoebe rejoined, with the frank impetuosity of an offended woman. "You know I would die, rather than get you into trouble. Beg my pardon directly--or I won't walk another step with you!"

Jervy made the necessary apologies, with all possible humility. He had gained his end--he could now postpone any further discussion of the subject, without arousing Phoebe's distrust. "Let us say no more about it, for the present," he suggested; "we will think it over, and talk of pleasanter things in the mean time. Kiss me, my dear girl; there's nobody looking."

So he made peace with his sweetheart, and secured to himself, at the same time, the full liberty of future action of which he stood in need. If Phoebe asked any more questions, the necessary answer was obvious to the meanest capacity. He had merely to say, "The matter is beset with

difficulties which I didn't see at first--I have given it up."

Their nearest way back to Phoebe's lodgings took them through the street which led to the Hampden Institution. Passing along the opposite side of the road, they saw the private door opened. Two men stepped out. A third man, inside, called after one of them. "Mr. Goldenheart! you have left the statement of receipts in the waiting-room." "Never mind," Amelius answered; "the night's receipts are so small that I would rather not be reminded of them again." "In my country," a third voice remarked, "if he had lectured as he has lectured to-night, I reckon I'd have given him three hundred dollars, gold (sixty pounds, English currency), and have made my own profit by the transaction. The British nation has lost its taste, sir, for intellectual recreation. I wish you good evening."

Jervy hurried Phoebe out of the way, just as the two gentlemen were crossing the street. He had not forgotten events at Tadmor--and he was by no means eager to renew his former acquaintance with Amelius. CHAPTER 6

Rufus and his young friend walked together silently as far as a large square. Here they stopped, having reached the point at which it was necessary to take different directions on their way home.

"I've a word of advice, my son, for your private ear," said the New Englander. "The barometer behind your waistcoat points to a downhearted state of the moral atmosphere. Come along to home with me--you want a whisky cocktail badly."

"No, thank you, my dear fellow," Amelius answered a little sadly. "I own I'm downhearted, as you say. You see, I expected this lecture to be a new opening for me. Personally, as you know, I don't care two straws about money. But my marriage depends on my adding to my income; and the first attempt I've made to do it has ended in a total failure. I'm all abroad again, when I look to the future--and I'm afraid I'm fool enough to let it weigh on my spirits. No, the cocktail isn't the right remedy for me. I don't get the exercise and fresh air, here, that I used to get at Tadmor. My head burns after all that talking to-night. A good long walk will put me right, and nothing else will."

Rufus at once offered to accompany him. Amelius shook his head. "Did you ever walk a mile in your life, when you could ride?" he asked good-humouredly. "I mean to be on my legs for four or five hours; I should only have to send you home in a cab. Thank you, old fellow, for the brotherly interest you take in me. I'll breakfast with you to-morrow, at your hotel.

Good night."

Some curious prevision of evil seemed to trouble the mind of the good New Englander. He held Amelius fast by the hand: he said, very earnestly, "It goes against the grit with me to see you wandering off by yourself at this time of night--it does, I tell you! Do me a favour for once, my bright boy--go right away to bed."

Amelius laughed, and released his hand. "I shouldn't sleep, if I did go to bed. Breakfast to-morrow, at ten o'clock. Goodnight, again!"

He started on his walk, at a pace which set pursuit on the part of Rufus at defiance. The American stood watching him, until he was lost to sight in the darkness. "What a grip that young fellow has got on me, in no more than a few months!" Rufus thought, as he slowly turned away in the direction of his hotel. "Lord send the poor boy may keep clear of mischief this night!"

Meanwhile, Amelius walked on swiftly, straight before him, careless in what direction he turned his steps, so long as he felt the cool air and kept moving.

His thoughts were not at first occupied with the doubtful question of his marriage; the lecture was still the uppermost subject in his mind. He had reserved for the conclusion of his address the justification of his view of the future, afforded by the widespread and frightful poverty among the millions of the population of London alone. On this melancholy theme he had spoken with the eloquence of true feeling, and had produced a strong impression, even on those members of the audience who were most resolutely opposed to the opinions which he advocated. Without any undue exercise of self-esteem, he could look back on the close of his lecture with the conviction that he had really done justice to himself and to his cause. The retrospect of the public discussion that had followed failed to give him the same pleasure. His warm temper, his vehemently sincere belief in the truth of his own convictions, placed him at a serious disadvantage towards the more self-restrained speakers (all older than himself) who rose, one after another, to combat his views. More than once he had lost his temper, and had been obliged to make his apologies. More than once he had been indebted to the ready help of Rufus, who had taken part in the battle of words, with the generous purpose of covering his retreat. "No!" he thought to himself, with bitter humility, "I'm not fit for public discussions. If they put me into Parliament tomorrow, I should only get called to order and do nothing."

He reached the bank of the Thames, at the eastward end of the Strand.

Walking straight on, as absently as ever, he crossed Waterloo Bridge, and followed the broad street that lay before him on the other side. He was thinking of the future again: Regina was in his mind now. The one prospect that he could see of a tranquil and happy life--with duties as well as pleasures; duties that might rouse him to find the vocation for which he was fit--was the prospect of his marriage. What was the obstacle that stood in his way? The vile obstacle of money; the contemptible spirit of ostentation which forbade him to live humbly on his own sufficient little income, and insisted that he should purchase domestic happiness at the price of the tawdry splendour of a rich tradesman and his friends. And Regina, who was free to follow her own better impulses--Regina, whose heart acknowledged him as its master--bowed before the golden image which was the tutelary deity of her uncle's household, and said resignedly, Love must wait!

Still walking blindly on, he was roused on a sudden to a sense of passing events. Crossing a side-street at the moment, a man caught him roughly by the arm, and saved him from being run over. The man had a broom in his hand; he was a crossing-sweeper. "I think I've earned my penny, sir!" he said.

Amelius gave him half-a-crown. The man shouldered his broom, and tossed up the money, in a transport of delight. "Here's something to go home with!" he cried, as he caught the half-crown again.

"Have you got a family at home?" Amelius asked.

"Only one, sir," said the man. "The others are all dead. She's as good a girl and as pretty a girl as ever put on a petticoat--though I say it that shouldn't. Thank you kindly, sir. Good night!"

Amelius looked after the poor fellow, happy at least for that night! "If I had only been lucky enough to fall in love with the crossing-sweeper's daughter," he thought bitterly, "she would have married me when I asked her."

He looked along the street. It curved away in the distance, with no visible limit to it. Arrived at the next side-street on his left, Amelius turned down it, weary of walking longer in the same direction. Whither it might lead him he neither knew nor cared. In his present humour it was a pleasurable sensation to feel himself lost in London.

The short street suddenly widened; a blaze of flaring gaslight dazzled his eyes; he heard all round him the shouting of innumerable voices. For the first time since he had been in London, he found himself in one of the street-

markets of the poor.

On either side of the road, the barrows of the costermongers--the wandering tradesmen of the highway--were drawn up in rows; and every man was advertising his wares, by means of the cheap publicity of his own voice. Fish and vegetables; pottery and writing-paper; looking-glasses, saucepans, and coloured prints--all appealed together to the scantily filled purses of the crowds who thronged the pavement. One lusty vagabond stood up in a rickety donkey-cart, knee-deep in apples, selling a great wooden measure full for a penny, and yelling louder than all the rest. "Never was such apples sold in the public streets before! Sweet as flowers, and sound as a bell. Who says the poor ain't looked after," cried the fellow, with ferocious irony, "when they can have such apple-sauce as this to their loin of pork? Here's nobby apples; here's a penn'orth for your money. Sold again! Hullo, you! you look hungry. Catch! there's an apple for nothing, just to taste. Be in time, be in time before they're all sold!" Amelius moved forward a few steps, and was half deafened by rival butchers, shouting, "Buy, buy, buy!" to audiences of ragged women, who fingered the meat doubtfully, with longing eyes. A little farther--and there was a blind man selling staylaces, and singing a Psalm; and, beyond him again, a broken-down soldier playing "God save the Queen" on a tin flageolet. The one silent person in this sordid carnival was a Lascar beggar, with a printed placard round his neck, addressed to "The Charitable Public." He held a tallow candle to illuminate the copious narrative of his misfortunes; and the one reader he obtained was a fat man, who scratched his head, and remarked to Amelius that he didn't like foreigners. Starving boys and girls lurked among the costermongers' barrows, and begged piteously on pretence of selling cigar-lights and comic songs. Furious women stood at the doors of public-houses, and railed on their drunken husbands for spending the house-money in gin. A thicker crowd, towards the middle of the street, poured in and out at the door of a cookshop. Here the people presented a less terrible spectacle--they were even touching to see. These were the patient poor, who bought hot morsels of sheep's heart and liver at a penny an ounce, with lamentable little mouthfuls of peas-pudding, greens, and potatoes at a halfpenny each. Pale children in corners supped on penny basins of soup, and looked with hungry admiration at their enviable neighbours who could afford to buy stewed eels for twopence. Everywhere there was the same noble resignation to their hard fate, in old and young alike. No impatience, no complaints. In this wretched place, the language of true gratitude was still to be heard, thanking the good-natured cook for a little spoonful of gravy thrown in for nothing--and here, humble mercy that had its one superfluous halfpenny to spare gave that halfpenny to utter destitution, and gave it with right good-will. Amelius spent all his shillings and sixpences, in doubling and trebling the poor little pennyworths

of food--and left the place with tears in his eyes.

He was near the end of the street by this time. The sight of the misery about him, and the sense of his own utter inability to remedy it, weighed heavily on his spirits. He thought of the peaceful and prosperous life at Tadmor. Were his happy brethren of the Community and these miserable people about him creatures of the same all-merciful God? The terrible doubts which come to all thinking men--the doubts which are not to be stifled by crying "Oh, fie!" in a pulpit--rose darkly in his mind. He quickened his pace. "Let me let out of it," he said to himself, "let me get out of it!"