BOOK THE EIGHTH.

THE CAPITOL AND THINGS AROUND IT.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS OF MAJESTIC MATTERS.

Irresistible Fate ever carrying him forward, which had now for so many hours showered its surprises on Gwynplaine, and which had transported him to Windsor, transferred him again to London. Visionary realities succeeded each other without a moment's intermission. He could not escape from their influence. Freed from one he met another. He had scarcely time to breathe. Any one who has seen a juggler throwing and catching balls can judge the nature of fate. Those rising and falling projectiles are like men tossed in the hands of Destiny--projectiles and playthings.

On the evening of the same day, Gwynplaine was an actor in an extraordinary scene. He was seated on a bench covered with fleurs-de-lis; over his silken clothes he wore a robe of scarlet velvet, lined with white silk, with a cape of ermine, and on his shoulders two

bands of ermine embroidered with gold. Around him were men of all ages, young and old, seated like him on benches covered with fleurs-de-lis, and dressed like him in ermine and purple. In front of him other men were kneeling, clothed in black silk gowns. Some of them were writing; opposite, and a short distance from him, he observed steps, a raised platform, a dais, a large escutcheon glittering between a lion and a unicorn, and at the top of the steps, on the platform under the dais, resting against the escutcheon, was a gilded chair with a crown over it. This was a throne--the throne of Great Britain.

Gwynplaine, himself a peer of England, was in the House of Lords. How Gwynplaine's introduction to the House of Lords came about, we will now explain. Throughout the day, from morning to night, from Windsor to London, from Corleone Lodge to Westminster Hall, he had step by step mounted higher in the social grade. At each step he grew giddier. He had been conveyed from Windsor in a royal carriage with a peer's escort. There is not much difference between a guard of honour and a prisoner's. On that day, travellers on the London and Windsor road saw a galloping cavalcade of gentlemen pensioners of her Majesty's household escorting two carriages drawn at a rapid pace. In the first carriage sat the Usher of the Black Rod, his wand in his hand. In the second was to be seen a large hat with white plumes, throwing into shadow and hiding the face underneath it. Who was it who was thus being hurried on--a prince, a prisoner? It was Gwynplaine.

It looked as if they were conducting some one to the Tower, unless, indeed, they were escorting him to the House of Lords. The queen had

done things well. As it was for her future brother-in-law, she had provided an escort from her own household. The officer of the Usher of the Black Rod rode on horseback at the head of the cavalcade. The Usher of the Black Rod carried, on a cushion placed on a seat of the carriage, a black portfolio stamped with the royal crown. At Brentford, the last relay before London, the carriages and escort halted. A four-horse carriage of tortoise-shell, with two postilions, a coachman in a wig, and four footmen, was in waiting. The wheels, steps, springs, pole, and all the fittings of this carriage were gilt. The horses' harness was of silver. This state coach was of an ancient and extraordinary shape, and would have been distinguished by its grandeur among the fifty-one celebrated carriages of which Roubo has left us drawings.

The Usher of the Black Rod and his officer alighted. The latter, having lifted the cushion, on which rested the royal portfolio, from the seat in the postchaise, carried it on outstretched hands, and stood behind the Usher. He first opened the door of the empty carriage, then the door of that occupied by Gwynplaine, and, with downcast eyes, respectfully invited him to descend. Gwynplaine left the chaise, and took his seat in the carriage. The Usher carrying the rod, and the officer supporting the cushion, followed, and took their places on the low front seat provided for pages in old state coaches. The inside of the carriage was lined with white satin trimmed with Binche silk, with tufts and tassels of silver. The roof was painted with armorial bearings. The postilions of the chaises they were leaving were dressed in the royal livery. The attendants of the carriage they now entered wore a different but very magnificent livery.

Gwynplaine, in spite of his bewildered state, in which he felt quite overcome, remarked the gorgeously-attired footmen, and asked the Usher of the Black Rod,--

"Whose livery is that?"

He answered,--

"Yours, my lord."

The House of Lords was to sit that evening. Curia erat serena, run the old records. In England parliamentary work is by preference undertaken at night. It once happened that Sheridan began a speech at midnight and finished it at sunrise.

The two postchaises returned to Windsor. Gwynplaine's carriage set out for London. This ornamented four-horse carriage proceeded at a walk from Brentford to London, as befitted the dignity of the coachman. Gwynplaine's servitude to ceremony was beginning in the shape of his solemn-looking coachman. The delay was, moreover, apparently prearranged; and we shall see presently its probable motive.

Night was falling, though it was not quite dark, when the carriage stopped at the King's Gate, a large sunken door between two turrets connecting Whitehall with Westminster. The escort of gentlemen pensioners formed a circle around the carriage. A footman jumped down

from behind it and opened the door. The Usher of the Black Rod, followed by the officer carrying the cushion, got out of the carriage, and addressed Gwynplaine.

"My lord, be pleased to alight. I beg your lordship to keep your hat on."

Gwynplaine wore under his travelling cloak the suit of black silk, which he had not changed since the previous evening. He had no sword. He left his cloak in the carriage. Under the arched way of the King's Gate there was a small side door raised some few steps above the road. In ceremonial processions the greatest personage never walks first.

The Usher of the Black Rod, followed by his officer, walked first; Gwynplaine followed. They ascended the steps, and entered by the side door. Presently they were in a wide, circular room, with a pillar in the centre, the lower part of a turret. The room, being on the ground floor, was lighted by narrow windows in the pointed arches, which served but to make darkness visible. Twilight often lends solemnity to a scene. Obscurity is in itself majestic.

In this room, thirteen men, disposed in ranks, were standing--three in the front row, six in the second row, and four behind. In the front row one wore a crimson velvet gown; the other two, gowns of the same colour, but of satin. All three had the arms of England embroidered on their shoulders. The second rank wore tunics of white silk, each one having a different coat of arms emblazoned in front. The last row were clad in

black silk, and were thus distinguished. The first wore a blue cape. The second had a scarlet St. George embroidered in front. The third, two embroidered crimson crosses, in front and behind. The fourth had a collar of black sable fur. All were uncovered, wore wigs, and carried swords. Their faces were scarcely visible in the dim light, neither could they see Gwynplaine's face.

The Usher of the Black Rod, raising his wand, said,--

"My Lord Fermain Clancharlie, Baron Clancharlie and Hunkerville, I, the Usher of the Black Rod, first officer of the presence chamber, hand your lordship over to Garter King-at-Arms."

The person clothed in velvet, quitting his place in the ranks, bowed to the ground before Gwynplaine, and said,--

"My Lord Fermain Clancharlie, I am Garter, Principal King-at-Arms of England. I am the officer appointed and installed by his grace the Duke of Norfolk, hereditary Earl Marshal. I have sworn obedience to the king, peers, and knights of the garter. The day of my installation, when the Earl Marshal of England anointed me by pouring a goblet of wine on my head, I solemnly promised to be attentive to the nobility; to avoid bad company; to excuse, rather than accuse, gentlefolks; and to assist widows and virgins. It is I who have the charge of arranging the funeral ceremonies of peers, and the supervision of their armorial bearings. I place myself at the orders of your lordship."

The first of those wearing satin tunics, having bowed deeply, said,--

"My lord, I am Clarenceaux, Second King-at-Arms of England. I am the officer who arranges the obsequies of nobles below the rank of peers. I am at your lordship's disposal."

The other wearer of the satin tunic bowed and spoke thus,--

"My lord, I am Norroy, Third King-at-Arms of England. Command me."

The second row, erect and without bowing, advanced a pace. The right-hand man said,--

"My lord, we are the six Dukes-at-Arms of England. I am York."

Then each of the heralds, or Dukes-at-Arms, speaking in turn, proclaimed his title.

"I am Lancaster."

"I am Richmond."

"I am Chester."

"I am Somerset."

"I am Windsor."

The coats of arms embroidered on their breasts were those of the counties and towns from which they took their names.

The third rank, dressed in black, remained silent. Garter King-at-Arms, pointing them out to Gwynplaine, said,--

"My lord, these are the four Pursuivants-at-Arms. Blue Mantle."

The man with the blue cape bowed.

"Rouge Dragon."

He with the St. George inclined his head.

"Rouge Croix."

He with the scarlet crosses saluted.

"Portcullis."

He with the sable fur collar made his obeisance.

On a sign from the King-at-Arms, the first of the pursuivants, Blue Mantle, stepped forward and received from the officer of the Usher the cushion of silver cloth and crown-emblazoned portfolio. And the King-at-Arms said to the Usher of the Black Rod,--

"Proceed; I leave in your hands the introduction of his lordship!"

The observance of these customs, and also of others which will now be described, were the old ceremonies in use prior to the time of Henry VIII., and which Anne for some time attempted to revive. There is nothing like it in existence now. Nevertheless, the House of Lords thinks that it is unchangeable; and, if Conservatism exists anywhere, it is there.

It changes, nevertheless. E pur si muove. For instance, what has become of the may-pole, which the citizens of London erected on the 1st of May, when the peers went down to the House? The last one was erected in 1713. Since then the may-pole has disappeared. Disuse.

Outwardly, unchangeable; inwardly, mutable. Take, for example, the title of Albemarle. It sounds eternal. Yet it has been through six different families--Odo, Mandeville, Bethune, Plantagenet, Beauchamp, Monck. Under the title of Leicester five different names have been merged--Beaumont, Breose, Dudley, Sydney, Coke. Under Lincoln, six; under Pembroke, seven. The families change, under unchanging titles. A superficial historian believes in immutability. In reality it does not exist. Man can never be more than a wave; humanity is the ocean.

Aristocracy is proud of what women consider a reproach--age! Yet both cherish the same illusion, that they do not change. It is probable the House of Lords will not recognize itself in the foregoing description,

nor yet in that which follows, thus resembling the once pretty woman, who objects to having any wrinkles. The mirror is ever a scapegoat, yet its truths cannot be contested. To portray exactly, constitutes the duty of a historian. The King-at-Arms, turning to Gwynplaine, said,--

"Be pleased to follow me, my lord." And added, "You will be saluted. Your lordship, in returning the salute, will be pleased merely to raise the brim of your hat."

They moved off, in procession, towards a door at the far side of the room. The Usher of the Black Rod walked in front; then Blue Mantle, carrying the cushion; then the King-at-Arms; and after him came Gwynplaine, wearing his hat. The rest, kings-at-arms, heralds, and pursuivants, remained in the circular room. Gwynplaine, preceded by the Usher of the Black Rod, and escorted by the King-at-Arms, passed from room to room, in a direction which it would now be impossible to trace, the old Houses of Parliament having been pulled down. Amongst others, he crossed that Gothic state chamber in which took place the last meeting of James II. and Monmouth, and whose walls witnessed the useless debasement of the cowardly nephew at the feet of his vindictive uncle. On the walls of this chamber hung, in chronological order, nine fell-length portraits of former peers, with their dates--Lord Nansladron, 1305; Lord Baliol, 1306; Lord Benestede, 1314; Lord Cantilupe, 1356; Lord Montbegon, 1357; Lord Tibotot, 1373; Lord Zouch of Codnor, 1615; Lord Bella-Aqua, with no date; Lord Harren and Surrey, Count of Blois, also without date.

It being now dark, lamps were burning at intervals in the galleries. Brass chandeliers, with wax candles, illuminated the rooms, lighting them like the side aisles of a church. None but officials were present. In one room, which the procession crossed, stood, with heads respectfully lowered, the four clerks of the signet, and the Clerk of the Council. In another room stood the distinguished Knight Banneret, Philip Sydenham of Brympton in Somersetshire. The Knight Banneret is a title conferred in time of war, under the unfurled royal standard. In another room was the senior baronet of England, Sir Edmund Bacon of Suffolk, heir of Sir Nicholas Bacon, styled, Primus baronetorum Anglicæ. Behind Sir Edmund was an armour-bearer with an arquebus, and an esquire carrying the arms of Ulster, the baronets being the hereditary defenders of the province of Ulster in Ireland. In another room was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his four accountants, and the two deputies of the Lord Chamberlain, appointed to cleave the tallies.[21]

At the entrance of a corridor covered with matting, which was the communication between the Lower and the Upper House, Gwynplaine was saluted by Sir Thomas Mansell of Margam, Comptroller of the Queen's Household and Member for Glamorgan; and at the exit from the corridor by a deputation of one for every two of the Barons of the Cinque Ports, four on the right and four on the left, the Cinque Ports being eight in number. William Hastings did obeisance for Hastings; Matthew Aylmor, for Dover; Josias Burchett, for Sandwich; Sir Philip Boteler, for Hythe; John Brewer, for New Rumney; Edward Southwell, for the town of Rye; James Hayes, for Winchelsea; George Nailor, for Seaford. As Gwynplaine

was about to return the salute, the King-at-Arms reminded him in a low voice of the etiquette, "Only the brim of your hat, my lord." Gwynplaine did as directed. He now entered the so-called Painted Chamber, in which there was no painting, except a few of saints, and amongst them St. Edward, in the high arches of the long and deep-pointed windows, which were divided by what formed the ceiling of Westminster Hall and the floor of the Painted Chamber. On the far side of the wooden barrier which divided the room from end to end, stood the three Secretaries of State, men of mark. The functions of the first of these officials comprised the supervision of all affairs relating to the south of England, Ireland, the Colonies, France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey. The second had charge of the north of England, and watched affairs in the Low Countries, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and Russia. The third, a Scot, had charge of Scotland. The two first-mentioned were English, one of them being the Honourable Robert Harley, Member for the borough of New Radnor. A Scotch member, Mungo Graham, Esquire, a relation of the Duke of Montrose, was present. All bowed, without speaking, to Gwynplaine, who returned the salute by touching his hat. The barrier-keeper lifted the wooden arm which, pivoting on a hinge, formed the entrance to the far side of the Painted Chamber, where stood the long table, covered with green cloth, reserved for peers. A branch of lighted candles stood on the table. Gwynplaine, preceded by the Usher of the Black Rod, Garter King-at-Arms, and Blue Mantle, penetrated into this privileged compartment. The barrier-keeper closed the opening immediately Gwynplaine had passed. The King-at-Arms, having entered the precincts of the privileged compartment, halted. The Painted Chamber was a spacious apartment. At the farther end, upright,

beneath the royal escutcheon which was placed between the two windows, stood two old men, in red velvet robes, with two rows of ermine trimmed with gold lace on their shoulders, and wearing wigs, and hats with white plumes. Through the openings of their robes might be detected silk garments and sword hilts. Motionless behind them stood a man dressed in black silk, holding on high a great mace of gold surmounted by a crowned lion. It was the Mace-bearer of the Peers of England. The lion is their crest. Et les Lions ce sont les Barons et li Per, runs the manuscript chronicle of Bertrand Duguesclin.

The King-at-Arms pointed out the two persons in velvet, and whispered to Gwynplaine,--

"My lord, these are your equals. Be pleased to return their salute exactly as they make it. These two peers are barons, and have been named by the Lord Chancellor as your sponsors. They are very old, and almost blind. They will, themselves, introduce you to the House of Lords. The first is Charles Mildmay, Lord Fitzwalter, sixth on the roll of barons; the second is Augustus Arundel, Lord Arundel of Trerice, thirty-eighth on the roll of barons." The King-at-Arms having advanced a step towards the two old men, proclaimed "Fermain Clancharlie, Baron Clancharlie, Baron Hunkerville, Marquis of Corleone in Sicily, greets your lordships!" The two peers raised their hats to the full extent of the arm, and then replaced them. Gwynplaine did the same. The Usher of the Black Rod stepped forward, followed by Blue Mantle and Garter King at-Arms. The Mace-bearer took up his post in front of Gwynplaine, the two peers at his side, Lord Fitzwalter on the right, and Lord Arundel of

Trerice on the left. Lord Arundel, the elder of the two, was very feeble. He died the following year, bequeathing to his grandson John, a minor, the title which became extinct in 1768. The procession, leaving the Painted Chamber, entered a gallery in which were rows of pilasters, and between the spaces were sentinels, alternately pike-men of England and halberdiers of Scotland. The Scotch halberdiers were magnificent kilted soldiers, worthy to encounter later on at Fontenoy the French cavalry, and the royal cuirassiers, whom their colonel thus addressed: "Messieurs les maitres, assurez vos chapeaux. Nous allons avoir l'honneur de charger." The captain of these soldiers saluted Gwynplaine, and the peers, his sponsors, with their swords. The men saluted with their pikes and halberds.

At the end of the gallery shone a large door, so magnificent that its two folds seemed to be masses of gold. On each side of the door there stood, upright and motionless, men who were called doorkeepers. Just before you came to this door, the gallery widened out into a circular space. In this space was an armchair with an immense back, and on it, judging by his wig and from the amplitude of his robes, was a distinguished person. It was William Cowper, Lord Chancellor of England. To be able to cap a royal infirmity with a similar one has its advantages. William Cowper was short-sighted. Anne had also defective sight, but in a lesser degree. The near-sightedness of William Cowper found favour in the eyes of the short-sighted queen, and induced her to appoint him Lord Chancellor, and Keeper of the Royal Conscience. William Cowper's upper lip was thin, and his lower one thick--a sign of semi-good-nature.

This circular space was lighted by a lamp hung from the ceiling. The Lord Chancellor was sitting gravely in his large armchair; at his right was the Clerk of the Crown, and at his left the Clerk of the Parliaments.

Each of the clerks had before him an open register and an inkhorn.

Behind the Lord Chancellor was his mace-bearer, holding the mace with the crown on the top, besides the train-bearer and purse-bearer, in large wigs.

All these officers are still in existence. On a little stand, near the woolsack, was a sword, with a gold hilt and sheath, and belt of crimson velvet.

Behind the Clerk of the Crown was an officer holding in his hands the coronation robe.

Behind the Clerk of the Parliaments another officer held a second robe, which was that of a peer.

The robes, both of scarlet velvet, lined with white silk, and having bands of ermine trimmed with gold lace over the shoulders, were similar, except that the ermine band was wider on the coronation robe.

The third officer, who was the librarian, carried on a square of

Flanders leather the red book, a little volume, bound in red morocco, containing a list of the peers and commons, besides a few blank leaves and a pencil, which it was the custom to present to each new member on his entering the House.

Gwynplaine, between the two peers, his sponsors, brought up the procession, which stopped before the woolsack.

The two peers, who introduced him, uncovered their heads, and Gwynplaine did likewise.

The King-at-Arms received from the hands of Blue Mantle the cushion of silver cloth, knelt down, and presented the black portfolio on the cushion to the Lord Chancellor.

The Lord Chancellor took the black portfolio, and handed it to the Clerk of the Parliament.

The Clerk received it ceremoniously, and then sat down.

The Clerk of the Parliament opened the portfolio, and arose.

The portfolio contained the two usual messages--the royal patent addressed to the House of Lords, and the writ of summons.

The Clerk read aloud these two messages, with respectful deliberation, standing.

The writ of summons, addressed to Fermain Lord Clancharlie, concluded with the accustomed formalities,--

"We strictly enjoin you, on the faith and allegiance that you owe, to come and take your place in person among the prelates and peers sitting in our Parliament at Westminster, for the purpose of giving your advice, in all honour and conscience, on the business of the kingdom and of the church."

The reading of the messages being concluded, the Lord Chancellor raised his voice,--

"The message of the Crown has been read. Lord Clancharlie, does your lordship renounce transubstantiation, adoration of saints, and the mass?"

Gwynplaine bowed.

"The test has been administered," said the Lord Chancellor.

And the Clerk of the Parliament resumed,--

"His lordship has taken the test."

The Lord Chancellor added,--

"My Lord Clancharlie, you can take your seat."

"So be it," said the two sponsors.

The King-at-Arms rose, took the sword from the stand, and buckled it round Gwynplaine's waist.

"Ce faict," says the old Norman charter, "le pair prend son espée, et monte aux hauts siéges, et assiste a l'audience."

Gwynplaine heard a voice behind him which said,--

"I array your lordship in a peer's robe."

At the same time, the officer who spoke to him, who was holding the robe, placed it on him, and tied the black strings of the ermine cape round his neck.

Gwynplaine, the scarlet robe on his shoulders, and the golden sword by his side, was attired like the peers on his right and left.

The librarian presented to him the red book, and put it in the pocket of his waistcoat.

The King-at-Arms murmured in his ear,--

"My lord, on entering, will bow to the royal chair."

The royal chair is the throne.

Meanwhile the two clerks were writing, each at his table--one on the register of the Crown, the other on the register of the House.

Then both--the Clerk of the Crown preceding the other--brought their books to the Lord Chancellor, who signed them. Having signed the two registers, the Lord Chancellor rose.

"Fermain Lord Clancharlie, Baron Clancharlie, Baron Hunkerville, Marquis of Corleone in Sicily, be you welcome among your peers, the lords spiritual and temporal of Great Britain."

Gwynplaine's sponsors touched his shoulder.

He turned round.

The folds of the great gilded door at the end of the gallery opened.

It was the door of the House of Lords.

Thirty-six hours only had elapsed since Gwynplaine, surrounded by a different procession, had entered the iron door of Southwark Jail.

What shadowy chimeras had passed, with terrible rapidity through his brain--chimeras which were hard facts; rapidity, which was a capture by

assault!

CHAPTER II.

IMPARTIALITY.

The creation of an equality with the king, called Peerage, was, in barbarous epochs, a useful fiction. This rudimentary political expedient produced in France and England different results. In France, the peer was a mock king; in England, a real prince--less grand than in France, but more genuine: we might say less, but worse.

Peerage was born in France; the date is uncertain--under Charlemagne, says the legend; under Robert le Sage, says history, and history is not more to be relied on than legend. Favin writes: "The King of France wished to attach to himself the great of his kingdom, by the magnificent title of peers, as if they were his equals."

Peerage soon thrust forth branches, and from France passed over to England.

The English peerage has been a great fact, and almost a mighty institution. It had for precedent the Saxon wittenagemote. The Danish

thane and the Norman vavassour commingled in the baron. Baron is the same as vir, which is translated into Spanish by varon, and which signifies, par excellence, "Man." As early as 1075, the barons made themselves felt by the king--and by what a king! By William the Conqueror. In 1086 they laid the foundation of feudality, and its basis was the "Doomsday Book." Under John Lackland came conflict. The French peerage took the high hand with Great Britain, and demanded that the king of England should appear at their bar. Great was the indignation of the English barons. At the coronation of Philip Augustus, the King of England, as Duke of Normandy, carried the first square banner, and the Duke of Guyenne the second. Against this king, a vassal of the foreigner, the War of the Barons burst forth. The barons imposed on the weak-minded King John Magna Charta, from which sprang the House of Lords. The pope took part with the king, and excommunicated the lords. The date was 1215, and the pope was Innocent III., who wrote the "Veni, Sancte Spiritus," and who sent to John Lackland the four cardinal virtues in the shape of four gold rings. The Lords persisted. The duel continued through many generations. Pembroke struggled. 1248 was the year of "the provisions of Oxford." Twenty-four barons limited the king's powers, discussed him, and called a knight from each county to take part in the widened breach. Here was the dawn of the Commons. Later on, the Lords added two citizens from each city, and two burgesses from each borough. It arose from this, that up to the time of Elizabeth the peers were judges of the validity of elections to the House of Commons. From their jurisdiction sprang the proverb that the members returned ought to be without the three P's--sine Prece, sine Pretio, sine Poculo. This did not obviate rotten boroughs. In 1293, the Court of

Peers in France had still the King of England under their jurisdiction; and Philippe le Bel cited Edward I. to appear before him. Edward I. was the king who ordered his son to boil him down after death, and to carry his bones to the wars. Under the follies of their kings the Lords felt the necessity of fortifying Parliament. They divided it into two chambers, the upper and the lower. The Lords arrogantly kept the supremacy. "If it happens that any member of the Commons should be so bold as to speak to the prejudice of the House of Lords, he is called to the bar of the House to be reprimanded, and, occasionally, to be sent to the Tower." There is the same distinction in voting. In the House of Lords they vote one by one, beginning with the junior, called the puisne baron. Each peer answers "Content," or "Non-content." In the Commons they vote together, by "Aye," or "No," in a crowd. The Commons accuse, the peers judge. The peers, in their disdain of figures, delegated to the Commons, who were to profit by it, the superintendence of the Exchequer--thus named, according to some, after the table-cover, which was like a chess-board; and according to others, from the drawers of the old safe, where was kept, behind an iron grating, the treasure of the kings of England. The "Year-Book" dates from the end of the thirteenth century. In the War of the Roses the weight of the Lords was thrown, now on the side of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, now on the side of Edmund, Duke of York. Wat Tyler, the Lollards, Warwick the King-maker, all that anarchy from which freedom is to spring, had for foundation, avowed or secret, the English feudal system. The Lords were usefully jealous of the Crown; for to be jealous is to be watchful. They circumscribed the royal initiative, diminished the category of cases of high treason, raised up pretended Richards against Henry IV., appointed

themselves arbitrators, judged the question of the three crowns between the Duke of York and Margaret of Anjou, and at need levied armies, and fought their battles of Shrewsbury, Tewkesbury, and St. Albans, sometimes winning, sometimes losing. Before this, in the thirteenth century, they had gained the battle of Lewes, and had driven from the kingdom the four brothers of the king, bastards of Queen Isabella by the Count de la Marche; all four usurers, who extorted money from Christians by means of the Jews; half princes, half sharpers--a thing common enough in more recent times, but not held in good odour in those days. Up to the fifteenth century the Norman Duke peeped out in the King of England, and the acts of Parliament were written in French. From the reign of Henry VII., by the will of the Lords, these were written in English. England, British under Uther Pendragon; Roman under Cæsar; Saxon under the Heptarchy; Danish under Harold; Norman after William; then became, thanks to the Lords, English. After that she became Anglican. To have one's religion at home is a great power. A foreign pope drags down the national life. A Mecca is an octopus, and devours it. In 1534, London bowed out Rome. The peerage adopted the reformed religion, and the Lords accepted Luther. Here we have the answer to the excommunication of 1215. It was agreeable to Henry VIII.; but, in other respects, the Lords were a trouble to him. As a bulldog to a bear, so was the House of Lords to Henry VIII. When Wolsey robbed the nation of Whitehall, and when Henry robbed Wolsey of it, who complained? Four lords--Darcie, of Chichester; Saint John of Bletsho; and (two Norman names) Mountjoie and Mounteagle. The king usurped. The peerage encroached. There is something in hereditary power which is incorruptible. Hence the insubordination of the Lords. Even in

Elizabeth's reign the barons were restless. From this resulted the tortures at Durham. Elizabeth was as a farthingale over an executioner's block. Elizabeth assembled Parliament as seldom as possible, and reduced the House of Lords to sixty-five members, amongst whom there was but one marquis (Winchester), and not a single duke. In France the kings felt the same jealousy and carried out the same elimination. Under Henry III. there were no more than eight dukedoms in the peerage, and it was to the great vexation of the king that the Baron de Mantes, the Baron de Courcy, the Baron de Coulommiers, the Baron de Chateauneuf-en-Thimerais, the Baron de la Fère-en-Lardenois, the Baron de Mortagne, and some others besides, maintained themselves as barons--peers of France. In England the crown saw the peerage diminish with pleasure. Under Anne, to quote but one example, the peerages become extinct since the twelfth century amounted to five hundred and sixty-five. The War of the Roses had begun the extermination of dukes, which the axe of Mary Tudor completed. This was, indeed, the decapitation of the nobility. To prune away the dukes was to cut off its head. Good policy, perhaps; but it is better to corrupt than to decapitate. James I. was of this opinion. He restored dukedoms. He made a duke of his favourite Villiers, who had made him a pig;[22] a transformation from the duke feudal to the duke courtier. This sowing was to bring forth a rank harvest: Charles II. was to make two of his mistresses duchesses--Barbara of Southampton, and Louise de la Querouel of Portsmouth. Under Anne there were to be twenty-five dukes, of whom three were to be foreigners, Cumberland, Cambridge, and Schomberg. Did this court policy, invented by James I., succeed? No. The House of Peers was irritated by the effort to shackle it by intrigue. It was irritated against James I., it was irritated

against Charles I., who, we may observe, may have had something to do with the death of his father, just as Marie de Medicis may have had something to do with the death of her husband. There was a rupture between Charles I. and the peerage. The lords who, under James I., had tried at their bar extortion, in the person of Bacon, under Charles I. tried treason, in the person of Stratford. They had condemned Bacon; they condemned Stratford. One had lost his honour, the other lost his life. Charles I. was first beheaded in the person of Stratford. The Lords lent their aid to the Commons. The king convokes Parliament to Oxford; the revolution convokes it to London. Forty-four peers side with the King, twenty-two with the Republic. From this combination of the people with the Lords arose the Bill of Rights--a sketch of the French Droits de l'homme, a vague shadow flung back from the depths of futurity by the revolution of France on the revolution of England.

Such were the services of the peerage. Involuntary ones, we admit, and dearly purchased, because the said peerage is a huge parasite. But considerable services, nevertheless.

The despotic work of Louis XI., of Richelieu, and of Louis XIV., the creation of a sultan, levelling taken for true equality, the bastinado given by the sceptre, the common abasement of the people, all these Turkish tricks in France the peers prevented in England. The aristocracy was a wall, banking up the king on one side, sheltering the people on the other. They redeemed their arrogance towards the people by their insolence towards the king. Simon, Earl of Leicester, said to Henry III., "King, thou hast lied!" The Lords curbed the crown, and grated

against their kings in the tenderest point, that of venery. Every lord, passing through a royal park, had the right to kill a deer: in the house of the king the peer was at home; in the Tower of London the scale of allowance for the king was no more than that for a peer--namely, twelve pounds sterling per week. This was the House of Lords' doing.

Yet more. We owe to it the deposition of kings. The Lords ousted John Lackland, degraded Edward II., deposed Richard II., broke the power of Henry VI., and made Cromwell a possibility. What a Louis XIV. there was in Charles I.! Thanks to Cromwell, it remained latent. By-the-bye, we may here observe that Cromwell himself, though no historian seems to have noticed the fact, aspired to the peerage. This was why he married Elizabeth Bouchier, descendant and heiress of a Cromwell, Lord Bouchier, whose peerage became extinct in 1471, and of a Bouchier, Lord Robesart, another peerage extinct in 1429. Carried on with the formidable increase of important events, he found the suppression of a king a shorter way to power than the recovery of a peerage. A ceremonial of the Lords, at times ominous, could reach even to the king. Two men-at-arms from the Tower, with their axes on their shoulders, between whom an accused peer stood at the bar of the house, might have been there in like attendance on the king as on any other nobleman. For five centuries the House of Lords acted on a system, and carried it out with determination. They had their days of idleness and weakness, as, for instance, that strange time when they allowed themselves to be seduced by the vessels loaded with cheeses, hams, and Greek wines sent them by Julius II. The English aristocracy was restless, haughty, ungovernable, watchful, and patriotically mistrustful. It was that aristocracy which, at the end of

the seventeenth century, by act the tenth of the year 1694, deprived the borough of Stockbridge, in Hampshire, of the right of sending members to Parliament, and forced the Commons to declare null the election for that borough, stained by papistical fraud. It imposed the test on James, Duke of York, and, on his refusal to take it, excluded him from the throne. He reigned, notwithstanding; but the Lords wound up by calling him to account and banishing him. That aristocracy has had, in its long duration, some instinct of progress. It has always given out a certain quantity of appreciable light, except now towards its end, which is at hand. Under James II. it maintained in the Lower House the proportion of three hundred and forty-six burgesses against ninety-two knights. The sixteen barons, by courtesy, of the Cinque Ports were more than counterbalanced by the fifty citizens of the twenty-five cities. Though corrupt and egotistic, that aristocracy was, in some instances, singularly impartial. It is harshly judged. History keeps all its compliments for the Commons. The justice of this is doubtful. We consider the part played by the Lords a very great one. Oligarchy is the independence of a barbarous state, but it is an independence. Take Poland, for instance, nominally a kingdom, really a republic. The peers of England held the throne in suspicion and guardianship. Time after time they have made their power more felt than that of the Commons. They gave check to the king. Thus, in that remarkable year, 1694, the Triennial Parliament Bill, rejected by the Commons, in consequence of the objections of William III., was passed by the Lords. William III., in his irritation, deprived the Earl of Bath of the governorship of Pendennis Castle, and Viscount Mordaunt of all his offices. The House of Lords was the republic of Venice in the heart of the royalty of England.

To reduce the king to a doge was its object; and in proportion as it decreased the power of the crown it increased that of the people. Royalty knew this, and hated the peerage. Each endeavoured to lessen the other. What was thus lost by each was proportionate profit to the people. Those two blind powers, monarchy and oligarchy, could not see that they were working for the benefit of a third, which was democracy. What a delight it was to the crown, in the last century, to be able to hang a peer, Lord Ferrers!

However, they hung him with a silken rope. How polite!

"They would not have hung a peer of France," the Duke of Richelieu haughtily remarked. Granted. They would have beheaded him. Still more polite!

Montmorency Tancarville signed himself peer of France and England; thus throwing the English peerage into the second rank. The peers of France were higher and less powerful, holding to rank more than to authority, and to precedence more than to domination. There was between them and the Lords that shade of difference which separates vanity from pride. With the peers of France, to take precedence of foreign princes, of Spanish grandees, of Venetian patricians; to see seated on the lower benches the Marshals of France, the Constable and the Admiral of France, were he even Comte de Toulouse and son of Louis XIV.; to draw a distinction between duchies in the male and female line; to maintain the proper distance between a simple comté, like Armagnac or Albret, and a comté pairie, like Evreux; to wear by right, at five-and-twenty, the

blue ribbon of the Golden Fleece; to counterbalance the Duke de la Tremoille, the most ancient peer of the court, with the Duke Uzès, the most ancient peer of the Parliament; to claim as many pages and horses to their carriages as an elector; to be called monseigneur by the first President; to discuss whether the Duke de Maine dates his peerage as the Comte d'Eu, from 1458; to cross the grand chamber diagonally, or by the side--such things were grave matters. Grave matters with the Lords were the Navigation Act, the Test Act, the enrolment of Europe in the service of England, the command of the sea, the expulsion of the Stuarts, war with France. On one side, etiquette above all; on the other, empire above all. The peers of England had the substance, the peers of France the shadow.

To conclude, the House of Lords was a starting-point; towards civilization this is an immense thing. It had the honour to found a nation. It was the first incarnation of the unity of the people: English resistance, that obscure but all-powerful force, was born in the House of Lords. The barons, by a series of acts of violence against royalty, have paved the way for its eventual downfall. The House of Lords at the present day is somewhat sad and astonished at what it has unwillingly and unintentionally done, all the more that it is irrevocable.

What are concessions? Restitutions;--and nations know it.

"I grant," says the king.

"I get back my own," says the people.

The House of Lords believed that it was creating the privileges of the peerage, and it has produced the rights of the citizen. That vulture, aristocracy, has hatched the eagle's egg of liberty.

And now the egg is broken, the eagle is soaring, the vulture dying.

Aristocracy is at its last gasp; England is growing up.

Still, let us be just towards the aristocracy. It entered the scale against royalty, and was its counterpoise. It was an obstacle to despotism. It was a barrier. Let us thank and bury it.

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD HALL.

Near Westminster Abbey was an old Norman palace which was burnt in the time of Henry VIII. Its wings were spared. In one of them Edward VI. placed the House of Lords, in the other the House of Commons. Neither the two wings nor the two chambers are now in existence. The whole has been rebuilt.

We have already said, and we must repeat, that there is no resemblance between the House of Lords of the present day and that of the past. In demolishing the ancient palace they somewhat demolished its ancient usages. The strokes of the pickaxe on the monument produce their counter-strokes on customs and charters. An old stone cannot fall without dragging down with it an old law. Place in a round room a parliament which has been hitherto held in a square room, and it will no longer be the same thing. A change in the shape of the shell changes the shape of the fish inside.

If you wish to preserve an old thing, human or divine, a code or a dogma, a nobility or a priesthood, never repair anything about it thoroughly, even its outside cover. Patch it up, nothing more. For instance, Jesuitism is a piece added to Catholicism. Treat edifices as you would treat institutions. Shadows should dwell in ruins. Worn-out

powers are uneasy in chambers freshly decorated. Ruined palaces accord best with institutions in rags. To attempt to describe the House of Lords of other days would be to attempt to describe the unknown. History is night. In history there is no second tier. That which is no longer on the stage immediately fades into obscurity. The scene is shifted, and all is at once forgotten. The past has a synonym, the unknown.

The peers of England sat as a court of justice in Westminster Hall, and as the higher legislative chamber in a chamber specially reserved for the purpose, called The House of Lords.

Besides the house of peers of England, which did not assemble as a court unless convoked by the crown, two great English tribunals, inferior to the house of peers, but superior to all other jurisdiction, sat in Westminster Hall. At the end of that hall they occupied adjoining compartments. The first was the Court of King's Bench, in which the king was supposed to preside; the second, the Court of Chancery, in which the Chancellor presided. The one was a court of justice, the other a court of mercy. It was the Chancellor who counselled the king to pardon; only rarely, though.

These two courts, which are still in existence, interpreted legislation, and reconstructed it somewhat, for the art of the judge is to carve the code into jurisprudence; a task from which equity results as it best may. Legislation was worked up and applied in the severity of the great hall of Westminster, the rafters of which were of chestnut wood, over which spiders could not spread their webs. There are enough of them in

all conscience in the laws.

To sit as a court and to sit as a chamber are two distinct things. This double function constitutes supreme power. The Long Parliament, which began in November 1640, felt the revolutionary necessity for this two-edged sword. So it declared that, as House of Lords, it possessed judicial as well as legislative power.

This double power has been, from time immemorial, vested in the House of Peers. We have just mentioned that as judges they occupied Westminster Hall; as legislators, they had another chamber. This other chamber, properly called the House of Lords, was oblong and narrow. All the light in it came from four windows in deep embrasures, which received their light through the roof, and a bull's-eye, composed of six panes with curtains, over the throne. At night there was no other light than twelve half candelabra, fastened to the wall. The chamber of Venice was darker still. A certain obscurity is pleasing to those owls of supreme power.

A high ceiling adorned with many-faced relievos and gilded cornices, circled over the chamber where the Lords assembled. The Commons had but a flat ceiling. There is a meaning in all monarchical buildings. At one end of the long chamber of the Lords was the door; at the other, opposite to it, the throne. A few paces from the door, the bar, a transverse barrier, and a sort of frontier, marked the spot where the people ended and the peerage began. To the right of the throne was a fireplace with emblazoned pinnacles, and two bas-reliefs of marble, representing, one, the victory of Cuthwolf over the Britons, in 572; the

other, the geometrical plan of the borough of Dunstable, which had four streets, parallel to the four quarters of the world. The throne was approached by three steps. It was called the royal chair. On the two walls, opposite each other, were displayed in successive pictures, on a huge piece of tapestry given to the Lords by Elizabeth, the adventures of the Armada, from the time of its leaving Spain until it was wrecked on the coasts of Great Britain. The great hulls of the ships were embroidered with threads of gold and silver, which had become blackened by time. Against this tapestry, cut at intervals by the candelabra fastened in the wall, were placed, to the right of the throne, three rows of benches for the bishops, and to the left three rows of benches for the dukes, marquises, and earls, in tiers, and separated by gangways. On the three benches of the first section sat the dukes; on those of the second, the marquises; on those of the third, the earls. The viscounts' bench was placed across, opposite the throne, and behind, between the viscounts and the bar, were two benches for the barons.

On the highest bench to the right of the throne sat the two archbishops of Canterbury and York; on the middle bench three bishops, London, Durham, and Winchester, and the other bishops on the lowest bench. There is between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other bishops this considerable difference, that he is bishop "by divine providence," whilst the others are only so "by divine permission." On the right of the throne was a chair for the Prince of Wales, and on the left, folding chairs for the royal dukes, and behind the latter, a raised seat for minor peers, who had not the privilege of voting. Plenty of fleurs-de-lis everywhere, and the great escutcheon of England over the

four walls, above the peers, as well as above the king.

The sons of peers and the heirs to peerages assisted at the debates, standing behind the throne, between the daïs and the wall. A large square space was left vacant between the tiers of benches placed along three sides of the chamber and the throne. In this space, which was covered with the state carpet, interwoven with the arms of Great Britain, were four woolsacks--one in front of the throne, on which sat the Lord Chancellor, between the mace and the seal; one in front of the bishops, on which sat the judges, counsellors of state, who had the right to vote, but not to speak; one in front of the dukes, marquises, and earls, on which sat the Secretaries of State; and one in front of the viscounts and barons, on which sat the Clerk of the Crown and the Clerk of the Parliament, and on which the two under-clerks wrote, kneeling.

In the middle of the space was a large covered table, heaped with bundles of papers, registers, and summonses, with magnificent inkstands of chased silver, and with high candlesticks at the four corners.

The peers took their seats in chronological order, each according to the date of the creation of his peerage. They ranked according to their titles, and within their grade of nobility according to seniority. At the bar stood the Usher of the Black Rod, his wand in his hand. Inside the door was the Deputy-Usher; and outside, the Crier of the Black Rod, whose duty it was to open the sittings of the Courts of Justice with the cry, "Oyez!" in French, uttered thrice, with a solemn accent upon the

first syllable. Near the Crier stood the Serjeant Mace-Bearer of the Chancellor.

In royal ceremonies the temporal peers wore coronets on their heads, and the spiritual peers, mitres. The archbishops wore mitres, with a ducal coronet; and the bishops, who rank after viscounts, mitres, with a baron's cap.

It is to be remarked, as a coincidence at once strange and instructive, that this square formed by the throne, the bishops, and the barons, with kneeling magistrates within it, was in form similar to the ancient parliament in France under the two first dynasties. The aspect of authority was the same in France as in England. Hincmar, in his treatise, "De Ordinatione Sacri Palatii," described in 853 the sittings of the House of Lords at Westminster in the eighteenth century. Strange, indeed! a description given nine hundred years before the existence of the thing described.

But what is history? An echo of the past in the future; a reflex from the future on the past.

The assembly of Parliament was obligatory only once in every seven years.

The Lords deliberated in secret, with closed doors. The debates of the Commons were public. Publicity entails diminution of dignity.

The number of the Lords was unlimited. To create Lords was the menace of royalty; a means of government.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the House of Lords already contained a very large number of members. It has increased still further since that period. To dilute the aristocracy is politic. Elizabeth most probably erred in condensing the peerage into sixty-five lords. The less numerous, the more intense is a peerage. In assemblies, the more numerous the members, the fewer the heads. James II. understood this when he increased the Upper House to a hundred and eighty-eight lords; a hundred and eighty-six if we subtract from the peerages the two duchies of royal favourites, Portsmouth and Cleveland. Under Anne the total number of the lords, including bishops, was two hundred and seven. Not counting the Duke of Cumberland, husband of the queen, there were twenty-five dukes, of whom the premier, Norfolk, did not take his seat, being a Catholic; and of whom the junior, Cambridge, the Elector of Hanover, did, although a foreigner. Winchester, termed first and sole marquis of England, as Astorga was termed sole Marquis of Spain, was absent, being a Jacobite; so that there were only five marquises, of whom the premier was Lindsay, and the junior Lothian; seventy-nine earls, of whom Derby was premier and Islay junior; nine viscounts, of whom Hereford was premier and Lonsdale junior; and sixty-two barons, of whom Abergavenny was premier and Hervey junior. Lord Hervey, the junior baron, was what was called the "Puisné of the House." Derby, of whom Oxford, Shrewsbury, and Kent took precedence, and who was therefore but the fourth under James II., became (under Anne) premier earl. Two chancellors' names had disappeared from the list of barons--Verulam,

under which designation history finds us Bacon; and Wem, under which it finds us Jeffreys. Bacon and Jeffreys! both names overshadowed, though by different crimes. In 1705, the twenty-six bishops were reduced to twenty-five, the see of Chester being vacant. Amongst the bishops some were peers of high rank, such as William Talbot, Bishop of Oxford, who was head of the Protestant branch of that family. Others were eminent Doctors, like John Sharp, Archbishop of York, formerly Dean of Norwich; the poet, Thomas Spratt, Bishop of Rochester, an apoplectic old man; and that Bishop of Lincoln, who was to die Archbishop of Canterbury, Wake, the adversary of Bossuet. On important occasions, and when a message from the Crown to the House was expected, the whole of this august assembly--in robes, in wigs, in mitres, or plumes--formed out, and displayed their rows of heads, in tiers, along the walls of the House, where the storm was vaguely to be seen exterminating the Armada--almost as much as to say, "The storm is at the orders of England."

CHAPTER IV.

THE OLD CHAMBER.

The whole ceremony of the investiture of Gwynplaine, from his entry under the King's Gate to his taking the test under the nave window, was enacted in a sort of twilight.

Lord William Cowper had not permitted that he, as Lord Chancellor of England, should receive too many details of circumstances connected with the disfigurement of the young Lord Fermain Clancharlie, considering it below his dignity to know that a peer was not handsome; and feeling that his dignity would suffer if an inferior should venture to intrude on him information of such a nature. We know that a common fellow will take pleasure in saying, "That prince is humpbacked;" therefore, it is abusive to say that a lord is deformed. To the few words dropped on the subject by the queen the Lord Chancellor had contented himself with replying, "The face of a peer is in his peerage!"

Ultimately, however, the affidavits he had read and certified enlightened him. Hence the precautions which he took. The face of the new lord, on his entrance into the House, might cause some sensation. This it was necessary to prevent; and the Lord Chancellor took his measures for the purpose. It is a fixed idea, and a rule of conduct in grave personages, to allow as little disturbance as possible. Dislike of

incident is a part of their gravity. He felt the necessity of so ordering matters that the admission of Gwynplaine should take place without any hitch, and like that of any other successor to the peerage.

It was for this reason that the Lord Chancellor directed that the reception of Lord Fermain Clancharlie should take place at the evening sitting. The Chancellor being the doorkeeper--"Quodammodo ostiarus," says the Norman charter; "Januarum cancellorumque," says Tertullian--he can officiate outside the room on the threshold; and Lord William Cowper had used his right by carrying out under the nave the formalities of the investiture of Lord Fermain Clancharlie. Moreover, he had brought forward the hour for the ceremonies; so that the new peer actually made his entrance into the House before the House had assembled.

For the investiture of a peer on the threshold, and not in the chamber itself, there were precedents. The first hereditary baron, John de Beauchamp, of Holt Castle, created by patent by Richard II., in 1387, Baron Kidderminster, was thus installed. In renewing this precedent the Lord Chancellor was creating for himself a future cause for embarrassment, of which he felt the inconvenience less than two years afterwards on the entrance of Viscount Newhaven into the House of Lords.

Short-sighted as we have already stated him to be, Lord William Cowper scarcely perceived the deformity of Gwynplaine; while the two sponsors, being old and nearly blind, did not perceive it at all.

The Lord Chancellor had chosen them for that very reason.

More than this, the Lord Chancellor, having only seen the presence and stature of Gwynplaine, thought him a fine-looking man. When the door-keeper opened the folding doors to Gwynplaine there were but few peers in the house; and these few were nearly all old men. In assemblies the old members are the most punctual, just as towards women they are the most assiduous.

On the dukes' benches there were but two, one white-headed, the other gray--Thomas Osborne, Duke of Leeds, and Schomberg, son of that Schomberg, German by birth, French by his marshal's bâton, and English by his peerage, who was banished by the edict of Nantes, and who, having fought against England as a Frenchman, fought against France as an Englishman. On the benches of the lords spiritual there sat only the Archbishopof Canterbury, Primate of England, above; and below, Dr. Simon Patrick, Bishop of Ely, in conversation with Evelyn Pierrepoint, Marquis of Dorchester, who was explaining to him the difference between a gabion considered singly and when used in the parapet of a field work, and between palisades and fraises; the former being a row of posts driven info the ground in front of the tents, for the purpose of protecting the camp; the latter sharp-pointed stakes set up under the wall of a fortress, to prevent the escalade of the besiegers and the desertion of the besieged; and the marquis was explaining further the method of placing fraises in the ditches of redoubts, half of each stake being buried and half exposed. Thomas Thynne, Viscount Weymouth, having approached the light of a chandelier, was examining a plan of his

architect's for laying out his gardens at Longleat, in Wiltshire, in the Italian style--as a lawn, broken up into plots, with squares of turf alternating with squares of red and yellow sand, of river shells, and of fine coal dust. On the viscounts' benches was a group of old peers, Essex, Ossulstone, Peregrine, Osborne, William Zulestein, Earl of Rochford, and amongst them, a few more youthful ones, of the faction which did not wear wigs, gathered round Prince Devereux, Viscount Hereford, and discussing the question whether an infusion of apalaca holly was tea. "Very nearly," said Osborne. "Quite," said Essex. This discussion was attentively listened to by Paulet St. John, a cousin of Bolingbroke, of whom Voltaire was, later on, in some degree the pupil; for Voltaire's education, commenced by Père Porée, was finished by Bolingbroke. On the marquises' benches, Thomas de Grey, Marquis of Kent, Lord Chamberlain to the Queen, was informing Robert Bertie, Marquis of Lindsay, Lord Chamberlain of England, that the first prize in the great English lottery of 1694 had been won by two French refugees, Monsieur Le Coq, formerly councillor in the parliament of Paris, and Monsieur Ravenel, a gentleman of Brittany. The Earl of Wemyss was reading a book, entitled "Pratique Curieuse des Oracles des Sybilles." John Campbell, Earl of Greenwich, famous for his long chin, his gaiety, and his eighty-seven years, was writing to his mistress. Lord Chandos was trimming his nails.

The sitting which was about to take place, being a royal one, where the crown was to be represented by commissioners, two assistant door-keepers were placing in front of the throne a bench covered with purple velvet. On the second woolsack sat the Master of the Rolls, sacrorum scriniorum

magister, who had then for his residence the house formerly belonging to the converted Jews. Two under-clerks were kneeling, and turning over the leaves of the registers which lay on the fourth woolsack. In the meantime the Lord Chancellor took his place on the first woolsack. The members of the chamber took theirs, some sitting, others standing; when the Archbishop of Canterbury rose and read the prayer, and the sitting of the house began.

Gwynplaine had already been there for some time without attracting any notice. The second bench of barons, on which was his place, was close to the bar, so that he had had to take but a few steps to reach it. The two peers, his sponsors, sat, one on his right, the other on his left, thus almost concealing the presence of the new-comer.

No one having been furnished with any previous information, the Clerk of the Parliament had read in a low voice, and as it were, mumbled through the different documents concerning the new peer, and the Lord Chancellor had proclaimed his admission in the midst of what is called, in the reports, "general inattention." Every one was talking. There buzzed through the House that cheerful hum of voices during which assemblies pass things which will not bear the light, and at which they wonder when they find out what they have done, too late.

Gwynplaine was seated in silence, with his head uncovered, between the two old peers, Lord Fitzwalter and Lord Arundel. On entering, according to the instructions of the King-at-Arms--afterwards renewed by his sponsors--he had bowed to the throne.

Thus all was over. He was a peer. That pinnacle, under the glory of which he had, all his life, seen his master, Ursus, bow himself down in fear--that prodigious pinnacle was under his feet. He was in that place, so dark and yet so dazzling in England. Old peak of the feudal mountain, looked up to for six centuries by Europe and by history! Terrible nimbus of a world of shadow! He had entered into the brightness of its glory, and his entrance was irrevocable.

He was there in his own sphere, seated on his throne, like the king on his. He was there and nothing in the future could obliterate the fact. The royal crown, which he saw under the daïs, was brother to his coronet. He was a peer of that throne. In the face of majesty he was peerage; less, but like. Yesterday, what was he? A player. To-day, what was he? A prince.

Yesterday, nothing; to-day, everything.

It was a sudden confrontation of misery and power, meeting face to face, and resolving themselves at once into the two halves of a conscience. Two spectres, Adversity and Prosperity, were taking possession of the same soul, and each drawing that soul towards itself.

Oh, pathetic division of an intellect, of a will, of a brain, between two brothers who are enemies! the Phantom of Poverty and the Phantom of Wealth! Abel and Cain in the same man!

CHAPTER V.

ARISTOCRATIC GOSSIP.

By degrees the seats of the House filled as the Lords arrived. The question was the vote for augmenting, by a hundred thousand pounds sterling, the annual income of George of Denmark, Duke of Cumberland, the queen's husband. Besides this, it was announced that several bills assented to by her Majesty were to be brought back to the House by the Commissioners of the Crown empowered and charged to sanction them. This raised the sitting to a royal one. The peers all wore their robes over their usual court or ordinary dress. These robes, similar to that which had been thrown over Gwynplaine, were alike for all, excepting that the dukes had five bands of ermine, trimmed with gold; marquises, four; earls and viscounts, three; and barons, two. Most of the lords entered in groups. They had met in the corridors, and were continuing the conversations there begun. A few came in alone. The costumes of all were solemn; but neither their attitudes nor their words corresponded with them. On entering, each one bowed to the throne.

The peers flowed in. The series of great names marched past with scant ceremonial, the public not being present. Leicester entered, and shook Lichfield's hand; then came Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough and

Monmouth, the friend of Locke, under whose advice he had proposed the recoinage of money; then Charles Campbell, Earl of Loudoun, listening to Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke; then Dorme, Earl of Carnarvon; then Robert Sutton, Baron Lexington, son of that Lexington who recommended Charles II. to banish Gregorio Leti, the historiographer, who was so ill-advised as to try to become a historian; then Thomas Bellasys, Viscount Falconberg, a handsome old man; and the three cousins, Howard, Earl of Bindon, Bowes Howard, Earl of Berkshire, and Stafford Howard, Earl of Stafford--all together; then John Lovelace, Baron Lovelace, which peerage became extinct in 1736, so that Richardson was enabled to introduce Lovelace in his book, and to create a type under the name. All these personages--celebrated each in his own way, either in politics or in war, and of whom many were an honour to England--were laughing and talking.

It was history, as it were, seen in undress.

In less than half an hour the House was nearly full. This was to be expected, as the sitting was a royal one. What was more unusual was the eagerness of the conversations. The House, so sleepy not long before, now hummed like a hive of bees.

The arrival of the peers who had come in late had wakened them up. These lords had brought news. It was strange that the peers who had been there at the opening of the sitting knew nothing of what had occurred, while those who had not been there knew all about it. Several lords had come from Windsor.

For some hours past the adventures of Gwynplaine had been the subject of conversation. A secret is a net; let one mesh drop, and the whole goes to pieces. In the morning, in consequence of the incidents related above, the whole story of a peer found on the stage, and of a mountebank become a lord, had burst forth at Windsor in Royal places. The princes had talked about it, and then the lackeys. From the Court the news soon reached the town. Events have a weight, and the mathematical rule of velocity, increasing in proportion to the squares of the distance, applies to them. They fall upon the public, and work themselves through it with the most astounding rapidity. At seven o'clock no one in London had caught wind of the story; by eight Gwynplaine was the talk of the town. Only the lords who had been so punctual that they were present before the assembling of the House were ignorant of the circumstances, not having been in the town when the matter was talked of by every one, and having been in the House, where nothing had been perceived. Seated quietly on their benches, they were addressed by the eager newcomers.

"Well!" said Francis Brown, Viscount Montacute, to the Marquis of Dorchester.

"What?"

"Is it possible?"

"What?"

"The Laughing Man!"

"Who is the Laughing Man?"

"Don't you know the Laughing Man?"

"No."

"He is a clown, a fellow performing at fairs. He has an extraordinary face, which people gave a penny to look at. A mountebank."

"Well, what then?"

"You have just installed him as a peer of England."

"You are the laughing man, my Lord Montacute!"

"I am not laughing, my Lord Dorchester."

Lord Montacute made a sign to the Clerk of the Parliament, who rose from his woolsack, and confirmed to their lordships the fact of the admission of the new peer. Besides, he detailed the circumstances.

"How wonderful!" said Lord Dorchester. "I was talking to the Bishop of Ely all the while."

The young Earl of Annesley addressed old Lord Eure, who had but two

years more to live, as he died in 1707.

"My Lord Eure."

"My Lord Annesley."

"Did you know Lord Linnæus Clancharlie?"

"A man of bygone days. Yes I did."

"He died in Switzerland?"

"Yes; we were relations."

"He was a republican under Cromwell, and remained a republican under Charles II.?"

"A republican? Not at all! He was sulking. He had a personal quarrel with the king. I know from good authority that Lord Clancharlie would have returned to his allegiance, if they had given him the office of Chancellor, which Lord Hyde held."

"You astonish me, Lord Eure. I had heard that Lord Clancharlie was an honest politician."

"An honest politician! does such a thing exist? Young man, there is no such thing."

"And Cato?"

"Oh, you believe in Cato, do you?"

"And Aristides?"

"They did well to exile him."

"And Thomas More?"

"They did well to cut off his head."

"And in your opinion Lord Clancharlie was a man as you describe. As for a man remaining in exile, why, it is simply ridiculous."

"He died there."

"An ambitious man disappointed?"

"You ask if I knew him? I should think so indeed. I was his dearest friend."

"Do you know, Lord Eure, that he married when in Switzerland?"

"I am pretty sure of it."

"And that he had a lawful heir by that marriage?"

"Yes; who is dead."

"Who is living."

"Living?"

"Living."

"Impossible!"

"It is a fact--proved, authenticated, confirmed, registered."

"Then that son will inherit the Clancharlie peerage?"

"He is not going to inherit it."

"Why?"

"Because he has inherited it. It is done."

"Done?"

"Turn your head, Lord Eure; he is sitting behind you, on the barons' benches."

Lord Eure turned, but Gwynplaine's face was concealed under his forest of hair.

"So," said the old man, who could see nothing but his hair, "he has already adopted the new fashion. He does not wear a wig."

Grantham accosted Colepepper.

"Some one is finely sold."

"Who is that?"

"David Dirry-Moir."

"How is that?"

"He is no longer a peer."

"How can that be?"

And Henry Auverquerque, Earl of Grantham, told John Baron Colepepper the whole anecdote--how the waif-flask had been carried to the Admiralty, about the parchment of the Comprachicos, the jussu regis, countersigned Jeffreys, and the confrontation in the torture-cell at Southwark, the proof of all the facts acknowledged by the Lord Chancellor and by the Queen; the taking the test under the nave, and finally the admission of Lord Fermain Clancharlie at the commencement of

the sitting. Both the lords endeavoured to distinguish his face as he sat between Lord Fitzwalter and Lord Arundel, but with no better success than Lord Eure and Lord Annesley.

Gwynplaine, either by chance or by the arrangement of his sponsors, forewarned by the Lord Chancellor, was so placed in shadow as to escape their curiosity.

"Who is it? Where is he?"

Such was the exclamation of all the new-comers, but no one succeeded in making him out distinctly. Some, who had seen Gwynplaine in the Green Box, were exceedingly curious, but lost their labour: as it sometimes happens that a young lady is entrenched within a troop of dowagers, Gwynplaine was, as it were, enveloped in several layers of lords, old, infirm, and indifferent. Good livers, with the gout, are marvellously indifferent to stories about their neighbours.

There passed from hand to hand copies of a letter three lines in length, written, it was said, by the Duchess Josiana to the queen, her sister, in answer to the injunction made by her Majesty, that she should espouse the new peer, the lawful heir of the Clancharlies, Lord Fermain. This letter was couched in the following terms:--

"MADAM,--The arrangement will suit me just as well. I can have Lord David for my lover.--(Signed) JOSIANA."

This note, whether a true copy or a forgery, was received by all with the greatest enthusiasm. A young lord, Charles Okehampton, Baron Mohun, who belonged to the wigless faction, read and re-read it with delight. Lewis de Duras, Earl of Faversham, an Englishman with a Frenchman's wit, looked at Mohun and smiled.

"That is a woman I should like to marry!" exclaimed Lord Mohun.

The lords around them overheard the following dialogue between Duras and Mohun:--

"Marry the Duchess Josiana, Lord Mohun!"

"Why not?"

"Plague take it."

"She would make one very happy."

"She would make many very happy."

"But is it not always a question of many?"

"Lord Mohun, you are right. With regard to women, we have always the leavings of others. Has any one ever had a beginning?"

"Adam, perhaps."

"Not he."

"Then Satan."

"My dear lord," concluded Lewis de Duras, "Adam only lent his name. Poor dupe! He endorsed the human race. Man was begotten on the woman by the devil."

Hugh Cholmondeley, Earl of Cholmondeley, strong in points of law, was asked from the bishops' benches by Nathaniel Crew, who was doubly a peer, being a temporal peer, as Baron Crew, and a spiritual peer, as Bishop of Durham.

"Is it possible?" said Crew.

"Is it regular?" said Cholmondeley.

"The investiture of this peer was made outside the House," replied the bishop; "but it is stated that there are precedents for it."

"Yes. Lord Beauchamp, under Richard II.; Lord Chenay, under Elizabeth: and Lord Broghill, under Cromwell."

"Cromwell goes for nothing."

"What do you think of it all?"

"Many different things."

"My Lord Cholmondeley, what will be the rank of this young Lord Clancharlie in the House?"

"My Lord Bishop, the interruption of the Republic having displaced ancient rights of precedence, Clancharlie now ranks in the peerage between Barnard and Somers, so that should each be called upon to speak in turn, Lord Clancharlie would be the eighth in rotation."

"Really! he--a mountebank from a public show!"

"The act, per se, does not astonish me, my Lord Bishop. We meet with such things. Still more wonderful circumstances occur. Was not the War of the Roses predicted by the sudden drying up of the river Ouse, in Bedfordshire, on January 1st, 1399. Now, if a river dries up, a peer may, quite as naturally, fall into a servile condition. Ulysses, King of Ithaca, played all kinds of different parts. Fermain Clancharlie remained a lord under his player's garb. Sordid garments touch not the soul's nobility. But taking the test and the investiture outside the sitting, though strictly legal, might give rise to objections. I am of opinion that it will be necessary to look into the matter, to see if there be any ground to question the Lord Chancellor in Privy Council later on. We shall see in a week or two what is best to be done."

And the Bishop added,--

"All the same. It is an adventure such as has not occurred since Earl Gesbodus's time."

Gwynplaine, the Laughing Man; the Tadcaster Inn; the Green Box; "Chaos Vanquished;" Switzerland; Chillon; the Comprachicos; exile; mutilation; the Republic; Jeffreys; James II.; the jussu regis; the bottle opened at the Admiralty; the father, Lord Linnæus; the legitimate son, Lord Fermain; the bastard son, Lord David; the probable lawsuits; the Duchess Josiana; the Lord Chancellor; the Queen;--all these subjects of conversation ran from bench to bench.

Whispering is like a train of gunpowder.

They seized on every incident. All the details of the occurrence caused an immense murmur through the House. Gwynplaine, wandering in the depths of his reverie, heard the buzzing, without knowing that he was the cause of it. He was strangely attentive to the depths, not to the surface. Excess of attention becomes isolation.

The buzz of conversation in the House impedes its usual business no more than the dust raised by a troop impedes its march. The judges--who in the Upper House were mere assistants, without the privilege of speaking, except when questioned--had taken their places on the second woolsack; and the three Secretaries of State theirs on the third.

The heirs to peerages flowed into their compartment, at once without and

within the House, at the back of the throne.

The peers in their minority were on their own benches. In 1705 the number of these little lords amounted to no less than a dozen--Huntingdon, Lincoln, Dorset, Warwick, Bath, Barlington, Derwentwater--destined to a tragical death--Longueville, Lonsdale, Dudley, Ward, and Carteret: a troop of brats made up of eight earls, two viscounts, and two barons.

In the centre, on the three stages of benches, each lord had taken his seat. Almost all the bishops were there. The dukes mustered strong, beginning with Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset; and ending with George Augustus, Elector of Hanover, and Duke of Cambridge, junior in date of creation, and consequently junior in rank. All were in order, according to right of precedence: Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, whose grandfather had sheltered Hobbes, at Hardwicke, when he was ninety-two; Lennox, Duke of Richmond; the three Fitzroys, the Duke of Southampton, the Duke of Grafton, and the Duke of Northumberland; Butler, Duke of Ormond; Somerset, Duke of Beaufort; Beauclerk, Duke of St. Albans; Paulet, Duke of Bolton; Osborne, Duke of Leeds; Wrottesley Russell, Duke of Bedford, whose motto and device was Che sarà sarà, which expresses a determination to take things as they come; Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham; Manners, Duke of Rutland; and others. Neither Howard, Duke of Norfolk, nor Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury, was present, being Catholics; nor Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, the French Malbrouck, who was at that time fighting the French and beating them. There were no Scotch dukes then--Queensberry, Montrose, and Roxburgh not being

admitted till 1707.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HIGH AND THE LOW.

All at once a bright light broke upon the House. Four doorkeepers brought and placed on each side of the throne four high candelabra filled with wax-lights. The throne, thus illuminated, shone in a kind of purple light. It was empty but august. The presence of the queen herself could not have added much majesty to it.

The Usher of the Black Rod entered with his wand and announced,--

"The Lords Commissioners of her Majesty."

The hum of conversation immediately subsided.

A clerk, in a wig and gown, appeared at the great door, holding a cushion worked with fleurs de lis, on which lay parchment documents. These documents were bills. From each hung the bille, or bulle, by a silken string, from which laws are called bills in England and bulls at Rome. Behind the clerk walked three men in peers' robes, and wearing

plumed hats.

These were the Royal Commissioners. The first was the Lord High Treasurer of England, Godolphin; the second, the Lord President of the Council, Pembroke; the third, the Lord of the Privy Seal, Newcastle.

They walked one by one, according to precedence, not of their rank, but of their commission--Godolphin first, Newcastle last, although a duke.

They reached the bench in front of the throne, to which they bowed, took off and replaced their hats, and sat down on the bench.

The Lord Chancellor turned towards the Usher of the Black Rod, and said,--

"Order the Commons to the bar of the House."

The Usher of the Black Rod retired.

The clerk, who was one of the clerks of the House of Lords, placed on the table, between the four woolsacks, the cushion on which lay the bills.

Then there came an interruption, which continued for some minutes.

Two doorkeepers placed before the bar a stool with three steps.

This stool was covered with crimson velvet, on which fleurs de lis were designed in gilt nails.

The great door, which had been closed, was reopened; and a voice announced,--

"The faithful Commons of England."

It was the Usher of the Black Rod announcing the other half of Parliament.

The lords put on their hats.

The members of the House of Commons entered, preceded by their Speaker, all with uncovered heads.

They stopped at the bar. They were in their ordinary garb; for the most part dressed in black, and wearing swords. The Speaker, the Right Honourable John Smith, an esquire, member for the borough of Andover, got up on the stool which was at the centre of the bar. The Speaker of the Commons wore a robe of black satin, with large hanging sleeves, embroidered before and behind with brandenburgs of gold, and a wig smaller than that of the Lord Chancellor. He was majestic, but inferior.

The Commons, both Speaker and members, stood waiting with uncovered heads, before the peers, who were seated, with their hats on.

Amongst the members of Commons might have been remarked the Chief Justice of Chester, Joseph Jekyll; the Queen's three Serjeants-at-Law--Hooper, Powys, and Parker; James Montagu, Solicitor-General; and the Attorney-General, Simon Harcourt. With the exception of a few baronets and knights, and nine lords by courtesy--Hartington, Windsor, Woodstock, Mordaunt, Granby, Scudamore, Fitzharding, Hyde, and Berkeley--sons of peers and heirs to peerages--all were of the people, a sort of gloomy and silent crowd.

When the noise made by the trampling of feet had ceased, the Crier of the Black Rod, standing by the door, exclaimed:--

"Oyez!"

The Clerk of the Crown arose. He took, unfolded, and read the first of the documents on the cushion. It was a message from the Queen, naming three commissioners to represent her in Parliament, with power to sanction the bills.

"To wit--"

Here the Clerk raised his voice.

"Sidney Earl Godolphin."

The Clerk bowed to Lord Godolphin. Lord Godolphin raised his hat.

The Clerk continued,--

"Thomas Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery."

The Clerk bowed to Lord Pembroke. Lord Pembroke touched his hat.

The Clerk resumed,--

"John Holles, Duke of Newcastle."

The Duke of Newcastle nodded.

The Clerk of the Crown resumed his seat.

The Clerk of the Parliaments arose. His under-clerk, who had been on his knees behind him, got up also. Both turned their faces to the throne, and their backs to the Commons.

There were five bills on the cushion. These five bills, voted by the Commons and agreed to by the Lords, awaited the royal sanction.

The Clerk of the Parliaments read the first bill.

It was a bill passed by the Commons, charging the country with the costs of the improvements made by the Queen to her residence at Hampton Court, amounting to a million sterling.

The reading over, the Clerk bowed low to the throne. The under-clerk bowed lower still; then, half turning his head towards the Commons, he said,--

"The Queen accepts your bounty--et ainsi le veut."

The Clerk read the second bill.

It was a law condemning to imprisonment and fine whosoever withdrew himself from the service of the trainbands. The trainbands were a militia, recruited from the middle and lower classes, serving gratis, which in Elizabeth's reign furnished, on the approach of the Armada, one hundred and eighty-five thousand foot-soldiers and forty thousand horse.

The two clerks made a fresh bow to the throne, after which the under-clerk, again half turning his face to the Commons, said,--

"La Reine le veut."

The third bill was for increasing the tithes and prebends of the Bishopric of Lichfield and Coventry, which was one of the richest in England; for making an increased yearly allowance to the cathedral, for augmenting the number of its canons, and for increasing its deaneries and benefices, "to the benefit of our holy religion," as the preamble set forth. The fourth bill added to the budget fresh taxes--one on marbled paper; one on hackney coaches, fixed at the number of eight hundred in London, and taxed at a sum equal to fifty-two francs yearly

each; one on barristers, attorneys, and solicitors, at forty-eight francs a year a head; one on tanned skins, notwithstanding, said the preamble, the complaints of the workers in leather; one on soap, notwithstanding the petitions of the City of Exeter and of the whole of Devonshire, where great quantities of cloth and serge were manufactured; one on wine at four shillings; one on flour; one on barley and hops; and one renewing for four years "the necessities of the State," said the preamble, "requiring to be attended to before the remonstrances of commerce"--tonnage-dues, varying from six francs per ton, for ships coming from the westward, to eighteen francs on those coming from the eastward. Finally, the bill, declaring the sums already levied for the current year insufficient, concluded by decreeing a poll-tax on each subject throughout the kingdom of four shillings per head, adding that a double tax would be levied on every one who did not take the fresh oath to Government. The fifth bill forbade the admission into the hospital of any sick person who on entering did not deposit a pound sterling to pay for his funeral, in case of death. These last three bills, like the first two, were one after the other sanctioned and made law by a bow to the throne, and the four words pronounced by the under-clerk, "la Reine le veut," spoken over his shoulder to the Commons. Then the under-clerk knelt down again before the fourth woolsack, and the Lord Chancellor said,--

"Soit fait comme il est désiré."

This terminated the royal sitting. The Speaker, bent double before the Chancellor, descended from the stool, backwards, lifting up his robe

behind him; the members of the House of Commons bowed to the ground, and as the Upper House resumed the business of the day, heedless of all these marks of respect, the Commons departed.

CHAPTER VII.

STORMS OF MEN ARE WORSE THAN STORMS OF OCEANS.

The doors were closed again, the Usher of the Black Rod re-entered; the Lords Commissioners left the bench of State, took their places at the top of the dukes' benches, by right of their commission, and the Lord Chancellor addressed the House:--

"My Lords, the House having deliberated for several days on the Bill which proposes to augment by £100,000 sterling the annual provision for his Royal Highness the Prince, her Majesty's Consort, and the debate having been exhausted and closed, the House will proceed to vote; the votes will be taken according to custom, beginning with the puisne Baron. Each Lord, on his name being called, will rise and answer content, or non-content, and will be at liberty to explain the motives of his vote, if he thinks fit to do so.--Clerk, take the vote."

The Clerk of the House, standing up, opened a large folio, and spread it

open on a gilded desk. This book was the list of the Peerage.

The puisne of the House of Lords at that time was John Hervey, created Baron and Peer in 1703, from whom is descended the Marquis of Bristol.

The clerk called,--

"My Lord John, Baron Hervey."

An old man in a fair wig rose, and said, "Content."

Then he sat down.

The Clerk registered his vote.

The Clerk continued,--

"My Lord Francis Seymour, Baron Conway, of Killultagh."

"Content," murmured, half rising, an elegant young man, with a face like a page, who little thought that he was to be ancestor to the Marquises of Hertford.

"My Lord John Leveson, Baron Gower," continued the Clerk.

This Baron, from whom were to spring the Dukes of Sutherland, rose, and, as he reseated himself, said "Content."

The Clerk went on.

"My Lord Heneage Finch, Baron Guernsey."

The ancestor of the Earls of Aylesford, neither older nor less elegant than the ancestor of the Marquises of Hertford, justified his device, Aperto vivere voto, by the proud tone in which he exclaimed, "Content."

Whilst he was resuming his seat, the Clerk called the fifth Baron,--

"My Lord John, Baron Granville."

Rising and resuming his seat quickly, "Content," exclaimed Lord Granville, of Potheridge, whose peerage was to become extinct in 1709.

The Clerk passed to the sixth.

"My Lord Charles Montague, Baron Halifax."

"Content," said Lord Halifax, the bearer of a title which had become extinct in the Saville family, and was destined to become extinct again in that of Montague. Montague is distinct from Montagu and Montacute. And Lord Halifax added, "Prince George has an allowance as Her Majesty's Consort; he has another as Prince of Denmark; another as Duke of Cumberland; another as Lord High Admiral of England and Ireland; but he

has not one as Commander-in-Chief. This is an injustice and a wrong which must be set right, in the interest of the English people."

Then Lord Halifax passed a eulogium on the Christian religion, abused popery, and voted the subsidy.

Lord Halifax sat down, and the Clerk resumed,--

"My Lord Christopher, Baron Barnard."

Lord Barnard, from whom were to descend the Dukes of Cleveland, rose to answer to his name.

"Content."

He took some time in reseating himself, for he wore a lace band which was worth showing. For all that, Lord Barnard was a worthy gentleman and a brave officer.

While Lord Barnard was resuming his seat, the Clerk, who read by routine, hesitated for an instant; he readjusted his spectacles, and leaned over the register with renewed attention; then, lifting up his head, he said,--

"My Lord Fermain Clancharlie, Baron Clancharlie and Hunkerville."

Gwynplaine arose.

"Non-content," said he.

Every face was turned towards him. Gwynplaine remained standing. The branches of candles, placed on each side of the throne, lighted up his features, and marked them against the darkness of the august chamber in the relief with which a mask might show against a background of smoke.

Gwynplaine had made that effort over himself which, it may be remembered, was possible to him in extremity. By a concentration of will equal to that which would be needed to cow a tiger, he had succeeded in obliterating for a moment the fatal grin upon his face. For an instant he no longer laughed. This effort could not last long. Rebellion against that which is our law or our fatality must be short-lived; at times the waters of the sea resist the power of gravitation, swell into a waterspout and become a mountain, but only on the condition of falling back again.

Such a struggle was Gwynplaine's. For an instant, which he felt to be a solemn one, by a prodigious intensity of will, but for not much longer than a flash of lightning lasts, he had thrown over his brow the dark veil of his soul--he held in suspense his incurable laugh. From that face upon which it had been carved he had withdrawn the joy. Now it was nothing but terrible.

"Who is this man?" exclaimed all.

That forest of hair, those dark hollows under the brows, the deep gaze of eyes which they could not see, that head, on the wild outlines of which light and darkness mingled weirdly, were a wonder indeed. It was beyond all understanding; much as they had heard of him, the sight of Gwynplaine was a terror. Even those who expected much found their expectations surpassed. It was as though on the mountain reserved for the gods, during the banquet on a serene evening, the whole of the all-powerful body being gathered together, the face of Prometheus, mangled by the vulture's beak, should have suddenly appeared before them, like a blood-coloured moon on the horizon. Olympus looking on Caucasus! What a vision! Old and young, open-mouthed with surprise, fixed their eyes upon Gwynplaine.

An old man, respected by the whole House, who had seen many men and many things, and who was intended for a dukedom--Thomas, Earl of Wharton--rose in terror.

"What does all this mean?" he cried. "Who has brought this man into the House? Let him be put out."

And addressing Gwynplaine haughtily,--

"Who are you? Whence do you come?"

Gwynplaine answered,--

"Out of the depths."

And folding his arms, he looked at the lords.

"Who am I? I am wretchedness. My lords, I have a word to say to you."

A shudder ran through the House. Then all was silence. Gwynplaine continued,--

"My lords, you are highly placed. It is well. We must believe that God has His reasons that it should be so. You have power, opulence, pleasure, the sun ever shining in your zenith; authority unbounded, enjoyment without a sting, and a total forgetfulness of others. So be it. But there is something below you--above you, it may be. My lords, I bring you news--news of the existence of mankind."

Assemblies are like children. A strange occurrence is as a Jack-in-the-Box to them. It frightens them; but they like it. It is as if a spring were touched and a devil jumps up. Mirabeau, who was also deformed, was a case in point in France.

Gwynplaine felt within himself, at that moment, a strange elevation. In addressing a body of men, one's foot seems to rest on them; to rest, as it were, on a pinnacle of souls--on human hearts, that quiver under one's heel. Gwynplaine was no longer the man who had been, only the night before, almost mean. The fumes of the sudden elevation which had disturbed him had cleared off and become transparent, and in the state in which Gwynplaine had been seduced by a vanity he now saw but a duty.

That which had at first lessened now elevated him. He was illuminated by one of those great flashes which emanate from duty.

All round Gwynplaine arose cries of "Hear, hear!"

Meanwhile, rigid and superhuman, he succeeded in maintaining on his features that severe and sad contraction under which the laugh was fretting like a wild horse struggling to escape.

He resumed,--

"I am he who cometh out of the depths. My lords, you are great and rich. There lies your danger. You profit by the night; but beware! The dawn is all-powerful. You cannot prevail over it. It is coming. Nay! it is come. Within it is the day-spring of irresistible light. And who shall hinder that sling from hurling the sun into the sky? The sun I speak of is Right. You are Privilege. Tremble! The real master of the house is about to knock at the door. What is the father of Privilege? Chance. What is his son? Abuse. Neither Chance nor Abuse are abiding. For both a dark morrow is at hand. I am come to warn you. I am come to impeach your happiness. It is fashioned out of the misery of your neighbour. You have everything, and that everything is composed of the nothing of others. My lords, I am an advocate without hope, pleading a cause that is lost; but that cause God will gain on appeal. As for me, I am but a voice. Mankind is a mouth, of which I am the cry. You shall hear me! I am about to open before you, peers of England, the great assize of the people; of that sovereign who is the subject; of that criminal who is the judge. I

am weighed down under the load of all that I have to say. Where am I to begin? I know not. I have gathered together, in the vast diffusion of suffering, my innumerable and scattered pleas. What am I to do with them now? They overwhelm me, and I must cast them to you in a confused mass. Did I foresee this? No. You are astonished. So am I. Yesterday I was a mountebank; to-day I am a peer. Deep play. Of whom? Of the Unknown. Let us all tremble. My lords, all the blue sky is for you. Of this immense universe you see but the sunshine. Believe me, it has its shadows. Amongst you I am called Lord Fermain Clancharlie; but my true name is one of poverty--Gwynplaine. I am a wretched thing carved out of the stuff of which the great are made, for such was the pleasure of a king. That is my history. Many amongst you knew my father. I knew him not. His connection with you was his feudal descent; his outlawry is the bond between him and me. What God willed was well. I was cast into the abyss. For what end? To search its depths. I am a diver, and I have brought back the pearl, truth. I speak, because I know. You shall hear me, my lords. I have seen, I have felt! Suffering is not a mere word, ye happy ones! Poverty I grew up in; winter has frozen me; hunger I have tasted; contempt I have suffered; pestilence I have undergone; shame I have drunk of. And I will vomit all these up before you, and this ejection of all misery shall sully your feet and flame about them. I hesitated before I allowed myself to be brought to the place where I now stand, because I have duties to others elsewhere, and my heart is not here. What passed within me has nothing to do with you. When the man whom you call Usher of the Black Rod came to seek me by order of the woman whom you call the Queen, the idea struck me for a moment that I would refuse to come. But it seemed to me that the hidden hand of God pressed me to

the spot, and I obeyed. I felt that I must come amongst you. Why? Because of my rags of yesterday. It is to raise my voice among those who have eaten their fill that God mixed me up with the famished. Oh, have pity! Of this fatal world to which you believe yourselves to belong you know nothing. Placed so high, you are out of it. But I will tell you what it is. I have had experience enough. I come from beneath the pressure of your feet. I can tell you your weight. Oh, you who are masters, do you know what you are? do you see what you are doing? No. Oh, it is dreadful! One night, one night of storm, a little deserted child, an orphan alone in the immeasurable creation, I made my entrance into that darkness which you call society. The first thing that I saw was the law, under the form of a gibbet; the second was riches, your riches, under the form of a woman dead of cold and hunger; the third, the future, under the form of a child left to die; the fourth, goodness, truth, and justice, under the figure of a vagabond, whose sole friend and companion was a wolf."

Just then Gwynplaine, stricken by a sudden emotion, felt the sobs rising in his throat, causing him, most unfortunately, to burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

The contagion was immediate. A cloud had hung over the assembly. It might have broken into terror; it broke into delight. Mad merriment seized the whole House. Nothing pleases the great chambers of sovereign man so much as buffoonery. It is their revenge upon their graver moments.

The laughter of kings is like the laughter of the gods. There is always a cruel point in it. The lords set to play. Sneers gave sting to their laughter. They clapped their hands around the speaker, and insulted him. A volley of merry exclamations assailed him like bright but wounding hailstones.

"Bravo, Gwynplaine!"--"Bravo, Laughing Man!"--"Bravo, Snout of the Green Box!"--"Mask of Tarrinzeau Field!"--"You are going to give us a performance."--"That's right; talk away!"--"There's a funny fellow!"--"How the beast does laugh, to be sure!"--"Good-day, pantaloon!"--"How d'ye do, my lord clown!"--"Go on with your speech!"--"That fellow a peer of England?"--"Go on!"--"No, no!"--"Yes, yes!"

The Lord Chancellor was much disturbed.

A deaf peer, James Butler, Duke of Ormond, placing his hand to his ear like an ear trumpet, asked Charles Beauclerk, Duke of St. Albans,--

"How has he voted?"

"Non-content."

"By heavens!" said Ormond, "I can understand it, with such a face as his."

Do you think that you can ever recapture a crowd once it has escaped

your grasp? And all assemblies are crowds alike. No, eloquence is a bit; and if the bit breaks, the audience runs away, and rushes on till it has thrown the orator. Hearers naturally dislike the speaker, which is a fact not as clearly understood as it ought to be. Instinctively he pulls the reins, but that is a useless expedient. However, all orators try it, as Gwynplaine did.

He looked for a moment at those men who were laughing at him. Then he cried,--

"So, you insult misery! Silence, Peers of England! Judges, listen to my pleading! Oh, I conjure you, have pity. Pity for whom? Pity for yourselves. Who is in danger? Yourselves! Do you not see that you are in a balance, and that there is in one scale your power, and in the other your responsibility? It is God who is weighing you. Oh, do not laugh. Think. The trembling of your consciences is the oscillation of the balance in which God is weighing your actions. You are not wicked; you are like other men, neither better nor worse. You believe yourselves to be gods; but be ill to-morrow, and see your divinity shivering in fever! We are worth one as much as the other. I address myself to honest men; there are such here. I address myself to lofty intellects; there are such here. I address myself to generous souls; there are such here. You are fathers, sons, and brothers; therefore you are often touched. He amongst you who has this morning watched the awaking of his little child is a good man. Hearts are all alike. Humanity is nothing but a heart. Between those who oppress and those who are oppressed there is but a difference of place. Your feet tread on the heads of men. The fault is

not yours; it is that of the social Babel. The building is faulty, and out of the perpendicular. One floor bears down the other. Listen, and I will tell you what to do. Oh! as you are powerful, be brotherly; as you are great, be tender. If you only knew what I have seen! Alas, what gloom is there beneath! The people are in a dungeon. How many are condemned who are innocent! No daylight, no air, no virtue! They are without hope, and yet--there is the danger--they expect something. Realize all this misery. There are beings who live in death. There are little girls who at twelve begin by prostitution, and who end in old age at twenty. As to the severities of the criminal code, they are fearful.
I speak somewhat at random, and do not pick my words. I say everything that comes into my head. No later than yesterday I who stand here saw a man lying in chains, naked, with stones piled on his chest, expire in torture. Do you know of these things? No. If you knew what goes on, you would not dare to be happy. Who of you have been to Newcastle-upon-Tyne? There, in the mines, are men who chew coals to fill their stomachs and deceive hunger. Look here! in Lancashire, Ribblechester has sunk, by poverty, from a town to a village. I do not see that Prince George of Denmark requires a hundred thousand pounds extra. I should prefer receiving a poor sick man into the hospital, without compelling him to pay his funeral expenses in advance. In Carnarvon, and at Strathmore, as well as at Strathbickan, the exhaustion of the poor is horrible. At Stratford they cannot drain the marsh for want of money. The manufactories are shut up all over Lancashire. There is forced idleness everywhere. Do you know that the herring fishers at Harlech eat grass when the fishery fails? Do you know that at Burton-Lazars there are still lepers confined, on whom they fire if they leave their tan houses!

At Ailesbury, a town of which one of you is lord, destitution is chronic. At Penkridge, in Coventry, where you have just endowed a cathedral and enriched a bishop, there are no beds in the cabins, and they dig holes in the earth in which to put the little children to lie, so that instead of beginning life in the cradle, they begin it in the grave. I have seen these things! My lords, do you know who pays the taxes you vote? The dying! Alas! you deceive yourselves. You are going the wrong road. You augment the poverty of the poor to increase the riches of the rich. You should do the reverse. What! take from the worker to give to the idle, take from the tattered to give to the well-clad; take from the beggar to give to the prince! Oh yes! I have old republican blood in my veins. I have a horror of these things. How I execrate kings! And how shameless are the women! I have been told a sad story. How I hate Charles II.! A woman whom my father loved gave herself to that king whilst my father was dying in exile. The prostitute! Charles II., James II.! After a scamp, a scoundrel. What is there in a king? A man, feeble and contemptible, subject to wants and infirmities. Of what good is a king? You cultivate that parasite royalty; you make a serpent of that worm, a dragon of that insect. O pity the poor! You increase the weight of the taxes for the profit of the throne. Look to the laws which you decree. Take heed of the suffering swarms which you crush. Cast your eyes down. Look at what is at your feet. O ye great, there are the little. Have pity! yes, have pity on yourselves; for the people is in its agony, and when the lower part of the trunk dies, the higher parts die too. Death spares no limb. When night comes no one can keep his corner of daylight. Are you selfish? then save others. The destruction of the vessel cannot be a matter of indifference to any

passenger. There can be no wreck for some that is not wreck for all. O believe it, the abyss yawns for all!"

The laughter increased, and became irresistible. For that matter, such extravagance as there was in his words was sufficient to amuse any assembly. To be comic without and tragic within, what suffering can be more humiliating? what pain deeper? Gwynplaine felt it. His words were an appeal in one direction, his face in the other. What a terrible position was his!

Suddenly his voice rang out in strident bursts.

"How gay these men are! Be it so. Here is irony face to face with agony; a sneer mocking the death-rattle. They are all-powerful. Perhaps so; be it so. We shall see. Behold! I am one of them; but I am also one of you, O ye poor! A king sold me. A poor man sheltered me. Who mutilated me? A prince. Who healed and nourished me? A pauper. I am Lord Clancharlie; but I am still Gwynplaine. I take my place amongst the great; but I belong to the mean. I am amongst those who rejoice; but I am with those who suffer. Oh, this system of society is false! Some day will come that which is true. Then there will be no more lords, and there shall be free and living men. There will be no more masters; there will be fathers. Such is the future. No more prostration; no more baseness; no more ignorance; no more human beasts of burden; no more courtiers; no more toadies; no more kings; but Light! In the meantime, see me here. I have a right, and I will use it. Is it a right? No, if I use it for myself; yes, if I use it for all. I will speak to you, my lords, being one of

you. O my brothers below, I will tell them of your nakedness. I will rise up with a bundle of the people's rags in my hand. I will shake off over the masters the misery of the slaves; and these favoured and arrogant ones shall no longer be able to escape the remembrance of the wretched, nor the princes the itch of the poor; and so much the worse, if it be the bite of vermin; and so much the better, if it awake the lions from their slumber."

Here Gwynplaine turned towards the kneeling under-clerks, who were writing on the fourth woolsack.

"Who are those fellows kneeling down?--What are you doing? Get up; you are men."

These words, suddenly addressed to inferiors whom a lord ought not even to perceive, increased the merriment to the utmost.

They had cried, "Bravo!" Now they shouted, "Hurrah!" From clapping their hands they proceeded to stamping their feet. One might have been back in the Green Box, only that there the laughter applauded Gwynplaine; here it exterminated him. The effort of ridicule is to kill. Men's laughter sometimes exerts all its power to murder.

The laughter proceeded to action. Sneering words rained down upon him. Humour is the folly of assemblies. Their ingenious and foolish ridicule shuns facts instead of studying them, and condemns questions instead of solving them. Any extraordinary occurrence is a point of interrogation;

to laugh at it is like laughing at an enigma. But the Sphynx, which never laughs, is behind it.

Contradictory shouts arose,--

"Enough! enough!" "Encore! encore!"

William Farmer, Baron Leimpster, flung at Gwynplaine the insult cast by Ryc Quiney at Shakespeare,--

"Histrio, mima!"

Lord Vaughan, a sententious man, twenty-ninth on the barons' bench, exclaimed,--

"We must be back in the days when animals had the gift of speech. In the midst of human tongues the jaw of a beast has spoken."

"Listen to Balaam's ass," added Lord Yarmouth.

Lord Yarmouth presented that appearance of sagacity produced by a round nose and a crooked mouth.

"The rebel Linnæus is chastised in his tomb. The son is the punishment of the father," said John Hough, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, whose prebendary Gwynplaine's attack had glanced.

"He lies!" said Lord Cholmondeley, the legislator so well read up in the law. "That which he calls torture is only the peine forte et dure, and a very good thing, too. Torture is not practised in England."

Thomas Wentworth, Baron Raby, addressed the Chancellor.

"My Lord Chancellor, adjourn the House."

"No, no. Let him go on. He is amusing. Hurrah! hip! hip! hip!"

Thus shouted the young lords, their fun amounting to fury. Four of them especially were in the full exasperation of hilarity and hate. These were Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester; Thomas Tufton, Earl of Thanet; Viscount Hatton; and the Duke of Montagu.

"To your tricks, Gwynplaine!" cried Rochester.

"Put him out, put him out!" shouted Thanet.

Viscount Hatton drew from his pocket a penny, which he flung to Gwynplaine.

And John Campbell, Earl of Greenwich; Savage, Earl Rivers; Thompson, Baron Haversham; Warrington, Escrick Rolleston, Rockingham, Carteret, Langdale, Barcester, Maynard, Hunsdon, Cäernarvon, Cavendish, Burlington, Robert Darcy, Earl of Holderness, Other Windsor, Earl of Plymouth, applauded.

There was a tumult as of pandemonium or of pantheon, in which the words of Gwynplaine were lost.

Amidst it all, there was heard but one word of Gwynplaine's: "Beware!"

Ralph, Duke of Montagu, recently down from Oxford, and still a beardless youth, descended from the bench of dukes, where he sat the nineteenth in order, and placed himself in front of Gwynplaine, with his arms folded. In a sword there is a spot which cuts sharpest, and in a voice an accent which insults most keenly. Montagu spoke with that accent, and sneering with his face close to that of Gwynplaine, shouted,--"What are you talking about?"

"I am prophesying," said Gwynplaine.

The laughter exploded anew; and below this laughter, anger growled its continued bass. One of the minors, Lionel Cranfield Sackville, Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, stood upon his seat, not smiling, but grave as became a future legislator, and, without saying a word, looked at Gwynplaine with his fresh twelve-year old face, and shrugged his shoulders. Whereat the Bishop of St. Asaph's whispered in the ear of the Bishop of St. David's, who was sitting beside him, as he pointed to Gwynplaine, "There is the fool;" then pointing to the child, "there is the sage."

A chaos of complaint rose from amidst the confusion of exclamations:--

"Gorgon's face!"--"What does it all mean?"--"An insult to the House!"--"The fellow ought to be put out!"--"What a madman!"--"Shame! shame!"--"Adjourn the House!"--"No; let him finish his speech!"--"Talk away, you buffoon!"

Lord Lewis of Duras, with his arms akimbo, shouted,--

"Ah! it does one good to laugh. My spleen is cured. I propose a vote of thanks in these terms: 'The House of Lords returns thanks to the Green Box.'"

Gwynplaine, it may be remembered, had dreamt of a different welcome.

A man who, climbing up a steep and crumbling acclivity of sand above a giddy precipice, has felt it giving way under his hands, his nails, his elbows, his knees, his feet; who--losing instead of gaining on his treacherous way, a prey to every terror of the danger, slipping back instead of ascending, increasing the certainty of his fall by his very efforts to gain the summit, and losing ground in every struggle for safety--has felt the abyss approaching nearer and nearer, until the certainty of his coming fall into the yawning jaws open to receive him, has frozen the marrow of his bones;--that man has experienced the sensations of Gwynplaine.

He felt the ground he had ascended crumbling under him, and his audience was the precipice.

There is always some one to say the word which sums all up.

Lord Scarsdale translated the impression of the assembly in one exclamation,--

"What is the monster doing here?"

Gwynplaine stood up, dismayed and indignant, in a sort of final convulsion. He looked at them all fixedly.

"What am I doing here? I have come to be a terror to you! I am a monster, do you say? No! I am the people! I am an exception? No! I am the rule; you are the exception! You are the chimera; I am the reality! I am the frightful man who laughs! Who laughs at what? At you, at himself, at everything! What is his laugh? Your crime and his torment! That crime he flings at your head! That punishment he spits in your face! I laugh, and that means I weep!"

He paused. There was less noise. The laughter continued, but it was more subdued. He may have fancied that he had regained a certain amount of attention. He breathed again, and resumed,--

"This laugh which is on my face a king placed there. This laugh expresses the desolation of mankind. This laugh means hate, enforced silence, rage, despair. This laugh is the production of torture. This laugh is a forced laugh. If Satan were marked with this laugh, it would

convict God. But the Eternal is not like them that perish. Being absolute, he is just; and God hates the acts of kings. Oh! you take me for an exception; but I am a symbol. Oh, all-powerful men, fools that you are! open your eyes. I am the incarnation of All. I represent humanity, such as its masters have made it. Mankind is mutilated. That which has been done to me has been done to it. In it have been deformed right, justice, truth, reason, intelligence, as eyes, nostrils, and ears have been deformed in me; its heart has been made a sink of passion and pain, like mine, and, like mine, its features have been hidden in a mask of joy. Where God had placed his finger, the king set his sign-manual. Monstrous superposition! Bishops, peers, and princes, the people is a sea of suffering, smiling on the surface. My lords, I tell you that the people are as I am. To-day you oppress them; to-day you hoot at me. But the future is the ominous thaw, in which that which was as stone shall become wave. The appearance of solidity melts into liquid. A crack in the ice, and all is over. There will come an hour when convulsion shall break down your oppression; when an angry roar will reply to your jeers. Nay, that hour did come! Thou wert of it, O my father! That hour of God did come, and was called the Republic! It was destroyed, but it will return. Meanwhile, remember that the line of kings armed with the sword was broken by Cromwell, armed with the axe. Tremble! Incorruptible solutions are at hand: the talons which were cut are growing again; the tongues which were torn out are floating away, they are turning to tongues of fire, and, scattered by the breath of darkness, are shouting through infinity; those who hunger are showing their idle teeth; false heavens, built over real hells, are tottering. The people are suffering--they are suffering; and that which is on high totters, and

that which is below yawns. Darkness demands its change to light; the damned discuss the elect. Behold! it is the coming of the people, the ascent of mankind, the beginning of the end, the red dawn of the catastrophe! Yes, all these things are in this laugh of mine, at which you laugh to-day! London is one perpetual fête. Be it so. From one end to the other, England rings with acclamation. Well! but listen. All that you see is I. You have your fêtes--they are my laugh; you have your public rejoicings--they are my laugh; you have your weddings, consecrations, and coronations--they are my laugh. The births of your princes are my laugh. But above you is the thunderbolt--it is my laugh."

How could they stand such nonsense? The laughter burst out afresh; and now it was overwhelming. Of all the lava which that crater, the human mouth, ejects, the most corrosive is joy. To inflict evil gaily is a contagion which no crowd can resist. All executions do not take place on the scaffold; and men, from the moment they are in a body, whether in mobs or in senates, have always a ready executioner amongst them, called sarcasm. There is no torture to be compared to that of the wretch condemned to execution by ridicule. This was Gwynplaine's fate. He was stoned with their jokes, and riddled by the scoffs shot at him. He stood there a mark for all. They sprang up; they cried, "Encore;" they shook with laughter; they stamped their feet; they pulled each other's bands. The majesty of the place, the purple of the robes, the chaste ermine, the dignity of the wigs, had no effect. The lords laughed, the bishops laughed, the judges laughed, the old men's benches derided, the children's benches were in convulsions. The Archbishop of Canterbury nudged the Archbishop of York; Henry Compton, Bishop of London, brother

of Lord Northampton, held his sides; the Lord Chancellor bent down his head, probably to conceal his inclination to laugh; and, at the bar, that statue of respect, the Usher of the Black Rod, was laughing also.

Gwynplaine, become pallid, had folded his arms; and, surrounded by all those faces, young and old, in which had burst forth this grand Homeric jubilee; in that whirlwind of clapping hands, of stamping feet, and of hurrahs; in that mad buffoonery, of which he was the centre; in that splendid overflow of hilarity; in the midst of that unmeasured gaiety, he felt that the sepulchre was within him. All was over. He could no longer master the face which betrayed nor the audience which insulted him.

That eternal and fatal law by which the grotesque is linked with the sublime--by which the laugh re-echoes the groan, parody rides behind despair, and seeming is opposed to being--had never found more terrible expression. Never had a light more sinister illumined the depths of human darkness.

Gwynplaine was assisting at the final destruction of his destiny by a burst of laughter. The irremediable was in this. Having fallen, we can raise ourselves up; but, being pulverized, never. And the insult of their sovereign mockery had reduced him to dust. From thenceforth nothing was possible. Everything is in accordance with the scene. That which was triumph in the Green Box was disgrace and catastrophe in the House of Lords. What was applause there, was insult here. He felt something like the reverse side of his mask. On one side of that mask he

had the sympathy of the people, who welcomed Gwynplaine; on the other, the contempt of the great, rejecting Lord Fermain Clancharlie. On one side, attraction; on the other, repulsion; both leading him towards the shadows. He felt himself, as it were, struck from behind. Fate strikes treacherous blows. Everything will be explained hereafter, but, in the meantime, destiny is a snare, and man sinks into its pitfalls. He had expected to rise, and was welcomed by laughter. Such apotheoses have lugubrious terminations. There is a dreary expression--to be sobered; tragical wisdom born of drunkenness! In the midst of that tempest of gaiety commingled with ferocity, Gwynplaine fell into a reverie.

An assembly in mad merriment drifts as chance directs, and loses its compass when it gives itself to laughter. None knew whither they were tending, or what they were doing. The House was obliged to rise, adjourned by the Lord Chancellor, "owing to extraordinary circumstances," to the next day. The peers broke up. They bowed to the royal throne and departed. Echoes of prolonged laughter were heard losing themselves in the corridors.

Assemblies, besides their official doors, have--under tapestry, under projections, and under arches--all sorts of hidden doors, by which the members escape like water through the cracks in a vase. In a short time the chamber was deserted. This takes place quickly and almost imperceptibly, and those places, so lately full of voices, are suddenly given back to silence.

Reverie carries one far; and one comes by long dreaming to reach, as it

were, another planet.

Gwynplaine suddenly awoke from such a dream. He was alone. The chamber was empty. He had not even observed that the House had been adjourned. All the peers had departed, even his sponsors. There only remained here and there some of the lower officers of the House, waiting for his lordship to depart before they put the covers on and extinguished the lights.

Mechanically he placed his hat on his head, and, leaving his place, directed his steps to the great door opening into the gallery. As he was passing through the opening in the bar, a doorkeeper relieved him of his peer's robes. This he scarcely felt. In another instant he was in the gallery.

The officials who remained observed with astonishment that the peer had gone out without bowing to the throne!

CHAPTER VIII.

HE WOULD BE A GOOD BROTHER, WERE HE NOT A GOOD SON.

There was no one in the gallery.

Gwynplaine crossed the circular space, from whence they had removed the arm-chair and the tables, and where there now remained no trace of his investiture. Candelabra and lustres, placed at certain intervals, marked the way out. Thanks to this string of light, he retraced without difficulty, through the suite of saloons and galleries, the way which he had followed on his arrival with the King-at-Arms and the Usher of the Black Rod. He saw no one, except here and there some old lord with tardy steps, plodding along heavily in front of him.

Suddenly, in the silence of those great deserted rooms, bursts of indistinct exclamations reached him, a sort of nocturnal clatter unusual in such a place. He directed his steps to the place whence this noise proceeded, and found himself in a spacious hall, dimly lighted, which was one of the exits from the House of Lords. He saw a great glass door open, a flight of steps, footmen and links, a square outside, and a few coaches waiting at the bottom of the steps.

This was the spot from which the noise which he had heard had proceeded.

Within the door, and under the hall lamp, was a noisy group in a storm of gestures and of voices.

Gwynplaine approached in the gloom.

They were quarrelling. On one side there were ten or twelve young lords, who wanted to go out; on the other, a man, with his hat on, like

themselves, upright and with a haughty brow, who barred their passage.

Who was this man? Tom-Jim-Jack.

Some of these lords were still in their robes, others had thrown them off, and were in their usual attire. Tom-Jim-Jack wore a hat with plumes--not white, like the peers; but green tipped with orange. He was embroidered and laced from head to foot, had flowing bows of ribbon and lace round his wrists and neck, and was feverishly fingering with his left hand the hilt of the sword which hung from his waistbelt, and on the billets and scabbard of which were embroidered an admiral's anchors.

It was he who was speaking and addressing the young lords; and Gwynplaine overheard the following:--

"I have told you you are cowards. You wish me to withdraw my words. Be it so. You are not cowards; you are idiots. You all combined against one man. That was not cowardice. All right. Then it was stupidity. He spoke to you, and you did not understand him. Here, the old are hard of hearing, the young devoid of intelligence. I am one of your own order to quite sufficient extent to tell you the truth. This new-comer is strange, and he has uttered a heap of nonsense, I admit; but amidst all that nonsense there were some things which were true. His speech was confused, undigested, ill-delivered. Be it so. He repeated, 'You know, you know,' too often; but a man who was but yesterday a clown at a fair cannot be expected to speak like Aristotle or like Doctor Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury. The vermin, the lions, the address to the

under-clerks--all that was in bad taste. Zounds! who says it wasn't? It was a senseless and fragmentary and topsy-turvy harangue; but here and there came out facts which were true. It is no small thing to speak even as he did, seeing it is not his trade. I should like to see you do it.
Yes, you! What he said about the lepers at Burton Lazars is an undeniable fact. Besides, he is not the first man who has talked nonsense. In fine, my lords, I do not like to see many set upon one.
Such is my humour; and I ask your lordships' permission to take offence. You have displeased me; I am angry. I am grateful to God for having drawn up from the depth of his low existence this peer of England, and for having given back his inheritance to the heir; and, without heeding whether it will or will not affect my own affairs, I consider it a beautiful sight to see an insect transformed into an eagle, and Gwynplaine into Lord Clancharlie. My lords, I forbid you holding any opinion but mine. I regret that Lord Lewis Duras should not be here. I should like to insult him. My lords, it is Fermain Clancharlie who has been the peer, and you who have been the mountebanks. As to his laugh, it is not his fault. You have laughed at that laugh; men should not laugh at misfortune. If you think that people cannot laugh at you as well, you are very much mistaken. You are ugly. You are badly dressed. My Lord Haversham, I saw your mistress the other day; she is hideous--a duchess, but a monkey. Gentlemen who laugh, I repeat that I should like to hear you try to say four words running! Many men jabber; very few speak. You imagine you know something, because you have kept idle terms at Oxford or Cambridge, and because, before being peers of England on the benches of Westminster, you have been asses on the benches at Gonville and Caius. Here I am; and I choose to stare you in the face.

You have just been impudent to this new peer. A monster, certainly; but a monster given up to beasts. I had rather be that man than you. I was present at the sitting, in my place as a possible heir to a peerage. I heard all. I have not the right to speak; but I have the right to be a gentleman. Your jeering airs annoyed me. When I am angry I would go up to Mount Pendlehill, and pick the cloudberry which brings the thunderbolt down on the gatherer. That is the reason why I have waited for you at the door. We must have a few words, for we have arrangements to make. Did it strike you that you failed a little in respect towards myself? My lords, I entertain a firm determination to kill a few of you. All you who are here--Thomas Tufton, Earl of Thanet; Savage, Earl Rivers; Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland; Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester; you Barons, Gray of Rolleston, Cary Hunsdon, Escrick, Rockingham, little Carteret; Robert Darcy, Earl of Holderness; William, Viscount Hutton; and Ralph, Duke of Montagu; and any who choose--I, David Dirry-Moir, an officer of the fleet, summon, call, and command you to provide yourselves, in all haste, with seconds and umpires, and I will meet you face to face and hand to hand, to-night, at once, to-morrow, by day or night, by sunlight or by candlelight, where, when, or how you please, so long as there is two sword-lengths' space; and you will do well to look to the flints of your pistols and the edges of your rapiers, for it is my firm intention to cause vacancies in your peerages.--Ogle Cavendish, take your measures, and think of your motto, Cavendo tutus.--Marmaduke Langdale, you will do well, like your ancestor, Grindold, to order a coffin to be brought with you.--George Booth, Earl of Warrington, you will never again see the County Palatine of Chester, or your labyrinth like that of Crete, or the high towers of

Dunham Massy!--As to Lord Vaughan, he is young enough to talk impertinently, and too old to answer for it. I shall demand satisfaction for his words of his nephew Richard Vaughan, Member of Parliament for the Borough of Merioneth.--As for you, John Campbell, Earl of Greenwich, I will kill you as Achon killed Matas; but with a fair cut, and not from behind, it being my custom to present my heart and not my back to the point of the sword.--I have spoken my mind, my lords. And so use witchcraft if you like. Consult the fortune-tellers. Grease your skins with ointments and drugs to make them invulnerable; hang round your necks charms of the devil or the Virgin. I will fight you blest or curst, and I will not have you searched to see if you are wearing any wizard's tokens. On foot or on horseback, on the highroad if you wish it, in Piccadilly, or at Charing Cross; and they shall take up the pavement for our meeting, as they unpaved the court of the Louvre for the duel between Guise and Bassompierre. All of you! Do you hear? I mean to fight you all.--Dorme, Earl of Caernarvon, I will make you swallow my sword up to the hilt, as Marolles did to Lisle Mariveaux, and then we shall see, my lord, whether you will laugh or not.--You, Burlington, who look like a girl of seventeen--you shall choose between the lawn of your house in Middlesex, and your beautiful garden at Londesborough in Yorkshire, to be buried in.--I beg to inform your lordships that it does not suit me to allow your insolence in my presence. I will chastise you, my lords. I take it ill that you should have ridiculed Lord Fermain Clancharlie. He is worth more than you. As Clancharlie, he has nobility, which you have; as Gwynplaine, he has intellect, which you have not. I make his cause my cause, insult to him insult to me, and your ridicule my wrath. We shall see who will come out of this affair alive, because I

challenge you to the death. Do you understand? With any arm, in any fashion, and you shall choose the death that pleases you best; and since you are clowns as well as gentlemen, I proportion my defiance to your qualities, and I give you your choice of any way in which a man can be killed, from the sword of the prince to the fist of the blackguard."

To this furious onslaught of words the whole group of young noblemen answered by a smile. "Agreed," they said.

"I choose pistols," said Burlington.

"I," said Escrick, "the ancient combat of the lists, with the mace and the dagger."

"I," said Holderness, "the duel with two knives, long and short, stripped to the waist, and breast to breast."

"Lord David," said the Earl of Thanet, "you are a Scot. I choose the claymore."

"I the sword," said Rockingham.

"I," said Duke Ralph, "prefer the fists; 'tis noblest."

Gwynplaine came out from the shadow. He directed his steps towards him whom he had hitherto called Tom-Jim-Jack, but in whom now, however, he began to perceive something more. "I thank you," said he, "but this is

my business."

Every head turned towards him.

Gwynplaine advanced. He felt himself impelled towards the man whom he heard called Lord David--his defender, and perhaps something nearer. Lord David drew back.

"Oh!" said he. "It is you, is it? This is well-timed. I have a word for you as well. Just now you spoke of a woman who, after having loved Lord Linnæus Clancharlie, loved Charles II."

"It is true."

"Sir, you insulted my mother."

"Your mother!" cried Gwynplaine. "In that case, as I guessed, we are--"

"Brothers," answered Lord David, and he struck Gwynplaine. "We are brothers," said he; "so we can fight. One can only fight one's equal; who is one's equal if not one's brother? I will send you my seconds; to-morrow we will cut each other's throats."

BOOK THE NINTH.