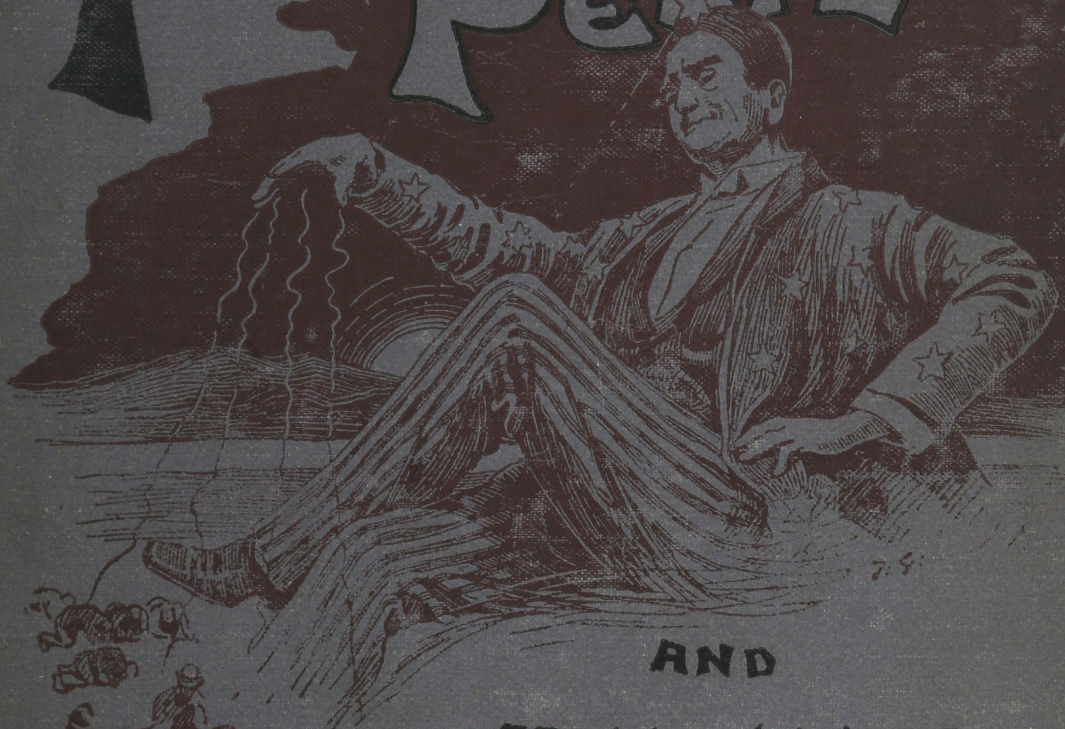


THE GREAT PERIL



AND

HOW IT WAS
AVERTED:

BY

W. LAIRD CLOWES

Aggie

With much love from

Allypi.

Christmas 1893.

THE GREAT PERIL

ADVERTISEMENT.

This story is not intended to found a school of philosophic doubt, to advocate a fad, to preach a sermon, to illustrate a theory, to point a moral, to teach a lesson, to throw contempt upon a cause, to deride a set of religious convictions, to attack an individual or a party, or to advertise a patent medicine. Excellent stories to do all these and many other things have been written, and have had their effect. It now occurs to me humbly to endeavour to strike out a novel course, and to tell a story the object of which shall be merely to entertain the benevolent reader. And who knows but that the reader, if he be very benevolent indeed, may be even so gracious as to find in the story, besides entertainment, something whereon, for yet an hour, he may muse, ere he drops off to the good sleep which, with all my heart, I wish him ?

THE
GREAT PERIL
AND
HOW IT WAS AVERTED

BY
W. LAIRD CLOWES
AUTHOR OF "THE CAPTAIN OF THE MARY ROSE"

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THE GREAT PERIL.

CHAPTER I.

HIRAM Y. HANCOCK'S SCHEME.

THE Barnham election was over, and the votes were being counted in the Town Hall. The result of the poll, it was understood would be declared at about half-past ten ; and, in the meantime the dimly-lighted streets of the old-fashioned seaport were thronged with excited and expectant crowds. Although, except on Saturdays, all that was respectable in and around Barnham was usually indoors long before ten, and although it was already a quarter past by St. Benet's clock, no one, on that particular evening, dreamt of going to bed without having first learnt whether the borough seat had been won by Beauchamp or by Hicks.

Jonathan Hicks, ship-chandler of Barley Hard, was the popular candidate. He was a burly, red-faced person, with a loud voice and a good many more aspirations than aspirates ; but, in spite of his lack of education and of his blunt manners, he was generally trusted and looked up to. There was no honester or more public-spirited man in the town ; he had been twice mayor ; he was generous and clear-headed ; and absolutely the only serious objec-

tion that his political opponents could urge against him was his unbending Radicalism.

Lord George Beauchamp, his rival, was a man of entirely different stamp. He was as ambitious as Hicks, as honest as well, and perhaps as public-spirited and as generous, though in a different way. He was as clear-headed also; but his perspicacity applied chiefly to abstract and theoretical matters, while the perspicacity of Hicks was essentially practical. Lord George could write an admirably reasoned paper, say, on Bishop Butler's doctrine of "Passive Impressions," but could be easily swindled by his bailiff. Hicks knew little and heeded less of philosophical questions, but was a thorough man of business.

Of Hicks's origin and family connections, all that need be said is that the ex-mayor was a self-made man, and that he had married the daughter of a wealthy Barnham butcher. Lord George Beauchamp's ancestry will be found fully set forth in Debrett, which also states that "his lordship married Mamie, only daughter of General Silas K. Hancock, of Illinois, U.S.A." Among the things which the Peerage omits to declare in this connection is the fact that Miss Mamie Hancock brought to her noble husband a dowry of half-a-million sterling, the part profits of her father's successful speculations in oil.

Lady George had been driving about the town all day in her victoria, sometimes with and sometimes without her husband. When she appeared with him at her side, the Barnham voters of both parties had the privilege of seeing as handsome a couple as ever tried to influence the result of a Parliamentary election; and it must be admitted that the spectacle produced a certain amount of effect. When she appeared without him, his place was occupied by a dark-complexioned gentleman who was a stranger in Barnham, but who was clearly on very intimate terms with the lovely wife of the Conservative candidate. That the Barnham people did not know him is in no way surprising; for he was her

Ladyship's brother, Hiram Y. Hancock, who had arrived from New York but two days before, and had come over expressly to see for himself what manner of thing an English contested election might be. He was a good deal older than Lady George, and quite unlike her. She was tall and fair and vivacious; he was dark, and thick-set and reserved; her expression was soft and lovable; his was hard, penetrating and inscrutable; yet, although he was unsympathetic and not even good-looking, there was in his appearance something which commanded as much attention as did the young red lips and laughing eyes of his companion, or the athletic figure and proud English face of Lord George Beauchamp.

St. Benet's clock chimed half-past ten, and almost ere the sound had died away, the double doors of the Town Hall were flung open, and the returning officer, followed by both candidates and a few favoured folk, came slowly forth to the top of the broad steps of the building. A small space immediately in front of the Hall had been kept clear by the police; but on the appearance of the returning officer, the crowd surged forward with a great roar of satisfaction, the police were driven in, and all was for a moment chaos.

The result was, no doubt, duly and formally declared. Very few, however, were near enough to hear it. Nevertheless, it spread with the rapidity of a flash to all corners of the market-place; and, in much less than a minute a thousand excited voices were shouting, "Hoorah for Hicks! Hicks for ever!" and a thousand hats and handkerchiefs were being wildly waved in honour of the happy ship-chandler of Barley Hard.

When the crowd had been gently pushed back again, and had grown weary of cheering, Jonathan Hicks came forward, beaming and mopping his shining brow with a red and yellow silk pocket-handkerchief of huge proportions. Lord George came forward too; but, although he was far from beaming, he was perfectly cool; his hair was as smooth as it might have been if he had only

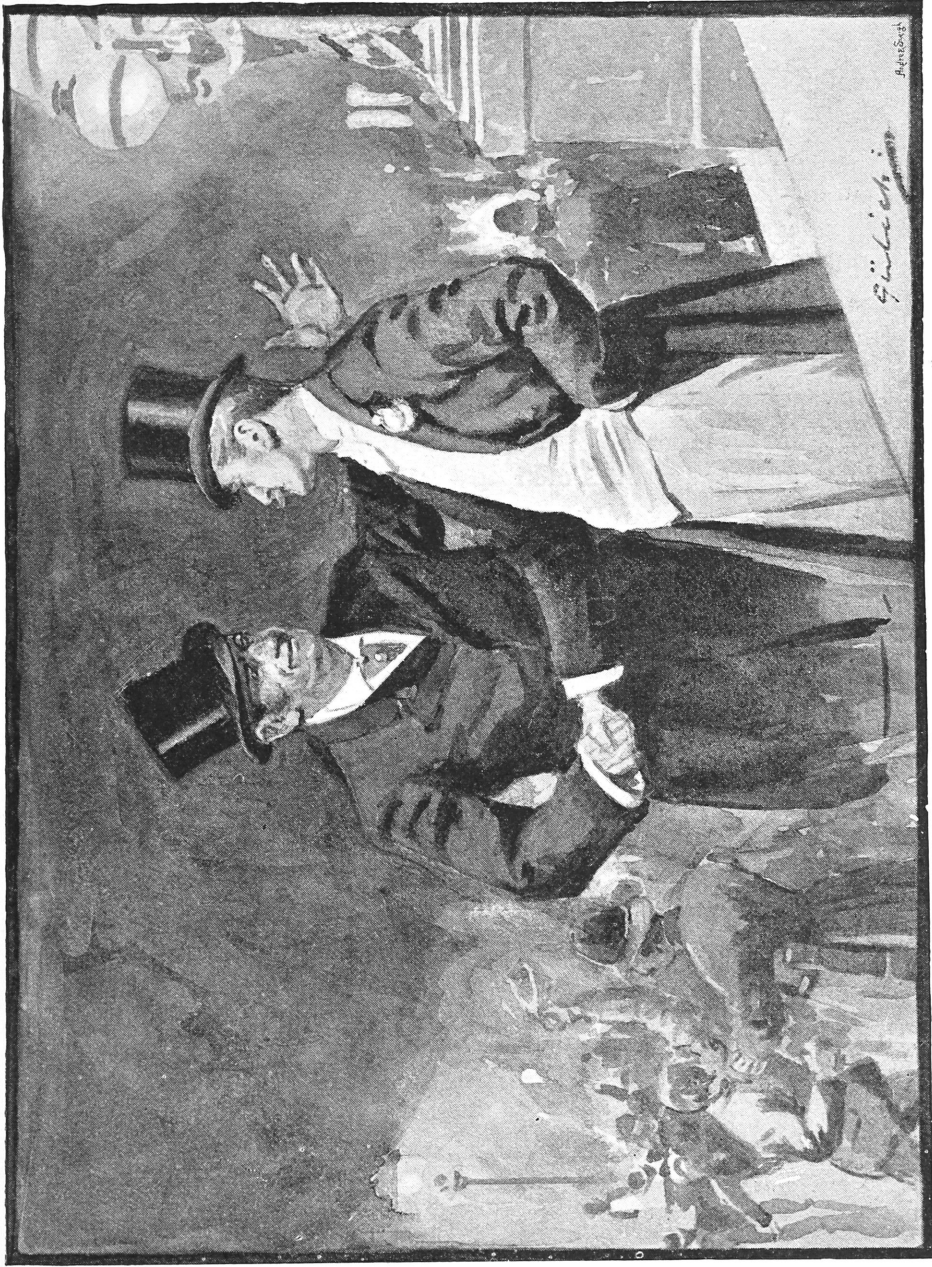
just finished brushing it, and the flower in the buttonhole of his beautifully fitting coat looked as if it had not been picked five minutes.

“Fellow citizens,” said Jonathan, “believe me, I thank you, one and all, from the bottom of my ’heart for the great honour you ’ave done me to-day, and for the great victory you ’ave won for the true principles of liberty. Lord George, I thank you, too. You ’ave be’aved in this contest in hevery way as a gentleman ought, and, between us, I am glad to say, nòthing ’as ’appened that I should like to ’ave altered. We ’ave fought it out in a friendly way; we know each other, and, I ’ope, respect each other better than we did. I’m pleased with the result—proud of it, I may say; but, I ’ope, Lord George, that you bear me no ill will, and that we shall yet ’ave the pleasure of seeing you in Parliament.” And he extended his rough right hand, which Lord George shook. “That’s right,” continued the ex-mayor, with apparent relief, as he slapped his late opponent soundly on the shoulder. “I knew you wouldn’t resent it. And now, fellow citizens, three cheers for Lord George!”

The cheers were given very heartily. Lord George, who had not altogether relished that smack upon the shoulder, spoke a very few words of thanks, and within ten minutes the great crowd, which had suddenly realised how late it was, began to disperse.

Jonathan Hicks went to the Radical Club, where he was entertained by his Committee. Lord George went to the Conservative Club, but dragged himself away as soon as possible, called for Lady George, who had been dining at the Bishop’s, and, with her and her brother, drove out before midnight to Barnham Place, his house, a couple of miles from the town.

His Lordship said little on the way. He was annoyed and disappointed: he still felt Jonathan Hicks’s hand upon his shoulder; and he was in so bad a temper that, when his wife, in the darkness of the carriage, placed her hand consolingly in his,



G. W. G.

REUTERS

"HICKS SLAPPED HIS LATE OPPONENT SOUNDLY ON THE SHOULDER."

he did not reciprocate the kindly pressure. Arrived at home, however, he courteously relieved her of her wraps, said "Good night, little woman, you must be very tired; run up and get off to bed," and kissed her. Then he took his brother-in-law's arm.

"Let's have a smoke before we turn in, Hiram," he said; "it will quiet me down."

Hiram smiled. "I thought that you fellows were too proud to allow yourselves to be upset, or, at least, to show it," he remarked.

"Oh, nonsense," returned Lord George. "Of course I'm upset. Who, in my position, wouldn't be? The mob is our master nowadays; and what is the mob? Who are the people who have carried Hicks in? Why, an ignorant and almost illiterate set of voters who are really little better qualified than my dog is for forming opinions on questions of policy. I'm annoyed that I have lost, but I am still more annoyed when I reflect that the votes of the better educated part of the constituency—for everyone must admit that most of the better educated people here are Conservatives—have been of no avail to-day."

"Well," said Hiram, "I have always been led to understand that the great beauty of your British Constitution lies in the fact that it gives you government by the people."

"Confound the people!" ejaculated Lord George, "if by the people you mean the semi-brainless majority."

"But that semi-brainless majority has not sent a semi-brainless man to Parliament. Mr. Hicks is no fool."

"I grant you that. Considering his position and his opportunities, he is a marvellous man, and a man whom I much respect; though I do wish that he wouldn't paw one so in conversation. But it riles me, nevertheless, to think that in England the semi-brainless mob is really the source of all power."

"What source of power would you have then? With us in America the source is wealth, the almighty dollar."

“No, I don't respect mere riches any more than I respect mere numbers.”

“Surely you don't advocate autocratic rule, as they have it in Russia?”



"BUT WE MIGHT TRY THE EXPERIMENT."

"Certainly not."

"And you wouldn't, I suppose, make birth the exclusive source

of power? You see, idiots and scoundrels are as apt to be born in palaces as in cottages."

"True; but isn't there an obvious way out of the difficulty. Why not give the power exclusively to brains? Why not let the strong intelligences rule the weak? That seems to be natural. In barbarous times, in the physical age, physical might was dominant. In this intellectual age mental might ought to be dominant."

Hiram regarded the glowing end of his cigar with an expression which began by being indifferent and finished by being strangely interested. A grim smile stole across his face.

"Do you know, George," he said, after a pause, "that your opinions remind me of a curious idea which occurred to me a few months ago at home. I, too, thought that it might be a good thing if mental might were dominant. But I came to the conclusion that the result would, perhaps, be the introduction of a form of slavery more irksome than the slavery which used to exist in our country; and that, upon the whole, it is better to compromise. If you give exclusive power to the strongest, physically or mentally, you risk the oppression of the weak, and you encourage the evolution of the tyrant, who is the strongest of those who are strong. That, at least, is what appears to me as probable. But we might try the experiment."

"Try the experiment!" cried Lord George. "How on earth can we try the experiment?"

"Oh! I have thought it all out. Possibly I should have tried it in America when the idea first occurred to me, but at the time I was too busy, and now I am rather glad I didn't make the attempt."

"What do you mean, Hiram? You talk about a wholesale transfer of the basis of power as you might talk of moving a plant from one part of a garden to another. It isn't so easy. Indeed, it is impossible. Do you expect the many-headed, power-invested

multitude to allow you or anyone else to deprive it of its most cherished possession?"

"The multitude can't prevent me. The natural bases of power are strength and knowledge. We submit to be ruled unnaturally; but the natural law can be revived. By physical force you can still coerce the multitude, and by the force of intellect and knowledge you can still lead or drive it. I'm not much interested in British politics; they are not my affair. But I'm willing to make the experiment if you like."

"What experiment?"

"The experiment of attempting to take away all power from the masses and to transfer it to the natural rulers of men, the men of dominant knowledge."

"Are you deliberately talking nonsense?" laughed Lord George, "or are you so sleepy as not to know what you are saying?"

"Neither," said the American, shortly. "I know what I am talking about, and I mean what I say."

"But to do what you suggest involves nothing short of a revolution, and very probably a bloody one."

"Why, certainly it involves a revolution," acquiesced Hiram calmly. "As I say, British politics are not my affair. If something bad were to happen to the Old Country it wouldn't hurt me much. I decided some time ago not to try the experiment in America; if anything bad happened there it might hurt me a good deal. But here, if you think the change would be beneficial we will attempt it. Mind you, I approach the business without the slightest feeling either one way or the other. I shall be like a chemist making an interesting laboratory experiment. It will give me scientific pleasure; but my ambition and enthusiasm, if I have any, won't be at stake. I shall watch the result, and perhaps be amused. If I also make a profit, why, all the better for me."

"How and where are you going to begin?" yawned Lord George, who had finished his cigar and was ready to go to bed.

"That's my business," answered Hiram.

"But you have no kind of power or influence over here."

"Very well; we shall see whether I shall not manage to create some."

"Why, you barely know a dozen people in England."

"Perhaps I don't know half-a-dozen. But if I only know two, each of those two know two more, and so on; and thus, although I know only two directly, I may know hundreds and even millions indirectly. I don't mind telling you that in my experiment I intend to utilise the snowball principle."

"What's that?" asked Lord George, languidly.

"Well, when some enthusiastic person—generally a maiden lady—wants to raise a large sum of money, she starts a snowball. She writes to two friends begging each of them to send her say, one penny, and also asking each of them to send similar requests to two of their friends. The original series of two letters produces only twopence to the fund; but if the system be loyally worked and properly supported, the second series produces fourpence, the third, sixpence, the fourth, one-and-fourpence, the fifth, two-and-eightpence, and so on, the tenth producing £4 5s. 4d., and the twentieth—how much do you think?"

"Oh, I don't know; give it up!"

Hiram tore a corner off a newspaper, took out a pencil and made a rapid calculation.

"The amount, supposing everyone to have complied with both requests, would be £4,369 1s. 4d., and that sum being made up of single pennies, the total number of persons contributing would be no less than 1,048,576."

"It seems to me to be a rather expensive way of raising funds. You spend a penny in asking someone to send you a penny, and

the other person spends a penny in sending it you. You're not going to raise the necessary funds in that manner, I hope?"



"MR. DIMBLEBY OPPORTUNELY ARRIVED TO EXPLAIN."

"I said nothing about necessary funds. I was only explaining my allusion to the snowball principle. I intend to make use of it, but not to collect funds; and you shall see the results, though I won't promise to let you see the methods."

"Well," said Lord George with another yawn; "let us go to bed now and talk about it again in the morning."

"There's nothing more to talk about. It's all settled."

Lord George burst into a weary laugh. "What nonsense we have been ——"

But he was interrupted by a servant who at that moment entered with a card.

“What’s the matter, Jones?” asked Lord George. “A card? Who wants to see me at this time of night? By Jove, it’s Dimbleby. Ask him to come in, Jones.”

“Who’s Dimbleby?” asked Hiram, as the servant retired.

“He’s my electioneering agent, a solicitor at Barnham, but I haven’t the remotest idea of what he wants.”

Mr. Dimbleby opportunely arrived to explain. He had ridden hard from Barnham in hopes of finding his Lordship still up, and was so excited and out of breath that he could at first scarcely speak.

“I waited at the Club,” he gasped, “to see various people; and just as I was going home, half-an-hour ago, in came a man to tell us that poor Hicks, who was being entertained by his friends at the Radical Club, had been seized with a fit of apoplexy, brought on, no doubt, by excitement.”

“Good Heavens!” ejaculated Lord George; “I’m very sorry.”

“And that’s not all,” continued Mr. Dimbleby. “I went round, of course, to inquire; but it appears that the poor fellow died almost immediately; in fact, before they could remove him from the room.”

Lord George turned pale from the shock which this news gave him. “Dead!” he cried. “Why, only two or three hours ago. . . Well! it is awfully sudden. I am sorry.”

“I thought you ought to know,” said Mr. Dimbleby apologetically. “It is almost brutal to mention the matter now; but I assume that your Lordship will stand again.”

“Don’t talk of it at present, Dimbleby. There’s plenty of time for that. Besides, in my present frame of mind I feel that it would be almost an unkindness to oppose poor Hicks’s friends.”

“Well,” said the solicitor, “that is for your Lordship to decide. I must be off. Good-night.”

When he had gone Lord George sank down in a chair, and was silent for several minutes.

"Of course you'll stand again," said Hiram at length.

"Oh, I suppose so," returned Lord George; "but we don't want to think of that now."

"Because," continued the American, "if you do so you will give me an opportunity of making a preliminary experiment in the direction of which we were speaking just now. I have no doubt whatever that I can guarantee your election."

"Guarantee my election! Why, to-day in a constituency of about six thousand voters, I polled only 1,296, while poor Hicks polled 2,980. The election will be held within a month. I haven't a ghost of a chance, and if I stand again, it will only be for the sake of the party."

"Leave it to me, my dear fellow," said Hiram in a convincing tone. "We will have a little revolution in Barnham, just to test the machinery, before we start the big revolution throughout the United Kingdom."

"Let's go to bed. I'm in no mood for the subject now," cried Lord George, as he rose.

He had previously seen very little of his brother-in-law. He had never much liked him, and he was now beginning to regard him as a blusterer, if not as a fool. "Hiram talks rather wildly, I think," he remarked to his wife next morning.

"Oh, no," said her ladyship; "Hiram means all he says."

"But he says that he can win me the seat at the next election, and within a month, can turn my minority of 1,684 into a majority."

"Does he say that?"

"Yes!"

"Then, George, you may be pretty sure that he will do so."

"But, my dear, you don't understand the impossibility of the thing."

"And you don't know Hiram as well as I do, George."

His lordship did not continue the conversation. "I hope," he thought to himself, "that lunacy doesn't run in the family!"

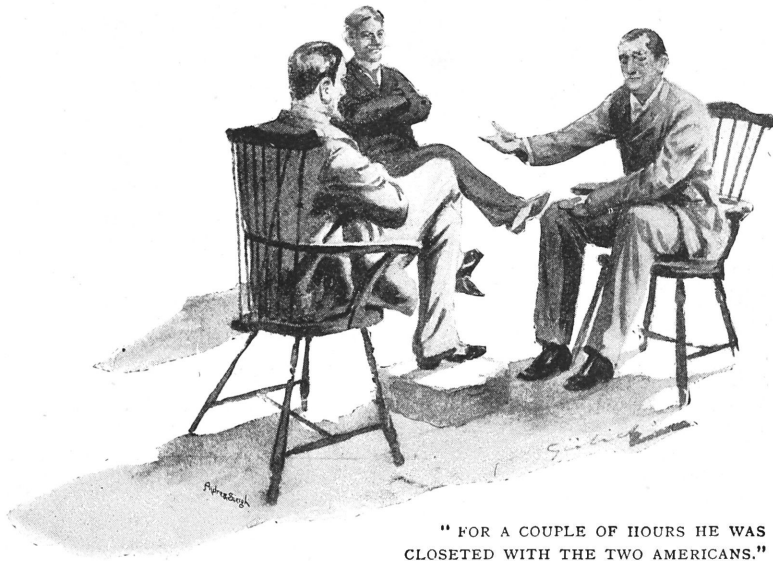
CHAPTER II.

THE SECOND BARNHAM ELECTION.

JONATHAN HICKS was buried three days after the election. If his majority had been a less thumping one, the ceremony would have been delayed for a week in order that the party might have as much time as possible wherein to mature its plan of campaign ; but as the dead man had left his opponent literally nowhere, it was not deemed necessary by the party managers to ask Mrs. Hicks to put off the funeral. The Radicals scarcely believed that Lord George Beauchamp would stand again so soon after his crushing defeat, nor did they care whether he would or not. It was generally felt that he had no chance whatever, and that the veriest carpet-bagger who should win the approval of the Radical Association must have the seat at his mercy. But Lord George, although, of course, he had no hope of being successful, felt on reflection that he could do himself little harm and might do himself much good by returning pluckily and promptly to the attack. The Carlton Club greatly appreciates that British doggedness which never knows when it is beaten, and the chiefs of a party are generally not slow to reward the efforts of a man who, being devoted to their interests, hammers away in spite of the frowns of fortune, and keeps a cheerful countenance in face of repeated repulses.

Lord George was rich, and the constituency, since it was only a small and thickly-populated borough, was not an expensive one.

Besides, he had an ambition to represent Barnham, and he well knew that if he declined to take up the cudgels, someone else might take them up instead of him, and so win a right to re-appear as a candidate on some more auspicious occasion in the future. On the evening, therefore, of the funeral—which, by the way, he attended—he formally signified his willingness to again seek the suffrages of the electors. He had previously said as much to Mr.



"FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS HE WAS CLOSETED WITH THE TWO AMERICANS."

Dimbleby, and every Barnham Tory knew of the decision long before Jonathan Hicks was put to his long sleep in a vault in Barnham Cathedral; but in these matters conventional decencies have to be observed, and Lord George observed them by refraining from publicly announcing his determination until an hour or so after the Bishop had pronounced the benediction.

It happened that at the time a member of the Radical Government was looking out for a safe seat, and naturally enough he

turned his eyes upon Barnham, which was without a candidate of his colour. The Right Honourable gentleman ran down for the funeral, with a portmanteau, in which was his address already printed. He came, of course, merely to do honour to the memory of poor Hicks ; but that evening, strange to relate, a deputation waited upon him in the most unexpected way at his hotel, and in five minutes persuaded him to carry the Radical banner. Next morning, ere anyone save the bill-poster was out of bed, copies of his address were placarded all over the town ; and by noon, when Lord George's bills had taken their places beside the others, the campaign had fairly begun. Lord George announced that, having so recently canvassed the borough, he would not insult its intelligence and occupy its time by canvassing it again ; but when Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock read this declaration, he bluntly pronounced it to be absurd.

"The whole thing depends upon canvassing, my dear George," he said. "Whether you canvass or not, I shall."

"But you don't know anything about English politics," objected Lord George. "If you canvass, you will be making all kinds of impossible promises on my behalf, and thus you will get me into hot water."

"Nonsense," said the American. "There's your address ; there are your promises. I'm not going behind the letter of the address, and, as it is written in English, I suppose I can understand it. But I have undertaken to guarantee your election, so you can't pretend to any right to tie my hands. This is an interesting experiment, and I'm going to carry it through."

"Well, be careful, for heaven's sake," implored his Lordship.

That morning Mr. Hancock despatched two telegrams, and in the afternoon he walked to Barnham Station and met two gentlemen, who, in response to the telegrams, came down from London. They were both American. With them Mr. Hancock drove to the "Crown and Sceptre," a quiet but respectable hotel, where, for a

couple of hours, he was closeted with them. When he walked back to Barnham Place, he felt so satisfied that more than once on the way he caught himself whistling, "As we go Marching thro' Georgia"; and when he encountered Lord George in the Park he could scarcely refrain from slapping his brother-in-law on the back.



"WILL YOU BET ON IT?" ASKED HIRAM.

"It's all arranged, George," he said.

"What's arranged?"

"Why, your election, of course."

"Hang the election! Last time I was beaten by 1,684. This time I shall be beaten by a hundred or two more. Everyone knows that."

"Will you bet on it" asked Hiram.

"Yes; I don't mind betting on it."

"But that isn't fair. See here: I'll

bet you that I get you a majority of a hundred."

Lord George laughed aloud. "You don't know the British elector, that's quite plain," he said.

"I don't know him," assented Hiram, "and that's why I offer a bet that I get you a majority of a hundred. If I did know him, I might be more sanguine, and promise you two hundred or five.

As I tell you, it's an experiment. I know the general nature of the result, but not the size of it. Will you bet?"

"Oh, if you like."

"Then we'll put an even thousand on the event. The seat's worth a thousand to you."

Lord George was too indifferent to think of crying "Done!" to his brother-in-law's offer. He took the bet rather to oblige the American than for any other reason; and, as he turned away, he thought to himself: "What a confounded idiot this man is! If he were not Mamie's brother I wouldn't have him in the house." Suddenly he turned.

"I say, Hiram," he cried, "I suppose you're not going in for a systematic course of bribery at Barnham, are you?"

"Bribery. Of course not," said the American.

"Because, you know," continued Lord George, "I don't want to be imprisoned, or anything of that kind. Bribery and treating and that sort of thing are serious matters over here."

"I know all about that. Don't you fear. Canvassing will do all the business. I'm going to begin to-morrow."

"H'm," muttered Lord George, as he turned again. "He's as mad as a hatter."

But Lord George was wrong. There was no trace of madness in the American's composition. The man may be mad whose schemes and ambitions, while far beyond his powers, seem to him to be of easy attainment; but Hiram was not a man of that type. His schemes were all well within his ability. The man who first suggested the utilisation of water-vapour as the motive power for a carriage was no madder than the American who, at Barnham, decided to apply to politics a lever, with the use of which in other forms and in other spheres, he in common with many others, had long been perfectly familiar. The electric light had been known to every one for half-a-century ere it was ever used for the illumination of streets and cities; and picric acid had been used by

dyers and calico-printers for years ere it occurred to anyone to find in it the base of one of the most potent of modern explosives. It is in the successful adaptation of old materials to new purposes, and of new means to old ends, that a man may most conspicuously demonstrate his sanity ; and, seeing how immense are the resources of nature, he would be to-day no better than a fool who should say categorically to his enthusiastic neighbour, "What you purpose is absolutely impossible." We are in a world of which we have not yet explored more than a little of the surface. Our deepest mines are but scratchings after all. Only a mile below us is a land of which we know nothing. And of what is above us we are as ignorant as of what is beneath our feet.

The Right Hon. John Bagnall began his canvass at the earliest possible moment. Everything was in his favour. He was an old Parliamentary hand, a well-known Minister of the Crown, and a clever speaker, and, above all, he wore the mantle of Mr. Jonathan Hicks. Lord George adhered to his decision not to canvass ; but Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock and Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock's two American friends from London canvassed most assiduously on his behalf. Between them they mapped out the borough into a number of small districts, and dealing systematically with three of these districts every day, they visited every house and made a point of seeing each elector personally, and of having a quiet interview with him. Every evening they met in a private room at the "Crown and Sceptre," acquainted one another with the results of their work, and entered up those results in a book which Mr. Hancock kept in his own possession.

After dinner each day Lord George chaffingly asked his brother-in-law how the canvassing was progressing, and the invariable reply was "swimmingly." But as he regarded the whole operation as so much sheer waste of time and energy, he took no serious interest in the business. He knew nothing about his brother-in-law's American assistants, who lived at the "Crown

and Sceptre," and never appeared at Barnham Place; he did not even know how thoroughly the voters were being visited on his behalf. In his mind his American ally was a meddling person who had to be borne with, but who was absolutely powerless for good, and comparatively so for evil. Lord George secretly wished his volunteer helper back in the United States, and found pleasure in imagining that the discouraging result of the election would, in all probability, drive him thither again; but he did not let Hiram too plainly detect his annoyance, and the American, happy in the possession of an impenetrable armour of self-complacency, never suspected that anyone could possibly look upon him as a nuisance.

Nor did Lord George begin to take his brother-in-law at all seriously until the affair of the Dean. The Dean of Barnham, unlike most persons of his cloth, was known everywhere as an exceedingly advanced Radical. He advocated the placing of legal restrictions upon drunkenness, as well as upon wife beating and petty larceny; he preferred the settlement of disputes by arbitration to their settlement by an appeal to force; he even hoped to see the disestablishment of the Church. He was, in fact, a dreadful and abnormal Dean, whom the Bishop and Canons, minor as well as major, would have ostracised had they been able. Never before was there a man with such big views and such a little body. He was a most uncompromising teetotaler and vegetarian, and he was quite ready, at a moment's notice, to undertake the reform of the world, and of all principalities and powers in it; but he only stood five feet two inches in his thickest boots, and therefore he was not half so dangerous as he might have been had he, like the bishop, attained a height of six feet four, and had an arm like the arm of Hercules and a voice like the voice of Stentor.

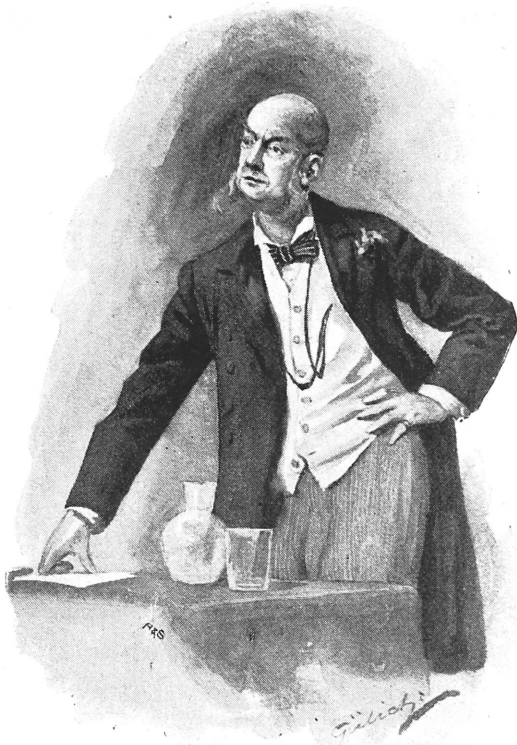
Yet, although the Dean's voice was as small as his person, it was seldom silent; and, consequently, everyone in Barnham knew

the general nature of his opinions. Nor was there any room, at the beginning of the contest, for doubt upon the subject of the Dean's political soundness; for he went out of his way to invite the Right Hon. John Bagsnap to stay with him at the Deanery until the election, and the Right Hon. John Bagsnap, in spite of his notorious affections for good dinners and fine wines, accepted; for he knew that Dean Smarrow was a shining light at the Radical Association, and must not be offended.

Some people—and among them the Bishop—thought that the Dean was unduly identifying himself with politics when he took this step, and when he began to drive the Radical candidate hither and thither, to canvass electors or to deliver addresses, and the matter was, very naturally, a subject of conversation one

evening at dinner at Barnham Place. "Ah!" said Hiram gaily, "it is all my fault. I haven't canvassed the Dean yet. I'll make a point of tackling him to-morrow."

"My dear fellow," remonstrated Lord George, "you might as



"THE RIGHT HON. JOHN BAGSNAP WAS AN OLD PARLIAMENTARY HAND."

well try to convert my park gates to the principles of Buddhism. Don't waste your time in calling upon Smarrow."

"See here!" exclaimed the American; "I am running this election on your behalf, and I intend to carry it through. You have only to be quiet. Recollect that we have a bet depending upon the result. You really must not injure my prospects by endeavouring to control my methods."

"Your prospects!" rejoined Lord George. "But how about mine?"

"Oh! according to your own admissions you have no chances of being elected, so your prospects cannot easily be injured. I'm going to canvass the Dean, anyway."

Lord George did not ask Hiram next day whether he had been to the Deanery, and Hiram did not volunteer the information. Indeed, the subject was forgotten by Lord George until the following Sunday morning, when it was revived in a very startling and unexpected way.

Lord and Lady George were in their usual places in the Cathedral; the Right Hon. John Bagsnap, who never went to church save when he was appealing to a constituency, sat in a conspicuous seat; the Bishop and several Canons were present, and there was a full congregation. The Dean preached, and it is not too much to say that his sermon will never be forgotten by those who heard it, for the little small-voiced Dr. Smarrow did a thing which he had never done before; he preached a violent political sermon. But it was not so much because the sermon was violently political as because it was violently, nay, passionately Tory that it was remarkable.

Long before "Firstly" was ended the Right Hon. Mr. Bagsnap had begun to open his eyes and to wonder what could have happened to the Dean. The man who had formerly advocated arbitration and international meekness was now a most truculent "Jingo," who plainly hinted that long peace was not necessarily

a blessing unmingled; the man who had formerly advocated the summary repression of the drink traffic, now spoke admiringly of



"THE DEAN PREACHED A VIOLENT POLITICAL SERMON."

Individualism, and deprecated grandmotherly legislation; and the man who had hoped to witness the disestablishment of the Church now warned his hearers most solemnly against the wiles of a

Party "which, with liberty, order and toleration on its banner, has tyranny, spoliation, and selfishness in its heart."

Lord George felt dazed and uncomfortable. Poor Mr. Bagnap, who had come to church solely to advertise himself, and who had the eyes of the whole astonished congregation upon him, would have liked nothing better than to sink into the earth and so hide his mortification. "Has that wretched little cur of a Dean," he thought to himself, "deliberately brought me here in order to hold me up to ridicule?" And, answering the question summarily in the affirmative, he sneaked out of church as soon as the treacherous preacher had ended, and ran across to the Deanery, whence his servant so quickly haled all his belongings that when the Dean himself returned he found no traces of his guest left.

Everyone talked about this thunderbolt from the blue. The Bishop was first furious and then alarmed. Perhaps the Dean was going out of his mind. The Bishop was a kindly soul, and he walked over to the Deanery, where he found the Dean in the garden.

"Dear Mr. Dean," he began. But as he had never spoken in that way before, and had always—for the two had been school-fellows—been less ceremonious, the Dean glared with amazement which the Bishop mistook for lunacy.

"I thought you were not quite well while you were in the pulpit," said the Bishop, "so I came over to enquire."

"Well?" repeated the Dean tartly. If there was one thing which he resented it was the suggestion that a man who drank no ardent liquor and never ate any meat could ever be otherwise than in robust health. "Well?" he repeated again. "Of course, I'm quite well, Jobson. But what's the matter with you? Why do you come here and call me 'Dear Mr. Dean'?"

"I'm glad if I was mistaken," said the Bishop. And as he walked across the Close to the Palace, with his hands behind him,

and his gaze on the ground, he thought to himself, "Poor old Smarrow! Never was strong. Ought to have played cricket and boated more. Ought to have taken the Indian clubs which I offered him last year, when I bought my heavier ones. Sad break up! Poor Smarrow!"

Lord George, on the way back to Barnham Place, told his wife that, in his frank opinion, the Dean was drunk.

"If not," he added, "there is no possible excuse for him. Apart from the folly that he has committed by talking politics in the pulpit, he has affronted Bagsnap in the most cruel and unpardonable manner, and he has done me more harm than good. I'm simply disgusted with him."

They found Hiram smoking a cigar on the lawn. As they came up he rose from his chair, tilted back his straw



" AS HE WALKED ACROSS THE CLOSE
HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, 'POOR OLD SMARROW!'"

hat, smiled with a conscious superiority, and exclaimed: "Well?"

Lord George did not connect him in any way with the Dean's conduct. "We have been to the Cathedral, and have come back again," he said, rather simply.

"Yes, of course! But—well, what sort of a sermon was there?"

"Oh!" interrupted Lady George, "the Dean preached a most extraordinary sermon, and George thinks that he must be——"

"Hush, Mamie," cried Lord George. "The fact is, Hiram, that the Dean preached an outrageous political sermon."

"H'm! But why outrageous?"

"Surely we don't want politics in the pulpits?"

"Depends upon the complexion, George," said Hiram, oracularly. "Yes, I canvassed the Dean, as I said I should."

"You don't mean to pretend that——"

"Yes, I do. I canvassed him, and I converted him; and, moreover, I suggested that it would be meet and proper for him to make no secret of his altered opinions."

"By Jove, he doesn't make any secret of them."

"I said that I felt sure that all thinking people in the borough had immense confidence in him, and that he ought to speak his mind."

"He has certainly spoken it. But he has made my cause ridiculous."

"We shall see," said the American; "but I hope not. Indeed, I am quite sure that, barring unforeseen accidents, you will be returned next Thursday."

Lord George entered the house half angry and half puzzled. He no longer believed that the Dean had been drinking; he felt convinced that he had indeed been converted. But how?

During the following days Hiram and his two aids canvassed as assiduously and as systematically as before. They did not finish their work until the very eve of the election, but when they had finished it Hiram's books showed them what would be the

general result. They did not publish what they knew, but the two men from London quietly made one or two little bets on the strength of it; and they and their employer were probably the only people in all England who were not thunderstruck when, on Thursday night, the poll was announced. The figures were :

Lord George Beauchamp (C)	3,479
Rt. Hon. John Bagnap (L)	833
	<hr/>
Majority for Beauchamp	2,646
	<hr/>

In less than a month a Radical majority of 1,648 had been transformed into a Conservative majority of 2,646. Never before had such a thing been known. Even to Lord George the news came like the shock of a sudden cold douche. He went home to think and to wonder. Bagnap returned to London, fuming and cursing, and talking about a petition. But there was no petition. The verdict had been too decisive to be appealed against, and Lord George was not disturbed.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROLLING OF THE SNOWBALL.

THE comments of the leading London papers on the morning after the Barnham Election were amusing reading. The Conservative journals were, of course, uproarious in their expressions of satisfaction. The *Morning Post* prophesied a Conservative majority of at least two hundred at the next General Election, followed by a Conservative tenure of office for a whole generation. The *Standard* thought that Lord George deserved a Peerage, and that the Ministry ought to resign immediately. The Radical *Daily News* professed to find comfort in the fact that little more than three-fourths of the Barnham electors had recorded their votes, and entirely overlooked the consideration that even if all the abstainers had polled for Bagsnap the seat would not have been won for the Government. In the afternoon the *Globe* clamoured for a dissolution, and the *Westminster Gazette* published an elaborate array of figures intended to prove that the Radical defeat was a moral victory, and that bye-elections were matters of no moment. But upon one point all the papers were agreed. The result was a startling surprise.

At Barnham Place Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock accepted his success coolly and cheerfully.

“I’m not going to stop here, you know, George,” he said at the breakfast table.

“Neither am I,” said his brother-in-law; “I’m going to town to-day to take my seat.”

“I don’t mean that. I mean that, since this little preliminary



“‘I BELIEVE I WILL GO
TO LONDON TOO, AND THINK
MATTERS OVER,’ SAID HIRAM.”

experiment has turned out so well, I intend to carry it further. The question is, in what direction shall I carry it?”

“You had better offer your services to the Carlton Club, and take the Committee’s advice,” suggested Lord George.

“My dear fellow, this experiment was only a feeler. My only desire was to test my theories. Being an American, you know, I’m not a Conservative in your British sense of the word, and I have no object to gain by assisting the Conservative Party. I believe I will go to London too, and think matters over.”

But already, in his own mind, Hiram had formed a fairly definite idea of what should be his plan of action. He knew that, if he could apply on a large scale the principles which he had applied on a small one at Barnham, the possibilities of his personal future were brilliant in the extreme; and when any man, be he a republican or otherwise, knows this, his temptations to take full advantage of the situation are seldom resisted for long.

The most attractive position which any ambitious man can imagine for himself, is one in which he may lead humanity as a conductor leads an orchestra, or in which he may play on humanity as the organist at his key-board plays on the thousand pipes of his instrument, making concords or discords at will, using his power to bring forth all the resources of the organ, or restraining it to permit only a few notes to whisper, and shutting the lid with the proud consciousness that only for him, or for one like him, will the pent-up voices ever speak in the same way again. And Hiram was ambitious. He had worked for himself rather than for his brother-in-law; and though Lord George had, so far, reaped the benefit, the future profits of the undertaking should, so the American determined, go chiefly into his own pockets. The first expense of his proposed plan of action would be considerable, but by no means gigantic, and Hiram had plenty of money wherewith to pay the cost. Pecuniarily, therefore, he was independent. Socially he was not. In this country, American women are received everywhere; but American men, unless they be Barnums or Codys or, at least, Lowells, are less readily

welcomed. They constitute the inferior half of the American race, so far as their social status in England is concerned; and, as a rule, if an American man be admitted to an English house, it is in order, either that he may bring with him an American woman, or that he may be exhibited as a curiosity. He is not always accepted as a friend or as an equal. His social position here is, in fact, much like that of the man who comes to an evening party to give a musical sketch, or to do some conjuring tricks. He may turn out to be a presentable fellow enough; but nothing of the kind is expected of him.

This was to Hiram's disadvantage. Had he been in Lord George's position his path would have been easier, for he could have begun at once his canvass, as he called it, among the "classes." And, in England, the prestige of persons of title is still most valuable as the starting of any new thing. Since he was not in Lord George's position he had to begin at a lower stratum of the social lump, and thence to work upwards as well as downwards. But the difficulty was not serious. There is scarcely one of us who is not on speaking terms with some man of rank or distinction; there is not one of us who does not know someone who is on intimate terms with a person of consequence. Hiram's snowball principle would help him to get over the difficulty. He, as the centre of the snowball, might be unknown; but he would soon be in touch, directly or indirectly, with every variety of celebrity and obscurity. He calculated that only twenty-five rolls of the ball would suffice to put him in touch with everyone in England; and he knew that if he could obtain trustworthy assistance in rolling the ball much less often, his objects would be at his mercy, and he might realise his ambitions in a week. For it was his plan to transform each individual whom the ball should take up into an agent as potent as any of the electors who had been influenced by the two American friends whose services had been so useful at Barnham. There

three men had done the work and won the victory. On the broader field of Great Britain a vastly increased number of workers was necessary to produce a similar result; but Hiram had no doubts about his ability to secure the requisite assistance from the right kind of people; and it was with perfect composure and confidence that he entered upon his task.

No American is capable of embarking on any undertaking without first establishing an office. Hiram established one the day after his arrival in London. He selected some rooms on the second floor of No. 4, a house on the east side of Trafalgar Square, and caused to be exhibited on the window blinds, and on the wall in the passage at the foot of the stairs, the not too definite legend:

“Hiram Y. Hancock, Agent.”

His next step was to communicate with the two Americans who had been his aids at Barnham. Both of them had lived for several years in London. One was the proprietor of an American “Exchange,” or headquarters for American travellers; the other was by profession a dentist. The former, Hannibal H. Hood, was a bright-eyed, fair young man, with a pushing manner; the latter, George Van Kidder, though well on in the forties, was equally energetic, both in looks and in action. The three men held two or three meetings in the office, smoked a good many cigars, and appeared to be delightfully idle, but they had started the Great Snowball on its course, and evidence that it was rolling along satisfactorily soon began to accumulate in their hands. One piece of evidence was the resignation of the Home Secretary.

The Home Secretary had gained a reputation for his pliability and meekness. He would permit mobs to demonstrate anywhere and everywhere; he did not always allow police interference, even when the crowd broke windows or displayed a tendency to loot shops; and if an appeal were made to him on behalf of the worst

criminal, he very seldom disregarded it. Suddenly he became stern and firm as a rock. A meeting in Trafalgar Square was by his orders dispersed by mounted constables ; he granted no more



"HIRAM Y. HANCOCK, AGENT."

reprieves to murderers, and he no longer shut his eyes when people evaded their legal responsibilities. The Government was alarmed. Such strictness, it was officially represented to the

Home Secretary would render the Ministry unpopular. The Home Secretary stood his ground, and was, if possible, stricter than ever, until the Premier politely requested him to resign; whereupon the Home Secretary did resign. That was a bad day for the Government, for the ex-Minister, who was a fine speaker, at once turned to rend his late colleagues.

He began to stump the country, declaring that law and order were being betrayed by their responsible guardians. He asserted—and what he said was, no doubt, partially true—that the age had become boneless and ill-disciplined, and that it was the duty of a Government to lead and rule, and not to mould its opinions to the wishes of provincial debating societies, or to take its policy from the mouth of casual speakers beneath the Reformer's Tree. In fact, he cried out for a strong Government; and it was a strong Government which Hiram Y. Hancock was bent upon establishing. The late Home Secretary's conduct excited much remark, but it was never publicly attributed to its real cause, the indirect influence of Lord George Beauchamp's brother-in-law.

In due time the ex-Minister applied for and obtained the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, and offered himself for re-election in order to test the feelings of his constituency. Thanks to the labours, on his behalf, of some of Hiram's emissaries, he was returned by an enormous majority, greatly, it may be, to his astonishment. This encouraged him to form a Party in the House of Commons—a little Party, but a noisy and energetic one: and thus, within three or four months of the second Barnham Election, Hiram Y. Hancock possessed a tangible following at St. Stephen's.

The following was there; so was the ostensible leader, the late Home Secretary. But the real leader was not. He sat day after day in his office in Trafalgar Square, receiving frequent visits from his immediate lieutenants, Hood and Van Kidder, but seeing hardly anyone else. Throughout he remained behind the scenes.

Even the men who, in all parts of the country, were engaged in furthering his personal ambitions, did not know him either in person or by name; and not one member of the new Party in the House so much as knew of his existence. Hood and Van Kidder, in the meantime, grew busier and busier. They ceased to smoke



"HOOD AND VAN KIDDER, IN THE MEANTIME, GREW BUSIER AND BUSIER."

cigars when they visited the office; they remained there no longer than was necessary; and they spent many of their nights, as well as all their days, in travelling hither and thither, in occasionally distributing mysterious little packages, in holding secret interviews with all sorts of men, and in making brief entries in books similar to the volume which Hiram himself had kept during the canvass

at Barnham. Hardly any business was transacted by letter or telegram. Hood and Van Kidder took their orders immediately from Hiram; each of them gave his orders directly to two other men; and so on. In a very few weeks the organisation assumed formidable proportions. Hiram himself was the Centre; Hood and Van Kidder formed what was called the First Series; their four lieutenants formed the Second Series; the eight lieutenants of these four formed the Third Series. When the Third Series had been formed there were but fourteen people in addition to Hiram in the Snowball; but, with the formation of the Fourth Series, there were thirty; with that of the Fifth, sixty-two; and with that of the Sixth, one hundred and twenty-six; and so the organisation grew, more than doubling itself, sometimes, in a week. And, although Hiram thus daily placed himself indirectly in communication with more and more individuals, scarcely one of them, with the exception of Hood and Van Kidder and the first few sections, had any suspicion that he was working in any way in the interests of an American who sat in an office on the second floor of No. 4, Trafalgar Square.

The efficiency of a snowball organisation depends, of course, in a large measure upon the perfection of the system. In Hiram's organisation, the death, say of Hood, would mean a reduction of force by one half, unless, indeed, Hiram or Van Kidder could unite the broken thread by placing himself in immediate communication with the dead man's immediate subordinates. Similarly, the death of a member of the Second Series would mean a reduction of force by one-quarter; the death of a member of the Third Series, a reduction by one-eighth; and a death of a member of the Fourth Series, a reduction by one-sixteenth. To diminish the risk of such heavy losses, Hiram took care to keep a careful register of the members of the first few series; but he went no further in that direction, for he very justly considered that any small reductions which his following might suffer, owing to the death or serious

illness of a member of some more remote series, would soon be compensated for by the continuous increase of the snowball. Members who might drop off for a time would eventually be re-absorbed again, just as the snow which falls from one side of the rolling ball is picked up again when another face of the ball comes into contact with it.

But although the greater part of Hiram's following did not know its leader either personally or by name, every man knew Hiram's photograph. The way in which copies of that photograph were disseminated over the country was marvellous. Hiram himself did not distribute them. He had been photographed by a first-rate man in Regent Street; but he merely ordered a dozen copies, and advised the photographer to keep the negative. That negative was soon unequal to the work required of it. Applications from all parts of the kingdom began to come in, not only from individuals, but also from firms of stationers and from other shopkeepers for copies of the portrait of "The Man." Hiram had not given his name to the photographer, and was, indeed, only known to him by a number. He had paid, as is usual, in advance, and had called for his copies and taken them away; but it somehow got about that No. 51,866 was "The Man," and it somehow became necessary for a very large number of people to possess portraits of the unknown. The photographer in Regent Street had to make first three and then twenty reproductions of the negative. Finally he had the portrait turned out by the thousand by some mechanical process, but still the demand increased. Some people insisted upon life-size enlargements, others upon cabinets, still others upon cartes-de-visite, hundreds asked for the photographs to be coloured, hundreds more required them on porcelain plaques, or as miniatures, suitable for inclosure in locket; and, after a time, the photographer threw up all his other business and devoted himself exclusively to the wholesale supply of pictures of his unknown customer.

All this was certainly not in consequence of the manly beauty of Hiram Y. Hancock's features. There are actors, actresses, parsons, and other people, whose photographs are sought for on account of the good looks of the originals. But Hiram, as has already been mentioned, was not good looking. He had a striking face, a face, as some have said, full of character; and he had fine eyes; but his expression was not attractive, his lower jaw was almost brutal in its massiveness, and few young ladies, seeing the portrait for the first time in a shop window, and knowing nothing directly or indirectly of Hiram, would have cared to have it for addition to their albums. Nevertheless, the portrait sold, in every form and in every size. Young ladies were not the persons who bought it, for the Snowball Organisation disregarded women, and no man ever explained to his sister, his mother, or even his wife or daughter, why he kept the mysterious portrait on his writing table, in his pocket book, in his locket, or in all three places, and perhaps in several others as well. Practically the sale was confined to men, and it may be safely said that the photograph of no other man, prince, hero, artist, or scoundrel, ever had half so large a circulation in Great Britain and Ireland.

In Parliament, the Party of Mr. Rawkings, the ex-Home Secretary, soon began to win the most extraordinary successes. Members of all the other Parties occasionally joined with it in opposing particular measures, and, more than once, the Government suffered defeat in consequence. In the constituencies the rapidly growing power of the Party was equally remarkable. From the first nearly every by-election added a recruit to its ranks, and, after a short time, every bye-election, with the greatest regularity, returned a Rawkingsite candidate. The party was not numerous enough, in spite of these gains, to do much in the House without assistance from the discontented section, and from the members sitting below the gangway; for bye-elections are not everyday affairs, and the Government soon learnt that it was

politic to discourage them as much as possible. But a General Election was being surely and inevitably approached, and, in the meanwhile, every week witnessed new defections from the Government and Tory benches.

“A strong personal Government” was the watchword of the Rawkingsites. It captured a few Tory members; and that was not altogether strange; but it captured also several Radicals; and that seemed to be almost miraculous. Indeed, it captured even more Radicals than Tories in the House. The situation was portentous. Ministers saw their once magnificent majority slipping away from them into the hands, apparently, of a man who, although he had been Home Secretary, was totally unfitted for the post of Prime Minister, and whose new opinions were so reactionary as to render it well-nigh incredible that any man sprung, as Mr. Rawkings had sprung, from the people should harbour them for a moment. If Rawkings had stood alone, his sanity might perhaps have been successfully challenged; but behind Rawkings stood five or six new and five-and-twenty old members of Parliament, and insanity has not yet been recognised as an epidemic.

What did it mean? No one seemed to understand. The Government found itself confronted by a monster, for the sudden apparition and growth of which it was impossible to suggest a reason. The Tories, in their anxiety about their own future, forgot to rejoice over the fate which was threatening the Radicals and were panic-stricken. There was an air of distrust and apprehension abroad as well as in the House. Nothing in the sphere of opinion seemed to have any stability. People saw the whole system under which they had been born and brought up tottering around them, and knew not what was shaking it to its fall.

Many a man has witnessed the same kind of inexplicable demoralisation, but not in men. In animals it is common enough. A drove of horses is feeding lazily on the prairie; nothing else is

in sight within the grassy horizon. There is no sound save the tearing and rustling of the herbage, the quiet munching of the animals and the occasional slow uplifting and putting down again of a hoof. Suddenly a stallion raises his nose in the breeze, flings back his mane, and shakes out his tail. Then, sometimes with a low cry and sometimes without, he starts forward. His first gentle trot grows into a gallop, and almost ere it has done so the whole drove is roused. Eyes become wild and fearsome, hoofs are stamped, long neighs are uttered, and, as the dust rises and floats with the wind, so the whole drove whirls away with it across the earth, madly, frantically, and as if pursued by demons. A drove thus started may rush for twenty or thirty miles, dashing down and up gullies with unbroken speed, not to be turned aside by any obstacle, leaping precipices and bursting fences. What does it all mean? Perhaps nothing. Perhaps that the leader stallion has been stung by a fly or pricked by a thorn. The others, if they could speak, could not explain their action.

And the whole country, six months after the second Barnham Election, was, thanks to Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock's subtle machinations, as ready to bolt as was ever any drove of horses on the prairie.

Hiram had good cause for satisfaction. His satisfaction was not, however, unmixed. At the beginning of the canvass both Van Kidder and Hood were bachelors. Hiram never concealed from them his convictions on the subject of marriage. "If," he said, "you want to be fat, sleek, respectable, and undistinguished, marry. If, on the other hand, you want to rise above your fellows, to make a name, and to grasp power, don't split your allegiance. Matrimony is fatal to most kinds of ambition. No sooner does a man put himself upon terms of intimacy with one of the other sex than he places himself at the mercy of a person who, besides being incapable of keeping a secret, is firmly persuaded that she renders a service to humanity by chaining him to the hearth-



"LUCY, A FAIR AND CHARMING ENGLISH GIRL
WHOM HANNIBAL HAD ACCIDENTALLY MET."

stone at which it pleases her to sit." Hiram often spoke in this way; and his theories were echoed by Van Kidder, to whom woman was the embodiment of all that is weak, foolish, and small in the world. But the sentiments were shocking to Hood, who, being younger, better-looking, and more favoured than his associates, was under no temptation to be cynical, and, indeed, professed a healthy and unspoilt devotion to the sex which the others affected to despise.

Nor was it only Hood's general sense of the fitness of things that rebelled. A certain Lucy Larkspur provided him with very special and particular reasons for dissenting from the scandalous views of Hiram and Van Kidder.

Lucy, a fair and charming English girl whom Hannibal had accidentally met, and inevitably fallen in love with, was the niece and ward of Miss Martha Marrable, a spinster lady, whose real feelings with regard to men were fully as hostile as Hiram's professed feelings with regard to women. She looked upon men as inferior animals, little if at all removed from the level of the brutes that perish, and, as she avoided them on principle, Hannibal's communications with Lucy were, from the very first, hedged round with many difficulties. To his credit be it said that before he made any proposal to Lucy he endeavoured to obtain the permission and countenance of her aunt; but Miss Marrable received him so coldly, and dismissed him so promptly, that from that moment he realised that, if he wanted Lucy as his wife, he must win her without the consent of her guardian.

There ensued a surreptitious correspondence and several clandestine meetings. The situation greatly interfered with Hannibal's work for Hiram, and Hannibal was conscious of it. After two months, therefore, of hesitation and doubt, he cut the knot by inducing Lucy, who happened to be of a sufficiently romantic disposition, to marry him privately. When the deed had been done, Hannibal confessed it to his chief, and Lucy to



"AFTER TWO MONTHS OF HESITATION AND DOUBT, HE INDUCED LUCY
TO MARRY HIM PRIVATELY."

her aunt ; and there were, in consequence, two dreadful explosions of wrath.

“So you have been playing instead of working!” exclaimed Hiram savagely. “Don’t you see that you are imperilling the whole business? A man who has a serious purpose in life ought at least to steer clear of petticoats until his purpose is accomplished.”

But even Hiram did not fully appreciate the effect upon his own plans of the step which Hannibal had thus suddenly taken. He did not know anything of Miss Marrable. He was not aware that his impressionable aid had mortally offended a very she-dragon, and so he was to some extent pacified when Hannibal promised to devote himself heart and soul in the future to the rolling and utilising of the Snowball, and never again to make a fool of himself.

Miss Marrable’s anger was not so easily assuaged. At first she threatened to turn Lucy out of her house in Grosvenor Street, to cut off the peccant girl with a shilling, and to see her face no more. But she was really attached to her niece, and, after a little reflection, she adopted less radical measures.

“I cannot imagine,” she said, “what has led you to entrust your happiness to this person. No man is worthy of such confidence, my poor child; but this man least of all. What is he? What do we know of him? He is certainly far beneath you—you, a Larkspur, with Marrable blood in your veins; he is probably an unscrupulous adventurer; possibly an even worse scoundrel. You do not know, my dear, what you have done. My first impulse was to cast you off. No; don’t cry; I admit it, but I shall not act upon it. You will need your old aunt badly enough one of these days, I suspect, so you shall remain here. And he shall come too. No one shall say that I have not given him every chance. But see him I will not. There’s a latch-key, which you may give him. Heaven alone knows whether it won’t lead to

our being all murdered in our beds. But I'm going to do my duty to you. You shall have the second floor, and I will have your

apartment shut off from the rest of the house so long as he remains."

"But why," ventured Lucy, "can't we have a house of our own, like other married people? Hannibal is not rich, but we can afford it."

"That I will never submit to," declared Miss Marrable, doggedly. "One of these days he would sell you up, or desert you, and then where would you be? No; you need your aunt's protection, my poor child, though you have sadly



LUCY CRIED A GOOD DEAL."

abused her kindness. But recollect, I will have nothing to do with him. When he comes here, you and I must be apart. When he

deserts you, you will be glad enough of your old aunt's society Lucy! I know the man is a villain."

Lucy cried a good deal, both then and when she repeated the substance of the conversation to Hannibal; but she submitted to her aunt's arrangements.

"The fact is," said Hannibal, "that I am very much engaged just at present, and that it would be rather inconvenient to go house-hunting and furniture buying. We might take apartments or go to an hotel; but then, I am afraid, you would often feel very lonely during my absence, and would hardly know what to do with yourself. Your aunt's plan will at least save you from having no one to speak to. And in a few months we shall be able to have a home of our own, for by that time I hope I may be free. In the meanwhile, too, there will no doubt be opportunities for us to weaken your aunt's unreasoning dislike for me, and that we must do if we can."

The establishment was thus provisionally arranged in accordance with Miss Marrable's plans. Hannibal received his latch-key, and, although he never came into contact with his wife's aunt, he experienced no other evidences of the fact that he was an unwelcome guest in the house.

But alas! for his promise never again to make a fool of himself. In less than two months he had told his wife the vital secret of all Hiram's plans; and that secret, when she gradually learnt to comprehend its importance, and when she began to be a witness of its power, changed the thoughtless and impulsive girl into a woman, and became a very terrible burden for her to bear.

CHAPTER IV.

“THE MAN.”

ELECTIONS and defections at length accomplished their work, and in the autumn the Government, having been badly and repeatedly beaten by coalitions of which the Rawkingsite Party always formed the nucleus, resigned, and Parliament was dissolved.

For some months Hiram Y. Hancock's Snowball had rolled steadily onwards. Van Kidder, during the whole period, and Hood, both before his engagement and after his marriage, had worked with the greatest possible assiduity; and everything was favourable for the full fruition of the mysterious schemes of the American gentleman who lived and laboured on the second floor of No. 4, Trafalgar Square. Nor was Hiram sorry when the moment for action arrived. During the laying of his plans he had shut himself up and had shunned all society save that of his immediate lieutenants. Very seldom had he gone out, and then only after dark and in disguise; and the restraint and confinement were rapidly becoming intolerable to him.

Upon the announcement of the dissolution his methods of procedure took a new direction. Putting himself into cable communication with New York friends, whom he had forewarned of his intentions, he obtained command, in the course of a single day, of a credit of \$5,000,000 or £1,000,000 sterling. The money

was supplied by a body of New York speculators who had quietly formed themselves into what was known as the "Old Country Development Trust Syndicate." With the funds thus placed in his hands Hiram rapidly covered the country with advertisements of all sizes. His posters, large and small, were on every hoarding, and almost on every wall and in every window in the towns, and on nearly every tree and gate-post in the country. His advertisements were in the columns of hundreds of newspapers. And all his announcements were reduced or enlarged facsimiles of a single original. Above, in large letters were the words, "Vote for:" beneath these was an engraving after the photograph of Hiram which was already familiar to every British man, woman, and child: and at the foot of all were the words, "'The Man!' Come and meet him at noon, on Wednesday, September 16th, on the summit of Clee Burf, Shropshire. Come! The moment has arrived!" Then followed directions showing how Clee Burf might be reached from all parts of the country. A rough map of the surrounding district was given; and the people were recommended to come supplied with food, and to be prepared, in case of need, to camp in the open air for at least one night.

At any other time, and in any other circumstances, an invitation of this extraordinary nature would have provoked nothing but laughter and contempt; but such was the peculiar demoralisation of the country that from the first this invitation was taken seriously. All the papers, no matter what might be their nominal party complexion, commented upon it as being destined to set in action the most potent political force that had ever been built up in England. Most of them speculated as to the personality of "The Man." The Barnham papers especially pretended to identify him with Lord George Beauchamp's brother-in-law; but the Barnham papers were obscure and of little influence. The American who had exercised so strange an effect upon the result of the second Barnham election had disappeared, and,



"HIS POSTERS, LARGE AND SMALL, WERE ON EVERY HOARDING."

upon the whole, the attitude of the Press was one of utter puzzlement and anxious expectation.

Some journalists hoped, and others feared; but not one paper was found making an effort to prick the swelling bubble. Every one seemed to be paralysed before the forthcoming apparition. People speculated, not whether anyone would go to Clee Burf, but how many would go; and whether the multitude would number a hundred thousand or a million and a half. The railway companies made special arrangements; people bought rugs, and mackintoshes, and even tents; the talk everywhere was of the Clee Burf Meeting; and, in the prevailing excitement, the old political Parties and their candidates singularly failed to gain attention. At the time there was no lack of pressing questions connected with home as well as with foreign politics, and both the Tories and the Liberals came forward with well-defined, and carefully-thought-out policies, but they found few listeners. "No; let us see what 'The Man' can do for us!" seemed to be the general cry. "'The Man' will right us! 'The Man' shall be our salvation!"

Individual speakers, here and there, bitterly ridiculed the popular madness. A few of the best-known men of both Parties did so. But they spoke to empty halls. Only the advocates of "The Man" possessed the ear of the people. A coalition Ministry had assumed office, Radicals and Tories joining for mutual support in the crisis; but, although they were good men and true who nominally governed the country, they had below them scarcely any upon whom they dared depend. The police, the post-office servants, the Navy, and the Army were all infected, disaffected and demoralised; and daily the ruthless Snowball rolled on and further demoralised all.

Clee Burf lies in the centre of an isosceles triangle, the apex of which, pointing to the south-west, is at Ludlow, and the base, facing the north-east, between Wenlock and Bridgenorth. It is

the south spur of the Brown Clee Hill, and it consists of a considerable eminence, on the western side of which is a broad, high shoulder that slopes gradually, for about a mile, downwards to an ancient Roman encampment, locally known as Nordy Bank. The conformation of the west side of the hill is, indeed, very similar to that of a huge human shoulder wearing an epaulette, the epaulette being the Roman Camp, and the slope upwards from it to the highest part being a wide wind-swept down, entirely bare of trees, and with only here and there a stunted growth of gorse, or fern, or heather, all else being close-cropped grass and thyme. From the crown of the epaulette the fall is somewhat more sudden as far as the little villages of Abdon and Clee St. Margaret; but even these places lie very high, and there is a long gentle fall for miles behind them to the bottom of the valley wherein winds the River Corve.

The whole district is sparsely populated, primitive in its habits, and customs, and unspoilt by railways. One may walk from Craven Arms on the west to Highley on the east, a distance of twenty miles, without crossing, or passing under, an iron road, and the way is as far and as free from Wenlock on the north to Tenbury on the south. In the very centre of this rural tract of hill and stream and wood, flanked to the north by Abdon Burf, and to the south by Titterston Clee, is the high open down which was selected for the great meeting.

The use of the place for such a purpose was no new thing. For generations the Nonconformists of the Welsh border have held their annual camp-meetings within the ring of the Roman entrenchments on Nordy Bank; and they hold them there still, in spite of the hardships of the ascent, and of the stiff breeze that often renders it difficult for the assembled crowds to hear the words of the harsh voiced elders.

There, on Monday the 14th of September, the multitude had already begun to gather. There were few women and scarcely

any children. The assembly was essentially one of men, and of men, for the most part, of the lower and lower-middle classes. Thousands of clerks in London, in Birmingham, in Manchester and Liverpool, and even in far-off Glasgow and Belfast, begged, or took, a week's holiday, in order to go to Clee Burf. If they could not obtain the holiday by asking for it, they took it without leave and with light hearts ; for the feeling among them all was that the meeting would mark the boundary line between the old order of things and something new, and that their fortune was secure, provided only that they should support "The Man." The invitation to "Vote for 'The Man'" was, of course, a senseless one, seeing that electors cannot vote for one whose name they knew not ; but this seemed to strike no one, or, if it did strike anyone, it only whetted his eagerness to see "The Man," to hear him, and to learn his name.

Hiram quitted London in disguise on Sunday, the 13th, and on the evening of that day secretly took up his quarters in a plain little brick chapel at Cockshut Ford, a solitary hamlet of a dozen houses scattered down the sides of the gully that divides the Burfs or hills of Clee and Abdon on the western side. Van Kidder and Hood accompanied him to Shropshire, but when they had placed their chief in safety they mingled with the people on the hillside and camped with them among the ferns.

That hillside, ordinarily so desolate and avoided, soon became a strange place to see. From any commanding point, but especially from the cairn which forms the summit of the Burf, the observer might watch little bands of people wending their way from all directions slowly up the hill. Nearly all arrived on foot, for there are no roads over the Clee, and nearly all carried knapsacks or bundles and rolls of blankets and waterproofs. But the pilgrims were not entirely dependent upon what they brought with them. There is good water upon the hill, and from Ludlow, from Wenlock, and from Bridgenorth the local tradesmen sent



"ALONE HE WALKED AMID THE
GROUPS OF SLEEPERS AND THE
SMOLDERING FIRES."

waggon-loads of meat, and bread and beer which found a ready sale, while pedlars of all sorts of things—but particularly of wraps and rugs—drove a brisk trade. One man brought up, across the springy turf, a cartload of little *tentes d'abri*, and sold all his stock on Monday afternoon.

Dotted over the hill were scores and then hundreds of little camps, each with its fire of dried fern and peat; but by Tuesday afternoon the numerous little camps had become one large one, and that night the population of a great city slept in the gorse and the bracken. And that night, when the camp was asleep and the moon shone softly o'er the strange scene, Hiram came forth from his hiding place in Cockshut Chapel to survey the promise of his next day's triumph.

Alone he walked amid the groups of sleepers and the smouldering fires. A few restless ones looked up as he passed, but he was too much muffled up to run any risk of recognition. Here and there he found belated parties playing cards or talking eagerly of the morrow, or singing and drinking; and as he turned from the noisier groups he ground his teeth and muttered angrily, "They are only brutes, after all. They deserve no better fate than I shall give them."

He returned to the chapel with satisfaction in his heart. What he had beheld assured him of success. There were still nine or ten hours wherein the multitude might further increase, yet already on Clee Burf there could not be less than a quarter of a million of men—all slaves of the unknown—all ready pawns and pieces for use in Hiram's game.

And morning brought hundreds of thousands more. Indeed, the people did not cease to arrive at any period of the night. They climbed the hill on all sides, and in a few minutes were absorbed into the ever-extending fringe of the camp. The roads towards the Brown Clee from every railway station round were crowded with passengers. They shot forth their streams of

humanity on the borders of the wide common-land that covers the hill, and the streams spread out and mingled densely and more densely, until, as the sun mounted in the heavens, the ashes of the fires were trampled under foot by the moving multitude, and the very turf was trodden into the ground.

They made a kind of tribune for "The Man." Some neighbouring farmers brought the wood, and the crowd gave rugs and shawls to cover it. Then the hillside stood and waited until "The Man" should come. Whence would he come? No one knew; and every far-off party of pilgrims, as it came within view, was in turn mistaken for the man and his escort. This, as time sped on and as the crowd grew more and more excited, led to a number of rushes being made, now in one direction and now in another. Taking advantage of one of these, Hiram, still muffled, walked quietly up from Cockshut Chapel, made his way to the tribune where Van Kidder and Hood were awaiting him, mounted it, unobserved save by them, and then, removing his hat and wraps, stood calmly courting recognition.

At the next general movement of the multitude he was recognised.

Everyone present knew Hiram's face only too well, and no one, looking at Hiram, was able to doubt that he was looking at the original of the famous photograph; yet in the face there was much that was not in the portrait, much that seemed to be unexpected, much even that appeared to be terrifying.

Those who first caught sight of him turned pale, and drew back as if a whip-lash had struck them. These, almost as much by their actions as by their words, communicated their discovery to those further off, and, as the news spread and the crowd faced inwards towards the tribune, a fierce, hoarse cry went up—a cry expressive not of delight, but of awe—a cry like the cry of the lost.

Hiram stood erect, with a smile of cynical pride, and surveyed the upturned sea of faces all around him.

He did not speak. As his eye fell upon those nearest to him they shrank back ; as it travelled to those most distant they drew forward ; until the throng formed a broad compact ring, in the centre of which was the tribune, while below the tribune were about a score of men among whom Van Kidder and Hood were prominent.

Still he did not speak. He seemed like a preacher engaged in magnetising a restless congregation ere beginning a sermon, yet although the crowd was now hushed and motionless, Hiram's lips did not move, and his eyes still travelled hither and thither, while the same triumphant cynical smile possessed his face.

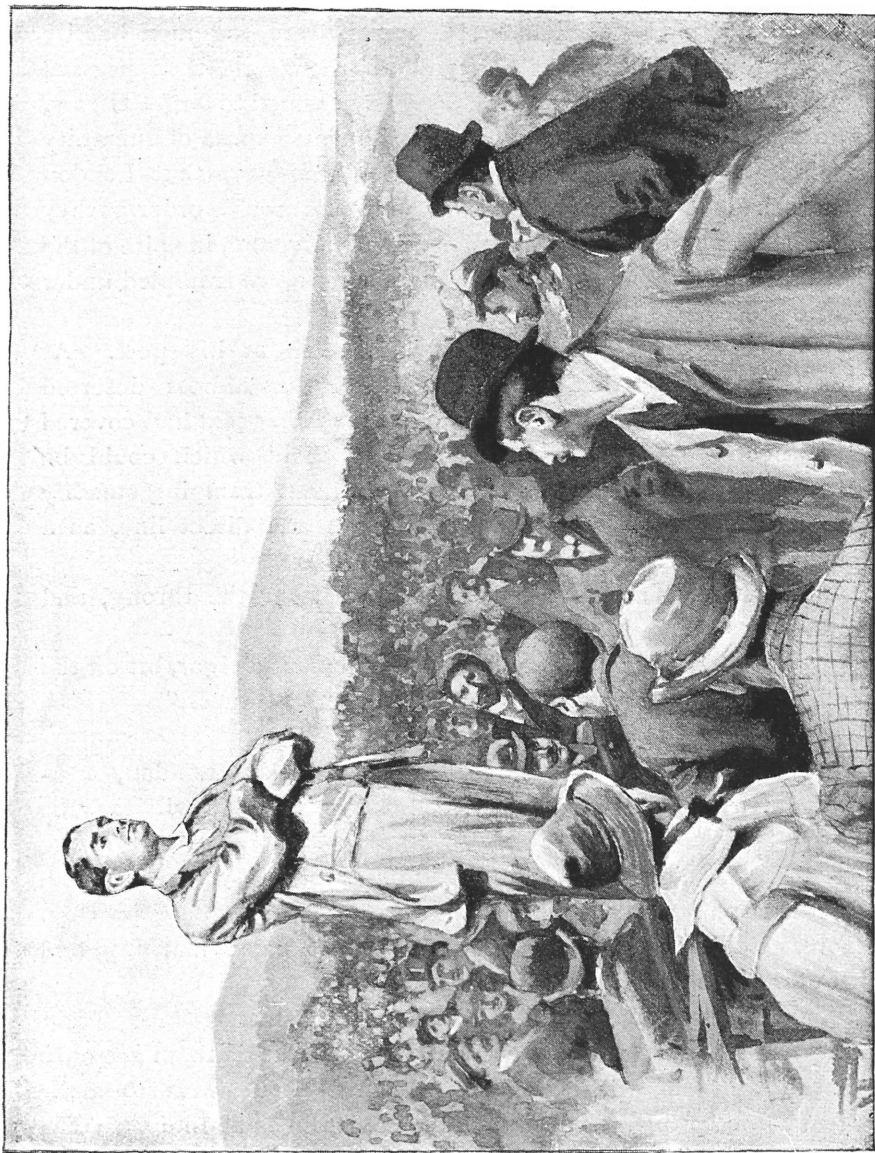
At last he spoke.

"Men," he said, in a voice which owing to the great stillness—a stillness which is unknown in cities—reached to a great distance, "Men, I am 'The Man!' I am a stranger, yet you all know me. Trust me! Here, on this mountain, we have ended for ever the strife of Parties. To-day there is but one Party in England. You cannot vote for me at the polling-booths ; but the polling-booths are not needed. Henceforward they are useless. This is your polling-booth. You have voted for me. Is it not so?"

And a great shout went up : " We have ! You are 'The Man!' "

"And I accept the vote," he continued. "You are mine! And I am yours!" Then, stretching his right hand to the south-east, he added, "To London, then. In London we shall meet again. In London 'The Man' will know his friends."

He had said nothing to excite or inspire the multitude. Indeed, he had said almost nothing at all ; yet, when he stretched out his arm, there was a perceptible movement of the crowd in the indicated direction. This was promptly assisted by the action of the men, headed by Van Kidder and Hood, who had gathered immediately beneath the tribune, and who were, in fact, the members of the first four or five series of Hiram's Snowball ; and the movement when it had once fairly begun, rapidly quickened.



"HIRAM STOOD ERECT, WITH A SMILE OF CYNICAL PRIDE, AND SURVEYED THE UPTURNED SEA OF FACES ALL AROUND HIM."

“To London! To London!” was the cry, as men hastily gathered up the little that belonged to them, and then pressed across the Down to the south-west. They seemed to forget Hiram, who still stood calmly surveying the immense mass of humanity at his feet. They seemed to forget everything save that London was their goal. They formed in some kind of rough order as they moved: but at first there was little regularity, and, in spite of the largeness and openness of the ground, some were trampled under foot by the stress from behind.

For an hour Hiram remained immovable at his post. At the expiration of that time, the hillside was almost deserted again, and all that remained visible of the throng that had covered it at noon was a distant cloud of dust, amid which could be occasionally distinguished a dark mass of men tramping steadily and fixedly towards Cleobury Mortimer on the direct line, as a pigeon might have headed, for London.

Van Kidder and Hood had escaped from the throng, and returned to him.

“Well,” said Hiram, calmly, as he pulled out a cigar, bit off the end, and lighted it. “That went off capitally, I guess.”

“It did so,” replied Van Kidder.

“It is just about one hundred and sixty miles to London,” continued Hiram, “and to-day is Wednesday. When will they be there?”

“They won’t do more than thirty miles a day,” ventured Hood.

“Humph: some of them will do fifty; some, perhaps even more. You’ll find some of them there on Sunday morning, and all of them there by Tuesday or Wednesday next.”

“Poor devils!” ejaculated Hood: “I pity them.”

“Bah! What are they good for? Nine-tenths of them are only senseless beasts, with enough of the ape about them to make them contemptible. These creatures exist for men like us. The question now is how best to utilise the pack of fools.”

"We must go to London," suggested Van Kidder.

"Why, certainly; but there's no need of hurry. We have two or three days. I guess I may cable the Syndicate that we have scored a big success."

"A complete success," assented Van Kidder and Hood together.

"But we still have to see this thing through. The Trust has yet to be formed and to take the business off our hands. I want to arrive at tangible results as quickly as may be."

"And so do I!" chorused the others.

"Then we must be busy. See here. Suppose we get across to Liverpool as soon as we can and discuss things by cable with the people at home. What shall be our figure, Van Kidder?"

"For the whole country?"

"Of course!" replied Hiram, as he re-rolled the displaced outer leaf of his cigar: "for the whole bag of tricks, of course:—three Kingdoms, gallant little Wales, and the islands, and reversionary interest in colonies thrown in, together with forty odd millions of fools, an ancient aristocracy, some charming old ruins, Shakespeare's genuine birthplace, the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, and sundries. Great Scott!" he continued: "who would believe that a nation with all that and much more, with the most splendid past in all history, and with the best position in the world, could be so easily taken in and done for by you and me!"

Van Kidder laughed. Hood looked serious.

Hiram buttoned his coat, for the autumn wind was chill. "Come," he said, "let us be off. We must find a horse and cart somewhere and make the best of our way north. If we drive far enough we must strike a railroad, and then, if the cars are still running, we may be able to get to Liverpool to-night."

They descended the gully to Cockshut Ford. The little hamlet was deserted save by the women and children, for all the men had gone first to the hill, and then with the multitude in the

direction of London. But a horse and rough cart were at last procured; and by half-past two the three Americans, Van Kidder driving, were jolting along the ill-made road that runs through Tugford to Corve Dale, and there joins the highway to Much Wenlock. That night, very late, they reached Liverpool and slept at the London and North-Western Hotel.

And, in the meantime, the great throng from Clee Burf pressed forward doggedly on its long march to London.

CHAPTER V.

THE FORMING OF THE TRUST.

HIRAM Y. HANCOCK had, of course, a code by means of which he could communicate privately by cable with the New York financiers who formed the "Old Country Development Trust Syndicate." His understanding with them was that he should dispose to them of the interest which he had for some months been acquiring, and was still increasing, in the British Empire as a going concern. The understanding of the financiers among themselves was that, having completed their transactions with Mr. Hancock, they should dispose to the best possible advantage of what they had purchased from him. Their design was to create a company, which should be the final purchaser; and this company, they decided, was to be known as "The Old Country Development Trust."

On the day of the Clee Burf meeting the members of the Syndicate were assembled in their office in Broadway, New York. The office was at the top of the huge building that stands at the corner of Dey Street, and that shelters the headquarters of the Western Union Telegraph Company. By special arrangements, the financiers had a telegraph clerk and a set of instruments in the room with them.

From one of the clicking instruments a printed tape was running out by jerks and starts. The words on the tape were cabalistic; but ever and anon the secretary of the Syndicate tore

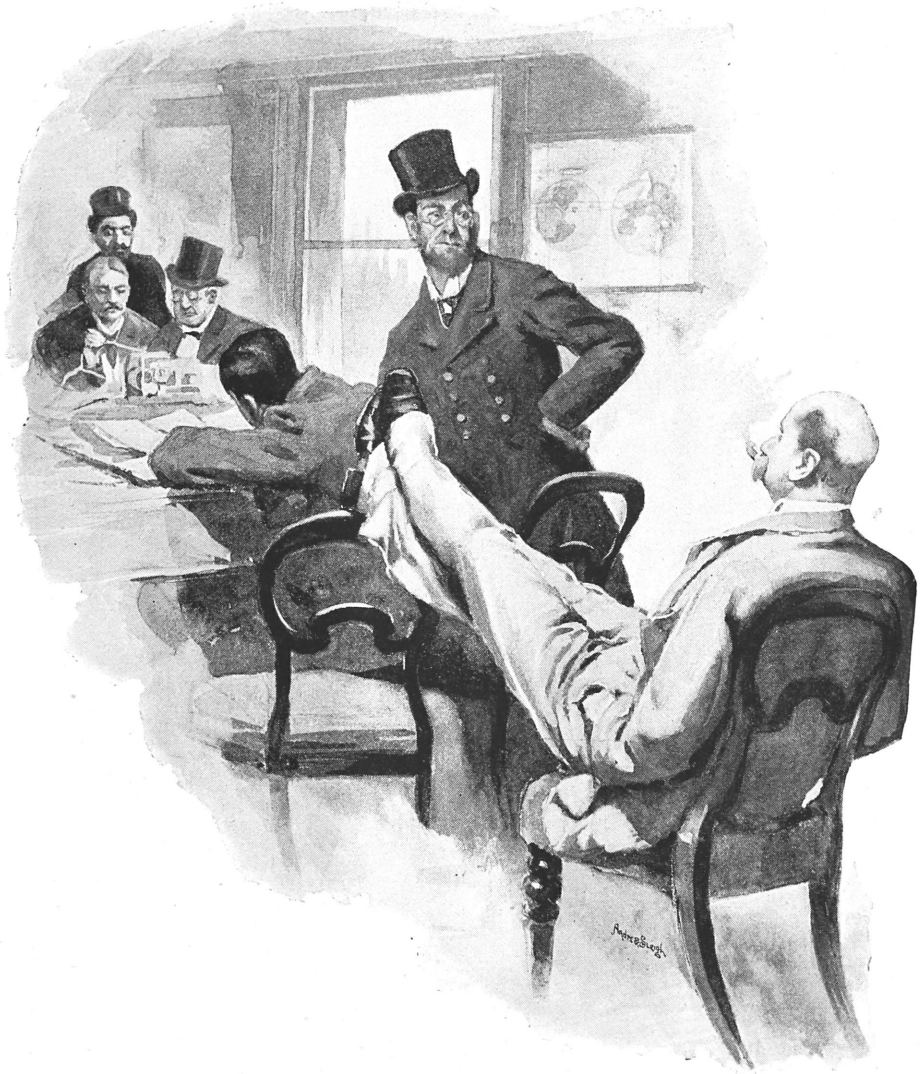
off a short length of tape and handed it to an assistant, who sat at his elbow, and who at once proceeded, with the help of a manuscript book, to translate the cabalistic words into English. These words formed Mr. Hancock's report of his day's work; and, as the assistant translated each word and wrote it down, the President of the Syndicate, Ridley Q. Blignum, who was looking over the young man's shoulder, read it out for the information of the other financiers who occupied chairs around him, and who, in the meantime, either smoked cigars or chewed something.

"Most successful meeting," read Mr. Blignum, one word at a time; "people as docile as lambs; ordered them to march to London; this will take two or three days; shall meet them there and assume government; am prepared to run the show for a short period as manager for the Trust, but Trust must lose no time in appointing a successor, as I find this business too exacting; propose to operate entire British Empire for benefit of Trust, and to make people do all work at cost of food, lodging and clothing. Every possibility of failure now vanished. Am going around to the bar to get a cocktail—cocktails very poor on this side—when I return will discuss terms."

"I guess that is about all we shall receive for the present," said Mr. Blignum, as he removed his spectacles. "It is a relief, gentlemen, to learn of this complete success, although, I am sure, we all fully expected it."

"Why, certainly," assented a cigar smoker, who sat in one chair and supported his legs on the back of another. "There's no nonsense about Mr. Hancock, and you may bet that results are even better than he says. If he tells us that the people are as docile as lambs, he just means that they're ready to lie down and let him walk over them: and don't you forget it. That's what he promised, and Mr. Hancock don't go back on his word."

"Yes; the business is as good as fixed for us," declared the chairman, "and the Britishers are our slaves as long as we



"A CIGAR SMOKER, WHO SAT IN ONE CHAIR AND SUPPORTED HIS LEGS ON THE
BACK OF ANOTHER."

conclude to work them. It's a pretty big thing for a Trust right here in New York City to control forty, fifty, a hundred millions of British slaves, not to mention a first-class Empire with all its industries, its mines, its armies, its fleets and its riches."

"I don't understand," ventured a small gentleman, who spoke nervously, "that Mr. Hancock claims to have gotten control of everything."

"But he will have everything by Sunday or Monday next," declared the President.

"You mean to say," said the small gentleman, "that no one can hold out against his influence?"

"A few will hold out, of course," admitted Mr. Blignum. "But if they don't reconcile themselves to going with the majority, why there'll be trouble, and I guess they'll have to do as they don't like."

"I trust there will be no bloodshed," said the small gentleman, who, though his financial methods were often attacked, was an Elder of his Church.

"I calculate you can't make a good road without breaking stones," remarked a practical man, "and if there should be bloodshed, it won't be you nor me as will have to shed it. The Britishers would do both the sheddin' and the bleedin'. This ain't no place for sentiment. This is a place for business—hard, common-sense business: and neither you nor me put a hundred thousand dollars down in order to lose them rather than let a pack of insane Britishers go for each other. I don't pretend to have any compunctions when it is a matter of business. I say, let the Britishers go for each other, if it will do our Syndicate any good. And now I believe that what we have to do is to make up our minds what we're prepared to pay to Mr. Hancock, and what we're prepared to sell everything to the Trust for."

Mr. Blignum, thus indirectly appealed to, called the meeting to order.

It was soon decided that at all costs Mr. Hancock must be induced to continue as General Manager for as long as possible; that every reasonable concession should, with this end in view, be made to him, and that the prospectus of the Trust Company should be at once drawn up. But, before any details could be discussed, Mr. Hancock, having finished his cocktail in Liverpool, set the telegraph instrument again in motion.

“Will sell right out,” he cabled, “for five hundred millions, immediately after I have assumed government, as am anxious to go to Nice for the winter. Can hold on for a month.”

There was general consternation when Mr. Blignum read this.

“I think,” suggested the President, “that we had best cable our conclusions. He must continue as General Manager.”

They cabled to Liverpool, and Hancock cabled back; and there were hot discussions by cable, and at both ends of the cable, until it was broad daylight at the North-Western Hotel and midnight in Broadway. Finally it was decided that Hancock should continue as General Manager for a year, and forego wintering at Nice; that he should be paid his price, namely, five hundred millions of dollars, for his acquired interest in the British Empire, and that he should be assigned shares to the amount of one-twentieth of the total capital of the Trust; but it was also decided that the whole arrangement must be contingent upon Hancock's successful assumption of the government in London; and that the payment of his price should be made in twelve equal monthly instalments, no such instalment being payable if Hancock were not still *de facto* General Manager of what had up to that time been known as the United Kingdom.

Having settled so much, Mr. Blignum and his associates went home to bed, and Mr. Hancock, after taking a morning cocktail with Hood and Van Kidder, managed to find a train for London, and slept serenely by the way. It was almost the last train that ran.

Next day the members of the Syndicate met again and drafted the prospectus of the Trust Company.

A document of the kind has not often been prepared. Certain Railway and Canal Companies have enormous capital, thousands of servants and workmen, and hundreds of square miles of land under their partial control, but no previous Association had asked for so much capital, and purposed to deal absolutely with so many millions of people and so many thousands of miles of territory as the "Old Country Development Trust." Therefore, the following summary of the prospectus should be of interest:—

"THE OLD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT TRUST
SYNDICATE,

BROADWAY AND DEY STREET, NEW YORK,

Is prepared to receive applications through its bankers for the
balance of 1,000,000 SHARES, EACH OF \$1,000, IN

THE OLD COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT TRUST.

(Incorporated under the Laws of the State of New York, U.S.A.)

"Price of Issue, \$1,000, payable as follows—viz.: \$300 upon application; \$250 upon allotment; and \$250 per share 30 days after allotment; after which there is no further liability.

"The Capital of the Trust is \$1,000,000,000, in \$1,000,000 Shares of \$1,000; of which 600,000 Shares are now offered. Of the remaining Shares, 50,000 are accepted by the Vendors in part payment for the properties and interests transferred to the Trust, and 350,000 are already subscribed for."

(Then followed the names of the president of the Trust, the Directors, the Bankers, the Brokers, the Auditors, the General Managers, the Legal Officers, and the Secretary.)

The prospectus continued:—

"The Old Country Development Trust is formed to acquire, work, and develop certain valuable interests which have been



"MR. HANCOCK, AFTER TAKING A MORNING COCKTAIL WITH HOOD AND VAN KIDDER, MANAGED TO FIND A TRAIN FOR LONDON, AND SLEPT SERENELY BY THE WAY."

created by Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock, of New York, in the well-known and enormously rich section hitherto called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, but now called The Old Country. The mode in which Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock's interests have been created and the exact nature of them need not be here dwelt upon, seeing that the newspapers are full of the subject, and that the more essential facts are matters of common knowledge. They will, however, be found to be partially explained in the pamphlet accompanying this prospectus. Suffice it to say that these interests virtually include the entire interests of the British Empire as a going concern ; and that the property, &c., to be acquired by the Trust, in return for the very modest consideration paid, comprises among other things :—

The United Kingdom of Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales, and outlying Islands) and Ireland ..	121,179 sq. miles.
With a population of (about)	40,000,000 people.
Control (which at present is partial and imperfect, but which will be rapidly extended) over the rest of the British Empire (about) ..	8,820,000 sq. miles.
With a population of (about)	275,000,000 people.
Control of a sea-borne trade which is estimated to have an annual value of (about)	\$5,000,000,000.
Control of gross revenues, from taxa- tion and other sources, estimated to be now worth annually ..	\$500,000,000.
A war fleet, the finest in the world, of (about)	500 ships.
A merchant fleet, the finest in the world, of (about)	12,000 vessels.
An army of (about)	300,000 men.
First-class railroads (about)	65,000 miles,

together with palaces, government buildings, fortresses, harbours, dockyards, manufactories, castles, cathedrals, historic ruins, museums, libraries, gas-works, a state church in working order, vast plots of real estate hitherto the property of the British Crown, schools, universities, colleges, mines, canals; the whole forming an unrivalled security for the investor.

“Absolute control over the United Kingdom and Ireland having been obtained, and no contracts whatever having been entered into by Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock, save as to the price to be paid to him by the purchasers, the operations of the Trust will be perfectly irresponsible, and will be conducted solely for the benefit of the shareholders. Hitherto the people of The Old Country have lived under a system which has permitted them a great deal of unnecessary leisure and luxury. It is now proposed to deal with them on strictly business principles. Everyone of them will be made to work for the Trust. On the other hand, every one of them will be housed, clothed, fed, instructed up to the needful standard, and even entertained, at the charges of the Trust; and the profits, after the expenses of maintenance, wear and tear, and management have been met, will belong, without further deduction, to the Trust. In short, it is intended that in the Old Country the Trust shall, henceforth, be the sole governor, manufacturer, and proprietor, and practically the only profit-earner. The spiritual, physical, and mental welfare of the people will be most carefully attended to, and their general happiness will, no doubt, be improved by the removal from the poor of most of their anxieties, and by the obligation of the rich to labour.

“The management of the business is undertaken for a minimum period of one year by Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock, who stipulates that he shall be allowed to appoint the whole of his staff, and that he may employ, as paid servants of the Trust, a limited number of Englishmen, not to exceed fifty in all. The rest of the natives become available for the purposes of the Trust.

“The previous history of the properties acquired by the Trust affords little or no indication of the extent of the profits which are likely to be made; but if the mere surplus produce (after payment of every expense) of the labour of each man, woman, and child in the United Kingdom only (letting alone the rest of the Empire) be worth no more than \$10 annually, there will be available for dividends a sum of \$400,000,000. This is sufficient to provide a dividend of 40 per cent. When, however, it is borne in mind that hitherto a lenient system of taxation has produced more than that sum; that the productive powers of the property are practically unlimited; that labour will hereafter be regular and general instead of, as heretofore, often occasional and always partial, it will probably be admitted that this estimate is very much too low. The Directors are content, nevertheless, to point to facts, and to leave to others the making of the necessary deductions. In the meantime there are many other certain sources of revenue.

“It is intended, for example, that all real estate, goods, chattels, &c., hitherto held as property by the natives, shall be thrown into a common fund, whence, after due provision has been made for the support of the old and infirm, and for the maintenance of buildings, public works, &c., a considerable surplus must remain. The personal estate will, with the exception of articles retained for the general use of the Trust, be sold, either in America or on the continent of Europe, at public auction. So much of the real estate as may not be required for purposes of the Trust and the support of its servants, will, it is confidently believed, find renters in the persons of citizens of this country, and others who may desire to enjoy elegant rural life in the most favourable circumstances. The Trust will have at its disposal some of the finest deer forests, shootings, and fishings in the Old World, and magnificent mansions in town and country that cannot fail to command the attention of appreciative Americans of wealth.

“It is further intended to offer at a fair price to the United

States Government, for transfer to and re-erection in the United States, a number of historical relics that possess for Americans a peculiar interest. Among these are Westminster Abbey (monuments, tombs, and bones included), Shakespeare's house at Stratford-on-Avon, Windsor and Holyrood Castles, Tintern Abbey, some of the "Rows" at Chester, and the finer cathedrals, churches, and old houses of note. The national collections of pictures, for instance, those in the National Gallery, Hampton Court Palace, and South Kensington, will be sold by auction for the profit of the Trust. The statues will be similarly disposed of, and the entire contents of the British Museum will be offered at a valuation to Chicago, Boston, New York, or Philadelphia. Funds obtained by such methods as these will be invested in Home Rails, and the interest only will be paid in the shape of dividends to the shareholders in the Trust, so that it is confidently anticipated that the income of the Trust will be an increasing rather than a decreasing one. This income, it is expected, will never fall short of 100 per cent. of the capital of the Trust, and there are many reasons for believing that it may be much more; but, as has already been said, the Directors prefer to leave facts to speak for themselves.

"Due and complete provision is being made for the maintenance of order, and for the security of the Trust's property; and it has been decided, with these ends in view, to retain, at least for the present, the existing Army, and part of the Navy. Such vessels as can be dispensed with will be sold to foreign governments, unless a contract for protection can be made with the Government of the United States. In this event, it is thought that it will be advantageous to hand over the British Navy bodily to the Navy Department at Washington in return for the security which will be guaranteed."

* * * * *

There was much more in the prospectus, which, when published, occupied eight pages of the *New York World*; but enough

of it has been quoted to indicate the general lines upon which the directors proposed to work.

It was not published immediately after it had been drawn up, for the members of the Syndicate rightly felt that they must not ask their countrymen to purchase an edifice which, after all, was not then built. But two days after the Clee Burf Meeting it was ready for issue, and its issue awaited only the receipt of Hancock's cablegram announcing the complete success of all his plans, and his assumption at Buckingham Palace of the mastery of the British Empire. In the meantime the Directors distributed fat little appointments in England among their friends, made up their minds what English country houses they would occupy, and what moors they would shoot over in the ensuing year, and dispatched experts with instructions to buy for them this or that picture, these or those books, and such and such a statue. The competition for the public statues was not, however, very keen. No one wanted the Albert Memorial, George III. from Cockspur Street, Fox from Bloomsbury Square, or Queen Anne from St. Paul's Churchyard. Richard I. in Old Palace Yard, Charles I. at Charing Cross, Peabody at the Royal Exchange, and some others found admirers; but rivalry ran highest over the Achilles in Hyde Park and Shakespeare in Leicester Square, and even these were less sought after than was Cleopatra's Needle, for which the City of Blobbsville, Illinois, instructed its special representative to offer a million dollars. This was because Ridley Q. Blignum had honoured Blobbsville by being born there, and because it was felt that something must be done to commemorate Blobbsville's connection with so eminent a citizen of it as the President of The Old Country Development Trust. Said the *Blobbsville Independent Battlecry and Morning Rooster*, when advocating the purchase:—

“We can scarcely do too much to honour a citizen whose glorious name will echo through the æons of the ages as the

President of the Trust which made England a fading memory, taught the sublimest lessons of political and social economy to the slothful and indolent inhabitants of a moribund hemisphere, abolished at a blow an effete and grinding aristocracy, benefited humanity at large and Americans in particular, and leapt bald-headed and unhesitatingly to a vast experiment, in comparison with which the French Revolution was a mothers' meeting, and the taking of Constantinople by the Turks a delightful clam-bake. It will be worthy of him, and honourable to us, if, when Cleopatra's Needle is set up in front of the City Hall, it be decorated on each face with the name, in letters of gold a foot long, of Ridley Q. Blignum."

CHAPTER VI.

MISS MARRABLE'S DECISION.

IN the meantime the great throng from Clee Burf was pressing doggedly towards London. Blind devotion to "The Man" had apparently become epidemic, and by no means for the first time in history did that kind of phenomenon show itself. The First Crusade was, at least at its beginning, an epidemic. The terrible Children's Crusade was even more markedly so. The various dancing manias of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were examples of epidemic imitation. So were the eccentricities of the Convulsionnaires. So, it may be, have been the most striking successes of the Salvation Army. And has not the world seen millions unreasoningly following a Napoleon to disaster? and a more modern leader of men to folly and confusion? One may ask why do such national outbreaks of madness happen? It is not so easy to answer the question, or even to suggest an answer; but the fact remains that, quite independently of any other motive forces that may be at work, personal magnetism, combined with imitation, arising as an epidemic, may and often does, act as the greatest of all powers in the making of history. And in this case personal magnetism was only a subordinate factor. Behind it was a far more potent force.

Some men kept their heads; but they were the few. The masses, almost without exception, succumbed.

The throng surged downwards across England, eating up the country as if a flight of locusts had passed. Through Worcester

and Oxford it went, not keeping only to the roads, but spreading wide across the fields, smoothing down boundaries, and churning meadows into mud. At Oxford the heads of some of the largest colleges caught the infection, and placed their houses at the disposal of the mob of people. Several of the hotel-keepers and confectioners also spread tables in the streets and gratuitously supplied bread, cheese and beer to the passing crowd. A few troops and policemen were from time to time sent out to meet the advancing multitude and to disperse it; but both soldiers and constables promptly joined the Rawkingsite horde and added to its volume. Even officers and country gentlemen of position went over. The few who did not follow the crowd stood aloof, powerless, puzzled and terrified. Some of them asked what it all meant. The passers-by could not explain. They only knew that they were bound for London, where they were to see "The Man," and that, when they had seen him, they would be in all things happy and satisfied. Argument was useless. The people had but one idea, and would not admit any other.

At every step, therefore, between Shropshire and the capital, the moving mass gathered weight. The country people ministered to some extent to its necessities, and then fell in behind it; but meat and bread were soon exhausted; and barns, orchards, and hedgerows chiefly supplied the pressing wants of the hungry ones.

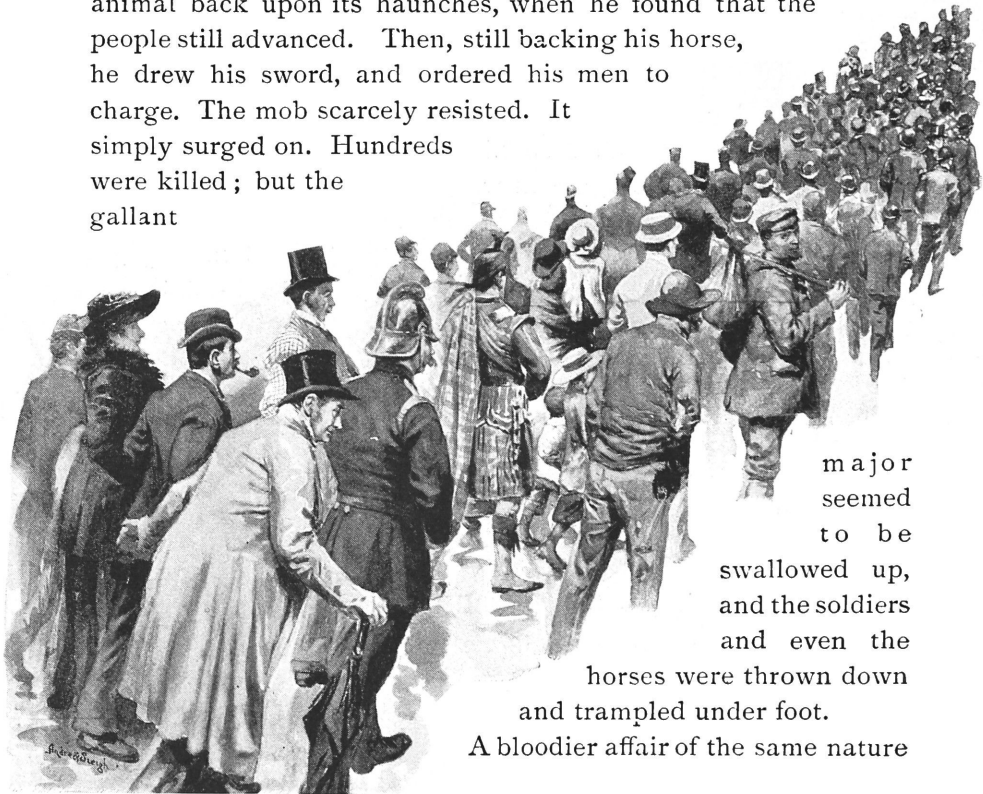
All the ordinary work of the land had by this time ceased. Clerks, porters, guards, postmen, engine-drivers, soldiers, sailors, clergymen, tax-collectors, commercial travellers, shopkeepers and servants had, for the most part, quitted their posts like the rest, and, after the day succeeding that of the Clee Burf Meeting, scarce a single railway train could be run, and hardly a newspaper was published.

Of all the troops in London not a thousand, inclusive of officers, remained well affected. The Commander-in-Chief, who kept his head, desired to send these out to break up the approaching throng; but at the Horse Guards things were at such a pass and

the executive machinery was so much damaged by desertions that great delay was occasioned ; and it was not until the vanguard of the horde from Shropshire was on Bushey Heath, near Watford, that it encountered any opposition worth mentioning. A couple of hundred cavalry, and an equal force of infantry, there disputed the way. A major of Hussars, who was the senior officer, and who wore the Victoria Cross on his breast, galloped forward, waving back the people and shouting :

“Disperse! Go to your houses! This is not how Englishmen should behave!”

He rode his horse right up to the leaders, and pulled the animal back upon its haunches, when he found that the people still advanced. Then, still backing his horse, he drew his sword, and ordered his men to charge. The mob scarcely resisted. It simply surged on. Hundreds were killed ; but the gallant



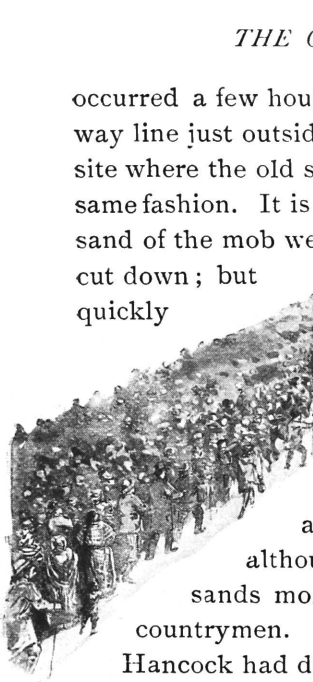
major
seemed
to be
swallowed up,
and the soldiers
and even the

horses were thrown down
and trampled under foot.

A bloodier affair of the same nature

THE GREAT PERIL.

occurred a few hours later on the broad railway line just outside Willesden Junction, site where the old station used to be. In the same fashion. It is believed that over a thousand of the mob were cut down ; but quickly



just opposite
It ended in the
that over a thou-
shot, bayoneted, or
the few troops were
crushed by sheer weight of
numbers, and trodden out of all
semblance to humanity. To the mob
the loss was of very little importance ;
to the Government it was fatal. That night
London was invaded by the head of the huge
and formless column, and by Monday morning,
although thousands were still pouring in, and thou-
sands more were behind them, the streets were full of
countrymen.

Hancock had determined to show himself on Monday at noon in Hyde Park, and, through his lieutenants, he disseminated the news as soon as the earliest of the weary pilgrims arrived in London. On Monday, therefore, there was a general move to Hyde Park.

Since his return from Liverpool, Hancock had not quitted his rooms in Trafalgar Square. He had held there almost hourly conversations with Hood and Van Kidder, and the other members of the first four Series composing the Snowball, but he had not allowed himself to be seen by anyone else ; and, indeed, he had had plenty to occupy his attention. To each of the thirty lieutenants—the members, that is, of the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Series—with whom he was now in immediate communication, and all of whom were Americans or foreigners of other nationalities, he had to assign special tasks in connection with the work which was about to be undertaken. These were to be his chiefs of departments and his arch-taskmasters for the development of The Old Country ; and, in the meantime, they were to

bring something like order out of the chaos which had been created, and were, moreover, to assist in the complete securing of the spoils.

Preparations for this had already been commenced in a more general way, under Hancock's orders, by the two hundred and fifty-four persons of the first seven Series. One hundred of these were as early as Sunday morning, posted on all the roads leading into London from the west and north, and in all places of public resort in London. Each of them was provided with a large bag full of small, square cardboard tickets, and each ticket bore a portrait of "The Man," and a large letter. The letters from A to X, inclusive, were distributed equally among the whole mass of tickets, and these tickets were offered freely to all men who passed. The only words printed on them were :—"It is perilous to let this go out of your possession for a moment. It is perilous to accept a second ticket from any distributor." Thus, by Monday at noon, nearly every man in London possessed a ticket, and the mass of people in the metropolis was classifiable into those who had the "A" ticket, those who had the "B" ticket, and so on. There were twenty-four of these classes. Many people, even among those who kept their heads, accepted tickets, believing that there might be safety in so doing. Everyone who had not kept his head made a point of getting a ticket, since he felt convinced that, in some inscrutable way, it would bring him nearer to his unknown goal.

On Monday morning the thirty members of the first four Series, who met, soon after breakfast time, in Hancock's rooms, received their final instructions, and each of them also received a hat which, though, at first sight, of the colour and material of an ordinary opera hat, was in reality a brilliant white hat decorated with gold badges, but covered with a black silk case which could in a moment be removed. Twenty-four of the badges—being those destined for the members of the Third and Fourth Series—

bore one of the letters from A to X inclusive, which letters corresponded with those borne by the twenty-four different classes of tickets. The badges for the four members of the Second Series were larger, and bore a red square on which was a gold 2; and the still larger badges of the two members, Hood and Van Kidder, of the First Series, bore a blue circular disc, on which was a gold 1. Similar badges, suitable for fastening to the lappel of the coat, were also distributed by Hancock. Banners, bearing reproductions of the badges, had been previously sent to a house in St. George's Place, whence they could be readily obtained for use in the Park.

At ten o'clock the twenty-four members of the Third and Fourth Series, having received full instructions, departed westwards to find their way as best they could to the rendezvous. Hood and Van Kidder, and the four members of the Second Series remained with Hancock, who did not omit to refresh them with cocktails and cigars, and who, in a matter-of-fact way, informed them that after that day his headquarters would be in Buckingham Palace, and that there he would be more than pleased to meet them at breakfast on the morrow.

Hannibal Hood invented an excuse for getting away from Hancock's rooms a little earlier than his associates. He felt that the moment was critical, and he wanted, before he went to the Park, to have a few final words with his wife. He therefore took Grosvenor Street on his way, and, getting there with great difficulty, owing to the crowded state of the route, opened the door with his latchkey and ran up to Lucy's boudoir.

"Oh, I am so frightened, Hannibal dear," she explained, as soon as he appeared. "I never realised what to-day may mean to us until this morning. Ever since you went away on Saturday" (he had been continuously with Hancock since Saturday) "I have been nervous. I have seen such funny-looking people about the streets. And to-day thousands of them

have been passing on their way to the Park, and they all seem to be quite mad. This is a dreadful business. Oh Hannibal; why did you mix yourself up in it?"

He had, it will be remembered, been weak enough to tell her Hancock's vital secret, and she knew almost everything concerning the methods and plans of the agents of The Old Country Development Trust.

Hannibal tried to soothe her, and to assure her that everything would be quite right. The Hyde Park mob, he said, would be under perfect control, and there was very little risk of any serious trouble. But poor Lucy could not be made to take that view.

"It's so awfully wicked," she broke out. "You're going to put the people into slavery, and to rob them of everything that makes life worth living; and, oh! Hannibal, although I'm your wife and I love you, I believe that I ought to even kill you rather than let you go out to do what you are about to do."

"I guess you will occupy a pretty elegant position," he interrupted cheerfully, "as the wife of one of the members of the First Series. Why! you'll be the first woman in the land; for Hancock and Van Kidder have no wives, and are not likely to marry."

"What shall I profit," she asked, "when I feel at every hour of the day and night that you and they have enslaved my country? If only I were a man, Hannibal."

"If you were, my dear, you would probably be treated like most of the other men of your delightful country, and you wouldn't by this time be able to call your soul—much less your body—your own. You would be touched like the rest; you would have been rushing across England like a maniac, and you would now be going to the Park to devote yourself to slavery. You should thank Heaven, Lucy, that you are a woman."

"How can you talk about Heaven? It is dreadful. Oh,

Hannibal, for my sake don't go! *You* are not touched like my unhappy countrymen. You have still your free-will. You need not go; nobody can make you."

"I guess I don't want any making, my dear girl," said Hood. "Wait, and don't make yourself nervous. When everything is fixed up you won't regret what has happened. You won't regret being in a position that many a princess or reigning queen will envy. I tell you, dear, that I am going through with this as much for your good as for any other reason. If I were a bachelor I should do it for myself, of course; but since you will also benefit the work is doubly worth doing. Don't be a baby, Lucy."

"Hannibal, do not go," she implored. "If you do I shall never be happy again."

"Nonsense! Now give me a kiss. There! Keep up your spirits like a dear good little woman, and don't be a donkey about trifles. Think of the future and how we shall enjoy it together. Good-bye. I hope that I shall be home to dinner, but if I am not able to come I will either call in or send a message."

And he went, gaily and light-heartedly, while Lucy, knowing not what else to do, sank down on the floor and buried her face in her hands.

As she thought over them, matters assumed a worse instead of a better complexion; and so it happened that when, a couple of hours after Hannibal had departed, Miss Marrable entered Lucy's boudoir and found her niece still sitting on the floor and sobbing hysterically, the determined spinster insisted upon and obtained a full explanation of what was going wrong.

At first she regarded Lucy as mad. She was, of course, painfully aware that very strange events were happening around her. For two days no tradesmen had called at the house, and it had been necessary to send out the maids for supplies, which were then procured only with the greatest difficulty and in very small

quantities. That day the *Morning Post* had not been left at the house, and, upon enquiry, it had appeared that no paper of that morning had been published in London. For three days no postman had knocked at the door. And in the meantime all kinds of mysterious rumours, none of which had lost by transmission, had penetrated to Grosvenor Street. But Miss Marrable had hitherto believed that neither she nor hers had the remotest direct interest in whatever might be going forward; that nothing worse than a strike of some sort was in progress; and that in a week, if not before, matters would be as usual. She had, in fact, fortified herself behind the average Englishwoman's unreasoning confidence in the forces of law, order, and social convention, and in the ability and will of the stronger sex to take care of the weaker, and of itself.

When, however, Miss Marrable heard the wonderful things that Lucy had to tell her, and when she reflected upon the rumours that had reached her concerning the march of the mob from Clee Burf, upon the photographs of "The Man" which she had seen, and upon the curious crowds whose strange, pre-occupied passage she had herself that morning witnessed from the dining-room windows while she was trifling with her toast, she became seriously uneasy, and soon ceased to be incredulous.

"Lucy," she said severely, after all her innumerable questions had been answered, "something must be done! A goose, my child, saved the Capitol, and I don't see why a woman—or a woman like me aided by a baby like you—shouldn't save the British Empire. Yes, Lucy; something must be done and shall be done. I will go and see Doctor Smirke."

Doctor Smirke was Miss Marrable's medical man. He also lived in Grosvenor Street, only a few doors away; yet, though the street was now quite deserted, Lucy implored her aunt not to venture forth. "They are all mad," she said. "If you meet one of them, who can say what will happen to you?"

“Rubbish!” replied Miss Marrable. “You are afraid to be left alone with the maids; that is what you really mean. But come; put on your bonnet and jacket! you shall go too. Lucy, my dear, I cannot rest until I have put an end to this wicked conspiracy. How I shall do it I don’t know: but do it I must, and you must help me. And, if you value your life, do not say a word of what you have told me to that disgracefully wicked man, Hannibal, when he comes back.”

Lucy went obediently to her room. Scarcely had she begun in a mechanical way, to put on her bonnet, when her aunt followed her.

“Have you any of the plasters?” she asked mysteriously. “Do you know where he keeps them?”

“Oh, I dare not, aunt,” pleaded the young wife. “I believe that he would kill me if he suspected.”

“Rubbish!” insisted Miss Marrable. “Kill or no kill, give me the plasters. I see that you know where they are, you wicked girl—banding yourself with pirates and thieves. I wonder that a born Larkspur—with good honest English Marrable blood in her veins, too—can stoop for a moment to such a thing. Out with the abominable plasters at once!”

“I didn’t know; I didn’t altogether understand,” cried the poor girl. “I didn’t realise how wicked it all is. Don’t be angry, dearest aunt. I will do what I can. But, oh! you must not let Hannibal suffer!”

“Hannibal! the wretch!” ejaculated Miss Marrable, with flaming eyes. “I never trusted him. I did all I could to prevent the marriage. Don’t ask me to save him. I would gladly hang him with my own hands, the wretch! But give me the plasters.”

Lucy knew only too well where she would find what was wanted. What Miss Marrable spoke of as “the plasters” were certain little harmless-looking squares of gummed yellow tissue paper, of which Hannibal kept a large quantity packed in small

boxes in a locked drawer in his dressing-room. Lucy knew also where the key was kept, and, urged on by her aunt, she unlocked the drawer with trembling fingers, and took out one of the boxes.

Miss Marrable seized the box, but as quickly put it down again. "Will the horrible things go off, I wonder?" she asked.

"I don't think they are at all dangerous to handle," ventured Lucy.

"They certainly look innocent enough," said her aunt, who had now made bold to open the box, but with marked carefulness and respectfulness of demeanour.

"I believe," declared Lucy, "that they are quite innocent, except for the particular purpose for which they are used. I have seen Hannibal handle them freely, and he knows."

"Knows! Yes, of course, he knows, the brute," burst out Miss Marrable. "But Lucy, are you sure; are you quite sure? You have deceived me once, you know; terribly deceived me, over your marriage. Are you deceiving me again? Is this only a new trick of yours?"

Lucy threw herself on her aunt's neck. "Do I look as if I could deceive anyone?" she asked. "Oh, I am far too miserable."

"Well, well, child," said Miss Marrable, kissing her on the brow, "we must now do what we can, and hope for the best. By-the-bye, where does this arch-monster, this Hancock, live?"

"I think in apartments in Trafalgar Square, on the second floor of No. 4."

"Ah!" ejaculated Miss Marrable, significantly. "Make haste, then, and get ready." And taking with her a box of the plasters, she went to her own room.

Ten minutes later the spinster lady and her niece were upon Doctor Smirke's doorstep. The maidservant, who answered the bell, said that Doctor Smirke had gone to the Park for the meeting.

There are many doctors' houses in Grosvenor Street. Miss Marrable began systematically at the north side of the Bond Street end of the thoroughfare, and rang at every door which bore a medical man's name-plate. The first three doctors thus inquired for had all gone to the Park, and had left word to that effect; the



"MISS MARRABLE SAT AND FIDGETED, FIRST WITH ONE FOOT AND THEN WITH BOTH."

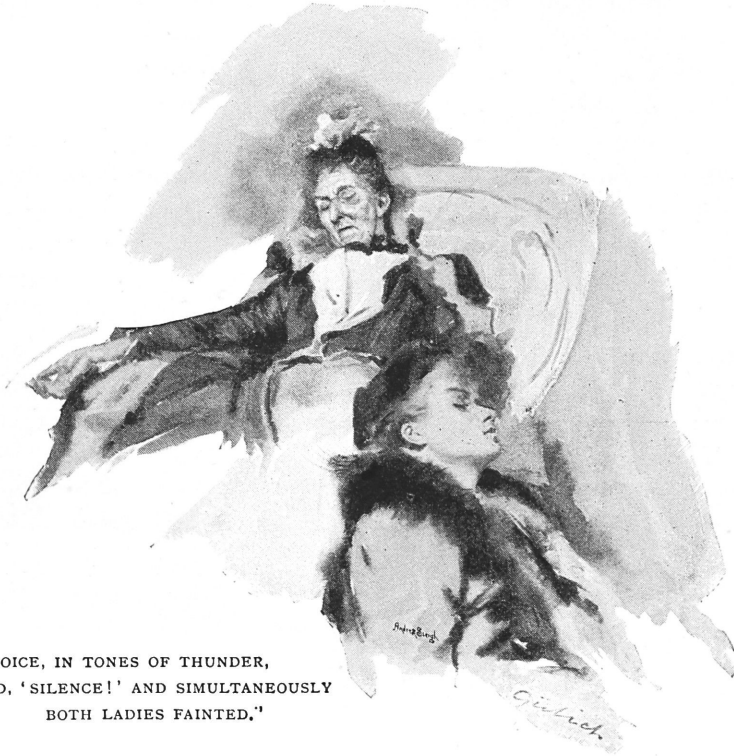
fourth was dangerously ill, and could see nobody, even if life were at stake; the fifth and sixth were also at the Park; the seventh, Doctor Pharaoh, was at home, but was engaged. If, however, the ladies would wait for not longer than a quarter-of-an-hour, he could be seen.

"There doesn't seem to be any other doctor in possession of his senses," remarked Miss Marrable, with great acerbity. "Yet we must see a doctor,

so we will wait. But ask your master to be as quick as possible. We want to see him on affairs of national importance."

The maid, a brawny and determined-looking woman of forty or thereabouts, was not much affected by this portentous announcement. She was fully accustomed to hearing remarkable declara-

tions of the kind, for her master was, it happened, a specialist in brain diseases; and very queer patients occasionally called upon him. She merely, therefore, repeated, "On affairs of national importance," with an accent which might have betokened either contempt or admiration, and, having shown the ladies into a wait-



"A VOICE, IN TONES OF THUNDER,
CRIED, 'SILENCE!' AND SIMULTANEOUSLY
BOTH LADIES FAINTED."

ing-room, went to Doctor Pharaoh with the information that "there was another one of them brought to see him, and that she looked a bit dangerous about the eyes." Whereupon the doctor recommended her to remain within hearing, and to tell him if the supposed patient became troublesome to her keeper.

The waiting-room was furnished forth, as such rooms usually

are, with the latest comic papers, a few ancient and dog-eared volumes of the illustrated journals, some very uncomfortable chairs, and sundry portraits of medical and surgical celebrities of past generations, together with a presentation clock with a laudatory inscription, and a couple of bronze statuettes that kept guard, one at each end of the mantelpiece.

Miss Marrable, in her then frame of mind, cared for none of these vanities. She sat and fidgetted, first with one foot and then with both. She played a devil's tattoo on the table. She made exclamations under her breath.

But Doctor Pharaoh did not keep the ladies waiting for even the stipulated quarter-of-an-hour. He very soon came in, bluff, fresh-coloured, stout, and cheerful, and with a "Very sorry that you found me for the moment engaged," led the way to his consulting-room, and bade his visitors be seated—this time in chairs that were most seductively comfortable.

Before any kind of conversation could be begun on either side, something very unparalleled and alarming happened.

A voice, in tones of thunder that really, and not merely metaphorically, shook the house, and that were louder than the night roaring of a myriad hungry beasts in the forests of Africa, cried:—

"Silence!"

And simultaneously both ladies fainted.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHLOISBOPHONE.

HIRAM Y. HANCOCK strolled down towards Hyde Park arm-in-arm with George Van Kidder at about a quarter to eleven. The four members of the Second Series, the men with the figure 2 in their hats, had already started thither. Hiram, who was disguised in blue spectacles and a pointed beard, was smoking an excellent cigar. The morning was bright, the air was crisp, but not cold, and "The Man," who had been for three days indoors, and, for greater part of that time, hard at work, was in high spirits.

The streets as far as Piccadilly were almost deserted. Cabs and omnibuses had ceased to run; the policemen were not at their usual posts; the voice of the newsboy was not heard; and the general aspect of affairs was that of London at half-past four on a fine summer morning. All the shops were shut; most of the houses seemed to be wrapped in sleep. The only thing that appeared to be inconsistent with the reigning state of torpor was the obvious presence behind the curtains of many windows of white and frightened women's faces.

At Piccadilly more signs of life were visible. From the Circus, a good many people could be seen trudging eagerly westward. They straggled from the pavements all over the road. Most of them walked singly; all walked rapidly; all were peculiarly silent and pre-occupied.

At the end of Bond Street the crowd became thicker, and progress began to be very difficult, but there was no serious scuffling, and almost the only outcry came from persons who were hurt by the steady and ever-increasing crush. It took Hancock and Van Kidder fully twenty minutes to get from Bond Street to a point opposite the Isthmian Club, so dense was the throng of people. From the bottom of Berkeley Street, it could be seen that the railings of the Green Park had been forced down, and that the mob from Piccadilly had overflowed into the Park, which lies lower than the pavement, and was trampling down the grass. The Americans followed the crowd no further, but turned to the right up Berkeley Street where the crowd formed a kind of eddy. Upon the outskirts of this there were many injured people. Dover Yard, which runs back behind Piccadilly, was full of them. They lay on the ground, some tended by friends, but many more deserted by those who had carried them thither. One poor fellow who had his ribs crushed, and who, judged by his appearance, was a gentleman, lay at the very entrance to the yard, and called feebly to the two Americans for help as they stepped over him, but Hancock merely smiled at Van Kidder, and, continuing his route, passed along the east and north sides of Berkeley Square, swerved into Mount Street, where there was a thin but continuous stream of people, and turned to the left into Park Street, thus reaching one of the tall fine houses which look out westward across Park Lane to the Park.

Hancock, with a key which he took from his pocket, opened the door of this house, let in his companion and himself, closed the door carefully, and then cried, "Say, Griswold, here we are."

The person thus addressed promptly ran upstairs from the lower regions. He was a short, stout man, dressed in a canvas suit that had once been white, holding in his hand a lump of cotton-waste that smelt of oil, and decorated, both as to his

clothes and as to his hands and face, with liberal smudges of soot and grease.

“Right you are, Boss,” he said, as he came forward. “Can’t shake; am too oily. Thought you’d never fetch. Never saw such a crowd. Been up on the roof watching it. Must be a million and a half in the Park.”

“Glad to hear it,” returned Hancock. “Is everything fixed up? Are you certain that the machinery will operate properly?”

“You bet!” answered Mr. Griswold, with absolute confidence.

“Then,” said Hancock, turning to Van Kidder, “I guess you had best go right away and see to your part of the show. Mr. Griswold will let you out into Park Lane, and you must get to your station as best you can. I don’t envy you forcing your way through the crush, but if you have much difficulty, uncover your hat. That will pass you in, I guess. I’m glad I haven’t got to go along too. Thank goodness there’s no wind and plenty of sun, and so I can comfortably work the show from here. Now, mind that you make a rattling fine fire for me. The wood is apt to be a bit damp, but it will give all the more smoke, and the oil will make it burn. I shall begin as soon as there is smoke enough.”

Van Kidder made his way out through the ivy-sheltered garden door into Park Lane, and Hancock went up to the roof of the house. Griswold had with him two American assistants, but, save for the four men, the house—which, by the way, belonged to Lord George Beauchamp, and had been let to him by his brother-in-law—was empty.

Since the new tenant had taken the place, he had, as everyone in the neighbourhood had not failed to notice, made certain alterations and improvements, notably by rebuilding the chimneys, and by fitting the house with very powerful machinery, which was supplied by the American Electric Light Company; but no one

seemed to know who the new tenant was, and the few who had seen him had been unable to recognise in him the original of the numerous portraits of "The Man," for Hancock had always gone disguised to the house. He was now, however, disguised no longer. Moreover, he was dressed in the very clothes which he had worn at the meeting in Shropshire on the previous Wednesday.

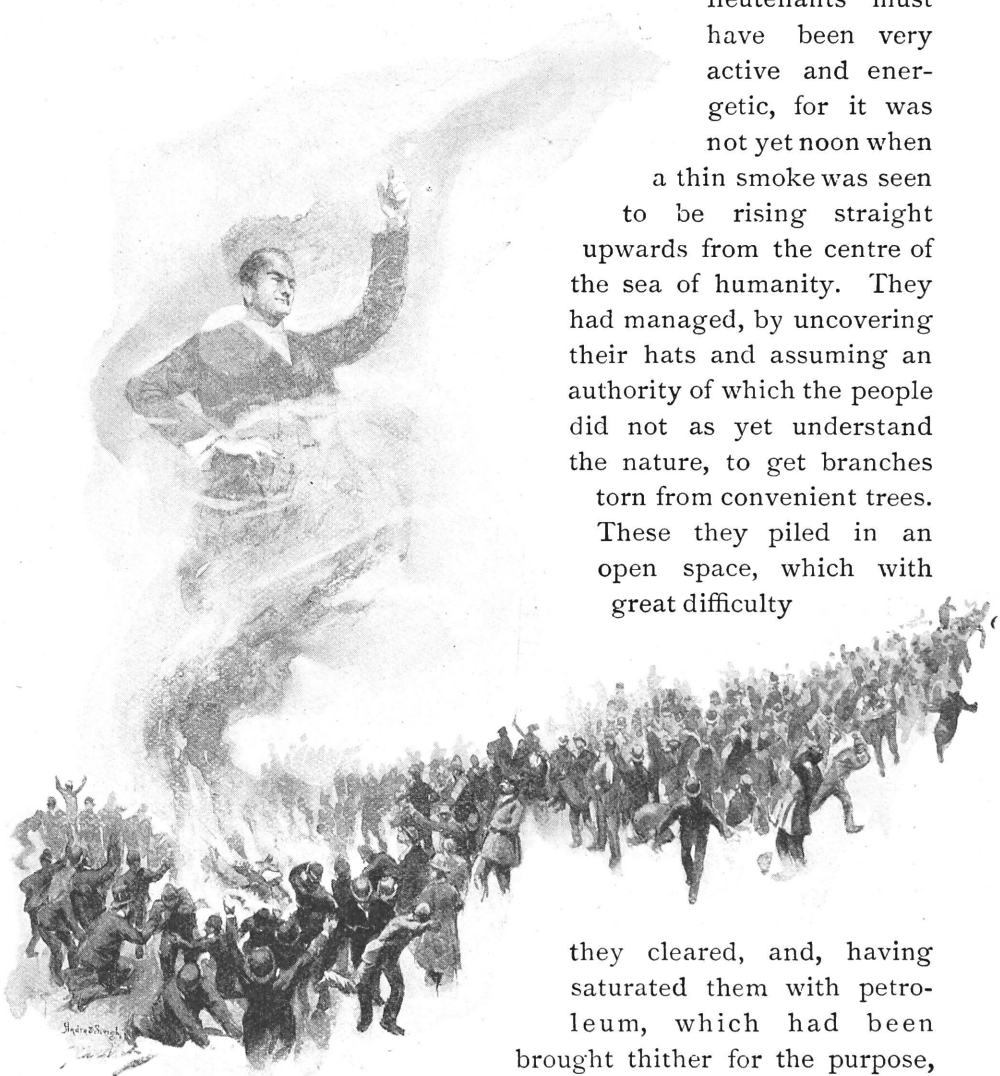
It was within ten minutes of noon. From the roof the whole expanse of Hyde Park within the Ring Road looked, save for the trees, like an unbroken sea of hats. Through Grosvenor Gate, to the right, beneath the Marble Arch, still further to the right, and from Hyde Park Corner, on the left, the crowd was still streaming in unceasingly. Here and there were sudden rushes and quick eddies; here and there were gaps in the railings, which had evidently given way under the pressure; but there was very little apparent disorder, and there was marvellously little noise. The only audible noise, indeed, was the noise of two millions of moving feet, blended with the heavy breathing of a million pair of lungs. This was enough to drown the sound of any voices that may have been raised; yet it was but the dull continuous noise as of long Atlantic rollers breaking at a distance on a rocky coast.

Never in previous days had anyone really recognised the capacity of the Park as a place of meeting. The space within the Ring Road has an area of about 400 acres, and an acre contains 4,840 square yards. Allowing, therefore, a whole square yard to each person, the part of Hyde Park within the Ring Road will hold nearly two millions of people. That area seemed to be full. The area outside it, and the roads around it seemed to be full also. No one ever knew how many were in the Park. A million was mentioned by Mr. Griswold as the number, but many good judges afterwards placed it at three millions, and even more. The exact number is not important. Whatever it may have been, there was at least an equal number of people who never reached

the Park at all, but who, nevertheless, may be said, as will presently appear, to have been present at that impressive and memorable meeting. Hood and Van Kidder, and Hancock's other

lieutenants must have been very active and energetic, for it was not yet noon when

a thin smoke was seen to be rising straight upwards from the centre of the sea of humanity. They had managed, by uncovering their hats and assuming an authority of which the people did not as yet understand the nature, to get branches torn from convenient trees. These they piled in an open space, which with great difficulty

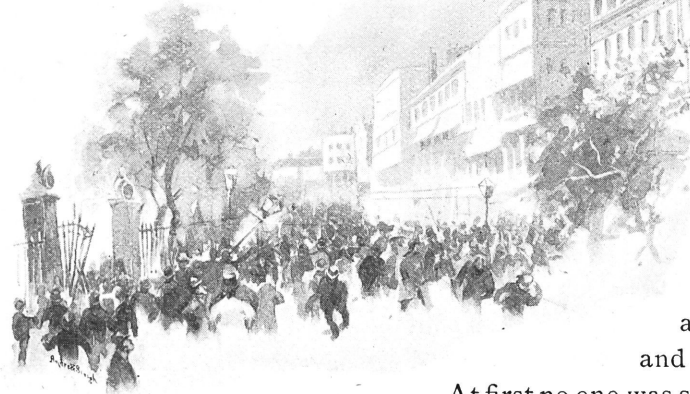


they cleared, and, having saturated them with petroleum, which had been brought thither for the purpose,

they lighted them. The fire quickly grew as more wood was thrown upon it. Huge limbs of trees were dragged down and passed over the heads of the mob, more petroleum was added, and in ten minutes an immense column of light grey smoke stood out against the clear blue sky of that autumn day.

“I guess we’ll commence,” said Hancock to Griswold. “If you’re ready, fire away.”

As the crowd watched it, towering above their heads, it seemed to some of them that the upper part of the pillar of smoke assumed, for fleeting



moments, form and colour. News spread quickly among the people, and all gazed.

At first no one was sure. This man saw in the smoke a shadow ; that one saw an outline. But presently for an instant, there shone brightly on the grey veil a colossal figure—the figure, erect, commanding, threatening, of Hancock magnified a hundred times, appeared on the smoke like the living picture upon the screen of a camera, then it vanished suddenly. Soon it came again, but only for a few seconds. All now saw it, some plainly, some dimly, but all saw it. And those who had been at Cleve Burf, those who had the portrait which everyone had seen, all, in a word, who gazed, knew that the figure was that of “The Man.”

The country-bred people trembled and turned pale ; the town-bred ones knew not quite what was being done, and were uneasy. But when the figure appeared for the third time plainly on the smoke, and was seen to raise a hand above its head, the crowd found voice, and shouted with loud acclamations : “ ‘The Man !’ ‘The Man !’ He is here !”

It was a marvellous roar of sound from the throats of a million excited men, but as it rose, it was instantly extinguished by the far greater roar of a solitary, gigantic voice, which cried, “ Silence !”

It was this voice and this word that was heard by Miss Marrable and Lucy in Doctor Pharaoh’s consulting-room.

All London—even the women who were hiding fearsomely in their innermost rooms—heard it ; and many dropped fainting. Children in distant nurseries heard it and swooned away. As for the men, many who were religious dropped upon their knees in an attitude of prayer ; many more, who were not religious, burst into the cold sweat of terror ; some fell forward lifeless upon their faces, and it is even said that a few, men as well as women and children, died as the thundering word was spoken.

What the voice was like may be known by anyone who has ever had a word shouted into his ear by a strong-lunged man whose mouth was not half-an-inch from the opening of the external meatus ; but the sound did not appear to be local ; it seemed to pervade the air as the sound of thunder does, and, although so deafening, to come from afar off.

The figure on the smoke was seen once again, standing in the attitude of one addressing the people, and then it was seen no more, but even as it vanished, there rolled a second time above the crowd the roar of that tremendous voice, crying, “ Silence !”

And there was silence. Each man could hear his neighbour’s heart beat.

Then very slowly, deliberately, and distinctly, but with startling abrupt and sudden pauses, the voice spoke thus :—

“‘The Man’ has come. He is here. It is he who speaks now to you. Those who seek happiness, health, and usefulness will do his bidding. Those who do not do his bidding shall die. From this moment there is for you all neither poverty nor property. I, ‘The Man,’ will care alike for him who has been poor, and for him who has been rich. I, ‘The Man,’ will feed, will clothe, will house, will instruct, will tend in sickness, will make happy in health. No man shall care henceforth for himself; but every man shall only work loyally during short hours as I shall bid him, and shall leave the rest to me, to whom all things now belong.

“Among you are those who know me, and whom you and I may trust; each wears a badge, whereby you may know him. Each of you has received a card. The letter on your card indicates the division to which, for the present, I have appointed you. Your leader is he who wears upon his badge your letter. He is your captain. Above every six captains of divisions is a captain of brigade. Him you may know because he wears upon his badge the number **2**. Belonging to the First Brigade are all the divisions whose letters are A. B. C. D. E. F. Belonging to the Second Brigade are all the divisions whose letters are G. H. I. J. K. L. Belonging to the Third Brigade are all the divisions whose letters are M. N. O. P. Q. R. Belonging to the Fourth Brigade are all the divisions whose letters are S. T. U. V. W. X. Your captains will appoint such officers as I have ordered. You will disobey your captains and their officers at your peril; and you will submit yourselves to them upon pain of being left to starve miserably. Banners bearing the letters of your divisions are provided. Let them now be unrolled, and let them be carried to the various points to which I have directed them to be taken. Silence! Be still.”

This part of the address, being spoken very slowly, took about a quarter of an hour in delivery. At its close there was a period of silence, during which the bearers of the twenty-four banners.

marched from the house in St. George's Place and slowly arranged themselves as had been directed. Those of the First Brigade distributed themselves about the south-east corner of the Park, those of the Second Brigade about the north-east, and so on, in such a way that, when the crowd should at length range itself beneath its proper banners, it should still cover as much space as before, but should merely be differently arranged. When the banner-bearers had taken up their positions, the voice continued, slowly, clearly, unhesitatingly, yet with abrupt pauses, as before.

What it said need not be here chronicled word for word. Suffice it to say that by issuing certain distinct orders, one at a time, it gradually caused the crowd in the Park to distribute itself in the desired manner, without undue pressure or struggling. Persons not actually in the Park were enjoined not to make further attempts to enter it during the continuance of the meeting, but at its conclusion to repair to the headquarters which should be designated for the Brigade to which they might belong. These headquarters were: For the First Brigade, Battersea Park; for the Second, Regent's Park; for the Third, Kensington Gardens; and for the Fourth, Hyde Park itself. The general headquarters of "The Man" were at Buckingham Palace, and their precincts included St. James's and the Green Park, within which members only of the first Seven Sections might intrude. These members, 254 in number, were, as has been already said, all Americans or foreigners, and only in the Eighth and lower Sections did Englishmen find place.

When sufficient directions had been given, and absolute obedience and good order had been stringently inculcated, the captains were one by one directed to march away their divisions, and thereafter to act in pursuance of previous orders. Slowly, yet steadily, the Park then began to clear, until the Fourth Division only remained. By that time it was five o'clock.

The voice had for a full hour ceased to thunder over London, and on the roof of the house in Park Street, Hancock, Griswold, the two assistants, Hood, and Van Kidder sat in comfortable chairs, smoking good cigars, and occasionally drinking cocktails. Van Kidder had just returned from a rapid visit on horseback to the City. Some of the 254 had been kept all day at the Central Telegraph Office there; others of them, or men of equal trustworthiness, were at certain other points; and thus, in spite of the general cessation of business, Hancock had been enabled to cable full news of his success to America. Next morning, therefore, The Old Country Development Trust issued the prospectus, which has been already quoted from, and copies of which appeared simultaneously in all the New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago daily papers.

The symposium on the roof did not last for long. Time was far too precious.

“Now,” said Hancock, starting up, and giving his orders with determination and great rapidity. “You, Van Kidder, go down to the Fourth Brigade, choose a couple of officers and five hundred of the best men—you know what kind—march to the City, seizing carts and horses from stables on the way, and collect the contents of the big banks, including the Bank of England. You know where to find revolvers as you go; but I don’t anticipate much resistance. Take crowbars, too, to break open doors, and dynamite to blow open safes. You know where everything needful has been got ready. And bring what you find to the Palace. You, Hood, take these lists and gallop round to each of the Brigade headquarters. The lists indicate the places, including the post-offices and railway stations, which are to be at once seized and occupied by outposts from each division; and they detail the officers who are to be responsible for finding quarters for the people, and for providing them with food. The houses that are to be seized, and the shops which are to be annexed as commis-

sariat centres are also indicated. Direct every officer to use as much diligence as possible in extending and maintaining the influence, and let them know that they can obtain as many plasters as they need at the Brigade headquarters or at Buckingham Palace. Take some with you for fear of supplies running short. If you haven't any, Griswold will give you as many as you want. You, Griswold, send one of your assistants down to the Captain of the Fourth Brigade, and ask him to detail an officer and a hundred picked men to meet me at six o'clock at Hyde Park Corner, under the Wellington Statue. Let him tell the Captain to be very careful in picking these men, and to be certain to send only plastered ones. And then let your assistant take this latch-key, go down to my lodgings in Trafalgar Square, and bring up the whole contents of the caboodle to Buckingham Palace sharp. He'll want a cab. On this paper are the name and address of a plastered man who has special orders to keep all his cabs, with plastered drivers, ready for our work. Now, gentlemen, be off as soon as possible, and report to me at the Palace as soon as you have carried out my instructions. As many of us as can be spared will dine together at nine o'clock, remember."

* * * * *

It now becomes necessary, in order to the due understanding of these strange events, to give some explanation of the methods by which Hancock had thus far brought about the physical and moral subjugation of a great country.

Behind the operation which has been spoken of as "plastering" lay the whole secret of Hancock's remarkable success, and upon it depended all the hopes of The Old Country Development Trust. The operation was also spoken of as "influencing," and Lucy in speaking to her aunt, had described those who had been "influenced" as having been "touched."

Personal magnetism, the effect of mystery, the force of blind

enthusiasm, and the infection of example did much, it is true, for the cause. So did Mr. T. A. Edison's two latest and most wonderful inventions, which Hancock, assisted by Griswold, had used so dramatically in the Park. One of these was the Iconobole, by means of which the image of Hancock, as he stood on the roof of the house in Park Street, was projected, enlarged to a gigantic size, far above the trees on to the screen formed by the smoke. That apparatus could be utilised only in the presence of bright sunshine and the absence of wind; and, had the necessary conditions been lacking, Hancock would probably have deemed it advisable to go *in propria persona* into the midst of the crowd. The other invention was the Phloisbophone. By its aid the tones of a voice, speaking into a receiver, were magnified more than a million-fold, and were delivered into the air with a sound as loud as that of thunder. Edison had thought that the Phloisbophone would supersede all earlier devices for signalling and communication between ships at sea; but Mr. Blignum, having been shown the invention, imagined that it might be very useful to Hancock, and had therefore purchased on behalf of his Syndicate all rights in it, and had caused the first machine of the kind that was ever constructed to be erected by the American Electric Light Company in Lord George Beauchamp's house overlooking the Park.

All these things tended in one way or another to Hancock's success; but nothing of any moment could have been effected had there been no "plastering."

"Plastering" was the *primum mobile* of the Revolution. Prudent legislators have since made it a capital offence to exercise or to attempt to exercise it, or even to make or possess plasters. It is not indeed quite certain that the knowledge of how these plasters were prepared has not been lost. But those who believe that they have the knowledge dare not impart it; much less dare they test whether they really possess it or not. Nor is it desirable that the evil knowledge should survive. That the plasters were

medicated with some preparation of cocaine is, however, accepted as a fact. The general action and the mode of operation of these abominable devices of science are known only too well; and, seeing that what they were will amply appear ere this history of a terrible episode can be brought to a conclusion, they need not now be further explained. But it may be explained at once that Hancock, Hood, Van Kidder and the members of the first Seven Series were not plastered. They, as well as a certain number of Americans in the Eighth and Ninth Series, were the paid agents and voluntary accomplices of the Trust. Only Englishmen were plastered. The effect of the plastering, which they underwent unconsciously, rendered them, not accomplices, but absolute slaves, who had no will of their own, who merely did as they were bidden, even to the extent of plastering others, and so extending Hancock's power, and who, even then, did not know what they had done. The foreigners, on the other hand, were all profiting parties to the conspiracy for the subjugation of the country and the Empire. Hancock and his two friends had sufficed for the subjugation of Barnham. For the conquest of England, the organisation had to be enlarged until it included about three hundred active paid servants of the Syndicate.

* * * * *

At six o'clock, accompanied by Griswold and one of his assistants, Hancock, with a big cigar in his mouth, betook himself to Hyde Park Corner. Everything was very orderly, for everyone, plastered or not, who was not privy to the conspiracy, had much fear of disobeying the orders of the mysterious voice, and the conspirators and paid assistants had all been very active.

Opposite St. George's Hospital, from the windows of which the nurses looked out in wonderment and terror, stood a member of the Fifth Series, with a hundred men drawn up in semi-military formation behind him. Hancock was most enthusiastically received, but acknowledged the acclamations without removing

his cigar from between his lips, and plainly treated the plastered men with unmitigated contempt. To the officer only was he civil.

"See here," he said to him, "I'm going to occupy Buckingham Palace, right now, and all my baggage is due there presently in a four-wheeler, so I guess we must be pretty smart. Just march your detachment down there, take the place in hand, set a fellow here and there to act as a sentry, and let the rest go to work to clean things up and make things ship-shape. Some of the boys are going to dine with me at nine o'clock. You had best come along too. The dinner is to be supplied by a very good cook and confectioner in Lower Grosvenor Place, a plastered man, of course. He may need help to run the show, as things will be rather apt to be at sixes and sevens at the Palace this evening; so, if you can, you might find a few plastered butlers and waiters in your Division, or plaster some on purpose. The first dinner-party at the Palace ought to be done well."

"Why, certainly, Boss," said the officer. "You just leave the thing right here to me. Don't you worry about it. I'll find the cook and catch the waiters. How about wines?"

"I guess there are wines in the Palace."

"Maybe! But I know a regular first-class cellar not a hundred yards from where we stand."

"Right! I'll leave it to you. And you'll dine with us?"

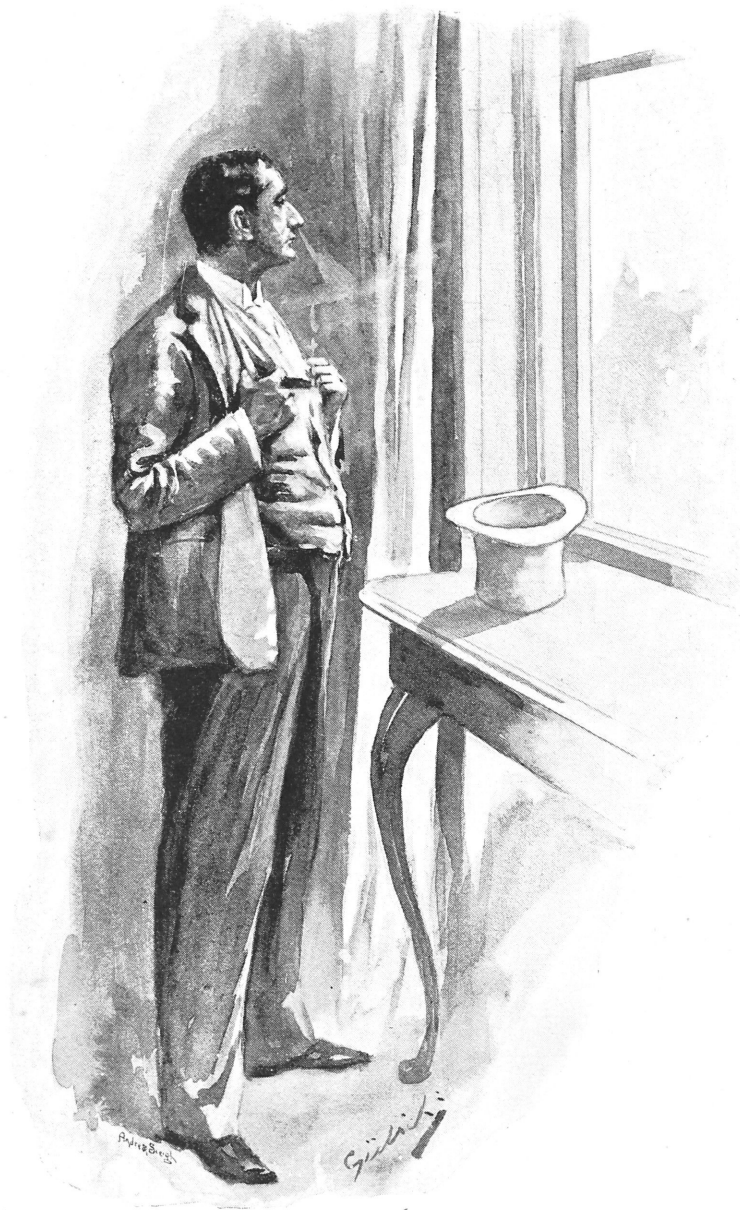
"Well, I should smile," said the Fifth Series' officer, as he ordered his men at a trot down Constitution Hill, and went off laughing at the head of them.

Buckingham Palace required very little taking. Outside there was, however, a solitary sentinel, who with great devotion had remained at his post for twenty-eight successive hours, because he had not been relieved. He had listened all the afternoon, at first in terror and then in wonderment, to the voice of the Phloisbophone. He had heard the tramp of the motley First Brigade as it had gone down Grosvenor Place

towards its headquarters in Battersea Park ; and his spirit had been greatly troubled because, the Palace being between him and them, he had not been able, without deserting his post, to get a shot at the scoundrels. He was the last of only fourteen "untouched" men in his regiment. Twelve had perished at Bushey Heath or at Willesden ; one had lost heart after going off guard on the previous day, and had fled down to the river, stolen a boat, and rowed away for his life, with a vague hope that his muscles and the fortunes of the winds and tides would land him in some country which had not gone altogether mad. The solitary sentry, therefore, as soon as he heard the Palace detachment coming down the hill, deliberately opened his pouch, knelt down, and made ready. When the head of the crowd appeared, he shouted "Who goes there?" and getting no answer, eased off one round from his Lee-Metford, and went on deliberately easing off other rounds, and with each knocking over a man, until he had fired nine, and was himself knocked on the head with a big stone. Honest Thomas Atkins! There is now a marble monument commemorating thy devotion and gallantry, and it stands opposite the Palace, but it was not erected at the direct charges of The Old Country Development Trust.

The only other opponents were the housekeeper and her staff of women servants. These screamed and fled to the attics, where they locked themselves in. Hancock and Griswold strolled down leisurely at the heels of the attacking party, and found the work begun and ended.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Hiram, when, five minutes later, he stood smoking at one of the windows on the first floor, and looked along St. James's Park, at the other end of which the Commander-in-Chief, in a room at the Horse Guards, was swearing himself hoarse because there was no one to carry out his orders. "Great Scott! I didn't believe there was such a fine view as this from any window in Europe."



"GREAT SCOTT! I DIDN'T BELIEVE THERE WAS SUCH A FINE VIEW
AS THIS FROM ANY WINDOW IN EUROPE."

Just then, up drove a four-wheeled cab with his goods and chattels from Trafalgar Square. Outside the cab were trunks and packages; on the box, beside the plastered driver, was Griswold's assistant; and inside, mixed up with a great deal of small baggage, sat, in solemn state, Miss Martha Marrable.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DANGER AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

WHEN Miss Marrable and Lucy fainted in Dr. Pharaoh's consulting room in Grosvenor Street, the doctor himself retained, if not his composure, at least his senses ; and although the din of the Phloisbophone extorted from him a rather violent exclamation, which it was perhaps well that the ladies did not hear, it did not prevent him from attending to the necessities of his unfortunate visitors. He summoned the brawny woman who had let them in, and who seemed to preserve nearly as much self-control as her master ; and with smelling salts, cold water, and brandy the ladies were presently restored to consciousness.

“Don't be frightened,” exclaimed the doctor cheerfully to them, as they slowly revived. “This is only some new trick of that infernal ‘Man.’”

“It is——” began Miss Marrable.

“Don't speak, madam,” said the doctor roughly, “until you are thoroughly yourself again. It was enough to terrify anyone with a weak head, and all women have weak heads.”

“You abominable man !” exclaimed Miss Marrable. “How dare you ?”

“My dear madam, I simply state facts which, however regrettable, are undoubtedly true.”

“Thank heaven, then,” ejaculated the lady bitterly, “that some people have what you call weak heads. Nearly all the people

with strong ones seem to be entirely at the mercy of this 'Man' of whom you speak; and but for a weak-headed person like myself it is quite likely that his wicked goings on would never have been found out."

"Do I understand, then, that you have found them out, madam?" asked the doctor, who was as yet by no means sure that he was not dealing with a lunatic.

"I have—Lucy and I have—at least, partially; but Lucy is a fool." Miss Marrable, who had been placed on a sofa, rose as she uttered these words, and sat up, energetic and belligerent. "Sir," she continued, fumbling at her pocket, and at length dragging out the box of plasters which had been found in Hannibal's drawer, "what are these?"

Doctor Pharaoh took the box, opened it, extracted a paper, held it up to the light, smelt it, crumpled it in his fingers, spread it out again, and, after long examination, said, "I really don't know, madam."

"You must appeal to the weak head then. Men, I find, always have to do so. They are plasters; they are some of 'The Man's' horrid plasters."

"What you tell me, though, no doubt, very interesting, does not greatly enlighten me. What, if I may ask, are these plasters?"

"They are the things," said Miss Marrable, "with which the abominable 'Man' is doing all this damage. They are the things which give him command over strong heads, though not, apparently, over weak ones."

"But how do you know?"

"Ask my niece, sir. She has been wicked enough to marry one of the intimate friends and fellow-conspirators of this 'Man.' She, a born Larkspur, with my Marrable blood in her veins."

"Do not ladies with Marrable blood in their veins usually marry, then?" demanded Dr. Pharaoh, cruelly. "What do you know, young lady, about these pieces of paper?"

“They are Hannibal’s,” sobbed Lucy, “and if he knew that I had taken them, he would never, never forgive me.”

“I should think not,” said the doctor. “And pray what are they for?”

“For plastering people; for touching them; for making them do whatever Hannibal tells them to do.”

“Very lucid,” was Dr. Pharaoh’s comment, as he again took a paper and carefully examined it. “Now,” he continued, “do I understand you ladies to say that these people—these adventurers—make use of these bits of paper as means whereby they influence others?”

“Yes,” replied Miss Marrable and Lucy together.

“H’m! Very curious!” said the doctor, and he resumed his examination.

In the meantime the Phloisbophone was roaring forth its directions to the crowd, and every word of the terrible voice, which could be plainly heard in the consulting-room, caused Lucy to shudder.

“This is decidedly curious,” resumed the doctor, who seemed to be deaf to the voice. “It is a peculiar kind of paper. It has some sort of adhesive on one side. It is plainly medicated in some way. By Gad! now I think of it, I have come across the very thing already.”

“Have you?” asked Miss Marrable. “Then do not swear.”

“Yes, madam, I have. I was at my club the other night——”

“Men always have clubs, Lucy dear,” interjected the older lady.

“I was, I say, at my club the other night,” repeated Dr. Pharaoh. “When I was about to leave I went to the cloak-room to get my hat. As I took it from its peg I happened to notice that a piece of paper, such as I had never seen there before, was stuck upon the inner band, so that if I had put on the hat, the paper would have been pressed against the anterior—I beg your

pardon—against my forehead. Why I chanced to catch sight of the paper I don't know. It was barely noticeable; but, with some



“H’M! VERY CURIOUS!” SAID THE DOCTOR.”

less your man’s head had been strong enough to resist the evil effect.”

“It may be so. I certainly don’t know how the paper got into my hat,” the doctor admitted.

little trouble, I picked it off, and before throwing it away, casually examined it. It was the facsimile of these plasters of yours. Of that I am certain.”

“Well!” cried Miss Marrable.

“Well, what would have happened if, instead of picking it off, I had left it alone and worn it? Do you mean to say that it would have influenced me, and have subjected me to the caprice of heaven knows whom?”

“I suspect, from what Lucy says, that that is what would have occurred,” said Miss Marrable, “un-

“I think,” ventured Lucy, hesitatingly, “that they do somehow stick them on to people, or to people’s hats. That is what I gather, from what Hannibal—I mean my husband, Mr. Hood—has said.”

“And a very pretty conspiracy for the husband of so pretty a young lady to be engaged in,” remarked the doctor. “Supposing what you say to be true, and what you believe to be correct, I can only assume that these people have discovered some method of, as it were, paralysing the will-power of their dupes. The will-power, it is generally understood, resides in the cerebrum, which, as you ladies may possibly not be aware, is situated beneath the brow and upper part of the head; and it is certainly conceivable—though I confess I cannot understand the process—that the application of one of these plasters to a man’s forehead may have the effect of paralysing his will-power, or rendering it subservient to the suggestions of others. Now if this be a true theory, it is both interesting and important. But how do you reconcile with it the undoubted and notorious fact that, in this epidemic of madness that seems to have seized upon us, the men suffer very generally, and are nearly all affected, while the women suffer hardly at all? Eh? madam? Why shouldn’t the weak heads suffer?”

“Weak heads, indeed!” ejaculated Miss Marrable; “strong heads I call them.”

“Perhaps,” suggested Lucy with great deference, “it might be because the strong heads wear hats and the weak ones do not wear anything which fits close to the brows.”

“My dear young lady,” cried Dr. Pharaoh warmly, “that is the greatest assistance that has yet been rendered me in this really extraordinary matter. Of course, it is because of the hat. Of course, no man would be such a fool as to wear a plaster on his forehead if he knew that it was there. Of course, if it were sticking to his skin he would feel it. Of course, if it were only sticking to the inner band of his hat he would not feel it, would not be con-

scious of its presence. Of course, in fine, that is how the trick is done. These scoundrels, by surreptitiously sticking these plasters inside people's hats have destroyed the will-power of their victims, and have thus been enabled to compel the poor wretches to do as they are bidden, no matter how stupid or ridiculous the orders may be."

"Very clever of you, I am sure," snapped Miss Marrable, "to find out everything after you have been told. And now, what are you going to do?"

"I shall certainly beg some of these papers from you," returned the doctor. "Anything more interesting to the psychologist and physiologist, I have never come across. Very curious indeed. If, ladies, it was on account of the plasters that you were good enough to come and see me, I assure you that I am exceedingly obliged to you. And now I will wish you good morning."

"What!" thundered Miss Marrable.

"Good morning, ladies. And I'll take good care that no one puts plasters into my hat."

"What!" repeated Miss Marrable, in a still louder tone.

"Upon my word, I don't understand you, madam."

"What are you going to do, sir? What—are—you—going—to—do?"

Dr. Pharaoh smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "Merely protect myself," he said.

"Man!" she exclaimed, standing erect. "Is it possible that you can be so brutal? Is it possible that you can know the cause which is bringing your countrymen to slavery, the worst in the history of the world, and yet not make one effort to save them? I will not believe it of you."

"You may believe it or not, as you please, madam," returned the doctor, drily, "but it is a fact. I am not asked, or paid, to take care of these people. Their condition is none of my business; it does not concern me. It is my business only to take care of

myself and of those patients who do me the honour to consult me. Good-day !”

When Miss Marrable found herself once more in the street she was red and furious. The air was resounding with the roar of the Phloisbophone. One sentence particularly caught her attention. “The headquarters of me, ‘The Man,’” it said, “will from this evening, henceforth, be at Buckingham Palace.”

“You told me, Lucy,” cried Miss Marrable, suddenly, “that he was living where?”

“I think in Trafalgar Square, in apartments on the second floor of No. 4.”

“Lucy,” said her aunt in a changed voice, “this is awful. Here is this Doctor Pharaoh, who could save the country, just as indifferent as one might expect to find him if all these things were going on ten thousand miles away, and were not affecting his own neighbours. If he won’t save the country, I will, if I die for it.”

“What can you do, aunt?” asked Lucy, trembling. “Oh, don’t be rash! They will kill you.”

“Let them,” rejoined Miss Marrable. “It would not make matters much worse than they are. Come home, child; I’m going to leave you. No, no; don’t argue and don’t cry. Everything depends on me, remember. If your disgraceful husband, Hannibal, should come home—though I don’t think that he will—you are to lock him up in the cellar.”

“I? Oh, aunt, I can’t; I dare not.”

“Very well. Do it, and perhaps you may save him; fail to do it, and you will certainly get him hanged. For when things resume their normal course and people get over their madness—if, indeed, they ever do entirely get over it—men like your husband as soon as they are caught will be made to suffer, and very few will pity them. But do as you like.”

“Don’t leave me, aunt, for Heaven’s sake,” pleaded Lucy. “I don’t know what to do.”

“Why, you’re as selfish as, and fifty times more a fool than, Dr. Pharaoh,” said Miss Marrable. “Come; here we are, go in.”

Miss Marrable unlocked the door with her latchkey; pushed Lucy into the hall; and stamped her foot with rage. “Oh! that doctor!” she exclaimed, clenching both fists. “I wish he were plastered!”

The state of excitement to which Miss Marrable had been worked up, induced her to remain indoors long enough to drink a cup of tea. She always depended upon tea to steady her nerves. She also filled a small handbag with some bare necessaries, such as women who are a little indifferent to dress and fashion can get along very well with during a single night’s absence from home. “And now,” she said at last, “I am off. Recollect, Lucy, to lock him up in the cellar at all hazards, should he come in. He deserves any fate. Still, he is your husband, the abominable fellow. I don’t know when you will see me again. It may be to-morrow; it may be in a week; it may be never. But if I do come back, I shall have saved the Empire. Good-bye; and, above all things, don’t be a little fool!” And she departed.

Miss Marrable walked rapidly eastward to Trafalgar Square. The streets were almost deserted. Servants who had ventured to the heads of their area steps, or to half-opened doors, in hopes of seeing or hearing something of what was being done in obedience to the mysterious voice, fled as the bold lady’s steps drew near; for they feared they knew not what. Trafalgar Square was as empty as other places. There seemed at first to be no way of getting into the house in which were Hancock’s rooms; but at length an old housekeeper screwed up courage to open the outer door upon the chain and to ask the visitor to explain her business.

Miss Marrable asked for Mr. Hancock.

“He’s out,” said the woman, “out like every other man in this wretched London. What is the matter, mum? Is it the Judgment? Oh, what a terrible voice.”



“MISS MARRABLE UNLOCKED THE
DOOR WITH HER LATCHKEY AND
PUSHED LUCY INTO THE HALL.”

"You needn't be a bit frightened," said Miss Marrable, reassuringly. "It's all right, or soon will be; I've come to see Mr. Hancock. Of course, I may wait till he returns?"

"You may wait, if you like, and welcome; but I don't know when he'll be back. Did you see 'The Man,' mum?"

"Oh, bother 'The Man;' no, I did not see him," said Miss Marrable, as she sat down in a chair in the inner hall. "Don't mind me. I can take care of myself. Leave me alone, and merely let me know when Mr. Hancock returns."

She waited, with no very great degree of patience, until Mr. Griswold's assistant at length appeared to carry off Hancock's belongings.

"Young man," she said to him boldly; "are you a friend of Mr. Hancock, who lives here?"

"Guess I know Mr. Hancock, ma'am," he replied; "and guess, too, that he don't live here any more."

"I know," answered Miss Marrable, "that he is going to live at Buckingham Palace in the future. Hush! You see I know the secret, and who he is. Will you drive me up in your cab? I want to see him on important business."

The young man regarded the maiden lady with some degree of doubt. "You're not an American, ma'am?" he asked.

"No, I'm not an American, young man; I'm a housekeeper."

"Wa'al, guess I can't say whether or not Mr. Hancock wants to see you; but, if there's room in the cab, you can ride along."

"Thank you," said Miss Marrable, as graciously as she could.

And thus it was that when all Hancock's goods had been removed from his old lodgings in Trafalgar Square, Martha Marrable drove up in the midst of them to the door of Buckingham Palace.

She kept her eyes very wide open as she arrived upon the scene. She saw that none of the Palace servants were on the ground floor; she jumped instinctively to the conclusion that the

men had deserted, and that the maids had taken refuge where they would be undisturbed; and she very quickly formed her plan of action.

"Tell him," she said, as she alighted, "that the housekeeper is here, and that she is anxious to arrange things in accordance with his wishes. Matters will be very uncomfortable unless the women servants are promptly reduced to order."

Griswold's assistant, as soon as he had superintended the unloading of the luggage, went upstairs to rejoin Hancock, and delivered the message, while Miss Marrable—very nervous, but very determined—sat in the great hall.

"I thought that all the women had cleared out, and would keep out," said Hancock: "but if some of them are inclined to be reasonable, so much the better. We can't fix things comfortably without them. If this housekeeper is a woman of sense she may be able to influence the rest of the helps. Best treat her well. Tell her I'll see her. Let her come along right away."

Miss Marrable went up the grand staircase to the presence of "The Man." She alone of all the women in England did not fear him; she alone of all the women in England knew his weakness as well as his power. And, although anxious and nervous, she entered bravely.

"Good evening, Mrs. Jones," said Hancock, who still stood near the window. "I understand that you're the housekeeper, and that you're prepared to do what you can towards restoring order in the house, and fixing things comfortably. Now, I've loads to do, and I can't worry about details. But, see here: there's a dinner-party here for me and some particular friends of mine at nine o'clock. The gentleman who is running that show is Mr. Marblehead, of the Fourth Brigade. Anyone in the Palace will point him out to you. If you can fix things with him and take general charge of the house, as I understand you've done hitherto,

why you'll earn my eternal gratitude and a good deal that's more substantial. Will you do that, Mrs. Jones?"

"Well," answered Miss Marrable, who did not know why she was so confidently addressed as Mrs. Jones, and who could only suppose that that was the name of the real housekeeper; "I can't promise everything, for everyone is so dreadfully upset; but I'll see what I can do if you'll be so good as to leave all to me."

"Good!" cried Hancock. "Everything is left to you then, Mrs. Jones; but do what you can at once to reassure the maids. No harm shall befall them."

Miss Marrable got away as fast as she decently could. Fortune favoured her more than she had dared to hope, and she still feared to make some fatal slip. With the activity of a much younger woman she found her way up to the long passage at the top of the Palace. Doors were hastily closed and locked as she approached. She knocked quietly at one behind which she had plainly seen a woman's dress disappear; and in a low voice said: "Open, I can save you all; I am a woman."

The door was not opened without parley. Voices within discussed the matter in half-smothered tones, and there seemed to be some opposition to allowing admittance to anyone; but at length, when Miss Marrable had replied with great precision to many searching questions, she was let in.

The room was full of maids. Among them was the real housekeeper, who, as Miss Marrable had suspected, was a Mrs. Jones. To her, as briefly as possible and without betraying any of Hancock's secrets, Miss Marrable explained her curious position. "I know," she said, "how to save you all, and to save the country, if only you will for a few short hours recognise me as Mrs. Jones, the housekeeper, and do as I tell you. You shall not be harmed; these people are all Americans, and I believe that all Americans behave respectfully to women. But you must appear to be



"'I KNOW,' SAID MISS MARRABLE, 'HOW TO SAVE YOU ALL.'"

resigned and even cheerful in the presence of these wicked men. It shall be only for a few hours, believe me."

The women were like a flock of scared sheep without a leader. Miss Marrable's confidence and enthusiasm soon commanded their attention and obedience, and in a very few minutes everything was arranged. The real Mrs. Jones handed over her keys to the false one, for whom also was found a becoming cap, and, within a quarter-of-an-hour of Miss Marrable's arrival, the servants were downstairs resuming their ordinary vocations. Miss Marrable caused Mr. Marblehead to be brought into the house-keeper's room, settled with him all the details of the dinner, made a few suggestions, and caused him later to report to Hancock that she was indeed an invaluable woman.

The dinner was a sumptuous and wonderful one, and the plastered cook and confectioner of Lower Grosvenor Place exceeded himself, while Marblehead by illicit methods supplied wines in profusion. Nearly all the leading Americans in London, except only the members of the Legation, dined. The members of the Legation, much puzzled, sent excuses, and met at the Minister's house to talk matters over. But few non-American foreigners were present, and, after dinner, Mr. Hiram Y. Hancock, in a very amusing speech, proposed prosperity to The Old Country Development Trust.

He said that he had not anticipated quite so easy a success. He had done Britishers the complimentary injustice of believing them to be a good deal less foolish than they actually were. But their lamb-like docility promised well for the amount of hard work which he hoped to get out of them, and for the dividends which he hoped to be able to offer to the shareholders. He was going to make John Bull realise that his days of bossdom were over. It was a pity, he thought, that the undertaking was not, from the beginning, being conducted under the glorious protection of the Stars and Stripes. He would have been proud to give

Great Britain as a new State to the Union, but the prospect of receiving such a very big gift all at once had frightened the President and Cabinet, and had led them to send over a cable message to the effect that on no account were the Stars and Stripes to be used by the agents of the Trust. "However," continued Hancock, "I calculate that we shall in time force the whole morsel down Uncle Sam's throat; and that in ages to come our country won't blame us for having tried to extend over part of the old world the glorious banner before which tyrants stand aghast and the nations gaze admiringly; and upon which the Bird of Freedom squats resplendent in the sunshine of effulgent liberty, and the breeze of eternal brotherhood."

Miss Marrable did not show herself during the evening. She was afraid of encountering her nephew-in-law, Hannibal Hood, who, she knew, was in the Palace. But she was by no means idle. Of course, the whole building was free to her; for had she not business in every part of it? And, while the dinner was still in progress, and the clatter of glass and plate, mingled with the roar that followed each speech, echoed from the banquetting hall, the housekeeper found her way to Hancock's rooms. His luggage from Trafalgar Square was flung down there in confusion. There also were clothes, boots, umbrellas, walking-sticks, gloves, and above all, hats—all belonging to "The Man." Into every hat there, and subsequently into every other hat in the Palace, Miss Marrable carefully gummed a plaster. The work, which had to be managed with secrecy and discretion, occupied her for more than an hour; but it was at length safely finished, and scarcely was it finished ere a great noise arose in the courtyard.

Van Kidder, by the light of five hundred torches—for the gas-works had been deserted—was bringing in the spoils of the city banks in fifty waggons. Everyone left the table to see the sight, for it was not often that anyone had an opportunity of seeing tons of gold and silver coin, and cartloads of gold and silver ingots

exposed in the open air to the general gaze. The night was chilly. Everyone put on his hat; many put on their overcoats also, in order to go out to watch while Hancock himself superintended the transfer of the treasure to the cellars of the Palace, and to cheer him as the last bag of new sovereigns was carried down below. Nor did Miss Marrable, from the deep shadows of a retired balcony, look on with less interest than other people. But all things do not equally interest everyone. Some that night had eyes only for the gold and silver. Miss Marrable watched rather the hundreds of hats in the yard beneath her.

CHAPTER IX.

SMASH.

AFTER the banquet and the torchlight reception of the treasure from the banks in the city, Hiram Y. Hancock, who was very weary, and who, moreover, in addition to numerous adventitious cocktails, had drunk a sufficiency of sweet champagne, went to bed.

He lay in a great state four-poster, the yellow satin canopy of which was looped up beneath a gilt crown and lined with delicate silk damask of grey and silver. Yet he did not sleep comfortably. He was restless and had horrid dreams in which the Phloisbophone, the plasters, and the gold in the cellars played parts; and it was barely daylight when he awoke, feeling that, though he was still thoroughly weary and miserable, he could sleep no more. As he tossed dissatisfied amid his royal surroundings, and tried in vain to amuse himself by counting the repetitions of the pattern on the damask, a knock sounded at his door.

“Who is there?” cried Hiram.

“It is I, Mrs. Jones, the housekeeper,” replied a voice.

“What do you want?” enquired “The Man.”

“I have only come to tell you that you are not to get up to-day until I give you leave.”

Miss Marrable uttered these words with an inward trepidation which was not indicated by the tones of her voice. She had lain down after all the rest of the Palace had gone to bed; but anxiety

had prevented her from sleeping. She had then risen ; had watched from the windows Hancock's motley sentries smoking in the moonlight in the courtyard ; had wandered uneasily hither and thither wondering whether, after all, although she knew that "The Man" had for some time worn his plastered hat, she had in her possession the real secret of Hancock's extraordinary power ; and at last, at dawn, had made up her mind to test the important question. She, therefore, waited breathlessly for "The Man's" reply to her brusque and dogmatic announcement.

"Eh?" he cried: "what on earth do you mean? What has happened? Not get up? Well, if I'm not to:—but it's tarnation strange."

Miss Marrable, overcome by conflicting emotions, sank down in a heap outside the door, and for fully five minutes was unable to stir. She feared that she would become hysterical, but she fought bravely to keep down the great lump that wanted to rise in her throat ; and at length she felt strong enough to go back to the housekeeper's room, where she flung herself upon a sofa in the semi-darkness and returned thanks. Then, losing but little time, she roused the real Mrs. Jones and obtained from her certain information as to the back entrances to the Palace, together with the necessary keys. Five minutes later she had put on her bonnet, wrapped herself up, and was on her way through the Royal Mews, Buckingham Palace Road, Birdcage Walk, and the open space at the east end of St. James's Park, to the Horse Guards.

The Horse Guards was apparently deserted. Most of the doors were wide open. Cold draughts sighed up and down colder passages and staircases. But, after carefully exploring the building, Miss Marrable found in an upper room a stout old gentleman who had been dozing in an arm-chair, and who, as she approached, sprang up in a martial manner and drew his sword—for he was in the uniform of a British Field-Marshal.



“‘WHAT DO YOU WANT?’ HE SHOUTED. ‘HERE I AM AT MY POST!
I WILL NEVER BE TAKEN BY YOU BLACKGUARDS.’”

“What do you want?” he shouted, ere he could see his visitor. “Here I am at my post! Come on; I will never be taken by you blackguards.”

“There are no blackguards here,” said the peaceful voice of Miss Marrable.

The Commander-in-Chief re-sheathed his sword with a crash, and bowed gallantly at the figure in black. “Beg pardon. What can I do for you?” he asked.

“You are the Commander-in-Chief?” she enquired.

“I was—or I am, if those gentlemen at Buckingham Palace, hang them, haven’t abolished me.”

“Don’t swear, sir,” said Miss Marrable, “but listen. I am here to save the Empire. Those gentlemen at Buckingham Palace are all as amenable as lambs now. Never mind how I managed it. I will tell you some day when I have more time. If you like to walk over you can take the whole lot of them in charge and——”

“I have not the honour to be a policeman, madam,” interrupted the Duke.

“Well, call it what you like, sir,” continued Miss Marrable. “Take them under your orders, or what you will. They won’t resist; they are harmless and powerless.”

“But I am absolutely alone, madam. I haven’t a soul here with me; all my miserable people have taken themselves off to follow this confounded adventurer,” objected the Commander-in-Chief.

“Yes,” mused Miss Marrable, “nearly every man in London is probably plastered.”

“What the d—— do you mean, madam?”

Miss Marrable was obliged, very rapidly and briefly, to explain herself.

“Ah!” exclaimed the Duke; “thank Heaven I always wear a cabbage leaf in my cap or helmet to keep my head cool. We want cool heads in these days, Mrs. ——”

"Miss Marrable is my name, sir."

"Yes, yes. Capital thing a cabbage leaf, Miss Marrable," said the Field-Marshal. "Perhaps it has saved me from being plastered. But as I tell you, I have not a soul here."

"You understand," ventured Miss Marrable, "that only the men are plastered. The women are not; they are all loyal, if only they be led."

"Do you mean," blurted out the Generalissimo of the Queen's Army, "to suggest that I am to march to Buckingham Palace at the head of a pack of women?"

"You don't want a pack. A dozen or so would do. I daresay that in half-an-hour I can find enough for the purpose close by. And there will also be the maids at the Palace."

"I never in all my life heard of such a derogatory proposition," declared the old soldier.

"Well, time presses," urged Miss Marrable, "and something must be done. I have taken from these people some of their power to do harm. In three hours, unless you will assume command and arrange matters, London will be without even the anarchical form of government that ruled it yesterday; and then who can say what may happen?"

"If you put it to me in that manner," said the Field-Marshal, "I can't hesitate. I am an Englishman, and I'm going to do my duty. There; run away and collect your women; but don't get too many, and, for Heaven's sake, don't let them chatter."

Miss Marrable went away at once. She hurried up and down Whitehall, knocking at every door, holding rapid colloquies with half-dressed and terrified women who appeared at upper windows, and persuading some of them to dress and come down to the street. Those who did so were chiefly servants, charwomen, and caretakers. Some armed themselves with brooms, others with fireirons. Very few of them were young or beautiful, but nearly all were muscular. At the head of the company Miss Marrable

returned to the Horse Guards, and, leaving her companions in the passage, she went up and informed the Commander-in-Chief of her success. He rather bashfully descended.

“Look here, my good women,” he said, as he stood on a step. “I understand that we are going to save the Empire from the clutches of the scoundrels who are now playing the deuce with it. This excellent and patriotic lady, Miss Marrowbones—I mean Marrable—has rendered most of the leaders incapable of doing much harm. They are all asleep in Buckingham Palace, or in the houses near it. But she tells me that when they awake there will be no one to restore order. You are to help me in doing this. You are just to obey my orders, like good women. March.”

The little assemblage tramped on to the Horse Guards' Parade, which was already bright and sunny, save where the buildings threw their chilly black shadows over the gravel. Miss Marrable walked with the Commander-in-Chief, and, on the way, gave him explanations as full and complete as possible.

“Then I understand,” he said, “that everyone who has been what you call plastered has lost his power of will, and will do exactly what he is told, eh?”

“That is so,” she assented.

“By Gad! I'd plaster the whole Army if I had it still,” he commented. “Then all that we have to do is to give orders. Anybody who has been plastered, either by you or by these scoundrels, will obey?”

“I believe so, sir. But I'm not certain what may be the effect of orders in opposition to those which may have been already given. There, I am afraid, lies the risk. I ought to have made the experiment.”

“Hang it, Miss Marrable,” cried the old soldier, cordially; “don't say that. You have done enough, and more than enough, to win the undying regard of your country; and if, after what you



"AT THE HEAD OF THE COMPANY MISS MARRABLE RETURNED TO THE HORSE GUARDS."

have done, I can't manage to complete the business, why, all I can say is that I don't deserve my position."

Miss Marrable blushed violently, and bowed. They were by this time close to the Palace, which, she saw with relief, was still quiet. A few of Hancock's sentries were, as before, in the courtyard smoking.

"Isn't this a good opportunity to try your experiment?" asked the Commander-in-Chief. "Hi! you women; get behind the trees; hide yourselves anywhere for a minute, for fear the rascals may disobey me and fire. I'm going to talk to them."

And alone he strode across the open space, till he stood at the very gateway of the Palace.

Suddenly he drew his sword.

"'Tention!" he shouted, as loudly as he could.

The sentries and guards dropped their pipes as if they were red hot, and sprang with alacrity to "attention," or, at least, to what the undrilled ones of them believed to be "attention."

"Lay down your ar-rums!" he shouted again.

All placed their rifles on the ground, unbuckled swords and revolvers, and laid them aside without a word; and the women, seeing what had happened, issued from their hiding-places.

"Now take up these rifles, my good women; and if one of these scoundrels dares so much as to move, or if any other people come and attempt to interfere with you, fire at them, without waiting to chatter about the rights and wrongs of things. But, recollect, you may expect all your orders to be obeyed."

With Miss Marrable he entered the Palace. Within Mrs. Jones and the servants were timidly awaiting them. All these, of course, knew the Commander-in-Chief, and were much stimulated and reassured by his presence.

"Where's the arch-scoundrel who's at the head of the business?" he demanded, and they led him to Hancock's room, where

the man was still in bed. The old soldier entered unhesitatingly and unaccompanied.



"HANCOCK NIPPED OUT OF BED AS ACTIVELY AS A SCHOOLBOY."

"Get up," he said, "and dress yourself quickly. I intend that that machine in the Park shall talk again this morning

as early as possible, so collect your wits and give the necessary orders."

Hancock nipped out of bed as actively as a schoolboy who has been caught oversleeping himself. He did not argue or remonstrate; he only looked dazed and frightened, and he got into his clothes with feverish rapidity.

"Send at once and give the necessary orders for that machine to be made ready," said the Commander-in-Chief. "Don't keep me waiting."

"Shall I ring the bell?" asked Hancock humbly. "Shall I tell Griswold?"

"Certainly; tell everyone. Is this Griswold here?"

"Yes," said Hancock. "He'll get the Phloisbophone ready."

The Commander-in-Chief himself rang the bell, and when a servant appeared, directed Griswold to be found and sent to him; and as Griswold, whose hat had been plastered by Miss Marrable, happened to be sleeping in the very next room, he was soon discovered. He, too, was dazed and frightened.

"Now," said the soldier, "give the orders," and Hancock gave them without a murmur, whereupon Griswold found one of his assistants, and very quickly set off for Lord George Beauchamp's house in Park Street. "I shall follow in an hour," the Commander-in-Chief shouted after him; "and if you are not ready for me, you'll have cause to regret it."

While Hancock was still dressing, the Field-Marshal sat down, and taking out his pocket-book, made a rough draft of the speech which he intended should be delivered by the Phloisbophone, and should restore order to London. In it he directed every citizen to desert "The Man," who, he took upon himself to announce, would that day be conveyed to her Majesty's prison at Newgate, and to return without delay to his ordinary home, position, and occupation. He also directed that everyone possessing plasters should surrender them at once at the Horse Guards, and that, after noon,

death would be the penalty for the possession of those articles. In addition, he made provision for the temporary carrying on of



"AT EIGHT O'CLOCK, TAKING WITH HIM MISS MARRABLE AND HANCOCK, THE DETERMINED OLD SOLDIER DROVE TO PARK STREET."

the affairs of Government until the ordinary machinery should be again in full working order; and in conclusion he paid a noble,

but well deserved, tribute to the gallantry of Miss Martha Mar-
rable, whose great services would, he warmly declared, be never
forgotten.

Long before he had finished Hancock was dressed, and stood
waiting for the Commander-in-Chief.

At eight o'clock, taking with him Miss Marrable and Hancock,
the determined old soldier, for whom a carriage had been obtained,
drove to Park Street, and mounted the roof whence, on the pre-
vious day, "The Man" had addressed the multitude. The Park
was now much emptier, though it was still partially occupied by
the Fourth Brigade. It was little better than an expanse of mud
and devastation: for the grass had been trodden into the earth,
the railings had been broken and twisted, and the trees had been
half stripped. Then the Field-Marshal, through the Phloisbo-
phone, delivered the speech which roused the country from its
paralysis, and re-established order.

"One thing only I must beg," said Miss Marrable, who had
filled her ears with cotton wool, and who, nevertheless, was
intensely relieved when the long speech was ended.

"Which is?" asked the Commander-in-Chief.

"This. I have a foolish niece who is so unfortunate as to be
the wife of one of the leaders of this abominable conspiracy. It is
owing to her that I was happily able to find out the great secret.
For him I have no pity; but for her it is different. She is a child.
For her sake, and for mine, procure the pardon of this misguided
man. I ask nothing else."

"Well," said the Field-Marshal, "that's a serious matter
indeed. I can't promise. But look here: I think that I can, per-
haps, undertake not to have him arrested for a week, and none of
us can tell where he may be in a week, can we? And, by the way,
I happen to have some money about me. Who can tell where, if
I ask you to take charge of my purse, you may drop it, or what
warning scrap of paper you may have in it at the time? No: Miss

Marrable: you really mustn't—not even you—ask for more than that.”

“Well,” said Miss Marrable, “if he will leave the country I shall be glad enough, and it may be an excellent thing for his poor wife.”

* * * * *

Hannibal did get away. He died soon after in the Argentine Republic. Van Kidder did not. He and several other leaders joined Hancock at Newgate. They were tried and condemned to death, but, the President of the United States pleading for them, their sentence was commuted to one of imprisonment for life. As for The Old Country Development Trust, it collapsed almost as soon as it was established; but, during the few hours of its existence, so many people rushed to take shares in it, that in the evening when the news of Hancock's downfall reached New York, Mr. Rufus Q. Blignum, the president, was able to lay hands on over three millions of dollars, with which, that very night, he departed for lands unknown.

Miss Marrable was offered splendid honours and rewards. She accepted none. Lucy lived to realise that her first marriage had been a stupidity. At five-and-thirty she married a colonial bishop. As for the plastered ones, in ten days they nearly all regained their will-power and returned to usefulness, for the effects of the drug with which the plasters had been impregnated lasted only for about that time. It may, therefore, be hoped that Hancock did not permanently increase the number of fools in the country. Yet there are some who believe that no man who had once been plastered ever entirely recovered from the effects of the operation, and that the evil results have descended even to the grandchildren of some of the original sufferers. There certainly is a marvellous amount of folly in the land. The subject seems to deserve the attention of a Royal Commission.

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