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## BOOK IV.

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### CHAPTER I.

A GREAT CITY, whose image dwells in the memory of man, is the type of some great idea. Rome represents conquest ; Faith hovers over the towers of Jerusalem ; and Athens embodies the pre-eminent quality of the antique world, Art.

In modern ages, Commerce has created London ; while Manners, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, have long found a supreme capital in the airy and bright-minded city of the Seinc.

What Art was to the ancient world, Science is to the modern : the distinctive faculty. In the minds of men the useful has succeeded to the beautiful. Instead of the city of the Violet Crown, a Lancashire village has expanded into a mighty region of factories and warehouses. Yet, rightly understood, Manchester is as great a human exploit as Athens.

The inhabitants, indeed, are not so impressed with their idiosyncrasy as the countrymen of Pericles and Phidias. They do not fully comprehend the position which they occupy. It is the philosopher alone who can conceive the grandeur of Manchester, and the immensity of its future. There are yet great truths to tell, if we had either the courage to announce or the temper to receive them.

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### CHAPTER II.

A FEELING of melancholy, even of uneasiness, attends our first entrance into a great town, especially at night. Is

it that the sense of all this vast existence with which we have no connexion, where we are utterly unknown, oppresses us with our insignificance? Is it that it is terrible to feel friendless where all have friends?

Yet reverse the picture. Behold a community where you are unknown, but where you will be known, perhaps honoured. A place where you have no friends, but where, also, you have no enemies. A spot that has hitherto been a blank in your thoughts, as you have been a cipher in its sensations, and yet a spot, perhaps, pregnant with your destiny!

There is, perhaps, no act of memory so profoundly interesting as to recall the careless mood and moment in which we have entered a town, a house, a chamber, on the eve of an acquaintance or an event, that have given a colour and an impulse to our future life.

What is this Fatality that men worship? Is it a Goddess?

Unquestionably it is a power that acts mainly by female agents. Women are the Priestesses of Predestination.

Man conceives Fortune, but Woman conducts it.

It is the Spirit of Man that says, 'I will be great;' but it is the Sympathy of Woman that usually makes him so.

It was not the comely and courteous hostess of the Adelphi Hotel, Manchester, that gave occasion to these remarks, though she may deserve them, and though she was most kind to our Coningsby as he came in late at night very tired, and not in very good humour.

He had travelled the whole day through the great district of labour, his mind excited by strange sights, and at length wearied by their multiplication. He had passed over the plains where iron and coal supersede turf and corn, dingy as the entrance of Hades, and flaming with furnaces; and now he was among illumined factories, with more windows than Italian palaces, and smoking chimneys taller than Egyptian obelisks. Alone in the great metropolis of machinery itself, sitting down in a solitary coffee-room glaring with gas, with no appetite, a whirling head,

and not a plan or purpose for the morrow, why was he there? Because a being, whose name even was unknown to him, had met him in a hedge alchouse during a thunder-storm, and told him that the Age of Ruins was past.

Remarkable instance of the influence of an individual; some evidence of the extreme susceptibility of our hero.

Even his bedroom was lit by gas. Wonderful city! That, however, could be got rid of. He opened the window. The summer air was sweet, even in this land of smoke and toil. He feels a sensation such as in Lisbon or Lima precedes an earthquake. The house appears to quiver. It is a sympathetic affection occasioned by a steam-engine in a neighbouring factory.

Notwithstanding, however, all these novel incidents, Coningsby slept the deep sleep of youth and health, of a brain which, however occasionally perplexed by thought, had never been harassed by anxiety. He rose early, freshened, and in fine spirits. And by the time the deviled chicken and the buttered toast, that mysterious and incomparable luxury, which can only be obtained at an inn, had disappeared, he felt all the delightful excitement of travel.

And now for action! Not a letter had Coningsby; not an individual in that vast city was known to him. He went to consult his kind hostess, who smiled confidence. He was to mention her name at one place, his own at another. All would be right; she seemed to have reliance in the destiny of such a nice young man.

He saw all; they were kind and hospitable to the young stranger, whose thought, and earnestness, and gentle manners attracted them. One recommended him to another; all tried to aid and assist him. He entered chambers vaster than are told of in Arabian fable, and peopled with habitants more wondrous than Afrite or Peri. For there he beheld, in long-continued ranks, those mysterious forms full of existence without life, that perform with facility, and in an instant, what man can fulfil only with difficulty and in days. A machine is a slave that neither brings nor bears degradation; it is a being endowed with

the greatest degree of energy, and acting under the greatest degree of excitement, yet free at the same time from all passion and emotion. It is, therefore, not only a slave, but a supernatural slave. And why should one say that the machine does not live? It breathes, for its breath forms the atmosphere of some towns. It moves with more regularity than man. And has it not a voice? Does not the spindle sing like a merry girl at her work, and the steam-engine roar in jolly chorus, like a strong artisan handling his lusty tools, and gaining a fair day's wages for a fair day's toil?

Nor should the weaving-room be forgotten, where a thousand or fifteen hundred girls may be observed in their coral necklaces, working like Penelope in the daytime; some pretty, some pert, some graceful and jocund, some absorbed in their occupation; a little serious some, few sad. And the cotton you have observed in its rude state, that you have seen the silent spinner change into thread, and the bustling weaver convert into cloth, you may now watch as in a moment it is tinted with beautiful colours, or printed with fanciful patterns. And yet the mystery of mysteries is to view machines making machines; a spectacle that fills the mind with curious, and even awful, speculation.

From early morn to the late twilight, our Coningsby for several days devoted himself to the comprehension of Manchester. It was to him a new world, pregnant with new ideas, and suggestive of new trains of thought and feeling. In this unprecedented partnership between capital and science, working on a spot which Nature had indicated as the fitting theatre of their exploits, he beheld a great source of the wealth of nations which had been reserved for these times, and he perceived that this wealth was rapidly developing classes whose power was imperfectly recognised in the constitutional scheme, and whose duties in the social system seemed altogether omitted. Young as he was, the bent of his mind, and the inquisitive spirit of the times, had sufficiently prepared him, not indeed to grapple with

these questions, but to be sensible of their existence, and to ponder.

One evening, in the coffee-room of the hotel, having just finished his well-earned dinner, and relaxing his mind for the moment in a fresh research into the Manchester Guide, an individual, who had also been dining in the same apartment, rose from his table, and, after lolling over the empty fireplace, reading the framed announcements, looking at the directions of several letters waiting there for their owners, picking his teeth, turned round to Coningsby, and, with an air of uneasy familiarity, said,—

‘First visit to Manchester, sir?’

‘My first.’

‘Gentleman traveller, I presume?’

‘I am a traveller,’ said Coningsby.

‘Hem! From south?’

‘From the south.’

‘And pray, sir, how did you find business as you came along? Brisk, I dare say. And yet there is a something, a sort of a something; didn’t it strike you, sir, there was a something? A deal of queer paper about, sir!’

‘I fear you are speaking on a subject of which I know nothing,’ said Coningsby, smiling; ‘I do not understand business at all; though I am not surprised that, being at Manchester, you should suppose so.’

‘Ah! not in business. Hem! Professional?’

‘No,’ said Coningsby, ‘I am nothing.’

‘Ah! an independent gent; hem! and a very pleasant thing, too. Pleased with Manchester, I dare say?’ continued the stranger.

‘And astonished,’ said Coningsby; ‘I think, in the whole course of my life, I never saw so much to admire.’

‘Seen all the lions, have no doubt?’

‘I think I have seen everything,’ said Coningsby, rather eager and with some pride.

‘Very well, very well,’ exclaimed the stranger, in a patronising tone. ‘Seen Mr. Birley’s weaving-room, I dare say?’

'Oh! isn't it wonderful?' said Coningsby.

'A great many people,' said the stranger, with a rather supercilious smile.

'But after all,' said Coningsby, with animation, 'it is the machinery without any interposition of manual power that overwhelms me. It haunts me in my dreams,' continued Coningsby; 'I see cities peopled with machines. Certainly Manchester is the most wonderful city of modern times!'

The stranger stared a little at the enthusiasm of his companion, and then picked his teeth.

'Of all the remarkable things here,' said Coningsby, 'what on the whole, sir, do you look upon as the most so?'

'In the way of machinery?' asked the stranger.

'In the way of machinery.'

'Why, in the way of machinery, you know,' said the stranger, very quietly, 'Manchester is a dead letter.'

'A dead letter!' said Coningsby.

'Dead and buried,' said the stranger, accompanying his words with that peculiar application of his thumb to his nose that signifies so eloquently that all is up.

'You astonish me!' said Coningsby.

'It's a booked place though,' said the stranger, 'and no mistake. We have all of us a very great respect for Manchester, in course; look upon her as a sort of mother, and all that sort of thing. But she is behind the times, sir, and that won't do in this age. The long and short of it is, Manchester is gone by.'

'I thought her only fault might be she was too much in advance of the rest of the country,' said Coningsby, innocently.

'If you want to see life,' said the stranger, 'go to Staley-bridge or Bolton. There's high pressure.'

'But the population of Manchester is increasing,' said Coningsby.

'Why, yes; not a doubt. You see we have all of us a great respect for the town. It is a sort of metropolis of this district, and there is a good deal of capital in the place. And it has some first-rate institutions. There's the Man-

chester Bank. That's a noble institution, full of commercial enterprise; understands the age, sir; high-pressure to the backbone. I came up to town to see the manager to-day. I am building a new mill now myself at Staley-bridge, and mean to open it by January, and when I do, I'll give you leave to pay another visit to Mr. Birley's weaving-room, with my compliments.'

'I am very sorry,' said Coningsby, 'that I have only another day left; but pray tell me, what would you recommend me most to see within a reasonable distance of Manchester?'

'My mill is not finished,' said the stranger musingly, 'and though there is still a great deal worth seeing at Staley-bridge, still you had better wait to see my new mill. And Bolton, let me see; Bolton, there is nothing at Bolton that can hold up its head for a moment against my new mill; but then it is not finished. Well, well, let us see. What a pity this is not the 1st of January, and then my new mill would be at work! I should like to see Mr. Birley's face, or even Mr. Ashworth's, that day. And the Oxford Road Works, where they are always making a little change, bit by bit reform, eh! not a very particular fine appetite, I suspect, for dinner, at the Oxford Road Works, the day they hear of my new mill being at work. But you want to see something tip-top. Well, there's Millbank; that's regular slap-up, quite a sight, regular lion; if I were you I would see Millbank.'

'Millbank!' said Coningsby; 'what Millbank?'

'Millbank of Millbank, made the place, made it himself. About three miles from Bolton; train to-morrow morning at 7.25, get a fly at the station, and you will be at Millbank by 8.40.'

'Unfortunately I am engaged to-morrow morning,' said Coningsby, 'and yet I am most anxious, particularly anxious, to see Millbank.'

'Well, there's a late train,' said the stranger, '3.15; you will be there by 4.30.'

'I think I could manage that,' said Coningsby.

'Do,' said the stranger; 'and if you ever find yourself at Staley-bridge, I shall be very happy to be of service. I must be off now. My train goes at 9.15.' And he presented Coningsby with his card as he wished him good night.

MR. G. O. A. HEAD,  
STALEY-BRIDGE.

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### CHAPTER III.

In a green valley of Lancaster, contiguous to that district of factories on which we have already touched, a clear and powerful stream flows through a broad meadow land. Upon its margin, adorned, rather than shadowed, by some old elm-trees, for they are too distant to serve except for ornament, rises a vast deep red brick pile, which though formal and monotonous in its general character, is not without a certain beauty of proportion and an artist-like finish in its occasional masonry. The front, which is of great extent, and covered with many tiers of small windows, is flanked by two projecting wings in the same style, which form a large court, completed by a dwarf wall crowned with a light, and rather elegant railing; in the centre, the principal entrance, a lofty portal of bold and beautiful design, surmounted by a statue of Commerce.

This building, not without a degree of dignity, is what is technically, and not very felicitously, called a mill; always translated by the French in their accounts of our manufacturing riots, 'moulin;' and which really was the principal factory of Oswald Millbank, the father of that youth whom, we trust, our readers have not quite forgotten.

At some little distance, and rather withdrawn from the principal stream, were two other smaller structures of the same style. About a quarter of a mile further on, appeared a village of not inconsiderable size, and remarkable from



the neatness and even picturesque character of its architecture, and the gay gardens that surrounded it. On a sunny knoll in the background rose a church, in the best style of Christian architecture, and near it was a clerical residence and a school-house of similar design. The village, too, could boast of another public building; an Institute where there were a library and a lecture-room; and a reading-hall, which any one might frequent at certain hours, and under reasonable regulations.

On the other side of the principal factory, but more remote, about half-a-mile up the valley, surrounded by beautiful meadows, and built on an agreeable and well-wooded elevation, was the mansion of the mill-owner; apparently a commodious and not inconsiderable dwelling-house, built in what is called a villa style, with a variety of gardens and conservatories. The atmosphere of this somewhat striking settlement was not disturbed and polluted by the dark vapour, which, to the shame of Manchester, still infests that great town, for Mr. Millbank, who liked nothing so much as an invention, unless it were an experiment, took care to consume his own smoke.

The sun was declining when Coningsby arrived at Millbank, and the gratification which he experienced on first beholding it, was not a little diminished, when, on enquiring at the village, he was informed that the hour was past for seeing the works. Determined not to relinquish his purpose without a struggle, he repaired to the principal mill, and entered the counting-house, which was situated in one of the wings of the building.

'Your pleasure, sir?' said one of three individuals sitting on high stools behind a high desk.

'I wish, if possible, to see the works.'

'Quite impossible, sir;' and the clerk, withdrawing his glance, continued his writing. 'No admission without an order, and no admission with an order after two o'clock.'

'I am very unfortunate,' said Coningsby.

'Sorry for it, sir. Give me ledger K. X., will you, Mr. Benson?'

'I think, Mr. Millbank would grant me permission,' said Coningsby.

'Very likely, sir; to-morrow. Mr. Millbank is there, sir, but very much engaged.' He pointed to an inner counting-house, and the glass doors permitted Coningsby to observe several individuals in close converse.

'Perhaps his son, Mr. Oswald Millbank, is here?' inquired Coningsby.

'Mr. Oswald is in Belgium,' said the clerk.

'Would you give a message to Mr. Millbank, and say a friend of his son's at Eton is here, and here only for a day, and wishes very much to see his works?'

'Can't possibly disturb Mr. Millbank now, sir; but, if you like to sit down, you can wait and see him yourself.'

Coningsby was content to sit down, though he grew very impatient at the end of a quarter of an hour. The ticking of the clock, the scratching of the pens of the three silent clerks, irritated him. At length, voices were heard, doors opened, and the clerk said, 'Mr. Millbank is coming, sir,' but nobody came; voices became hushed, doors were shut; again nothing was heard, save the ticking of the clock and the scratching of the pen.

At length there was a general stir, and they all did come forth, Mr. Millbank among them, a well-proportioned, comely man, with a fair face inclining to ruddiness, a quick, glancing, hazel eye, the whitest teeth, and short, curly, chestnut hair, here and there slightly tinged with grey. It was a visage of energy and decision.

He was about to pass through the counting-house with his companions, with whom his affairs were not concluded, when he observed Coningsby, who had risen.

'This gentleman wishes to see me?' he inquired of his clerk, who bowed assent.

'I shall be at your service, sir, the moment I have finished with these gentlemen.'

'The gentleman wishes to see the works, sir,' said the clerk.

'He can see the works at proper times,' said Mr. Millbank, somewhat pettishly; 'tell him the regulations;' and he was about to go.

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Coningsby, coming forward, and with an air of earnestness and grace that arrested the step of the manufacturer. 'I am aware of the regulations, but would beg to be permitted to infringe them.'

'It cannot be, sir,' said Mr. Millbank, moving.

'I thought, sir, being here only for a day, and as a friend of your son ——'

Mr. Millbank stopped and said,

'Oh! a friend of Oswald's, eh? What, at Eton?'

'Yes, sir, at Eton; and I had hoped perhaps to have found him here.'

'I am very much engaged, sir, at this moment,' said Mr. Millbank; 'I am sorry I cannot pay you any personal attention, but my clerk will show you everything. Mr. Benson, let this gentleman see everything;' and he withdrew.

'Be pleased to write your name here, sir,' said Mr. Benson, opening a book, and our friend wrote his name and the date of his visit to Millbank:

'HARRY CONINGSBY, SEPT. 2, 1836.'

Coningsby beheld in this great factory the last and the most refined inventions of mechanical genius. The building had been fitted up by a capitalist as anxious to raise a monument of the skill and power of his order, as to obtain a return for the great investment.

'It is the glory of Lancashire!' exclaimed the enthusiastic Mr. Benson.

The clerk spoke freely of his master, whom he evidently idolised, and his great achievements, and Coningsby encouraged him. He detailed to Coningsby the plans which Mr. Millbank had pursued, both for the moral and physical well-being of his people; how he had built churches, and schools, and institutes; houses and cottages on a new

system of ventilation ; how he had allotted gardens ; established singing classes.

'Here is Mr. Millbank,' continued the clerk, as he and Coningsby, quitting the factory, re-entered the court.

Mr. Millbank was approaching the factory, and the moment that he observed them, he quickened his pace.

'Mr. Coningsby?' he said, when he reached them. His countenance was rather disturbed, and his voice a little trembled, and he looked on our friend with a glance scrutinising and serious. Coningsby bowed.

'I am sorry that you should have been received at this place with so little ceremony, sir,' said Mr. Millbank ; 'but had your name been mentioned, you would have found it cherished here.' He nodded to the clerk, who disappeared.

Coningsby began to talk about the wonders of the factory, but Mr. Millbank recurred to other thoughts that were passing in his mind. He spoke of his son : he expressed a kind reproach that Coningsby should have thought of visiting this part of the world without giving them some notice of his intention, that he might have been their guest, that Oswald might have been there to receive him, that they might have made arrangements that he should see everything, and in the best manner ; in short, that they might all have shown, however slightly, the deep sense of their obligations to him.

'My visit to Manchester, which led to this, was quite accidental,' said Coningsby. 'I am bound for the other division of the county, to pay a visit to my grandfather, Lord Monmouth ; but an irresistible desire came over me during my journey to view this famous district of industry. It is some days since I ought to have found myself at Coningsby, and this is the reason why I am so pressed.'

A cloud passed over the countenance of Millbank as the name of Lord Monmouth was mentioned, but he said nothing. Turning towards Coningsby, with an air of kindness :

'At least,' said he, 'let not Oswald hear that you did

not taste our salt. Pray dine with me to-day; there is yet an hour to dinner; and as you have seen the factory, suppose we stroll together through the village.'

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#### CHAPTER IV.

THE village clock struck five as Mr. Millbank and his guest entered the gardens of his mansion. Coningsby lingered a moment to admire the beauty and gay profusion of the flowers.

'Your situation,' said Coningsby, looking up the green and silent valley, 'is absolutely poetic.'

'I try sometimes to fancy,' said Mr. Millbank, with a rather fierce smile, 'that I am in the New World.'

They entered the house; a capacious and classic hall, at the end a staircase in the Italian fashion. As they approached it, the sweetest and the clearest voice exclaimed from above, 'Papa! papa!' and instantly a young girl came bounding down the stairs, but suddenly seeing a stranger with her father she stopped upon the landing-place, and was evidently on the point of as rapidly retreating as she had advanced, when Mr. Millbank waved his hand to her and begged her to descend. She came down slowly; as she approached them her father said, 'A friend you have often heard of, Edith: this is Mr. Coningsby.'

She started; blushed very much; and then, with a trembling and uncertain gait, advanced, put forth her hand with a wild unstudied grace, and said in a tone of sensibility, 'How often have we all wished to see and to thank you!'

This daughter of his host was of tender years; apparently she could scarcely have counted sixteen summers. She was delicate and fragile, but as she raised her still blushing visage to her father's guest, Coningsby felt that he had never beheld a countenance of such striking and such peculiar beauty.

'My only daughter, Mr. Coningsby, Edith; a Saxon name, for she is the daughter of a Saxon.'

But the beauty of the countenance was not the beauty of the Saxons. It was a radiant face, one of those that seem to have been touched in their cradle by a sunbeam, and to have retained all their brilliancy and suffused and mantling lustre. One marks sometimes such faces, diaphanous with delicate splendour, in the southern regions of France. Her eye, too, was the rare eye of Aquitaine; soft and long, with lashes drooping over the cheek, dark as her clustering ringlets.

They entered the drawing-room.

'Mr. Coningsby,' said Millbank to his daughter, 'is in this part of the world only for a few hours, or I am sure he would become our guest. He has, however, promised to stay with us now and dine.'

'If Miss Millbank will pardon this dress,' said Coningsby, bowing an apology for his inevitable frock and boots; the maiden raised her eyes and bent her head.

The hour of dinner was at hand. Millbank offered to show Coningsby to his dressing-room. He was absent but a few minutes. When he returned he found Miss Millbank alone. He came somewhat suddenly into the room. She was playing with her dog, but ceased the moment she observed Coningsby.

Coningsby, who since his practice with Lady Everingham, flattered himself that he had advanced in small talk, and was not sorry that he had now an opportunity of proving his prowess, made some lively observations about pets and the breeds of lapdogs, but he was not fortunate in extracting a response or exciting a repartee. He began then on the beauty of Millbank, which he would on no account have avoided seeing, and inquired when she had last heard of her brother. The young lady, apparently much distressed, was murmuring something about Antwerp, when the entrance of her father relieved her from her embarrassment.

Dinner being announced, Coningsby offered his arm to

his fair companion, who took it with her eyes fixed on the ground.

'You are very fond, I see, of flowers,' said Coningsby, as they moved along; and the young lady said 'Yes.'

The dinner was plain, but perfect of its kind. The young hostess seemed to perform her office with a certain degree of desperate determination. She looked at a chicken and then at Coningsby, and murmured something which he understood. Sometimes she informed herself of his tastes or necessities in more detail, by the medium of her father, whom she treated as a sort of dragoman; in this way: 'Would not Mr. Coningsby, papa, take this or that, or do so and so?' Coningsby was always careful to reply in a direct manner, without the agency of the interpreter; but he did not advance. Even a petition for the great honour of taking a glass of sherry with her only induced the beautiful face to bow. And yet when she had first seen him, she had addressed him even with emotion. What could it be? He felt less confidence in his increased power of conversation. Why, Theresa Sydney was scarcely a year older than Miss Millbank, and though she did not certainly originate like Lady Everingham, he got on with her perfectly well.

Mr. Millbank did not seem to be conscious of his daughter's silence: at any rate, he attempted to compensate for it. He talked fluently and well; on all subjects his opinions seemed to be decided, and his language was precise. He was really interested in what Coningsby had seen, and what he had felt; and this sympathy divested his manner of the disagreeable effect that accompanies a tone inclined to be dictatorial. More than once Coningsby observed the silent daughter listening with extreme attention to the conversation of himself and her father.

The dessert was remarkable. Millbank was proud of his fruit. A bland expression of self-complacency spread over his features as he surveyed his grapes, his peaches, his figs.

'These grapes have gained a medal,' he told Coningsby.

'Those too are prize peaches. I have not yet been so successful with my figs. These however promise, and perhaps this year I may be more fortunate.'

'What would your brother and myself have given for such a dessert at Eton!' said Coningsby to Miss Millbank, wishing to say something, and something too that might interest her.

She seemed 'infinitely distressed, and yet this time would speak,

'Let me give you some.' He caught by chance her glance immediately withdrawn; yet it was a glance not only of beauty, but of feeling and thought. She added, in a hushed and hurried tone, dividing very nervously some grapes, 'I hardly know whether Oswald will be most pleased or grieved when he hears that you have been here.'

'And why grieved?' said Coningsby.

'That he should not have been here to welcome you, and that your stay is for so brief a time. It seems so strange that after having talked of you for years, we should see you only for hours.'

'I hope I may return,' said Coningsby, 'and that Millbank may be here to welcome me; but I hope I may be permitted to return even if he be not.'

But there was no reply; and soon after, Mr. Millbank talking of the American market, and Coningsby helping himself to a glass of claret, the daughter of the Saxon, looking at her father, rose and left the room, so suddenly and so quickly that Coningsby could scarcely gain the door.

'Yes,' said Millbank, filling his glass, and pursuing some previous observations, 'all that we want in this country is to be masters of our own industry; but Saxon industry and Norman manners never will agree; and some day, Mr. Coningsby, you will find that out.'

'But what do you mean by Norman manners?' inquired Coningsby.

'Did you ever hear of the Forest of Rossendale?' said Millbank. 'If you were staying here, you should visit the



district. It is an area of twenty-four square miles. It was disforested in the early part of the sixteenth century, possessing at that time eighty inhabitants. Its rental in James the First's time was 120*l*. When the woollen manufacture was introduced into the north, the shuttle competed with the plough in Rossendale, and about forty years ago we sent them the Jenny. The eighty souls are now increased to upwards of eighty thousand, and the rental of the forest, by the last county assessment, amounts to more than 50,000*l*., 41,000 per cent. on the value in the reign of James I. Now I call that an instance of Saxon industry competing successfully with Norman manners.'

'Exactly,' said Coningsby, 'but those manners are gone.'

'From Rossendale,' said Millbank, with a grim smile; 'but not from England.'

'Where do you meet them?'

'Meet them! In every place, at every hour; and feel them, too, in every transaction of life.'

'I know, sir, from your son,' said Coningsby, inquiringly, 'that you are opposed to an aristocracy.'

'No, I am not. I am for an aristocracy; but a real one, a natural one.'

'But, sir, is not the aristocracy of England,' said Coningsby, 'a real one? You do not confound our peerage, for example, with the degraded patricians of the Continent.'

'Hum!' said Millbank. 'I do not understand how an aristocracy can exist, unless it be distinguished by some quality which no other class of the community possesses. Distinction is the basis of aristocracy. If you permit only one class of the population, for example, to bear arms, they are an aristocracy; not one much to my taste; but still a great fact. That, however, is not the characteristic of the English peerage. I have yet to learn they are richer than we are, better informed, wiser, or more distinguished for public or private virtue. Is it not monstrous, then, that a small number of men, several of whom take the titles of Duke and Earl from towns in this very neighbourhood, towns which they never saw, which never heard of them,

which they did not form, or build, or establish, I say, is it not monstrous, that individuals so circumstanced, should be invested with the highest of conceivable privileges, the privilege of making laws? Dukes and Earls indeed! I say there is nothing in a masquerade more ridiculous.'

'But do you not argue from an exception, sir?' said Coningsby. 'The question is, whether a preponderance of the aristocratic principle in a political constitution be, as I believe, conducive to the stability and permanent power of a State; and whether the peerage, as established in England, generally tends to that end? We must not forget in such an estimate the influence which, in this country, is exercised over opinion by ancient lineage.'

'Ancient lineage!' said Mr. Millbank; 'I never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The real old families of this country are to be found among the peasantry; the gentry, too, may lay some claim to old blood. I can point you out Saxon families in this county who can trace their pedigrees beyond the Conquest; I know of some Norman gentlemen whose fathers undoubtedly came over with the Conqueror. But a peer with an ancient lineage is to me quite a novelty. No, no; the thirty years of the wars of the Roses freed us from those gentlemen. I take it, after the battle of Tewkesbury, a Norman baron was almost as rare a being in England as a wolf is now.'

'I have always understood,' said Coningsby, 'that our peerage was the finest in Europe.'

'From themselves,' said Millbank, 'and the heralds they pay to paint their carriages. But I go to facts. When Henry VII. called his first Parliament, there were only twenty-nine temporal peers to be found, and even some of them took their seats illegally, for they had been attainted. Of those twenty-nine not five remain, and they, as the Howards for instance, are not Norman nobility. We owe the English peerage to three sources: the spoliation of the Church; the open and flagrant sale of its honours by the elder Stuarts; and the boroughmongering of our own times. Those are the three main sources of the existing peerage of

England, and in my opinion disgraceful ones. But I must apologise for my frankness in thus speaking to an aristocrat.'

'Oh, by no means, sir, I like discussion. Your son and myself at Eton have had some encounters of this kind before. But if your view of the case be correct,' added Coningsby, smiling, 'you cannot at any rate accuse our present peers of Norman manners.'

'Yes, I do: they adopted Norman manners while they usurped Norman titles. They have neither the right of the Normans, nor do they fulfil the duty of the Normans: they did not conquer the land, and they do not defend it.'

'And where will you find your natural aristocracy?' asked Coningsby.

'Among those men whom a nation recognises as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property, and, if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion; and, therefore, they govern. I am no leveller; I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy; both depressing the energies, and checking the enterprise of a nation. I like man to be free, really free: free in his industry as well as his body. What is the use of Habeas Corpus, if a man may not use his hands when he is out of prison?'

'But it appears to me you have, in a great measure, this natural aristocracy in England.'

'Ah, to be sure! If we had not, where should we be? It is the counteracting power that saves us, the disturbing cause in the calculations of short-sighted selfishness. I say it now, and I have said it a hundred times, the House of Commons is a more aristocratic body than the House of Lords. The fact is, a great peer would be a greater man now in the House of Commons than in the House of Lords. Nobody wants a second chamber, except a few disreputable individuals. It is a valuable institution for any member of it who has no distinction, neither character, talents, nor estate. But a peer who possesses all or any of these great qualifications, would find himself an immeasurably more

important personage in what, by way of jest, they call the Lower House.'

'Is not the revising wisdom of a senate a salutary check on the precipitation of a popular assembly?'

'Why should a popular assembly, elected by the flower of a nation, be precipitate? If precipitate, what senate could stay an assembly so chosen? No, no, no! the thing has been tried over and over again; the idea of restraining the powerful by the weak is an absurdity; the question is settled. If we wanted a fresh illustration, we need only look to the present state of our own House of Lords. It originates nothing; it has, in fact, announced itself as a mere Court of Registration of the decrees of your House of Commons; and if by any chance it ventures to alter some miserable detail in a clause of a bill that excites public interest, what a clatter through the country, at Conservative banquets got up by the rural attorneys, about the power, authority, and independence of the House of Lords; nine times nine, and one cheer more! No, sir, you may make aristocracies by laws; you can only maintain them by manners. The manners of England preserve it from its laws. And they have substituted for our formal aristocracy an essential aristocracy; the government of those who are distinguished by their fellow-citizens.'

'But then it would appear,' said Coningsby, 'that the remedial action of our manners has removed all the political and social evils of which you complain?'

'They have created a power that may remove them; a power that has the capacity to remove them. But in a great measure they still exist, and must exist yet, I fear, for a long time. The growth of our civilisation has ever been as slow as our oaks; but this tardy development is preferable to the temporary expansion of the gourd.'

'The future seems to me sometimes a dark cloud.'

'Not to me,' said Mr. Millbank. 'I am sanguine; I am the Disciple of Progress. But I have cause for my faith. I have witnessed advance. My father has often told me that in his early days the displeasure of a peer of England

was like a sentence of death to a man. Why it was esteemed a great concession to public opinion, so late as the reign of George II., that Lord Ferrars should be executed for murder. The king of a new dynasty, who wished to be popular with the people, insisted on it, and even then he was hanged with a silken cord. At any rate we may defend ourselves now,' continued Mr. Millbank, 'and, perhaps, do something more. I defy any peer to crush me, though there is one who would be very glad to do it. No more of that; I am very happy to see you at Millbank, very happy to make your acquaintance,' he continued, with some emotion, 'and not merely because you are my son's friend and more than friend.'

The walls of the dining-room were covered with pictures of great merit, all of the modern English school. Mr. Millbank understood no other, he was wont to say! and he found that many of his friends who did, bought a great many pleasing pictures that were copies, and many originals that were very displeasing. He loved a fine free landscape by Lee, that gave him the broad plains, the green lanes, and running streams of his own land; a group of animals by Landseer, as full of speech and sentiment as if they were designed by Æsop; above all, he delighted in the household humour and homely pathos of Wilkie. And if a higher tone of imagination pleased him, he could gratify it without difficulty among his favourite masters. He possessed some specimens of Etty worthy of Venice when it was alive; he could muse amid the twilight ruins of ancient cities raised by the magic pencil of Danby, or accompany a group of fair Neapolitans to a festival by the genial aid of Uwins.

Opposite Coningsby was a portrait, which had greatly attracted his attention during the whole dinner. It represented a woman, young and of a rare beauty. The costume was of that classical character prevalent in this country before the general peace; a blue ribbon bound together as a fillet her clustering chestnut curls. The face was looking out of the canvass, and Coningsby never raised his eyes without catching its glance of blended vivacity and tenderness.

There are moments when our sensibility is affected by circumstances of a trivial character. It seems a fantastic emotion, but the gaze of this picture disturbed the serenity of Coningsby. He endeavoured sometimes to avoid looking at it, but it irresistibly attracted him. More than once during dinner he longed to inquire whom it represented; but it is a delicate subject to ask questions about portraits, and he refrained. Still, when he was rising to leave the room, the impulse was irresistible. He said to Mr. Millbank, 'By whom is that portrait, sir?'

The countenance of Millbank became disturbed; it was not an expression of tender reminiscence that fell upon his features. On the contrary, the expression was agitated, almost angry.

'Oh! that is by a country artist,' he said, 'of whom you never heard,' and moved away.

They found Miss Millbank in the drawing-room; she was sitting at a round table covered with working materials, apparently dressing a doll.

'Nay,' thought Coningsby, 'she must be too old for that.'

He addressed her, and seated himself by her side. There were several dolls on the table, but he discovered, on examination, that they were pincushions; and elicited, with some difficulty, that they were making for a fancy fair about to be held in aid of that excellent institution, the Manchester Athenæum. Then the father came up and said,

'My child, let us have some tea; ' and she rose and seated herself at the tea-table. Coningsby also quitted his seat, and surveyed the apartment.

There were several musical instruments; among others, he observed a guitar; not such an instrument as one buys in a music shop, but such an one as tinkles at Seville, a genuine Spanish guitar. Coningsby repaired to the tea-table.

'I am glad that you are fond of music, Miss Millbank.'

A blush and a bow.

'I hope after tea you will be so kind as to touch the guitar.'

Signals of great distress.

'Were you ever at Birmingham?'

'Yes:' a sigh.

'What a splendid music-hall! They should build one at Manchester.'

'They ought,' in a whisper.

The tea-tray was removed; Coningsby was conversing with Mr. Millbank, who was asking him questions about his son; what he thought of Oxford; what he thought of Oriel; should himself have preferred Cambridge; but had consulted a friend, an Oriel man, who had a great opinion of Oriel; and Oswald's name had been entered some years back. He rather regretted it now; but the thing was done. Coningsby, remembering the promise of the guitar, turned round to claim its fulfilment, but the singer had made her escape. Time elapsed, and no Miss Millbank re-appeared. Coningsby looked at his watch; he had to go three miles to the train, which started, as his friend of the previous night would phrase it, at 9.45.

'I should be happy if you remained with us,' said Mr. Millbank; 'but as you say it is out of your power, in this age of punctual travelling a host is bound to speed the parting guest. The carriage is ready for you.'

'Farewell, then, sir. You must make my adieux to Miss Millbank, and accept my thanks for your great kindness.'

'Farewell, Mr. Coningsby,' said his host, taking his hand, which he retained for a moment, as if he would say more. Then leaving it, he repeated with a somewhat wandering air, and in a voice of emotion, 'Farewell, farewell, Mr. Coningsby.'

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## CHAPTER V.

TOWARDS the end of the session of 1836, the hopes of the Conservative party were again in the ascendant. The Tadpoles and the Tapers had infused such enthusiasm into

all the country attorneys, who, in their turn, had so be-deviled the registration, that it was whispered in the utmost confidence, but as a flagrant truth, that Reaction was at length 'a great fact.' All that was required was the opportunity; but as the existing parliament was not two years old, and the government had an excellent working majority, it seemed that the occasion could scarcely be furnished. Under these circumstances, the backstairs politicians, not content with having by their premature movements already seriously damaged the career of their leader, to whom in public they pretended to be devoted, began weaving again their old intrigues about the court, and not without effect.

It was said that the royal ear lent itself with no marked repugnance to suggestions which might rid the sovereign of ministers, who, after all, were the ministers not of his choice, but of his necessity. But William IV., after two failures in a similar attempt, after his respective embarrassing interviews with Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, on their return to office in 1832 and 1835, was resolved never to make another move unless it were a checkmate. The king, therefore, listened and smiled, and loved to talk to his favourites of his private feelings and secret hopes; the first outraged, the second cherished; and a little of these revelations of royalty was distilled to great personages, who in their turn spoke hypothetically to their hangers-on of royal dispositions, and possible contingencies, while the hangers-on and go-betweens, in their turn, looked more than they expressed; took county members by the button into a corner, and advised, as friends, the representatives of boroughs to look sharply after the next registration.

Lord Monmouth, who was never greater than in adversity, and whose favourite excitement was to aim at the impossible, had never been more resolved on a Dukedom than when the Reform Act deprived him of the twelve votes which he had accumulated to attain that object. While all his companions in discomfiture were bewailing their irretrievable overthrow, Lord Monmouth became



almost a convert to the measure, which had furnished his devising and daring mind, palled with prosperity, and satiated with a life of success, with an object, and the stimulating enjoyment of a difficulty.

He had early resolved to appropriate to himself a division of the county in which his chief seat was situate; but what most interested him, because it was most difficult, was the acquisition of one of the new borougas that was in his vicinity, and in which he possessed considerable property. The borough, however, was a manufacturing town, and returning only one member, it had hitherto sent up to Westminster a radical shopkeeper, one Mr. Jawster Sharp, who had taken what is called 'a leading part' in the town on every 'crisis' that had occurred since 1830; one of those zealous patriots who had got up penny subscriptions for gold cups to Lord Grey; cries for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill; and public dinners where the victual was devoured before grace was said; a worthy who makes speeches, passes resolutions, votes addresses, goes up with deputations, has at all times the necessary quantity of confidence in the necessary individual; confidence in Lord Grey; confidence in Lord Durham; confidence in Lord Melbourne: and can also, if necessary, give three cheers for the King, or three groans for the Queen.

But the days of the genus Jawster Sharp were over in this borough as well as in many others. He had contrived in his lustre of agitation to feather his nest pretty successfully; by which he had lost public confidence and gained his private end. Three hungry Jawster Sharps, his hopeful sons, had all become commissioners of one thing or another; temporary appointments with interminable duties; a low-church son-in-law found himself comfortably seated in a chancellor's living; and several cousins and nephews were busy in the Excise. But Jawster Sharp himself was as pure as Cato. He had always said he would never touch the public money, and he had kept his word. It was an understood thing that Jawster Sharp was never to show

his face again on the hustings of Darlford; the Liberal party was determined to be represented in future by a man of station, substance, character, a true Reformer, but one who wanted nothing for himself, and therefore might, if needful, get something for them. They were looking out for such a man, but were in no hurry. The seat was looked upon as a good thing; a contest certainly, every place is contested now, but as certainly a large majority. Notwithstanding all this confidence, however, Reaction or Registration, or some other mystification, had produced effects even in this creature of the Reform Bill, the good Borough of Darlford. The borough that out of gratitude to Lord Grey returned a jobbing shopkeeper twice to Parliament as its representative without a contest, had now a Conservative Association, with a banker for its chairman, and a brewer for its vice-president, and four sharp lawyers nibbing their pens, noting their memorandum-books, and assuring their neighbours, with a consoling and complacent air, that 'Property must tell in the long run.' Whispers also were about, that when the proper time arrived, a Conservative candidate would certainly have the honour of addressing the electors. No name mentioned, but it was not concealed that he was to be of no ordinary calibre; a tried man, a distinguished individual, who had already fought the battle of the constitution, and served his country in eminent posts; honoured by the nation, favoured by his sovereign. These important and encouraging intimations were ably diffused in the columns of the Conservative journal, and in a style which, from its high tone, evidently indicated no ordinary source and no common pen. Indeed, there appeared occasionally in this paper, articles written with such unusual vigour, that the proprietors of the Liberal journal almost felt the necessity of getting some eminent hand down from town to compete with them. It was impossible that they could emanate from the rival Editor. They knew well the length of their brother's tether. Had they been more versant in the periodical literature of the day, they might in this 'slashing'

style have caught perhaps a glimpse of the future candidate for their borough, the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby.

Lord Monmouth, though he had been absent from England since 1832, had obtained from his vigilant correspondent a current knowledge of all that had occurred in the interval: all the hopes, fears, plans, prospects, manœuvres, and machinations; their rise and fall; how some had bloomed, others were blighted; not a shade of reaction that was not represented to him; not the possibility of an adhesion that was not duly reported; he could calculate at Naples at any time, within ten, the result of a dissolution. The season of the year had prevented him crossing the Alps in 1834, and after the general election he was too shrewd a practiser in the political world to be deceived as to the ultimate result. Lord Eskdale, in whose judgment he had more confidence than in that of any individual, had told him from the first that the pear was not ripe; Rigby, who always hedged against his interest by the fulfilment of his prophecy of irremediable discomfiture, was never very sanguine. Indeed, the whole affair was always considered premature by the good judges; and a long time elapsed before Tadpole and Taper recovered their secret influence, or resumed their ostentatious loquacity, or their silent insolence.

The pear, however, was now ripe. Even Lord Eskdale wrote that after the forthcoming registration a bet was safe, and Lord Monmouth had the satisfaction of drawing the Whig Minister at Naples into a cool thousand on the event. Soon after this he returned to England, and determined to pay a visit to Coningsby Castle, feast the county, patronise the borough, diffuse that confidence in the party which his presence never failed to do; so great and so just was the reliance in his unerring powers of calculation and his intrepid pluck. Notwithstanding Schedule A, the prestige of his power had not sensibly diminished, for his essential resources were vast, and his intellect always made the most of his influence.

True, however, to his organisation, Lord Monmouth, even to save his party and gain his dukedom, must not be bored. He, therefore, filled his castle with the most agreeable people from London, and even secured for their diversion a little troop of French comedians. Thus supported, he received his neighbours with all the splendour befitting his immense wealth and great position, and with one charm which even immense wealth and great position cannot command, the most perfect manner in the world. Indeed, Lord Monmouth was one of the most finished gentlemen that ever lived; and as he was good-natured, and for a selfish man even good-humoured, there was rarely a cloud of caprice or ill-temper to prevent his fine manners having their fair play. The country neighbours were all fascinated; they were received with so much dignity and dismissed with so much grace. Nobody would believe a word of the stories against him. Had he lived all his life at Coningsby, fulfilled every duty of a great English nobleman, benefited the county, loaded the inhabitants with favours, he would not have been half so popular as he found himself within a fortnight of his arrival with the worst county reputation conceivable, and every little squire vowing that he would not even leave his name at the Castle to show his respect.

Lord Monmouth, whose contempt for mankind was absolute; not a fluctuating sentiment, not a mournful conviction, ebbing and flowing with circumstances, but a fixed, profound, unalterable instinct; who never loved any one, and never hated any one except his own children; was diverted by his popularity, but he was also gratified by it. At this moment it was a great element of power; he was proud that, with a vicious character, after having treated these people with unprecedented neglect and contumely, he should have won back their golden opinions in a moment by the magic of manner and the splendour of wealth. His experience proved the soundness of his philosophy.

Lord Monmouth worshipped gold, though, if necessary, he could squander it like a caliph. He had even a respect for very rich men; it was his only weakness, the only ex-

ception to his general scorn for his species. Wit, power, particular friendships, general popularity, public opinion, beauty, genius, virtue, all these are to be purchased; but it does not follow that you can buy a rich man: you may not be able or willing to spare enough. A person or a thing that you perhaps could not buy, became invested, in the eyes of Lord Monmouth, with a kind of halo amounting almost to sanctity.

As the prey rose to the bait, Lord Monmouth resolved they should be gorged. His banquets were doubled; a ball was announced; a public day fixed; not only the county, but the principal inhabitants of the neighbouring borough, were encouraged to attend; Lord Monmouth wished it, if possible, to be without distinction of party. He had come to reside among his old friends, to live and die where he was born. The Chairman of the Conservative Association and the Vice President exchanged glances, which would have become Tadpole and Taper; the four attorneys nibbled their pens with increased energy, and vowed that nothing could withstand the influence of the aristocracy 'in the long run.' All went and dined at the Castle; all returned home overpowered by the condescension of the host, the beauty of the ladies, several real Princesses, the splendour of his liveries, the variety of his viands, and the flavour of his wines. It was agreed that at future meetings of the Conservative Association, they should always give 'Lord Monmouth and the House of Lords!' superseding the Duke of Wellington, who was to figure in an after-toast with the Battle of Waterloo.

It was not without emotion that Coningsby beheld for the first time the castle that bore his name. It was visible for several miles before he even entered the park, so proud and prominent was its position, on the richly-wooded steep of a considerable eminence. It was a castellated building, immense and magnificent, in a faulty and incongruous style of architecture, indeed, but compensating in some degree for these deficiencies of external taste and beauty by the splendour and accommodation of its interior, and which

a Gothic castle, raised according to the strict rules of art, could scarcely have afforded. The declining sun threw over the pile a rich colour as Coningsby approached it, and lit up with fleeting and fanciful tints the delicate foliage of the rare shrubs and tall thin trees that clothed the acclivity on which it stood. Our young friend felt a little embarrassed when, without a servant and in a hack chaise, he drew up to the grand portal, and a crowd of retainers came forth to receive him. A superior servant inquired his name with a stately composure that disdained to be supercilious. It was not without some degree of pride and satisfaction that the guest replied, 'Mr. Coningsby.' The instantaneous effect was magical. It seemed to Coningsby that he was borne on the shoulders of the people to his apartment; each tried to carry some part of his luggage; and he only hoped his welcome from their superiors might be as hearty.

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## CHAPTER VI.

It appeared to Coningsby in his way to his room, that the Castle was in a state of great excitement; everywhere bustle, preparation, moving to and fro, ascending and descending of stairs, servants in every corner; orders boundlessly given, rapidly obeyed; many desires, equal gratification. All this made him rather nervous. It was quite unlike Beaumanoir. That also was a palace, but it was a home. This, though it should be one to him, seemed to have nothing of that character. Of all mysteries the social mysteries are the most appalling. Going to an assembly for the first time is more alarming than the first battle. Coningsby had never before been in a great house full of company. It seemed an overwhelming affair. The sight of the servants bewildered him; how then was he to encounter their masters?