

# The New Utopia.

(From the Irish Monthly.)

## CHAPTER IV.—continued.

"Not quite so long as you think," said Sir John; "I believe it is not so very long since the heir of Oakham has been within these very walls."

"Not Grant!" exclaimed my father; "no, not possible!"

"Ay, not only possible, but most certain," said Sir John; "Wm. Grant Carstairs, only son of Lord Carstairs, and grandson of the old Duke of Leven. His father never took the ducal title, and even dropped that of Carstairs when he settled in Australia; but I have indubitable proof that Mr. Grant, of Glenleven, was really the man; indeed it was well known in the colony, when I was governor. Carstairs died about a year ago, and his son, this William Grant Carstairs, is really Duke of Leven. He came to England to pay off the last remnants of his grandfather's debts, as he could not do this without putting himself in communication with the Commission of Creditors, of which I am chairman, I became acquainted with his real name and history."

"Then Mary was right," I muttered to myself, while Sir John continued:

"We shall place the necessary evidence of these facts before the right tribunals, and, meanwhile, Mr. Grant must be communicated with."

"He leaves England in a fortnight," said my father.

"He will do no such thing," said Sir John. "It will be a case for the lords, and he will, no doubt, have a subpoena to appear and give evidence."

It all happened as he said; there was no difficulty about the proofs of identity, for there had never been any concealment of the fact, and everyone in Queensland knew well enough who "Grant of Glenleven" really was, and why he chose to drop the family name and ducal title. Then as to the heirship, that was equally plain. There were but two male branches of the family, of both of which Grant was now the sole surviving representative. When all this had been sifted and proved, and every legal form gone through which could be demanded by the House of Peers or Doctors Commons, then, and not till then, did Grant consent to reappear at Oakham, and receive from the executors of the late earl all that was necessary to constitute him its master. It took more than a year to effect all this; and when at last the day was fixed for the new duke to take possession, not Oakham only, but the entire county prepared to give him a worthy reception. I had my share of the law business, and went down to assist my father in the heavy work which the occasion brought on him. I shall not easily forget it. All the gentlemen of the county had assembled there, lords and baronets; but I need not give a list. There were triumphal arches and processions of school children, and the Roxburgh Volunteers and a dozen carriages to meet him at the station. I remembered how at that same station he had stood alone a year before, looking in vain for some one to carry his bag to the White Lion; I remembered that, as I saw him now step on to the platform, and shake hands with the Marquis of Exborough, and when I heard the loud cheers that greeted him. How the bells rang out as the array of carriages drove through the village! What a bright gala day it was! The old family restored to Oakham, the old property given back to the eighth Duke of Leven.

But I don't intend to dwell on all this further. When the fuss of the grand reception was over, he sent for me to come to him. "Aubrey," he said, "what is to be done about the Australian business? Harry keeps on pressing for some one to go out. Can you find me anywhere an honest man with a clear head, and I'll engage he shall make his fortune."

I thought, and I hesitated.

"Will you go yourself?" he said at last. "Mind, I don't ask you to go; but if you decide on accepting the post, I believe you will not regret it."

I consulted my father, and he urged me to accept the offer. There did not seem much chance of making my fortune by English law, and so, to make a long story short, before Christmas I left England, whither, as things turned out, I did not return for ten long years that were full of changes.

I have no intention, dear reader, of troubling you with my personal history during that eventful period. It was a busy part of my life, and the duke was right in saying that I should not regret it. My concern just now is to tell you my friend's story and not my own; and my ten years in Queensland were certainly not without their utility in advancing his interests. I won't bind myself to say to a shilling the sums which I sent over to England as the produce of his gold fields at Glenleven, but Harry Gibson had not been far wrong in calculating their value at millions. If anyone will bear in mind the fact (which is a fact) that in those ten years, the produce of gold in this one colony exceeded £14,000,000, they will easily understand what must have been the value of a single property which extended over some thousands of acres; for when Lord Carstairs first settled in the country an enormous tract of sheep-feeding land could be bought for a comparative trifle.

My own interests, of course, were not forgotten; the duke's terms were more than liberal; and, when the whole estate had been finally disposed of, I was able to return to England a wealthy man. One commission, entrusted to me by the duke, spoke well for his heart; it was the removal to England of his parents' remains, which had been laid to rest in the little cemetery of Ballarat.

Yet I own there were some things in my home correspondence which gave me a secret anxiety. Much was said in praise of the new duke, of his generosity, his manly principles, his care for his property and his tenants; but expressions were now and then dropped which

showed me he had the character of being eccentric. I was sorry for this, though not much surprised; in my brief intercourse with him in former years it was impossible to deny that his originality looked in that direction. What did surprise me much more was that, judging by his own letters, far from despising money he seemed to care for it a good deal. He took his millions from Australia with a very good grace, and made no objection to the proposals I submitted, whereby a larger revenue could be raised from the property. And after all, I sometimes said to myself, this is but natural. Men theorise on gold and like to call it dirt, so long as their hands are clear of it; but let them feel its magic touch and the dirt becomes marvellously pleasant. Leven desires to get as much as he justly can from his property, and so do I, and so does everybody. And yet the sigh with which I closed my meditations showed me that my imagination had painted the "Grant" of former days as something higher and more unselfish in his aims than "everybody."

Then there was another thing that struck me as odd. A year or two after I came to Glenleven I became a Catholic. I had never thought much of these subjects in early youth; but many things which Grant had said had gone home; and the impressions first received from him were deepened in Australia. There, for the first time, I saw the Catholic religion at full work. I felt its mastery over souls, its reality as a Divine power, and to that power I submitted. It was only natural for me to imagine that the Catholic Duke of Leven would have been leader of his co-religionists in England. I had the English papers, Catholic and Protestant, sent out to me pretty regularly, and after my conversion I looked with some eagerness to see what part he took in parliamentary debates on questions affecting Catholics; and in the reports of Catholic meetings about Catholic interests, education questions, workhouse questions, church-building questions and the rest, I looked for his name and I generally looked in vain. In my perhaps romantic imaginings about his probable course I had pictured him as the founder of benevolent institutions through the length and breadth of the kingdom; I thought he would acquire a distinguished name and achieve great things for the poor and labouring classes; but, if he did so, the papers, at any rate had nothing to tell me about it. There is no denying, it was a disappointment, but I gradually grew used to regard the whole subject as one on which the fancy of youth had cheated me with its wonted delusions; and who is there who reaches middle life who has not to look back at one time or other at having been the slave of his imagination?

I returned, then, to England, spending a week or two in London before going down to Oakham, where my parents still lived; for though my father's age had obliged him to give up his post as steward into younger hands, the duke would not hear of his leaving the Grange. Mary had become the wife of Charles Oswald, a small squire of the neighbourhood, and was still able to be a good deal of comfort to her father and mother, and to find an ample sphere for all her capacities of usefulness. In returning to Oakham, therefore, I was still returning home, though I had formed no plans as to my own final settlement.

In London I found plenty of old friends to welcome me, not, perhaps, the less kindly, from the fact that rumour had credited me with having brought home an Australian fortune. Some of those whom I had left just entering on their profession, had fought their way to legal eminence, and some had earned their silken gowns and a certain share of reputation.

Sir Clinton Edwards, the brother of our Oakham vicar, was now a judge, and at his table I met a group of men more or less distinguished in the world of politics and of letters. The world has many phases, some more, and some less pleasant to come in contact with. A London dinner-room, filled with refined and intelligent people, who know everything and everybody worth knowing, is, no doubt, a very agreeable sample of polite society; but mark well this truth, dear reader, it is still the world, and anything higher and better than what savours of the world, you must not look to extract from its conversation. Sir Clinton had a fancy for well-mixed variety in his company, so on the present occasion I had the good fortune to meet a Solicitor-General and a Home Secretary, the editor of a popular philosophic review (whose theology, by the way, was not predominantly Christian), two men of science, and a county member. Including our host and myself, we numbered eight. It is needless to say that our dinner was irreproachable. For the passing moment I found myself a lion; for the gayest and wittiest circles so soon exhaust the sources of their gaiety, that any person who, for one half-hour, can stimulate a new curiosity, may calculate for exactly that space of time on enjoying a fair amount of popularity.

The conversation in such a circle was as graceful and varied as the forms in a kaleidoscope. Home politics, the state of the colonies, Hapirock's last pamphlet on the Council of Ephesus, the vicar of Oakham's long promised, and recently published work on Roman Antiquities, the last cartoon in *Punch*, and the University boat race, all passed in review, till for my sins I fell into the hands of the philosophic editor, who was, of course, profoundly ignorant of the creed of his next door neighbour. He was engaged on an article which aimed, I will not say at proving men to be well-developed monkeys, for I have never found that writers of this particular class ever aim at proving anything whatsoever, but at throwing out pleasant theories of the possible probability of their being nothing better. The intellectual inferiority of the Australian aborigines was the point on which I was subjected to cross examination, and every fact elicited was bagged by my tormentor for future editorial purposes. But the county member who sat opposite charitably stepped in to my relief.

"I tell you what, Ford," he said, when he could get in, a word, "you needn't go to Australia to look for intellectual inferiority; no, nor for savages either, nor for that matter for heathens; you'll find the whole stock-in-trade ready for inspection in a good many of our manufacturing towns, only nobody comes to inspect them."

"Very true," said Sir Clinton; "when I am Lord Chancellor. I shall introduce a bill for obliging all members of Parliament to spend one calendar month in a colliery district, say Bradford, for instance.