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man with eight thousand pounds a year would indeed be an anomaly."

"That the service could not permit. It would be as injurious to himself as it would to others about him. At present, he has almost, indeed I may say quite, an unlimited command of money."

"That's bad, very bad. I wonder he behaves so well as he does."

"And so do I; but he really is a very superior lad, with all his peculiarities, and a general favourite with those whose opinions and friendship are worth having."

"Well, don't curb him too tight—for really he does not require it. He goes very well in a snaffle."

CHAPTER XXVIII

"Philosophy made Easy" upon agrarian principles, the subject of some uneasiness to our hero—The first appearance, but not the last, of an important personage.

THE conversation was here interrupted by a mail from England which they had been expecting. Captain Wilson retired with his letters; the governor remained equally occupied; and our hero received the first letter ever written to him by his father. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR SON,—I have many times taken up my pen with the intention of letting you know how things went on in this country. But as I can perceive around but one dark horizon of evil, I have as often laid it down again without venturing to make you unhappy with such bad intelligence.

"The account of your death, and also of your unexpectedly being yet spared to us, were duly received, and I trust I mourned and rejoiced on each occasion with all the moderation characteristic of a philosopher. In the first instance I consoled myself with the reflection that the world you had left was in a state of slavery, and pressed down by the iron arm of despotism, and that to die was gain, not only in all the parson tells us, but also in our liberty; and at the second

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intelligence I moderated my joy, for nearly about the same reasons, resolving, notwithstanding what Dr. Middleton may say, to die as I have lived, a true philosopher.

"The more I reflect the more am I convinced that there is nothing required to make this world happy but equality, and the rights of man being duly observed—in short, that everything and everybody should be reduced to one level. Do we not observe that it is the law of nature—do not brooks run into rivers—rivers into seas—mountains crumble down upon the plains?—are not the seasons contented to equalise the parts of the earth? Why does the sun run round the ecliptic instead of the equator, but to give an equal share of his heat to both sides of the world? Are we not all equally born in misery? does not death level us all *æquo pede*, as the poet hath? are we not all equally hungry, thirsty, and sleepy, and thus levelled by our natural wants? And such being the case, ought we not to have our equal share of good things in this world, to which we have undoubted equal right? Can any argument be more solid or more level than this, whatever nonsense Dr. Middleton may talk?

"Yes, my son, if it were not that I still hope to see the sun of Justice arise, and disperse the manifold dark clouds which obscure the land—if I did not still hope, in my time, to see an equal distribution of property—an agrarian law passed by the House of Commons, in which all should benefit alike—I would not care how soon I left this vale of tears, created by tyranny and injustice. At present the same system is carried on; the nation is taxed for the benefit of the few, and it groans under oppression and despotism; but I still do think that there is, if I may fortunately express myself, a bright star in the west, and signs of the times which comfort me. Already we have had a good deal of incendiarism about the country, and some of the highest aristocracy have pledged themselves to raise the people above themselves, and have advised sedition and conspiracy; have shown to the debased and unenlightened multitude that their force is physically irresistible, and recommended them to make use of it, promising that if they hold in power, they will only use that power to the abolition of our farce of a constitution, of a church, and of a king; and that if the nation is to be governed at all, it shall only be governed by the many. This is cheering. Hail, patriot lords! all hail! I am in hopes that

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the great work will be achieved, in spite of the laughs and sneers and shakes of the head, which my arguments still meet with from that obstinate fellow, Dr. Middleton.

"Your mother is in a quiet way; she has given over reading and working, and even her knitting, as useless; and she now sits all day long at the chimney-corner twiddling her thumbs, and waiting, as she says, for the millennium. Poor thing! she is very foolish with her ideas upon this matter, but as usual I let her have her own way in everything, copying the philosopher of old, who was tied to his Xantippe.

"I trust, my dear son, that your principles have strengthened with your years and fortified with your growth, and that, if necessary, you will sacrifice all to obtain what in my opinion will prove to be the real millennium. Make all the converts you can, and believe me to be your affectionate father and true guide,

NICODEMUS EASY."

Jack, who was alone, shook his head as he read this letter, and then laid it down with a pish! He did it involuntarily, and was surprised at himself when he found that he had so done. "I should like to argue the point," thought Jack, in spite of himself; and then he threw the letter on the table, and went into Gascoigne's room, displeased with his father and with himself. He asked Ned whether he had received any letters from England, and, it being near dinner-time, went back to dress. On his coming down into the receiving-room with Gascoigne, the governor said to them—

"As you both speak Italian, you must take charge of a Sicilian officer, who has come here with letters of introduction to me, and who dines here to-day."

Before dinner they were introduced to the party in question, a slight-made, well-looking young man, but still there was an expression in his countenance which was not agreeable. In compliance with the wishes of the governor, Don Mathias, for so he was called, was placed between our two midshipmen, who immediately entered into conversation with him, being themselves anxious to make inquiries about their friends at Palermo. In the course of conversation Jack inquired of him whether he was acquainted with Don Rebiera, to which the Sicilian answered in the affirmative, and they talked about the different members of the family. Don Mathias, towards the

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close of dinner, inquired of Jack by what means he had become acquainted with Don Rebiera, and Jack, in reply, narrated how he and his friend Gascoigne had saved him from being murdered by two villains; after this reply the young officer appeared to be less inclined for conversation, but before the party broke up requested to have the acquaintance of our two midshipmen. As soon as he was gone Gascoigne observed, in a reflective way, "I have seen that face before, but where I cannot exactly say; but you know, Jack, what a memory of people I have, and I have seen him before, I am sure."

"I can't recollect that ever I have," replied our hero, "but I never knew any one who could recollect in that way as you do."

The conversation was then dropped between them, and Jack was for some time listening to the governor and Captain Wilson, for the whole party were gone away, when Gascoigne, who had been in deep thought since he had made the observation to Jack, sprang up.

"I have him at last!" cried he.

"Have who?" demanded Captain Wilson.

"That Sicilian officer—I could have sworn that I had seen him before."

"That Don Mathias?"

"No, Sir Thomas! He is not Don Mathias! He is the very Don Silvio who was murdering Don Rebiera, when we came to his assistance and saved him."

"I do believe you are right, Gascoigne."

"I'm positive of it," replied Gascoigne; "I never made a mistake in my life."

"Bring me those letters, Easy," said the governor, "and let us see what they say of him. Here it is—Don Mathias de Alayeres. You may be mistaken, Gascoigne; it is a heavy charge you are making against this young man."

"Well, Sir Thomas, if that is not Don Silvio, I'd forfeit my commission if I had it here in my hand. Besides, I observed the change in his countenance when we told him it was Easy and I who had come to Don Rebiera's assistance; and did you observe after that, Easy, that he hardly said a word."

"Very true," replied Jack.

"Well, well, we must see to this," observed the governor; "if so, this letter of introduction must be a forgery."

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The party then retired to bed, and the next morning, while Easy was in Gascoigne's room talking over their suspicions, letters from Palermo were brought up to him. They were in answer to those written by Jack on his arrival at Malta; a few lines from Don Rebiera, a small note from Agnes, and a voluminous detail from his friend Don Philip, who informed him of the good health of all parties, and of their good-will towards him; of Agnes being as partial as ever; of his having spoken plainly, as he had promised Jack, to his father and mother relative to the mutual attachment; of their consent being given, and then withheld, because Father Thomas, their confessor, would not listen to the union of Agnes with a heretic; but nevertheless telling Jack that this would be got over through the medium of his brother and himself, who were determined that their sister and he should not be made unhappy about such a trifle. But the latter part of the letter contained intelligence equally important, which was, that Don Silvio had again attempted the life of their father, and would have succeeded had not Father Thomas, who happened to be there, thrown himself between them. That Don Silvio in his rage had actually stabbed the confessor, although the wound was not dangerous. That in consequence of this, all further lenity was denied to him, and the authorities were in search of him to award him the punishment due to murder and sacrilege. That up to the present they could not find him, and it was supposed that he had made his escape to Malta in one of the speronares.

Such were the contents of the letter, which were immediately communicated to the governor and Captain Wilson, upon their meeting at breakfast.

"Very well, we must see to this," observed the governor, who then made his inquiries as to the other intelligence contained in the letters.

Jack and Gascoigne were uneasy till the breakfast was over, when they made their escape; a few moments afterwards Captain Wilson rose to go on board, and sent for them, but they were not to be found.

"I understand it all, Wilson," said the governor; "leave them to me; go on board and make yourself quite easy."

In the meantime our two midshipmen had taken their hats

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and walked away to the parapet of the battery, where they would not be interrupted.

"Now, Gascoigne," observed Jack, "you guess what I'm about—I must shoot that rascal this very morning, and that's why I came out with you."

"But, Easy, the only difference is this, that I must shoot him, and not you; he is my property, for I found him out."

"We'll argue that point," replied Jack; "he has attempted the life of my is-to-be, please God, father-in-law, and therefore I have the best claim to him."

"I beg your pardon, Jack, he is mine, for I discovered him. Now let me put a case: suppose one man walking several yards before another picks up a purse, what claim has the other to it? I found him, and not you."

"That's all very well, Gascoigne; but suppose the purse you picked up to be mine, then I have a right to it, although you found it; he is my bird by right, and not yours."

"But I have another observation to make, which is very important; he is a blood relation of Agnes, and if his blood is on your hands, however much he may deserve it, depend upon it, it will be raised as an obstacle to your union—think of that."

Jack paused in thought.

"And let me induce you by another remark—you will confer on me a most particular favour."

"It will be the greatest I ever could," replied Jack, "and you ought to be eternally indebted to me."

"I trust to make him eternally indebted to me," replied Gascoigne.

Sailors, if going into action, always begin to reckon what their share of the prize-money may be, before a shot is fired—our two midshipmen appear in this instance to be doing the same.

The point having been conceded to Gascoigne, Jack went to the inn where Don Silvio had mentioned that he had taken up his quarters, and sending up his card, followed the waiter upstairs. The waiter opened the door, and presented the card.

"Very well," replied Don Silvio, "you can go down and show him up."

Jack hearing these words did not wait, but walked in,

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where he found Don Silvio very busy removing a hone upon which he had been whetting a sharp double-edged stiletto. The Sicilian walked up to him, offering his hand with apparent cordiality; but Jack, with a look of defiance, said, "Don Silvio, we know you; my object now is to demand, on the part of my friend, the satisfaction which you do not deserve, but which our indignation at your second attempt upon Don Reberia induces us to offer; for if you escape from him you will have to do with me. On the whole, Don Silvio, you may think yourself fortunate, for it is better to die by the hands of a gentleman than by the gibbet."

Don Silvio turned deadly pale—his hand sought his stiletto in his bosom, but it was remaining on the table; at last he replied, "Be it so—I will meet you when and where you please, in an hour from this."

Jack mentioned the place of meeting, and then walked out of the room. He and Gascoigne then hastened to the quarters of an officer they were intimate with, and having provided themselves with the necessary firearms, were at the spot before the time. They waited for him till the exact time, yet no Don Silvio made his appearance.

"He's off," observed Gascoigne; "the villain has escaped us."

Half-an-hour over the time had passed, and still there was no sign of Gascoigne's antagonist, but one of the governor's aides-de-camp was seen walking up to them.

"Here's Atkins," observed Jack; "that's unlucky, but he won't interfere."

"Gentlemen," said Atkins, taking off his hat with much solemnity, "the governor particularly wishes to speak to you both."

"We can't come just now—we'll be there in half-an-hour."

"You must be there in three minutes, both of you. Excuse me, my orders are positive—and to see them duly executed I have a corporal and a file of men behind that wall—of course if you walk with me quietly there will be no occasion to send for their assistance."

"This is confounded tyranny," cried Jack. "Well may they call him 'King Tom.'"

"Yes," replied Atkins, "and he governs here *in rey absoluto*—so come along."

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Jack and Gascoigne, having no choice, walked up to the government house, where they found Sir Thomas in the verandah, which commanded a view of the harbour and offing.

"Come here, young gentlemen," said the governor, in a severe tone; "do you see that vessel about two miles clear of the port? Don Silvio is in it, going back to Sicily under a guard. And now remember what I say as a maxim through life. Fight with gentlemen, if you must fight, but not with villains and murderers. By 'consenting' to fight with a 'blackguard,' you as much disparage your cloth and compromise your own character, as by refusing to give satisfaction to a 'gentleman.' There, go away, for I'm angry with you, and don't let me see you till dinner-time."

CHAPTER XXIX

In which our hero sees a little more service, and is better employed than in fighting Don Silvio.

BUT before they met the governor at his table, a sloop of war arrived from the fleet with despatches from the commander-in-chief. Those to Captain Wilson required him to make all possible haste in fitting, and then to proceed and cruise off Corsica, to fall in with a Russian frigate which was on that coast; if not there, to obtain intelligence, and to follow her wherever she might be.

All was now bustle and activity on board of the *Aurora*. Captain Wilson, with our hero and Gascoigne, quitted the governor's house and repaired on board, where they remained day and night. On the third day the *Aurora* was complete and ready for sea, and about noon sailed out of Valette Harbour.

In a week the *Aurora* had gained the coast of Corsica, and there was no need of sending look-out men to the mast-head, for one of the officers or midshipmen was there from daylight to dark. She ran up the coast to the northward without seeing the object of her pursuit, or obtaining any intelligence.

Calms and light airs detained them for a few days, when a northerly breeze enabled them to run down the eastern side