STANLEY JOHN WEYMAN

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EAN 8596547155454

DigiCat, 2022
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CHAPTER I

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THE HÔTEL LAMBERT--UPSTAIRS

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On an evening in March in the 'forties of last century a girl looked down on the Seine from an attic window on the Ile St. Louis. The room behind her--or beside her, for she sat on the window-ledge, with her back against one side of the opening and her feet against the other--was long, whitewashed from floor to ceiling, lighted by five gaunt windows, and as cold to the eye as charity to the recipient. Along each side of the chamber ran ten pallet beds. A black door broke the wall at one end, and above the door hung a crucifix. A painting of a Station of the Cross adorned the wall at the other end. Beyond this picture the room had no ornament; it is almost true to say that beyond what has been named it had no furniture. One bed--the bed beside the window at which the girl sat--was screened by a thin curtain which did not reach the floor. This was her bed.

But in early spring no window in Paris looked on a scene more cheerful than this window; which as from an eyrie commanded a shining reach of the Seine bordered by the lawns and foliage of the King's Garden, and closed by the graceful arches of the Bridge of Austerlitz. On the water boats shot to and fro. The quays were gay with the red trousers of soldiers and the coquettish caps of soubrettes, with students in strange cloaks, and the twin kling wheels of

yellow cabriolets. The first swallows were hawking hither and thither above the water, and a pleasant hum rose from the Boulevard Bourdon.

Yet the girl sighed. For it was her birthday, she was twenty this twenty-fifth of March, and there was not a soul in the world to know this and to wish her joy. A life of dependence, toned to the key of the whitewashed room and the thin pallets, lay before her; and though she had good reason to be thankful for the safety which dependence bought, still she was only twenty, and springtime, viewed from prison windows, beckons to its cousin, youth. She saw family groups walking the quays, and father, mother, children, all, seen from a distance, were happy. She saw lovers loitering in the garden or pacing to and fro, and romance walked with every one of them; none came late, or fell to words. She sighed more deeply; and on the sound the door opened.

"*Hola!*" cried a shrill voice, speaking in French, fluent, but oddly accented. "Who is here? The Princess desires that the English Mademoiselle will descend this evening."

"Very good," the girl in the window replied pleasantly. "At the same hour, Joséphine?"

"Why not, Mademoiselle?" A trim maid, with a plain face and the faultless figure of a Pole, came a few steps into the room. "But you are alone?"

"The children are walking. I stayed at home."

"To be alone? As if I did not understand that! To be alone--it is the luxury of the rich."

The girl nodded. "None but a Pole would have thought of that," she said.

"Ah, the crafty English Miss!" the maid retorted. "How she flatters! Perhaps she needs a touch of the tongs to-night? Or the loan of a pair of red-heeled shoes, worn no more than thrice by the Princess--and with the black which is convenable for Mademoiselle, oh, so neat! Of the *ancien régime*, absolutely!"

The other laughed. "The *ancien régime*, Joséphine--and this!" she replied, with a gesture that embraced the room, the pallets, her own bed. "A curled head--and this! You are truly a cabbage----"

"But Mademoiselle descends!"

"A cabbage of--foolishness!"

"Ah, well, if I descended, you would see," the maid retorted. "I am but the Princess's second maid, and I know nothing! But if I descended it would not be to this dormitory I should return! Nor to the tartines! Nor to the daughters of Poland! Trust me for that--and I know but my prayers. While Mademoiselle, she is an artist's daughter."

"There spoke the Pole again," the girl struck in with a smile.

"The English Miss knows how to flatter," Joséphine laughed. "That is one for the touch of the tongs," she continued, ticking them off on her fingers. "And one for the red-heeled shoes. And--but no more! Let me begone before I am bankrupt!" She turned about with a flirt of her short petticoats, but paused and looked back, with her hand on the door. "None the less, mark you well, Mademoiselle, from the whitewash to the ceiling of Lebrun, from the dortoir of the Jeunes Filles to the Gallery of Hercules, there are but twenty stairs, and easy, oh, so easy to descend! If

Mademoiselle instead of flattering Joséphine, the Cracovienne, flattered some pretty gentleman--who knows? Not I! I know but my prayers!" And with a light laugh the maid clapped to the door and was gone.

The girl in the window had not throughout the parley changed her pose or moved more than her head, and this was characteristic of her. For even in her playfulness there was gravity, and a measure of stillness. Now, left alone, she dropped her feet to the floor, turned, and knelt on the sill with her brow pressed against the glass. The sun had set, mists were rising from the river, the quays were gray and cold. Here and there a lamp began to shine through the twilight. But the girl's thoughts were no longer on the scene beneath her eyes.

"There goes the third who has been good to me," she pondered. "First the Polish lodger who lived on the floor below, and saved me from that woman. Then the Princess's daughter. Now Joséphine. There are still kind people in the world--God grant that I may not forget it! But how much better to give than to take, to be strong than to be weak, to be the mistress and not the puppet of fortune! How much better--and, were I a man, how easy!"

But on that there came into her remembrance one to whom it had not been easy, one who had signally failed to master fortune, or to grapple with circumstances. "Poor father!" she whispered.

CHAPTER II

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THE HÔTEL LAMBERT--DOWNSTAIRS

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When ladies were at home to their intimates in the Paris of the 'forties, they seated their guests about large round tables with a view to that common exchange of wit and fancy which is the French ideal. The mode crossed to England, and in many houses these round tables, fallen to the uses of the dining-room or the nursery, may still be seen. But when the Princess Czartoriski entertained in the Hôtel Lambert, under the ceiling painted by Lebrun, which had looked down on the arm-chair of Madame de Châtelet and the tabouret of Voltaire, she was, as became a Pole, a law to herself. In that beautiful room, softly lit by wax candles, her guests were free to follow their bent, to fall into groups, or to admire at their ease the Watteaus and Bouchers which the Princess's father-in-law, old Prince Adam, had restored to their native panels.

Thanks to his taste and under her rule the gallery of Hercules presented on this evening a scene not unworthy of its past. The silks and satins of the old régime were indeed replaced by the high-shouldered coats, the stocks, the pins and velvet vests of the dandies; and Thiers beaming through his glasses, or Lamartine, though beauty, melted by the woes of Poland, hung upon his lips, might have been thought by some unequal to the dead. But they were now

what those had been; and the women peacocked it as of old. At any rate the effect was good, and a guest who came late, and paused a moment on the threshold to observe the scene, thought that he had never before done the room full justice. Presently the Princess saw him and he went forward. The man who was talking to her made his bow, and she pointed with her fan to the vacant place. "Felicitations, my lord," she said. She held out her gloved hand.

"A thousands thanks," he said, as he bent over it. "But on what, Princess?"

"On the success of a friend. On what we have all seen in the *Journal*. Is it not true that you have won your suit?"

"I won, yes." He shrugged his shoulders. "But what, Madame? A bare title, an empty rent-roll."

"For shame!" she answered. "But I suppose that this is your English phlegm. Is it not a thing to be proud of--an old title? That which money cannot buy and the wisest would fain wear? M. Guizot, what would he not give to be Chien de Race? Your Peel, also?"

"And your Thiers?" he returned, with a sly glance at the little man in the shining glasses.

"He, too! But he has the passion of humanity, which is a title in itself. Whereas you English, turning in your unending circle, one out, one in, one in, one out, are but playing a game--marking time! You have not a desire to go forward!"

"Surely, Princess, you forget our Reform Bill, scarce ten years old."

"Which bought off your cotton lords and your fat bourgeois, and left the people without leaders and more helpless than before. No, my lord, if your Russell--Lord John,

do you call him?--had one jot of M. Thiers' enthusiasm! Or your Peel--but I look for nothing there!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I admit," he said, "that M. Thiers has an enthusiasm beyond the ordinary."

"You do? Wonderful!"

"But," with a smile, "it is, I fancy, an enthusiasm of which the object is--M. Thiers!"

"Ah!" she cried, fanning herself more quickly. "Now there spoke not Mr. Audley, the attaché--he had not been so imprudent! But--how do you call yourself now?"

"On days of ceremony," he replied, "Lord Audley of Beaudelays."

"There spoke my lord, unattached! Oh, you English, you have no enthusiasm. You have only traditions. Poor were Poland if her fate hung on you!"

"There are still bright spots," he said slyly. And his glance returned to the little statesman in spectacles on whom the Princess rested the hopes of Poland.

"No!" she cried vividly. "Don't say it again or I shall be displeased. Turn your eyes elsewhere. There is one here about whom I wish to consult you. Do you see the tall girl in black who is engaged with the miniatures?"

"I saw her some time ago."

"I suppose so. You are a man. I dare say you would call her handsome?"

"I think it possible, were she not in this company. What of her, Princess?"

"Do you notice anything beyond her looks?"

"The picture is plain--for the frame in which I see her. Is she one of the staff of your school?"

"Yes, but with an air----"

"Certainly--an air!" He nodded.

"Well, she is a countrywoman of yours and has a history. Her father, a journalist, artist, no matter what, came to live in Paris years ago. He went down, down, always down; six months ago he died. There was enough to bury him, no more. She says, I don't know"--the Princess indicated doubt with a movement of her fan--"that she wrote to friends in England. Perhaps she did not write; how do I know? She was at the last sou, the street before her, a hag of a concierge behind, and withal--as you see her."

"Not wearing that dress, I presume?" he said with a faint smile.

"No. She had passed everything to the Mont de Piété; she had what she stood up in--yet herself! Then a Polish family on the floor below, to whom my daughter carried alms, told Cécile of her. They pitied her, spoke well of her, she had done--no matter what for them--perhaps nothing. Probably nothing. But Cécile ascended, saw her, became enamoured, *enragée!* You know Cécile--for her all that wears feathers is of the angels! Nothing would do but she must bring her here and set her to teach English to the daughters during her own absence."

"The Princess is away?"

"For four weeks. But in three days she returns, and you see where I am. How do I know who this is? She may be this, or that. If she were French, if she were Polish, I should know! But she is English and of a calm, a reticence--ah!"

"And of a pride too," he replied thoughtfully, "if I mistake not. Yet it is a good face, Princess."

She fluttered her fan. "It is a handsome one. For a man that is the same."

"With all this you permit her to appear?"

"To be of use. And a little that she may be seen by some English friend, who may tell me."

"Shall I talk to her?"

"If you will be so good. Learn, if you please, what she is."

"Your wishes are law," he rejoined. "Will you present me?"

"It is not necessary," the Princess answered. She beckoned to a stout gentleman who wore whiskers trimmed à la mode du Roi, and had laurel leaves on his coat collar. "A thousand thanks."

He lingered a moment to take part in the Princess's reception of the Academician. Then he joined a group about old Prince Adam Czartoriski, who was describing a recent visit to Cracow, that last morsel of free Poland, soon to pass into the maw of Austria. A little apart, the girl in black bent over the case of miniatures, comparing some with a list, and polishing others with a square of silk. Presently he found himself beside her. Their eyes met.

"I am told," he said, bowing, "that you are my countrywoman. The Princess thought that I might be of use to you."

The girl had read his errand before he spoke and a shade flitted across her face. She knew, only too well, that her hold on this rock of safety to which chance had lifted her--out of a gulf of peril and misery of which she trembled to think--was of the slightest. Early, almost from the first, she had discovered that the Princess's benevolence found vent

rather in schemes for the good of many than in tenderness for one. But hitherto she had relied on the daughter's affection, and a little on her own usefulness. Then, too, she was young and hopeful, and the depths from which she had escaped were such that she could not believe that Providence would return her to them.

But she was quick-witted, and his opening frightened her. She guessed at once that she was not to be allowed to await Cécile's return, that her fate hung on what this Englishman, so big and bland and forceful, reported of her.

She braced herself to meet the danger. "I am obliged to the Princess," she said. "But my ties with England are slight. I came to France with my father when I was ten years old."

"I think you lost him recently?" He found his task less easy than it should have been.

"He died six months ago," she replied, regarding him gravely. "His illness left me without means. I was penniless, when the young Princess befriended me and gave me a respite here. I am no part of this," with a glance at the salon and the groups about them. "I teach upstairs. I am thankful for the privilege of doing so."

"The Princess told me as much," he said frankly. "She thought that, being English, I might advise you better than she could; that possibly I might put you in touch with your relations?"

She shook her head.

"Or your friends? You must have friends?"

"Doubtless my father had--once," she said in a low voice. "But as his means diminished, he saw less and less of those who had known him. For the last two years I do not think

that he saw an Englishman at home. Before that time I was in a convent school, and I do not know."

"You are a Roman Catholic, then?"

"No. And for that reason--and for another, that my account was not paid"--her color rose painfully to her face--"I could not apply to the Sisters. I am very frank," she added, her lip trembling.

"And I encroach," he answered, bowing. "Forgive me! Your father was an artist, I believe?"

"He drew for an Atelier de Porcelaine--for the journals when he could. But he was not very successful," she continued reluctantly. "The china factory which had employed him since he came to Paris, failed. When I returned from school he was alone and poor, living in the little street in the Quartier, where he died."

"But forgive me, you must have some relations in England?"

"Only one of whom I know," she replied. "My father's brother. My father had quarrelled with him--bitterly, I fear; but when he was dying he bade me write to my uncle and tell him how we were placed. I did so. No answer came. Then after my father's death I wrote again. I told my uncle that I was alone, that I was without money, that in a short time I should be homeless, that if I could return to England I could live by teaching French. He did not reply. I could do no more."

"That was outrageous," he answered, flushing darkly. Though well under thirty he was a tall man and portly, with one of those large faces that easily become injected. "Do you know--is your uncle also in narrow circumstances?"

"I know no more than his name," she said. "My father never spoke of him. They had quarrelled. Indeed, my father spoke little of his past."

"But when you did not hear from your uncle, did you not tell your father?"

"It could do no good," she said. "And he was dying."

He was not sentimental, this big man, whose entrance into a room carried with it a sense of power. Nor was he one to be lightly moved, but her simplicity and the picture her words drew for him of the daughter and the dying man touched him. Already his mind was made up that the Czartoriski should not turn her adrift for lack of a word. Aloud, "The Princess did not tell me your name," he said. "May I know it?"

"Audley," she said. "Mary Audley."

He stared at her. She supposed that he had not caught the name. She repeated it.

"Audley? Do you really mean that?"

"Why not?" she asked, surprised in her turn. "Is it so uncommon a name?"

"No," he replied slowly. "No, but it is a coincidence. The Princess did not tell me that your name was Audley."

The girl shook her head. "I doubt if she knows," she said. "To her I am only 'the English girl.'"

"And your father was an artist, resident in Paris? And his name?"

"Peter Audley."

He nodded. "Peter Audley," he repeated. His eyes looked through her at something far away. His lips were more firmly

set. His face was grave. "Peter Audley," he repeated softly. "An artist resident in Paris!"

"But did you know him?" she cried.

He brought his thoughts and his eyes back to her. "No, I did not know him," he said. "But I have heard of him." And again it was plain that his thoughts took wing. "John Audley's brother, the artist!" he muttered.

In her impatience she could have taken him by the sleeve and shaken him. "Then you do know John Audley?" she said. "My uncle?"

Again he brought himself back with an effort. "A thousand pardons!" he said. "You see the Princess did not tell me that you were an Audley. Yes, I know John Audley--of the Gatehouse. I suppose it was to him you wrote?"

"Yes."

"And he did not reply?"

She nodded.

He laughed, as at something whimsical. It was not a kindly laugh, it jarred a little on his listener. But the next moment his face softened, he smiled at her, and the smile of such a man had its importance, for in repose his eyes were hard. It was clear to her that he was a man of position, that he belonged of right to this keen polished world at which she was stealing a glance. His air was distinguished, and his dress, though quiet, struck the last note of fashion.

"But I am keeping you in suspense," he said. "I must tell you, Miss Audley, why it surprised me to learn your name. Because I, too, am an Audley."

"You!" she cried.

"Yes, I," he replied. "What is more, I am akin to you. The kinship is remote, but it happens that your father's name, in its place in a pedigree, has been familiar to me of late, and I could set down the precise degree of cousinship in which you stand to me. I think your father was my fourth cousin."

She colored charmingly. "Is it possible?" she exclaimed.

"It is a fact, proved indeed, recently, in a court of law," he answered lightly. "Perhaps it is as well that we have that warrant for a conversation which I can see that the Princess thinks long. After this she will expect to hear the whole of your history."

"I fear that she may be displeased," the girl said, wincing a little. "You have been very kind----"

"Who should be kind," he replied, "if not the head of your family? But have no fear, I will deal with the Princess. I shall be able to satisfy her, I have no doubt."

"And you"--she looked at him with appeal in her eyes--"will you be good enough to tell me who you are?"

"I am Lord Audley. To distinguish me from another of the same name, I am called Audley of Beaudelays."

"Of Beaudelays?" she repeated. He thought her face, her whole bearing, singularly composed in view of his announcement. "Beaudelays?" she repeated thoughtfully. "I have heard the name more than once. Perhaps from my father."

"It were odd if you had not," he said. "It is the name of my house, and your uncle, John Audley, lives within a mile of it."

"Oh," she said. The name of the uncle who had ignored her appeals fell on her like a cold douche.

"I will not say more now," Lord Audley continued. "But you shall hear from me. To--morrow I quit Paris for three or four days, but when I return have no fear. You may leave the matter in my hands in full confidence that I shall not fail--my cousin."

He held out his hand and she laid hers in it. She looked him frankly in the face. "Thank you," she said. "I little thought when I descended this evening that I should meet a kinsman."

"And a friend," he answered, holding her hand a little longer than was needful.

"And a friend," she repeated. "But there--I must go now. I should have disappeared ten minutes ago. This is my way." She inclined her head, and turning from him she pushed open a small door masked by a picture. She passed at once into a dark corridor, and threading its windings gained the great staircase.

As she flitted upwards from floor to floor, skirting a long procession of shadowy forms, and now ogled by a Leda whose only veil was the dusk, now threatened by the tusks of the great boar at bay, she was not conscious of thought or surprise. It was not until she had lighted her taper outside the dormitory door, and, passing between the rows of sleeping children, had gained her screened corner, that she found it possible to think. Then she set the light in her tiny washing-basin--such was the rule--and seated herself on her bed. For some minutes she stared before her, motionless and unwinking, her hands clasped about her knees, her mind at work.

Was it true, or a dream? Had this really happened to her since she had viewed herself in the blurred mirror, had set a curl right and, satisfied, had turned to go down? The danger and the delivery from it, the fear and the friend in need? Or was it a Cinderella's treat, which no fairy godmother would recall to her, with which no lost slipper would connect her? She could almost believe this. For no Cinderella, in the ashes of the hearth, could have seemed more remote from the gay ball-room than she crouching on her thin mattress, with the breathing of the children in her ears, from the luxury of the famous salon.

Or, if it was true, if it had happened, would anything come of it? Would Lord Audley remember her? Or would he think no more of her, ignoring to-morrow the poor relation whom it had been the whim of the moment to own? That would be cruel! That would be base! But if Mary had fallen in with some good people since her father's death, she had also met many callous, and a few cruel people. He might be one. And then, how strange it was that her father had never named this great kinsman, never referred to him, never even, when dying, disclosed his name!

The light wavered in the draught that stole through the bald, undraped window. A child whimpered in its sleep, awoke, began to sob. It was the youngest of the daughters of Poland. The girl rose, and going on tip-toe to the child, bent over it, kissed it, warmed it in her bosom, soothed it. Presently the little waif slept again, and Mary Audley began to make ready for bed.

But so much turned for her on what had happened, so much hung in the balance, that it was not unnatural that as

she let down her hair and plaited it in two long tails for the night, she should see her new kinsman's face in the mirror. Nor strange that as she lay sleepless and thought-ridden in her bed the same face should present itself anew relieved against the background of darkness.

CHAPTER III

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THE LAWYER ABROAD

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Half an hour later Lord Audley paused in the hall at Meurice's, and having given his cloak and hat to a servant went thoughtfully up the wide staircase. He opened the door of a room on the first floor. A stout man with a bald head, who had been for some time yawning over the dying fire, rose to his feet and remained standing.

Audley nodded. "Hallo, Stubbs!" he said carelessly, "not in bed yet?"

"No, my lord," the other answered. "I waited to learn if your lordship had any orders for England."

"Well, sit down now. I've something to tell you." My lord stooped as he spoke and warmed his hands at the embers; then rising, he stood with his back to the hearth. The stout man sat forward on his chair with an air of deference. His double chin rested on the ample folds of a soft white stock secured by a gold pin in the shape of a wheat-sheaf. He wore black knee-breeches and stockings, and his dress, though plain, bore the stamp of neatness and prosperity.

For a minute or two Audley continued to look thoughtfully before him. At length, "May I take it that this claim is really at an end now?" he said. "Is the decision final, I mean?"

"Unless new evidence crops up," Stubbs answered--he was a lawyer--"the decision is certainly final. With your

lordship's signature to the papers I brought over----"

"But the claimant might try again?"

"Mr. John Audley might do anything," Stubbs returned. "I believe him to be mad upon the point, and therefore capable of much. But he could only move on new evidence of the most cogent nature. I do not believe that such evidence exists."

His employer weighed this for some time. At length, "Then if you were in my place," he said, "you would not be tempted to hedge?"

"To hedge?" the lawyer exclaimed, as if he had never heard the word before. "I am afraid I don't understand."

"I will explain. But first, tell me this. If anything happens to me before I have a child, John Audley succeeds to the peerage? That is clear?"

"Certainly! Mr. John Audley, the claimant, is also your heir-at-law."

"To title and estates--such as they are?"

"To both, my lord."

"Then follow me another step, Stubbs. Failing John Audley, who is the next heir?"

"Mr. Peter Audley," Stubbs replied, "his only brother, would succeed, if he were alive. But it is common ground that he is dead. I knew Mr. Peter, and, if I may say it of an Audley, my lord, a more shiftless, weak, improvident gentleman never lived. And obstinate as the devil! He married into trade, and Mr. John never forgave it--never forgave it, my lord. Never spoke of his brother or to his brother from that time. It was before the Reform Bill," the lawyer continued with a sigh. "There were no railways then

and things were different. Dear, dear, how the world changes! Mr. Peter must have gone abroad ten years ago, but until he was mentioned in the suit I don't think that I had heard his name ten times in as many years. And he an Audley!"

"He had a child?"

"Only one, a daughter."

"Would she come in after Mr. John?"

"Yes, my lord, she would--if living."

"I've been talking to her this evening."

"Ah!" The lawyer was not so simple as he seemed, and for a minute or two he had foreseen the *dénouement*. "Ah!" he repeated, thoughtfully rubbing his plump calf. "I see, my lord. Mr. Peter Audley's daughter? Really! And if I may venture to ask, what is she like?"

Audley paused before he answered. Then, "If you have painted the father aright, Stubbs, I should say that she was his opposite in all but his obstinacy. A calm and self-reliant young woman, if I am any judge."

"And handsome?"

"Yes, with a look of breeding. At the same time she is penniless and dependent, teaching English in a kind of charity school, cheek by jowl with a princess!"

"God bless my soul!" cried the lawyer, astonished at last. "A princess!"

"Who is a good creature as women go, but as likely as not to send her adrift to-morrow."

"Tut-tut-tut!" muttered the other.

"However, I'll tell you the story," Audley concluded. And he did so.

When he had done, "Well," Stubbs exclaimed, "for a coincidence----"

"Ah, there," the young man broke in, "I fancy, all's not said. I take it the Princess noted the name, but was too polite to question me. Anyway, the girl is there. She is dependent, friendless; attractive, and well-bred. For a moment it did occur to me--she is John Audley's heiress--that I might make all safe by----" His voice dropped. His last words were inaudible.

"The chance is so very remote," said the lawyer, aware that he was on delicate ground, and that the other was rather following out his own thoughts than consulting him.

"It is. The idea crossed my mind only for a moment--of course it's absurd for a man as poor as I am. There is hardly a poorer peer out of Ireland--you know that. Fourteenth baron without a roof to my house or a pane of glass in my windows! And a rent-roll when all is told of----"

"A little short of three thousand," the lawyer muttered.

"Two thousand five hundred, by God, and not a penny more! If any man ought to marry money, I am that man, Stubbs!"

Mr. Stubbs, staring at the fire with a hand on each knee, assented respectfully. "I've always hoped that you would, my lord," he said, "though I've not ventured to say it."

"Yes! Well--putting that aside," the other resumed, "what is to be done about her? I've been thinking it over, and I fancy that I've hit on the right line. John Audley's given me trouble enough. I'll give him some. I'll make him provide for her, d--n him, or I don't know my man!"

"I'd like to know, my lord," Stubbs ventured thoughtfully, "why he didn't answer her letters. He hated her father, but it is not like Mr. John to let the young lady drift. He's crazy about the family, and she is his next heir. He's a lonely man, too, and there is room at the Gatehouse."

Audley paused, half-way across the room. "I wish we had never leased the Gatehouse to him!"

"It's not everybody's house, my lord. It's lonely and----"

"It's too near Beaudelays!"

"If your lordship were living at the Great House, quite so," the lawyer agreed. "But, as it is, the rent is useful, and the lease was made before our time, so that we have no choice."

"I shall always believe that he had a reason for going there!"

"He had an idea that it strengthened his claim," the lawyer said indulgently. "Nothing beyond that, my lord."

"Well, I've made up my mind to increase his family by a niece!" the other replied. "He shall have the girl whether he likes it or not. Take a pen, man, and sit down. He's spoiled my breakfast many a time with his confounded Writs of Error, or whatever you call them, and for once I'll be even with him. Say--yes, Stubbs, say this:

"'I am directed by Lord Audley to inform you that a young lady, believed to be a daughter of the late Mr. Peter Audley, and recently living in poverty in an obscure'--yes, Stubbs, say obscure--'part of Paris, has been rescued by the benevolence of a Polish lady. For the present she is in the lady's house in a menial capacity, and is dependent on her charity. Lord Audley is informed that the young lady made

application to you without result, but this report his lordship discredits. Still, he feels himself concerned; and if those to whom she naturally looks decline to aid her, it is his lordship's intention to make such provision as may enable her to live respectably. I am to inform you that Miss Audley's address is the Hôtel Lambert, He St. Louis, Paris. Letters should be addressed "Care of the Housekeeper."'"

"He won't like the last touch!" the young man continued, with a quiet chuckle. "If that does not touch him on the raw, I'll yield up the title to-morrow. And now, Stubbs, good-night."

But Stubbs did not take the hint. "I want to say one word, my lord, about the borough--about Riddsley," he said. "We put in Mr. Mottisfont at the last election, your lordship's interest just tipping the scale. We think, therefore, that a word from you may set right what is going wrong."

"What is it?"

"There's a strong feeling," the lawyer answered, his face serious, "that the party is not being led aright. And that Mr. Mottisfont, who is old----"

"Is willing to go with the party, eh, Stubbs?"

"No, my lord, with the party leaders. Which is a different thing. Sir Robert Peel--the land put him in, but, d--n me, my lord"--the lawyer's manner lost much of its deference and he spoke bluntly and strongly--"it looks as if he were going to put the land out! An income-tax in peace time, we've taken that. And less protection for the farmer, very good--if it must be. But all this taking off of duties, this letting in of Canadian corn--I tell you, my lord, there's an ugly feeling abroad! There are a good many in Riddsley say that he is going to

repeal the Corn Laws altogether; that he's sold us to the League, and won't be long before he delivers us!"

The big man sitting back in his chair smiled. "It seems to me," he said, "that you are travelling rather fast and rather far, Stubbs!"

"That's just what we fear Sir Robert is doing!" the lawyer retorted smartly, the other's rank forgotten. "And you may take it from me the borough won't stand it, my lord, and the sooner Mr. Mottisfont has a hint the better. If he follows Peel too far, the bottom will fall out of his seat. There's no Corn Law leaguer will ever sit for Riddsley!"

"With your help, anyway, Stubbs," my lord said with a smile. The lawyer's excitement amused him.

"No, my lord! Never with my help! I believe that on the landed interest rests the stability of the country! It was the landed interest that supported Pitt and beat Bony, and brought us through the long war. It was the landed interest that kept us from revolution in the dark days after the war. And now because the men that turn cotton and iron and clay into money by the help of the devil's breath--because they want to pay lower wages----"

"The ark of the covenant is to be overthrown, eh?" the young man laughed. "Why, to listen to you, Stubbs, one would think that you were the largest landowner in the county!"

"No, my lord," the lawyer answered. "But it's the landowners have made me what I am. And it's the landowners and the farmers that Riddsley lives by and is going to stand by! And the sooner Mr. Mottisfont knows that