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THE FIXED PERIOD

A NOVEL

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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THE FIXED PERIOD

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THE FIXED PERIOD.

CHAPTER VII.

COLUMBUS AND GALILEO.

I HAD left Graybody with a lie on my tongue. I said that I was bound to suppose that Crasweller would do his duty as a citizen,—by which I had meant Graybody to understand that I expected my old friend to submit to deposition. Now I expected nothing of the kind, and it grieved me to think that I should be driven to such false excuses. I began to doubt whether my mind would hold its proper bent under the strain thus laid upon it, and to

ask myself whether I was in all respects sane in entertaining the ideas which filled my mind. Galileo and Columbus,—Galileo and Columbus! I endeavoured to comfort myself with these names,—but in a vain, delusive manner; and though I used them constantly, I was beginning absolutely to hate them. Why could I not return to my wool-shed, and be contented among my bales, and my ships, and my credits, as I was of yore, before this theory took total possession of me? I was doing good then. I robbed no one. I assisted very many in their walks of life. I was happy in the praises of all my fellow-citizens. My health was good, and I had ample scope for my energies then, even as now. But there came on me a day of success,—a day, shall I say, of glory or of wretchedness? or shall I not most truly say of both?—and I persuaded my fellow-citizens to undertake this sad work of the Fixed Period. From that moment all quiet had left me, and all happiness. Still, it is not necessary that

a man should be happy. I doubt whether Cæsar was happy with all those enemies around him,—Gauls, and Britons, and Romans. If a man be doing his duty, let him not think too much of that condition of mind which he calls happiness. Let him despise happiness and do his duty, and he will in one sense be happy. But if there creep upon him a doubt as to his duty, if he once begin to feel that he may perhaps be wrong, then farewell all peace of mind, —then will come that condition in which a man is tempted to ask himself whether he be in truth of sane mind.

What should I do next? The cricketing Englishmen, I knew, were going. Two or three days more would see their gallant ship steam out of the harbour. As I returned in my cab to the city, I could see the English colours fluttering from her topmast, and the flag of the English cricket-club waving from her stern. But I knew well that they had discussed the question of the Fixed Period

among them, and that there was still time for them to go home and send back some English mandate which ought to be inoperative, but which we should be unable to disobey. And letters might have been written before this,—treacherous letters, calling for the assistance of another country in opposition to the councils of their own.

But what should I do next? I could not enforce the law *vi et armis* against Crasweller. I had sadly but surely acknowledged so much as that to myself. But I thought that I had seen signs of relenting about the man,—some symptoms of sadness which seemed to bespeak a yielding spirit. He only asked for a year. He was still in theory a supporter of the Fixed Period,—pleading his own little cause, however, by a direct falsehood. Could I not talk him into a generous assent? There would still be a year for him. And in old days there had been a spice of manliness in his bosom, to which it might be possible that I should

bring him back. Though the hope was poor, it seemed at present to be my only hope.

As I returned, I came round by the quays, dropping my cab at the corner of the street. There was the crowd of Englishmen, all going off to the vessel to see their bats and bicycles disposed of, and among them was Jack the hero. They were standing at the water's-edge, while three long-boats were being prepared to take them off. "Here's the President," said Sir Kennington Oval; "he has not seen our yacht yet: let him come on board with us." They were very gracious; so I got into one boat, and Jack into another, and old Crasweller, who had come with his guests from Little Christchurch, into the third; and we were pulled off to the yacht. Jack, I perceived, was quite at home there. He had dined there frequently, and had slept on board; but to me and Crasweller it was altogether new. "Yes," said Lord Marylebone; "if a fellow is to make his home for a

month upon the seas, it is as well to make it as comfortable as possible. Each of us has his own crib, with a bath to himself, and all the et-ceteras. This is where we feed. It is not altogether a bad shop for grubbing." As I looked round I thought that I had never seen anything more palatial and beautiful. "This is where we pretend to sit," continued the lord; "where we are supposed to write our letters and read our books. And this," he said, opening another door, "is where we really sit, and smoke our pipes, and drink our brandy-and-water. We came out under the rule of that tyrant King MacNuffery. We mean to go back as a republic. And I, as being the only lord, mean to elect myself president. You couldn't give me any wrinkles as to a pleasant mode of governing? Everybody is to be allowed to do exactly what he pleases, and nobody is to be interfered with unless he interferes with somebody else. We mean to take a wrinkle from you fellows in Britannula, where every-

body seems, under your presidency, to be as happy as the day is long."

"We have no Upper House with us, my lord," said I.

"You have got rid, at any rate, of one terrible bother. I daresay we shall drop it before long in England. I don't see why we should continue to sit merely to register the edicts of the House of Commons, and be told that we're a pack of fools when we hesitate." I told him that it was the unfortunate destiny of a House of Lords to be made to see her own unfitness for legislative work.

"But if we were abolished," continued he, "then I might get into the other place and do something. You have to be elected a Peer of Parliament, or you can sit nowhere. A ship can only be a ship, after all; but if we must live in a ship, we are not so bad here. Come and take some tiffin." An Englishman, when he comes to our side of the globe, always calls his lunch tiffin.

I went back to the other room with Lord Marylebone; and as I took my place at the table, I heard that the assembled cricketers were all discussing the Fixed Period.

"I'd be shot," said Mr Puddlebrane, "if they should deposit me, and bleed me to death, and cremate me like a big pig." Then he perceived that I had entered the saloon, and there came a sudden silence across the table.

"What sort of wind will be blowing next Friday at two o'clock?" asked Sir Lords Longstop.

It was evident that Sir Lords had only endeavoured to change the conversation because of my presence; and it did not suit me to allow them to think that I was afraid to talk of the Fixed Period. "Why should you object to be cremated, Mr Puddlebrane," said I, "whether like a big pig or otherwise? It has not been suggested that any one shall cremate you while alive."

"Because my father and mother were buried.

And all the Puddlebranes were always buried. There are they, all to be seen in Puddlebrane Church, and I should like to appear among them."

"I suppose it's only their names that appear, and not their bodies, Mr Puddlebrane. And a cremated man may have as big a tombstone as though he had been allowed to become rotten in the orthodox fashion."

"What Puddlebrane means is," said another, "that he'd like to have the same chance of living as his ancestors."

"If he will look back to his family records he will find that they very generally died before sixty-eight. But we have no idea of invading your Parliament and forcing our laws upon you."

"Take a glass of wine, Mr President," said Lord Marylebone, "and leave Puddlebrane to his ancestors. He's a very good Slip, though he didn't catch Jack when he got a chance. Allow me to recommend you a bit of ice-

pudding. The mangoes came from Jamaica, and are as fresh as the day they were picked." I ate my mango-pudding, but I did not enjoy it, for I was sure that the whole crew were returning to England laden with prejudices against the Fixed Period. As soon as I could escape, I got back to the shore, leaving Jack among my enemies. It was impossible not to feel that they were my enemies, as I was sure that they were about to oppose the cherished conviction of my very heart and soul. Crasweller had sat there perfectly silent while Mr Puddlebrane had spoken of his own possible cremation. And yet Crasweller was a declared Fixed-Periodist.

On the Friday, at two o'clock, the vessel sailed amidst all the plaudits which could be given by mingled kettle-drums and trumpets, and by a salvo of artillery. They were as good a set of fellows as ever wore pink-flannel clothing, and as generous as any that there are born to live upon *pâté* and champagne. I

doubt whether there was one among them who could have earned his bread in a counting-house, unless it was Stumps the professional. When we had paid all honour to the departing vessel, I went at once to Little Christchurch, and there I found my friend in the verandah with Eva. During the last month or two he seemed to be much older than I had ever before known him, and was now seated with his daughter's hand within his own. I had not seen him since the day on board the yacht, and he now seemed to be greyer and more haggard than he was then. "Crasweller," said I, taking him by the hand, "it is a sad thing that you and I should quarrel after so many years of perfect friendship."

"So it is; so it is. I don't want to quarrel, Mr President."

"There shall be no quarrel. Well, Eva, how do you bear the loss of all your English friends?"

"The loss of my English friends won't hurt

me if I can only keep those which I used to have in Britannula." I doubted whether she alluded to me or to Jack. It might be only to me, but I thought she looked as if she were thinking of Jack.

"Eva, my dear," said Mr Crasweller, "you had better leave us. The President, I think, wishes to speak to me on business." Then she came up and looked me in the face, and pressed my hand, and I knew that she was asking for mercy for her father. The feeling was not pleasant, seeing that I was bound by the strongest oath which the mind can conceive not to show him mercy.

I sat for a few minutes in silence, thinking that as Mr Crasweller had banished Eva, he would begin. But he said nothing, and would have remained silent had I allowed him to do so. "Crasweller," I said, "it is certainly not well that you and I should quarrel on this matter. In your company I first learned to entertain this project, and for years we have

agreed that in it is to be found the best means for remedying the condition of mankind."

"I had not felt then what it is to be treated as one who was already dead."

"Does Eva treat you so?"

"Yes; with all her tenderness and all her sweet love, Eva feels that my days are numbered unless I will boldly declare myself opposed to your theory. She already regards me as though I were a visitant from the other world. Her very gentleness is intolerable."

"But, Crasweller, the convictions of your mind cannot be changed."

"I do not know. I will not say that any change has taken place. But it is certain that convictions become vague when they operate against one's self. The desire to live is human, and therefore God-like. When the hand of God is felt to have struck one with coming death, the sufferer, knowing the blow to be inevitable, can reconcile himself; but it is very hard to walk away to one's long rest

while health, and work, and means of happiness yet remain."

There was something in this which seemed to me to imply that he had abandoned the weak assertion as to his age, and no longer intended to ask for a year of grace by the use of that falsehood. But it was necessary that I should be sure of this. "As to your exact age, I've been looking at the records," I began.

"The records are right enough," he said; "you need trouble yourself no longer about the records. Eva and I have discussed all that." From this I became aware that Eva had convinced him of the baseness of the falsehood.

"Then there is the law," said I, with, as I felt, unflinching hardness.

"Yes, there is the law,—if it be a law. Mr Exors is prepared to dispute it, and says that he will ask permission to argue the case out with the executive."

"He would argue about anything. You know what Exors is."

"And there is that poor man Barnes has gone altogether out of his mind, and has become a drivelling idiot."

"They told me yesterday that he was a raging lunatic; but I learn from really good authority that whether he takes one part or the other, he is only acting."

"And Tallowax is prepared to run amuck against those who come to fetch him. He swears that no one shall lead him up to the college."

"And you?" Then there was a pause, and Crasweller sat silent with his face buried in his hands. He was, at any rate, in a far better condition of mind for persuasion than that in which I had last found him. He had given up the fictitious year, and had acknowledged that he had assented to the doctrine with which he was now asked to comply. But it was a hard task that of having to press him under such circumstances. I thought of Eva and her despair, and of himself with all that

natural desire for life eager at his heart. I looked round and saw the beauty of the scenery, and thought how much worse to such a man would be the melancholy shades of the college than even departure itself. And I am not by nature hard-hearted. I have none of that steel and fibre which will enable a really strong man to stand firm by convictions even when opposed by his affections. To have liberated Crasweller at this moment, I would have walked off myself, oh, so willingly, to the college! I was tearing my own heart to pieces; —but I remembered Columbus and Galileo. Neither of them was surely ever tried as I was at this moment. But it had to be done, or I must yield, and for ever. If I could not be strong to prevail with my own friend and fellow-labourer,—with Crasweller, who was the first to come, and who should have entered the college with an heroic grandeur,—how could I even desire any other to immure himself? how persuade such men as Barnes, or Tallowax, or

that pettifogger Exors, to be led quietly up through the streets of the city? "And you?" I asked again.

"It is for you to decide."

The agony of that moment! But I think that I did right. Though my very heart was bleeding, I know that I did right. "For the sake of the benefits which are to accrue to unknown thousands of your fellow-creatures, it is your duty to obey the law." This I said in a low voice, still holding him by the hand. I felt at the moment a great love for him,—and in a certain sense admiration, because he had so far conquered his fear of an unknown future as to promise to do this thing simply because he had said that he would do it. There was no high feeling as to future generations of his fellow-creatures, no grand idea that he was about to perform a great duty for the benefit of mankind in general, but simply the notion that as he had always advocated my theory as my friend, he would not now depart from it,

let the cost to himself be what it might. He answered me only by drawing away his hand. But I felt that in his heart he accused me of cruelty, and of mad adherence to a theory. "Should it not be so, Crasweller?"

"As you please, President."

"But should it not be so?" Then, at great length, I went over once again all my favourite arguments, and endeavoured with the whole strength of my eloquence to reach his mind. But I knew, as I was doing so, that that was all in vain. I had succeeded,—or perhaps Eva had done so,—in inducing him to repudiate the falsehood by which he had endeavoured to escape. But I had not in the least succeeded in making him see the good which would come from his deposition. He was ready to become a martyr, because in years back he had said that he would do so. He had now left it for me to decide whether he should be called upon to perform his promise; and I, with an unfeeling pertinacity, had given

the case against him. That was the light in which Mr Crasweller looked at it. "You do not think that I am cruel?" I asked.

"I do," said Crasweller. "You ask the question, and I answer you. I do think that you are cruel. It concerns life and death,—that is a matter of course,—and it is the life and death of your most intimate friend, of Eva's father, of him who years since came hither with you from another country, and has lived with you through all the struggles and all the successes of a long career. But you have my word, and I will not depart from it, even to save my life. In a moment of weakness I was tempted to a weak lie. I will not lie. I will not demean myself to claim a poor year of life by such means, though I do not lack evidence to support the statement. I am ready to go with you;" and he rose up from his seat as though intending to walk away and be deposited at once.

"Not now, Crasweller."

"I shall be ready when you may come for

me. I shall not again leave my home till I have to leave it for the last time. Days and weeks mean nothing with me now. The bitterness of death has fallen upon me."

"Crasweller, I will come and live with you, and be a brother to you, during the entire twelve months."

"No; it will not be needed. Eva will be with me, and perhaps Jack may come and see me,—though I must not allow Jack to express the warmth of his indignation in Eva's hearing. Jack had perhaps better leave Britannula for a time, and not come back till all shall be over. Then he may enjoy the lawns of Little Christchurch in peace,—unless, perchance, an idea should disturb him, that he has been put into their immediate possession by his father's act." Then he got up from his chair and went from the verandah back into the house.

As I rose and returned to the city, I almost repented myself of what I had done. I had it in my heart to go back and yield, and to

tell him that I would assent to the abandonment of my whole project. It was not for me to say that I would spare my own friend, and execute the law against Barnes and Tallowax; nor was it for me to declare that the victims of the first year should be forgiven. I could easily let the law die away, but it was not in my power to decide that it should fall into partial abeyance. This I almost did. But when I had turned on my road to Little Christchurch, and was prepared to throw myself into Crasweller's arms, the idea of Galileo and Columbus, and their ultimate success, again filled my bosom. The moment had now come in which I might succeed. The first man was ready to go to the stake, and I had felt all along that the great difficulty would be in obtaining the willing assent of the first martyr. It might well be that these accusations of cruelty were a part of the suffering without which my great reform could not be carried to success. Though I should live to be ac-

counted as cruel as Cæsar, what would that be if I too could reduce my Gaul to civilisation? "Dear Crasweller," I murmured to myself as I turned again towards Gladstonopolis, and hurrying back, buried myself in the obscurity of the executive chambers.

The following day occurred a most disagreeable scene in my own house at dinner. Jack came in and took his chair at the table in grim silence. It might be that he was lamenting for his English friends who were gone, and therefore would not speak. Mrs Neverbend, too, ate her dinner without a word. I began to fear that presently there would be something to be said,—some cause for a quarrel; and as is customary on such occasions, I endeavoured to become specially gracious and communicative. I talked about the ship that had started on its homeward journey, and praised Lord Marylebone, and laughed at Mr Puddlebrane; but it was to no effect. Neither would Jack nor Mrs Neverbend say anything,

and they ate their dinner gloomily till the attendant left the room. Then Jack began. "I think it right to tell you, sir, that there's going to be a public meeting on the Town Flags the day after to-morrow." The Town Flags was an open unenclosed place, over which, supported by arches, was erected the Town Hall. It was here that the people were accustomed to hold those outside assemblies which too often guided the responsible Assembly in the Senate-house.

"And what are you all going to talk about there?"

"There is only one subject," said Jack, "which at present occupies the mind of Gladstonopolis. The people don't intend to allow you to deposit Mr Crasweller."

"Considering your age and experience, Jack, don't you think that you're taking too much upon yourself to say whether people will allow or will not allow the executive of the country to perform their duty?"

"If Jack isn't old," said Mrs Neverbend, "I, at any rate, am older, and I say the same thing."

"Of course I only said what I thought," continued Jack. "What I want to explain is, that I shall be there myself, and shall do all that I can to support the meeting."

"In opposition to your father?" said I.

"Well;—yes, I am afraid so. You see it's a public subject on a public matter, and I don't see that father and son have anything to do with it. If I were in the Assembly, I don't suppose I should be bound to support my father."

"But you're not in the Assembly."

"I have my own convictions all the same, and I find myself called upon to take a part."

"Good gracious—yes! and to save poor old Mr Crasweller's life from this most inhuman law. He's just as fit to live as are you and I."

"The only question is, whether he be fit to die,—or rather to be deposited, I mean. But

I'm not going to argue the subject here. It has been decided by the law; and that should be enough for you two, as it is enough for me. As for Jack, I will not have him attend any such meeting. Were he to do so, he would incur my grave displeasure,—and consequent punishment."

"What do you mean to do to the boy?" asked Mrs Neverbend.

"If he ceases to behave to me like a son, I shall cease to treat him like a father. If he attends this meeting he must leave my house, and I shall see him no more."

"Leave the house!" shrieked Mrs Neverbend.

"Jack," said I, with the kindest voice which I was able to assume, "you will pack up your portmanteau and go to New Zealand the day after to-morrow. I have business for you to transact with Macmurdo and Brown of some importance. I will give you the particulars when I see you in the office."

"Of course he won't go, Mr Neverbend," cried my wife. But, though the words were determined, there was a certain vacillation in the tone of her voice which did not escape me.

"We shall see. If Jack intends to remain as my son, he must obey his father. I have been kind, and perhaps too indulgent, to him. I now require that he shall proceed to New Zealand the day after to-morrow. The boat sails at eight. I shall be happy to go down with him and see him on board."

Jack only shook his head,—by which I understood that he meant rebellion. I had been a most generous father to him, and loved him as the very apple of my eye; but I was determined that I would be stern. "You have heard my order," I said, "and you can have to-morrow to think about it. I advise you not to throw over, and for ever, the affection, the fostering care, and all the comforts, pecuniary as well as others, which you have hitherto had from an indulgent father."

"You do not mean to say that you will disinherit the boy?" said Mrs Neverbend.

I knew that it was utterly out of my power to do so. I could not disinherit him. I could not even rob him of a single luxury without an amount of suffering much greater than he would feel. Was I not thinking of him day and night as I arranged my worldly affairs? That moment when he knocked down Sir Kennington Oval's wicket, had I not been as proud as he was? When the trumpet sounded, did not I feel the honour more than he? When he made his last triumphant run, and I threw my hat in the air, was it not to me sweeter than if I had done it myself? Did I not even love him the better for swearing that he would make this fight for Crasweller? But yet it was necessary that I should command obedience, and, if possible, frighten him into subservience. We talk of a father's power, and know that the old Romans could punish filial disobedience by death; but a Britannulan father has a heart in

his bosom which is more powerful than law or even custom, and I believe that the Roman was much the same. "My dear, I will not discuss my future intentions before the boy. It would be unseemly. I command him to start for New Zealand the day after to-morrow, and I shall see whether he will obey me. I strongly advise him to be governed in this matter by his father." Jack only shook his head, and left the room. I became aware afterwards that he slept that night at Little Christchurch.

That night I received such a lecture from Mrs Neverbend in our bedroom as might have shamed that Mrs Caudle of whom we read in English history. I hate these lectures, not as thinking them unbecoming, but as being peculiarly disagreeable. I always find myself absolutely impotent during their progress. I am aware that it is quite useless to speak a word, and that I can only allow the clock to run itself down. What Mrs Neverbend says at such moments has always in it a great deal

of good sense; but it is altogether wasted, because I knew it all beforehand, and with pen and ink could have written down the lecture which she delivered at that peculiar moment. And I fear no evil results from her anger for the future, because her conduct to me will, I know by experience, be as careful and as kind as ever. Were another to use harsh language to me, she would rise in wrath to defend me. And she does not, in truth, mean a tenth of what she says. But I am for the time as though I were within the clapper of a mill; and her passion goes on increasing because she can never get a word from me. "Mr Neverbend, I tell you this,—you are going to make a fool of yourself. I think it my duty to tell you so, as your wife. Everybody else will think it. Who are you, to liken yourself to Galileo?—an old fellow of that kind who lived a thousand years ago, before Christianity had ever been invented. You have got nasty murderous thoughts in your mind, and

want to kill poor Mr Crasweller, just out of pride, because you have said you would. Now, Jack is determined that you shan't, and I say that he is right. There is no reason why Jack shouldn't obey me as well as you. You will never be able to deposit Mr Crasweller,—not if you try it for a hundred years. The city won't let you do it; and if you have a grain of sense left in your head, you won't attempt it. Jack is determined to meet the men on the Town Flags the day after to-morrow, and I say that he is right. As for your disinheriting him, and spending all your money on machinery to roast pigs,—I say you can't do it. There will be a commission to inquire into you if you do not mind yourself, and then you will remember what I told you. Poor Mr Crasweller, whom you have known for forty years! I wonder how you can bring yourself to think of killing the poor man, whose bread you have so often eaten! And if you think you are going to frighten Jack, you are very much mis-

taken. Jack would do twice more for Eva Crasweller than for you or me, and it's natural he should. You may be sure he will not give up; and the end will be, that he will get Eva for his own. I do believe he has gone to sleep." Then I gave myself infinite credit for the pertinacity of my silence, and for the manner in which I had put on an appearance of somnolency without overacting the part. Mrs Neverbend did in truth go to sleep, but I lay awake during the whole night thinking of the troubles before me.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "JOHN BRIGHT."

JACK, of course, did not go to New Zealand, and I was bound to quarrel with him,—temporarily. They held the meeting on the Town Flags, and many eloquent words were, no doubt, spoken. I did not go, of course, nor did I think it well to read the reports. Mrs Neverbend took it into her head at this time to speak to me only respecting the material wants of life. "Will you have another lump of sugar in your tea, Mr President?" Or, "If you want a second blanket on your bed, Mr Neverbend, and will say the word, it shall be supplied." I took her in the same mood, and was dignified, cautious, and silent. With Jack

I was supposed to have quarrelled altogether, and very grievous it was to me not to be able to speak to the lad of a morning or an evening. But he did not seem to be much the worse for it. As for turning him out of the house or stopping his pocket-money, that would be carrying the joke further than I could do it. Indeed it seemed to me that he was peculiarly happy at this time, for he did not go to his office. He spent his mornings in making speeches, and then went down in the afternoon on his bicycle to Little Christchurch.

So the time passed on, and the day absolutely came on which Crasweller was to be deposited. I had seen him constantly during the last few weeks, but he had not spoken to me on the subject. He had said that he would not leave Little Christchurch, and he did not do so. I do not think that he had been outside his own grounds once during these six weeks. He was always courteous to me, and would offer me tea and toast when I came,

with a stately civility, as though there had been no subject of burning discord between us. Eva I rarely saw. That she was there I was aware,—but she never came into my presence till the evening before the appointed day, as I shall presently have to tell. Once or twice I did endeavour to lead him on to the subject; but he showed a disinclination to discuss it so invincible, that I was silenced. As I left him on the day before that on which he was to be deposited, I assured him that I would call for him on the morrow.

"Do not trouble yourself," he said, repeating the words twice over. "It will be just the same whether you are here or not." Then I shook my head by way of showing him that I would come, and I took my leave.

I must explain that during these last few weeks things had not gone quietly in Gladstonopolis, but there had been nothing like a serious riot. I was glad to find that, in spite of Jack's speechifying, the younger part of the

population was still true to me, and I did not doubt that I should still have got the majority of votes in the Assembly. A rumour was spread abroad that the twelve months of Crasweller's period of probation were to be devoted to discussing the question, and I was told that my theory as to the Fixed Period would not in truth have been carried out merely because Mr Crasweller had changed his residence from Little Christchurch to the college. I had ordered an open barouche to be prepared for the occasion, and had got a pair of splendid horses fit for a triumphal march. With these I intended to call at Little Christchurch at noon, and to accompany Mr Crasweller up to the college, sitting on his left hand. On all other occasions, the President of the Republic sat in his carriage on the right side, and I had ever stood up for the dignities of my position. But this occasion was to be an exception to all rule.

On the evening before, as I was sitting in

my library at home mournfully thinking of the occasion, telling myself that after all I could not devote my friend to what some might think a premature death, the door was opened, and Eva Crasweller was announced. She had on one of those round, close-fitting men's hats which ladies now wear, but under it was a veil which quite hid her face. "I am taking a liberty, Mr Neverbend," she said, "in troubling you at the present moment."

"Eva, my dear, how can anything you do be called a liberty?"

"I do not know, Mr Neverbend. I have come to you because I am very unhappy."

"I thought you had shunned me of late."

"So I have. How could I help it, when you have been so anxious to deposit poor papa in that horrid place?"

"He was equally anxious a few years since."

"Never! He agreed to it because you told him, and because you were a man able to persuade. It was not that he ever had his heart

in it, even when it was not near enough to alarm himself. And he is not a man fearful of death in the ordinary way. Papa is a brave man."

"My darling child, it is beautiful to hear you say so of him."

"He is going with you to-morrow simply because he has made you a promise, and does not choose to have it said of him that he broke his word even to save his own life. Is not that courage? It is not with him as it is with you, who have your heart in the matter, because you think of some great thing that you will do, so that your name may be remembered to future generations."

"It is not for that, Eva. I care not at all whether my name be remembered. It is for the good of many that I act."

"He believes in no good, but is willing to go because of his promise. Is it fair to keep him to such a promise under such circumstances?"

"But the law——"

"I will hear nothing of the law. The law means you and your influences. Papa is to be sacrificed to the law to suit your pleasure. Papa is to be destroyed, not because the law wishes it, but to suit the taste of Mr Neverbend."

"Oh, Eva!"

"It is true."

"To suit my taste?"

"Well—what else? You have got the idea into your head, and you will not drop it. And you have persuaded him because he is your friend. Oh, a most fatal friendship! He is to be sacrificed because, when thinking of other things, he did not care to differ with you." Then she paused, as though to see whether I might not yield to her words. And if the words of any one would have availed to make me yield, I think it would have been hers as now spoken. "Do you know what people will say of you, Mr Neverbend?" she continued.

"What will they say?"

"If I only knew how best I could tell you! Your son has asked me—to be his wife."

"I have long known that he has loved you well."

"But it can never be," she said, "if my father is to be carried away to this fearful place. People would say that you had hurried him off in order that Jack——"

"Would you believe it, Eva?" said I, with indignation.

"It does not matter what I would believe. Mr Grundle is saying it already, and is accusing me too. And Mr Exors, the lawyer, is spreading it about. It has become quite the common report in Gladstonopolis that Jack is to become at once the owner of Little Christchurch."

"Perish Little Christchurch!" I exclaimed. "My son would marry no man's daughter for his money."

"I do not believe it of Jack," she said, "for I know that he is generous and good. There!

I do love him better than any one in the world. But as things are, I can never marry him if papa is to be shut up in that wretched City of the Dead."

"Not City of the Dead, my dear."

"Oh, I cannot bear to think of it!—all alone with no one but me with him to watch him as day after day passes away, as the ghastly hour comes nearer and still nearer, when he is to be burned in those fearful furnaces!"

"The cremation, my dear, has nothing in truth to do with the Fixed Period."

"To wait till the fatal day shall have arrived, and then to know that at a fixed hour he will be destroyed just because you have said so! Can you imagine what my feelings will be when that moment shall have come?"

I had not in truth thought of it. But now, when the idea was represented to my mind's eye, I acknowledged to myself that it would be impossible that she should be left there for the occasion. How or when she should be

taken away, or whither, I could not at the moment think. These would form questions which it would be very hard to answer. After some score of years, say, when the community would be used to the Fixed Period, I could understand that a daughter or a wife might leave the college, and go away into such solitudes as the occasion required, a week perhaps before the hour arranged for departure had come. Custom would make it comparatively easy; as custom has arranged such a period of mourning for a widow, and such another for a widower, a son, or a daughter. But here, with Eva, there would be no custom. She would have nothing to guide her, and might remain there till the last fatal moment. I had hoped that she might have married Jack, or perhaps Grundle, during the interval,—not having foreseen that the year, which was intended to be one of honour and glory, should become a time of mourning and tribulation. "Yes, my dear, it is very sad."

"Sad! Was there ever a position in life so melancholy, so mournful, so unutterably miserable?" I remained there opposite, gazing into vacancy, but I could say nothing. "What do you intend to do, Mr Neverbend?" she asked. "It is altogether in your bosom. My father's life or death is in your hands. What is your decision?" I could only remain steadfast; but it seemed to be impossible to say so. "Well, Mr Neverbend, will you speak?"

"It is not for me to decide. It is for the country."

"The country!" she exclaimed, rising up; "it is your own pride,—your vanity and cruelty combined. You will not yield in this matter to me, your friend's daughter, because your vanity tells you that when you have once said a thing, that thing shall come to pass." Then she put the veil down over her face, and went out of the room.

I sat for some time motionless, trying to turn over in my mind all that she had said to me; but it seemed as though my faculties

were utterly obliterated in despair. Eva had been to me almost as a daughter, and yet I was compelled to refuse her request for her father's life. And when she had told me that it was my pride and vanity which had made me do so, I could not explain to her that they were not the cause. And, indeed, was I sure of myself that it was not so? I had flattered myself that I did it for the public good; but was I sure that obduracy did not come from my anxiety to be counted with Columbus and Galileo? or if not that, was there not something personal to myself in my desire that I should be known as one who had benefited my species? In considering such matters, it is so hard to separate the motives,—to say how much springs from some glorious longing to assist others in their struggle upwards in humanity, and how much again from mean personal ambition. I had thought that I had done it all in order that the failing strength of old age might be relieved, and that the race might

from age to age be improved. But I now doubted myself, and feared lest that vanity of which Eva had spoken to me had overcome me. With my wife and son I could still be brave,—even with Crasweller I could be constant and hard; but to be obdurate with Eva was indeed a struggle. And when she told me that I did so through pride, I found it very hard to bear. And yet it was not that I was angry with the child. I became more and more attached to her the more loudly she spoke on behalf of her father. Her very indignation endeared me to her, and made me feel how excellent she was, how noble a wife she would be for my son. But was I to give way after all? Having brought the matter to such a pitch, was I to give up everything to the prayers of a girl? I was well aware even then that my theory was true. The old and effete should go, in order that the strong and manlike might rise in their places and do the work of the world with the wealth of the

world at their command. Take the average of mankind all round, and there would be but the lessening of a year or two from the life of them all. Even taking those men who had arrived at twenty-five, to how few are allotted more than forty years of life! But yet how large a proportion of the wealth of the world remains in the hands of those who have passed that age, and are unable from senile imbecility to employ that wealth as it should be used! As I thought of this, I said to myself that Eva's prayers might not avail, and I did take some comfort to myself in thinking that all was done for the sake of posterity. And then, again, when I thought of her prayers, and of those stern words which had followed her prayers,—of that charge of pride and vanity,—I did tell myself that pride and vanity were not absent.

She was gone now, and I felt that she must say and think evil things of me through all my future life. The time might perhaps come,

when I too should have been taken away, and when her father should long since have been at rest, that softer thoughts would come across her mind. If it were only possible that I might go, so that Jack might be married to the girl he loved, that might be well. Then I wiped my eyes, and went forth to make arrangements for the morrow.

The morning came,—the 30th of June,—a bright, clear, winter morning, cold but still genial and pleasant as I got into the barouche and had myself driven to Little Christchurch. To say that my heart was sad within me would give no fair record of my condition. I was so crushed by grief, so obliterated by the agony of the hour, that I hardly saw what passed before my eyes. I only knew that the day had come, the terrible day for which in my ignorance I had yearned, and that I was totally unable to go through its ceremonies with dignity, or even with composure. But I observed as I was driven down the street, lying

out at sea many miles to the left, a small spot of smoke on the horizon, as though it might be of some passing vessel. It did not in the least awaken my attention; but there it was, and I remembered to have thought as I passed on how blessed were they who steamed by unconscious of that terrible ordeal of the Fixed Period which I was bound to encounter.

I went to Little Christchurch, and there I found Mr Crasweller waiting for me in the hall. I came in and took his limp hand in mine, and congratulated him. Oh how vain, how wretched, sounded that congratulation in my own ears!

And it was spoken, I was aware, in a piteous tone of voice, and with meagre, bated breath. He merely shook his head, and attempted to pass on. "Will you not take your greatcoat?" said I, seeing that he was going out into the open air without protection.

"No; why should I? It will not be wanted up there."

"You do not know the place," I replied. "There are twenty acres of pleasure-ground for you to wander over." Then he turned upon me a look,—oh, such a look!—and went on and took his place in the carriage. But Eva followed him, and spread a rug across his knees, and threw a cloak over his shoulders.

"Will not Eva come with us?" I said.

"No; my daughter will hide her face on such a day as this. It is for you and me to be carried through the city,—you because you are proud of the pageant, and me because I do not fear it." This, too, added something to my sorrow. Then I looked and saw that Eva got into a small closed carriage in the rear, and was driven off by a circuitous route, to meet us, no doubt, at the college.

As we were driven away,—Crasweller and I,—I had not a word to say to him. And he seemed to collect himself in his fierceness, and to remain obdurately silent in his anger. In this way we drove on, till, coming to a turn of

the road, the expanse of the sea appeared before us. Here again I observed a small cloud of smoke which had grown out of the spot I had before seen, and I was aware that some large ship was making its way into the harbour of Gladstonopolis. I turned my face towards it and gazed, and then a sudden thought struck me. How would it be with me if this were some great English vessel coming into our harbour on the very day of Crasweller's deposition? A year since I would have rejoiced on such an occasion, and would have assured myself that I would show to the strangers the grandeur of this ceremony, which must have been new to them. But now a creeping terror took possession of me, and I felt my heart give way within me. I wanted no Englishman, nor American, to come and see the first day of our Fixed Period.

It was evident that Crasweller did not see the smoke; but to my eyes, as we progressed, it became nearer, till at last the hull of the

vast vessel became manifest. Then as the carriage passed on into the street of Gladstonopolis at the spot where one side of the street forms the quay, the vessel with extreme rapidity steamed in, and I could see across the harbour that she was a ship of war. A certain sense of relief came upon my mind just then, because I felt sure that she had come to interfere with the work which I had in hand; but how base must be my condition when I could take delight in thinking that it had been interrupted!

By this time we had been joined by some eight or ten carriages, which formed, as it were, a funeral *cortège* behind us. But I could perceive that these carriages were filled for the most part by young men, and that there was no contemporary of Crasweller to be seen at all. As we went up the town hill, I could espy Barnes gibbering on the doorstep of his house, and Tallowax brandishing a large knife in his hand, and Exors waving a paper over his head, which I well knew to be a copy

of the Act of our Assembly; but I could only pretend not to see them as our carriage passed on.

The chief street of Gladstonopolis, running through the centre of the city, descends a hill to the level of the harbour. As the vessel came in we began to ascend the hill, but the horses progressed very slowly. Crasweller sat perfectly speechless by my side. I went on with a forced smile upon my face, speaking occasionally to this or the other neighbour as we met them. I was forced to be in a certain degree cheerful, but grave and solemn in my cheerfulness. I was taking this man home for that last glorious year which he was about to pass in joyful anticipation of a happier life; and therefore I must be cheerful. But this was only the thing to be acted, the play to be played, by me the player. I must be solemn too,—silent as the churchyard, mournful as the grave,—because of the truth. Why was I thus driven to act a part that was false? On the

brow of the hill we met a concourse of people both young and old, and I was glad to see that the latter had come out to greet us. But by degrees the crowd became so numerous that the carriage was stopped in its progress; and rising up, I motioned to those around us to let us pass. We became, however, more firmly enveloped in the masses, and at last I had to ask aloud that they would open and let us go on. "Mr President," said one old gentleman to me, a tanner in the city, "there's an English ship of war come into the harbour. I think they've got something to say to you."

"Something to say to me! What can they have to say to me?" I replied, with all the dignity I could command.

"We'll just stay and see;—we'll just wait a few minutes," said another elder. He was a bar-keeper with a red nose, and as he spoke he took up a place in front of the horses. It was in vain for me to press the coachman. It would have been indecent to do so at such a

moment, and something at any rate was due to the position of Crasweller. He remained speechless in the carriage; but I thought that I could see, as I glanced at his face, that he took a strong interest in the proceedings. "They're going to begin to come up the hill, Mr Bunnit," said the bar-keeper to the tanner, "as soon as ever they're out of their boats."

"God bless the old flag for ever and ever!" said Mr Bunnit. "I knew they wouldn't let us deposit any one."

Thus their secret was declared. These old men,—the tanner and whisky-dealer, and the like,—had sent home to England to get assistance against their own Government! There had always been a scum of the population,—the dirty, frothy, meaningless foam at the top,—men like the drunken old bar-keeper, who had still clung submissive to the old country,—men who knew nothing of progress and civilisation,—who were content with what they ate and drank, and chiefly with the latter. "Here

they come. God bless their gold bands!" said he of the red nose. Yes;—up the hill they came, three gilded British naval officers surrounded by a crowd of Britannulans.

Crasweller heard it all, but did not move from his place. But he leaned forward, and he bit his lip, and I saw that his right hand shook as it grasped the arm of the carriage. There was nothing for me but to throw myself back and remain tranquil. I was, however, well aware that an hour of despair and opposition, and of defeat, was coming upon me. Up they came, and were received with three deafening cheers by the crowd immediately round the carriage. "I beg your pardon, sir," said one of the three, whom I afterwards learned to be the second lieutenant; "are you the President of this Republic?"

"I am," replied I; "and what may you be?"

"I am the second lieutenant on board H.M.'s gunboat, the John Bright." I had heard of this vessel, which had been named from a

gallant officer, who, in the beginning of the century, had seated himself on a barrel of gunpowder, and had, single-handed, quelled a mutiny. He had been made Earl Bright for what he had done on that occasion, but the vessel was still called J. B. throughout the service.

"And what may be your business with me, Mr Second Lieutenant?"

"Our captain, Captain Battleax's compliments, and he hopes you won't object to postpone this interesting ceremony for a day or two till he may come and see. He is sure that Mr Crasweller won't mind." Then he took off his hat to my old friend. "The captain would have come up himself, but he can't leave the ship before he sees his big gun laid on and made safe. He is very sorry to be so unceremonious, but the 250-ton steam-swiveller requires a great deal of care."

"Laid on?" I suggested.

"Well—yes. It is always necessary, when

the ship lets go her anchor, to point the gun in the most effective manner."

"She won't go off, will she?" asked Bunnit.

"Not without provocation, I think. The captain has the exploding wire under double lock and key in his own state-room. If he only touched the spring, we about the locality here would be knocked into little bits in less time than it will take you to think about it. Indeed the whole of this side of the hill would become an instantaneous ruin without the sign of a human being anywhere."

There was a threat in this which I could not endure. And indeed, for myself, I did not care how soon I might be annihilated. England, with unsurpassed tyranny, had sent out one of her brutal modern inventions, and threatened us all with blood and gore and murder if we did not give up our beneficent modern theory. It was the malevolent influence of the intellect applied to brute force, dominating its benevolent influence as applied to philanthropy. What

was the John Bright to me that it should come there prepared to send me into eternity by its bloodthirsty mechanism? It is an evil sign of the times,—of the times that are in so many respects hopeful,—that the greatest inventions of the day should always take the shape of engines of destruction! But what could I do in the agony of the moment? I could but show the coolness of my courage by desiring the coachman to drive on.

"For God's sake, don't!" said Crasweller, jumping up.

"He shan't stir a step," said Bunnit to the bar-keeper.

"He can't move an inch," replied the other. "We know what our precious lives are worth; "don't we, Mr Bunnit?"

What could I do? "Mr Second Lieutenant, I must hold you responsible for this interruption," said I.

"Exactly so. I am responsible,—as far as stopping this carriage goes. Had all the town

turned out in your favour, and had this gentleman insisted on being carried away to be buried——"

"Nothing of that kind," said Crasweller.

"Then I think I may assume that Captain Battleax will not fire his gun. But if you will allow me, I will ask him a question." Then he put a minute whistle up to his mouth, and I could see, for the first time, that there hung from this the thinnest possible metal wire,—a thread of silk, I would have said, only that it was much less palpable,—which had been dropped from the whistle as the lieutenant had come along, and which now communicated with the vessel. I had, of course, heard of this hair telephone, but I had never before seen it used in such perfection. I was assured afterwards that one of the ship's officers could go ten miles inland and still hold communication with his captain. He put the instrument alternately to his mouth and to his ear, and then informed me that Captain Battleax was

desirous that we should all go home to our own houses.

"I decline to go to my own house," I said. The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. "Coachman, as soon as the crowd has dispersed itself, you will drive on." The coachman, who was an old assistant in my establishment, turned round and looked at me aghast. But he was soon put out of his trouble. Bunnit and the bar-keeper took out the horses and proceeded to lead them down the hill. Crasweller, as soon as he saw this, said that he presumed he might go back, as he could not possibly go on. "It is but three miles for us to walk," I said.

"I am forbidden to permit this gentleman to proceed either on foot or with the carriage," said the lieutenant. "I am to ask if he will do Captain Battleax the honour to come on board and take tiffin with him. If I could only prevail on you, Mr President." On this I shook my head in eager denial. "Exactly

so; but he will hope to see you on another occasion soon." I little thought then, how many long days I should have to pass with Captain Battleax and his officers, or how pleasant companions I should find them when the remembrance of the present indignity had been somewhat softened by time.

Crasweller turned upon his heel and walked down the hill with the officers,—all the crowd accompanying them; while Bunnit and the bar-keeper had gone off with the horses. I had not descended from the carriage; but there I was, planted alone,—the President of the Republic left on the top of the hill in his carriage without means of locomotion! On looking round I saw Jack, and with Jack I saw also a lady, shrouded from head to foot in black garments, with a veil over her face, whom I knew, from the little round hat upon her head, to be Eva. Jack came up to me, but where Eva went I could not see. "Shall we walk down to the house?" he said. I felt

that his coming to me at such a moment was kind, because I had been, as it were, deserted by all the world. Then he opened the door of the carriage, and I came out. "It was very odd that those fellows should have turned up just at this moment," said Jack.

"When things happen very oddly, as you call it, they seem to have been premeditated."

"Not their coming to-day. That has not been premeditated; at least not to my knowledge. Indeed I did not in the least know what the English were likely to do."

"Do you think it right to send to the enemies of your country for aid against your country?" This I asked with much indignation, and I had refused as yet to take his arm.

"Oh but, sir, England isn't our enemy."

"Not when she comes and interrupts the quiet execution of our laws by threats of blowing us and our city and our citizens to instant destruction!"

"She would never have done it. I don't suppose that big gun is even loaded."

"The more contemptible is her position. She threatens us with a lie in her mouth."

"I know nothing about it, sir. The gun may be there all right, and the gunpowder, and the twenty tons of iron shot. But I'm sure she'll not fire it off in our harbour. They say that each shot costs two thousand five hundred pounds, and that the wear and tear to the vessel is two thousand more. There are things so terrible, that if you will only create a belief in them, that will suffice without anything else. I suppose we may walk down. Crasweller has gone, and you can do nothing without him."

This was true, and I therefore prepared to descend the hill. My position as President of the Republic did demand a certain amount of personal dignity; and how was I to uphold that in my present circumstances? "Jack," said I, "it is the sign of a noble mind to bear

contumely without petulance. Since our horses have gone before us, and Crasweller and the crowd have gone, we will follow them." Then I put my arm within his, and as I walked down the hill, I almost took joy in thinking that Crasweller had been spared.

"Sir," said Jack, as we walked on, "I want to tell you something."

"What is it?"

"Something of most extreme importance to me! I never thought that I should have been so fortunate as to announce to you what I've now got to say. I hardly know whether I am standing on my head or my heels. Eva Crasweller has promised to be my wife."

"Indeed!"

"If you will make us happy by giving us your permission."

"I should not have thought that she would have asked for that."

"She has to ask her father, and he's all right. He did say, when I spoke to him this morning,

that his permission would go for nothing, as he was about to be led away and deposited. Of course I told him that all that would amount to nothing."

"To nothing! What right had you to say so?"

"Well, sir,—you see that a party of us were quite determined. Eva had said that she would never let me even speak to her as long as her father's life was in danger. She altogether hated that wretch Grundle for wanting to get rid of him. I swore to her that I would do the best I could, and she said that if I could succeed, then—she thought she could love me. What was a fellow to do?"

"What did you do?"

"I had it all out with Sir Kennington Oval, who is the prince of good fellows; and he telegraphed to his uncle, who is Secretary for Benevolence, or some such thing, at home."

"England is not your home," said I.

"It's the way we all speak of it."

"And what did he say?"

"Well, he went to work, and the John Bright was sent out here. But it was only an accident that it should come on this very day."

And this was the way in which things are to be managed in Britannula! Because a young boy had fallen in love with a pretty girl, the whole wealth of England was to be used for a most nefarious purpose, and a great nation was to exercise its tyranny over a small one, in which her own language was spoken and her own customs followed! In every way England had had reason to be proud of her youngest child. We Britannulans had become noted for intellect, morals, health, and prosperity. We had advanced a step upwards, and had adopted the Fixed Period. Then, at the instance of this lad, a leviathan of war was to be sent out to crush us unless we would consent to put down the cherished conviction of our hearts! As I thought of all, walking down the street hanging on Jack's arm, I had to ask myself whether the

Fixed Period was the cherished conviction of our hearts. It was so of some, no doubt; and I had been able, by the intensity of my will,—and something, too, by the covetousness and hurry of the younger men,—to cause my wishes to prevail in the community. I did not find that I had reconciled myself to the use of this covetousness with the object of achieving a purpose which I believed to be thoroughly good. But the heartfelt conviction had not been strong with the people. I was forced to confess as much. Had it indeed been really strong with any but myself? Was I not in the position of a shepherd driving sheep into a pasture which was distasteful to them? Eat, O sheep, and you will love the food in good time,—you or the lambs that are coming after you! What sheep will go into unsavoury pastures, with no hopes but such as these held out to them? And yet I had been right. The pasture had been the best which the ingenuity of man had found for the maintenance of sheep.

"Jack," said I, "what a poor, stupid, love-lorn boy you are!"

"I daresay I am," said Jack, meekly.

"You put the kisses of a pretty girl, who may perhaps make you a good wife,—and, again, may make you a bad one,—against all the world in arms."

"I am quite sure about that," said Jack.

"Sure about what?"

"That there is not a fellow in all Britannula will have such a wife as Eva."

"That means that you are in love. And because you are in love, you are to throw over —not merely your father, because in such an affair that goes for nothing——"

"Oh, but it does; I have thought so much about it."

"I'm much obliged to you. But you are to put yourself in opposition to the greatest movement made on behalf of the human race for centuries; you are to set yourself up against——"

"Galileo and Columbus," he suggested, quoting my words with great cruelty.

"The modern Galileo, sir; the Columbus of this age. And you are to conquer them! I, the father, have to submit to you the son; I the President of fifty-seven, to you the schoolboy of twenty-one; I the thoughtful man, to you the thoughtless boy! I congratulate you; but I do not congratulate the world on the extreme folly which still guides its actions." Then I left him, and going into the executive chambers, sat myself down and cried in the very agony of a broken heart.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW GOVERNOR.

"So," said I to myself, "because of Jack and his love, all the aspirations of my life are to be crushed! The whole dream of my existence, which has come so near to the fruition of a waking moment, is to be violently dispelled because my own son and Sir Kennington Oval have settled between them that a pretty girl is to have her own way." As I thought of it, there seemed to be a monstrous cruelty and potency in Fortune, which she never could have been allowed to exercise in a world which was not altogether given over to injustice. It was for that that I wept. I wept to think that a spirit of honesty should as yet have

prevailed so little in the world. Here, in our waters, was lying a terrible engine of British power, sent out by a British Cabinet Minister, —the so-called Minister of Benevolence, by a bitter chance,—at the instance of that Minister's nephew, to put down by brute force the most absolutely benevolent project for the governance of the world which the mind of man had ever projected. It was in that that lay the agony of the blow.

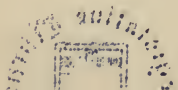
I remained there alone for many hours, but I must acknowledge that before I left the chambers I had gradually brought myself to look at the matter in another light. Had Eva Crasweller not been good-looking, had Jack been still at college, had Sir Kennington Oval remained in England, had Mr Bunnit and the bar-keeper not succeeded in stopping my carriage on the hill,—should I have succeeded in arranging for the final departure of my old friend? That was the question which I ought to ask myself. And even had I

succeeded in carrying my success so far as that, should I not have appeared a murderer to my fellow-citizens had not his departure been followed in regular sequence by that of all others till it had come to my turn? Had Crasweller departed, and had the system then been stopped, should I not have appeared a murderer even to myself? And what hope had there been, what reasonable expectation, that the system should have been allowed fair-play?

It must be understood that I, I myself, have never for a moment swerved. But though I have been strong enough to originate the idea, I have not been strong enough to bear the terrible harshness of the opinions of those around me when I should have exercised against those dear to me the mandates of the new law. If I could, in the spirit, have leaped over a space of thirty years and been myself deposited in due order, I could see that my memory would have been embalmed with those

who had done great things for their fellow-citizens. Columbus, and Galileo, and Newton, and Harvey, and Wilberforce, and Cobden, and that great Banting who has preserved us all so completely from the horrors of obesity, would not have been named with honour more resplendent than that paid to the name of Neverbend. Such had been my ambition, such had been my hope. But it is necessary that a whole age should be carried up to some proximity to the reformer before there is a space sufficiently large for his operations. Had the telegraph been invented in the days of ancient Rome, would the Romans have accepted it, or have stoned Wheatstone? So thinking, I resolved that I was before my age, and that I must pay the allotted penalty.

On arriving at home at my own residence, I found that our *salon* was filled with a brilliant company. We did not usually use the room; but on entering the house I heard the clatter of conversation, and went in. There was



Captain Battleax seated there, beautiful with a cocked-hat, and an epaulet, and gold braid. He rose to meet me, and I saw that he was a handsome tall man about forty, with a determined face and a winning smile. "Mr President," said he, "I am in command of her Majesty's gunboat, the John Bright, and I have come to pay my respects to the ladies."

"I am sure the ladies have great pleasure in seeing you." I looked round the room, and there, with other of our fair citizens, I saw Eva. As I spoke I made him a gracious bow, and I think I showed him by my mode of address that I did not bear any grudge as to my individual self.

"I have come to your shores, Mr President, with the purpose of seeing how things are progressing in this distant quarter of the world."

"Things were progressing, Captain Battleax, pretty well before this morning. We have our little struggles here as elsewhere, and all things

cannot be done by rose-water. But, on the whole, we are a prosperous and well-satisfied people."

"We are quite satisfied now, Captain Battleax," said my wife.

"Quite satisfied," said Eva.

"I am sure we are all delighted to hear the ladies speak in so pleasant a manner," said First-Lieutenant Crosstrees, an officer with whom I have since become particularly intimate.

Then there was a little pause in the conversation, and I felt myself bound to say something as to the violent interruption to which I had this morning been subjected. And yet that something must be playful in its nature. I must by no means show in such company as was now present the strong feeling which pervaded my own mind. "You will perceive, Captain Battleax, that there is a little difference of opinion between us all here as to the ceremony which was to have been accomplished

this morning. The ladies, in compliance with that softness of heart which is their characteristic, are on one side; and the men, by whom the world has to be managed, are on the other. No doubt, in process of time the ladies will follow——"

"Their masters," said Mrs Neverbend. "No doubt we shall do so when it is only ourselves that we have to sacrifice, but never when the question concerns our husbands, our fathers, and our sons."

This was a pretty little speech enough, and received the eager compliments of the officers of the John Bright. "I did not mean," said Captain Battleax, "to touch upon public subjects at such a moment as this. I am here only to pay my respects as a messenger from Great Britain to Britannula, to congratulate you all on your late victory at cricket, and to say how loud are the praises bestowed on Mr John Neverbend, junior, for his skill and gallantry. The power of his arm is already the

subject discussed at all clubs and drawing-rooms at home. We had received details of the whole affair by water-telegram before the John Bright started. Mrs Neverbend, you must indeed be proud of your son."

Jack had been standing in the far corner of the room talking to Eva, and was now reduced to silence by his praises.

"Sir Kennington Oval is a very fine player," said my wife.

"And my Lord Marylebone behaves himself quite like a British peer," said the wife of the Mayor of Gladstonopolis,—a lady whom he had married in England, and who had not moved there in quite the highest circles.

Then we began to think of the hospitality of the island, and the officers of the John Bright were asked to dine with us on the following day. I and my wife and son, and the two Craswellers, and three or four others, agreed to dine on board the ship on the next. To me personally an extreme of courtesy was shown.

It seemed as though I were treated with almost royal honour. This, I felt, was paid to me as being President of the republic, and I endeavoured to behave myself with such mingled humility and dignity as might befit the occasion; but I could not but feel that something was wanting to the simplicity of my ordinary life. My wife, on the spur of the moment, managed to give the gentlemen a very good dinner. Including the chaplain and the surgeon, there were twelve of them, and she asked twelve of the prettiest girls in Gladstonopolis to meet them. This, she said, was true hospitality; and I am not sure that I did not agree with her. Then there were three or four leading men of the community, with their wives, who were for the most part the fathers and mothers of the young ladies. We sat down thirty-six to dinner; and I think that we showed a great divergence from those usual colonial banquets, at which the elders are only invited to meet distinguished guests.

The officers were chiefly young men; and a greater babel of voices was, I'll undertake to say, never heard from a banqueting-hall than came from our dinner-table. Eva Crasweller was the queen of the evening, and was as joyous, as beautiful, and as high-spirited as a queen should ever be. I did once or twice during the festivity glance round at old Crasweller. He was quiet, and I might almost say silent, during the whole evening; but I could see from the testimony of his altered countenance how strong is the passion for life that dwells in the human breast.

"Your promised bride seems to have it all her own way," said Captain Battleax to Jack, when at last the ladies had withdrawn.

"Oh yes," said Jack, "and I'm nowhere. But I mean to have my innings before long."

Of what Mrs Neverbend had gone through in providing birds, beasts, and fishes, not to talk of tarts and jellies, for the dinner of that day, no one but myself can have any idea;

but it must be admitted that she accomplished her task with thorough success. I was told, too, that after the invitations had been written, no milliner in Britannula was allowed to sleep a single moment till half an hour before the ladies were assembled in our drawing-room; but their efforts, too, were conspicuously successful.

On the next day some of us went on board the John Bright for a return dinner; and very pleasant the officers made it. The living on board the John Bright is exceedingly good, as I have had occasion to learn from many dinners eaten there since that day. I little thought when I sat down at the right hand of Captain Battleax as being the President of the republic, with my wife on his left, I should ever spend more than a month on board the ship, or write on board it this account of all my thoughts and all my troubles in regard to the Fixed Period. After dinner Captain Battleax simply proposed my health, paying

to me many unmeaning compliments, in which, however, I observed that no reference was made to the special doings of my presidency; and he ended by saying, that though he had, as a matter of courtesy, and with the greatest possible alacrity, proposed my health, he would not call upon me for any reply. And immediately on his sitting down, there got up a gentleman to whom I had not been introduced before this day, and gave the health of Mrs Neverbend and the ladies of Britannula. Now in spite of what the captain said, I undoubtedly had intended to make a speech. When the President of the republic has his health drunk, it is, I conceive, his duty to do so. But here the gentleman rose with a rapidity which did at the moment seem to have been premeditated. At any rate, my eloquence was altogether stopped. The gentleman was named Sir Ferdinando Brown. He was dressed in simple black, and was clearly not one of the ship's officers; but I could not

but suspect at the moment that he was in some special measure concerned in the mission on which the gunboat had been sent. He sat on Mrs Neverbend's left hand, and did seem in some respect to be the chief man on that occasion. However, he proposed Mrs Neverbend's health and the ladies, and the captain instantly called upon the band to play some favourite tune. After that there was no attempt at speaking. We sat with the officers some little time after dinner, and then went ashore. "Sir Ferdinando and I," said the captain, as we shook hands with him, "will do ourselves the honour of calling on you at the executive chambers to-morrow morning."

I went home to bed with a presentiment of evil running across my heart. A presentiment indeed! How much of evil,—of real accomplished evil,—had there not occurred to me during the last few days! Every hope for which I had lived, as I then told myself, had been brought to sudden extinction by the com-

ing of these men to whom I had been so pleasant, and who, in their turn, had been so pleasant to me! What could I do now but just lay myself down and die? And the death of which I dreamt could not, alas! be that true benumbing death which we think may put an end, or at any rate give a change, to all our thoughts. To die would be as nothing; but to live as the late President of the republic who had fixed his aspirations so high, would indeed be very melancholy. As President I had still two years to run, but it occurred to me now that I could not possibly endure those two years of prolonged nominal power. I should be the laughing-stock of the people; and as such, it would become me to hide my head. When this captain should have taken himself and his vessel back to England, I would retire to a small farm which I possessed at the farthest side of the island, and there in seclusion would I end my days. Mrs Neverbend should come with me, or stay, if it so

pleased her, in Gladstonopolis. Jack would become Eva's happy husband, and would remain amidst the hurried duties of the eager world. Crasweller, the triumphant, would live, and at last die, amidst the flocks and herds of Little Christchurch. I, too, would have a small herd, a little flock of my own, surrounded by no such glories as those of Little Christchurch,—owing nothing to wealth, or scenery, or neighbourhood,—and there, till God should take me, I would spend the evening of my day. Thinking of all this, I went to sleep.

On the next morning Sir Ferdinando Brown and Captain Battleax were announced at the executive chambers. I had already been there at my work for a couple of hours; but Sir Ferdinando apologised for the earliness of his visit. It seemed to me as he entered the room and took the chair that was offered to him, that he was the greater man of the two on the occasion,—or perhaps I should say of the three. And yet he had not before come on shore to

visit me, nor had he made one at our little dinner-party. "Mr Neverbend," began the captain,—and I observed that up to that moment he had generally addressed me as President,—"it cannot be denied that we have come here on an unpleasant mission. You have received us with all that courtesy and hospitality for which your character in England stands so high. But you must be aware that it has been our intention to interfere with that which you must regard as the performance of a duty."

"It is a duty," said I. "But your power is so superior to any that I can advance, as to make us here feel that there is no disgrace in yielding to it. Therefore we can be courteous while we submit. Not a doubt but had your force been only double or treble our own, I should have found it my duty to struggle with you. But how can a little State, but a few years old, situated on a small island, far removed from all the centres of civilisation,

contend on any point with the owner of the great 250-ton swiveller-gun?"

"That is all quite true, Mr Neverbend," said Sir Ferdinando Brown.

"I can afford to smile, because I am absolutely powerless before you; but I do not the less feel that, in a matter in which the progress of the world is concerned, I, or rather we, have been put down by brute force. You have come to us threatening us with absolute destruction. Whether your gun be loaded or not matters little."

"It is certainly loaded," said Captain Battleax.

"Then you have wasted your powder and shot. Like a highwayman, it would have sufficed for you merely to tell the weak and cowardly that your pistol would be made to go off when wanted. To speak the truth, Captain Battleax, I do not think that you excel us more in courage than you do in thought and practical wisdom. Therefore, I feel myself quite able, as President

of this republic, to receive you with a courtesy due to the servants of a friendly ally."

"Very well put," said Sir Ferdinando. I simply bowed to him. "And now," he continued, "will you answer me one question?"

"A dozen if it suits you to ask them."

"Captain Battleax cannot remain here long with that expensive toy which he keeps locked up somewhere among his cocked-hats and white gloves. I can assure you he has not even allowed me to see the trigger since I have been on board. But 250-ton swivellers do cost money, and the John Bright must steam away, and play its part in other quarters of the globe. What do you intend to do when he shall have taken his pocket-pistol away?"

I thought for a little what answer it would best become me to give to this question, but I paused only for a moment or two. "I shall proceed at once to carry out the Fixed Period." I felt that my honour demanded that to such a question I should make no other reply.

"And that in opposition to the wishes, as I understand, of a large proportion of your fellow-citizens?"

"The wishes of our fellow-citizens have been declared by repeated majorities in the Assembly."

"You have only one House in your Constitution," said Sir Ferdinando.

"One House I hold to be quite sufficient."

I was proceeding to explain the theory on which the Britannulan Constitution had been formed, when Sir Ferdinando interrupted me. "At any rate, you will admit that a second Chamber is not there to guard against the sudden action of the first. But we need not discuss all this now. It is your purpose to carry out your Fixed Period as soon as the John Bright shall have departed?"

"Certainly."

"And you are, I am aware, sufficiently popular with the people here to enable you to do so?"

"I think I am," I said, with a modest acquiescence in an assertion which I felt to be so much to my credit. But I blushed for its untruth.

"Then," said Sir Ferdinando, "there is nothing for it but that he must take you with him."

There came upon me a sudden shock when I heard these words, which exceeded anything which I had yet felt. Me, the President of a foreign nation, the first officer of a people with whom Great Britain was at peace,—the captain of one of her gunboats must carry me off, hurry me away a prisoner, whither I knew not, and leave the country ungoverned, with no President as yet elected to supply my place! And I, looking at the matter from my own point of view, was a husband, the head of a family, a man largely concerned in business,—I was to be carried away in bondage—I, who had done no wrong, had disobeyed no law, who had indeed been conspicuous for my adherence to my duties! No opposition ever shown to Colum-

bus and Galileo had come near to this in audacity and oppression. I, the President of a free republic, the elected of all its people, the chosen depository of its official life,—I was to be kidnapped and carried off in a ship of war, because, forsooth, I was deemed too popular to rule the country! And this was told to me in my own room in the executive chambers, in the very sanctum of public life, by a stout florid gentleman in a black coat, of whom I hitherto knew nothing except that his name was Brown!

"Sir," I said, after a pause, and turning to Captain Battleax and addressing him, "I cannot believe that you, as an officer in the British navy, will commit any act of tyranny so oppressive, and of injustice so gross, as that which this gentleman has named."

"You hear what Sir Ferdinando Brown has said," replied Captain Battleax.

"I do not know the gentleman,—except as having been introduced to him at your hos-

pitable table. Sir Ferdinando Brown is to me —simply Sir Ferdinando Brown."

"Sir Ferdinando has lately been our British Governor in Ashantee, where he has, as I may truly say, 'bought golden opinions from all sorts of people.' He has now been sent here on this delicate mission, and to no one could it be intrusted by whom it would be performed with more scrupulous honour." This was simply the opinion of Captain Battleax, and expressed in the presence of the gentleman himself whom he so lauded.

"But what is the delicate mission?" I asked.

Then Sir Ferdinando told his whole story, which I think should have been declared before I had been asked to sit down to dinner with him in company with the captain on board the ship. I was to be taken away and carried to England or elsewhere,—or drowned upon the voyage, it mattered not which. That was the first step to be taken towards carrying

out the tyrannical, illegal, and altogether injurious intention of the British Government. Then the republic of Britannula was to be declared as non-existent, and the British flag was to be exalted, and a British Governor installed in the executive chambers! That Governor was to be Sir Ferdinando Brown.

I was lost in a maze of wonderment as I attempted to look at the proceeding all round. Now, at the close of the twentieth century, could oppression be carried to such a height as this? "Gentlemen," I said, "you are powerful. That little instrument which you have hidden in your cabin makes you the master of us all. It has been prepared by the ingenuity of men, able to dominate matter though altogether powerless over mind. On myself, I need hardly say that it would be inoperative. Though you should reduce me to atoms, from them would spring those opinions which would serve altogether to silence your artillery. But the dread of it is to the gener-

ality much more powerful than the fact of its possession."

"You may be quite sure it's there," said Captain Battleax, "and that I can so use it as to half obliterate your town within two minutes of my return on board."

"You propose to kidnap me," I said. "What would become of your gun were I to kidnap you?"

"Lieutenant Crosstrees has sealed orders, and is practically acquainted with the mechanism of the gun. Lieutenant Crosstrees is a very gallant officer. One of us always remains on board while the other is on shore. He would think nothing of blowing me up, so long as he obeyed orders."

"I was going on to observe," I continued, "that though this power is in your hands, and in that of your country, the exercise of it betrays not only tyranny of disposition, but poorness and meanness of spirit." I here bowed first to the one gentleman, and then to

the other. "It is simply a contest between brute strength and mental energy."

"If you will look at the contests throughout the world," said Sir Ferdinando, "you will generally find that the highest respect is paid to the greatest battalions."

"What world-wide iniquity such a speech as that discloses!" said I, still turning myself to the captain; for though I would have crushed them both by my words had it been possible, my dislike centred itself on Sir Ferdinando. He was a man who looked as though everything were to yield to his meagre philosophy; and it seemed to me as though he enjoyed the exercise of the tyranny which chance had put into his power.

"You will allow me to suggest," said he, "that that is a matter of opinion. In the meantime, my friend Captain Battleax has below a guard of fifty marines, who will pay you the respect of escorting you on board with two of the ship's cutters. Everything that can

be there done for your accommodation and comfort,—every luxury which can be provided to solace the President of this late republic,—shall be afforded. But, Mr Neverbend, it is necessary that you should go to England; and allow me to assure you, that your departure can neither be prevented nor delayed by uncivil words spoken to the future Governor of this prosperous colony."

"My words are, at any rate, less uncivil than Captain Battleax's marines; and they have, I submit, been made necessary by the conduct of your country in this matter. Were I to comply with your orders without expressing my own opinion, I should seem to have done so willingly hereafter. I say that the English Government is a tyrant, and that you are the instruments of its tyranny. Now you can proceed to do your work."

"That having all been pleasantly settled," said Sir Ferdinando, with a smile, "I will ask you to read the document by which this duty

has been placed in my hands." He then took out of his pocket a letter addressed to him by the Duke of Hatfield, as Minister for the Crown Colonies, and gave it to me to read. The letter ran as follows :—

"COLONIAL OFFICE, CROWN COLONIES,
15*th May* 1980.

"SIR,—I have it in command to inform your Excellency that you have been appointed Governor of the Crown colony which is called Britannula. The peculiar circumstances of the colony are within your Excellency's knowledge. Some years since, after the separation of New Zealand, the inhabitants of Britannula requested to be allowed to manage their own affairs, and H.M. Minister of the day thought it expedient to grant their request. The country has since undoubtedly prospered, and in a material point of view has given us no grounds for regret. But in their selection of a Constitution the Britannulists have un-

fortunately allowed themselves but one deliberative assembly, and hence have sprung their present difficulties. It must be, that in such circumstances crude councils should be passed as laws without the safeguard coming from further discussion and thought. At the present moment a law has been passed which, if carried into action, would become abhorrent to mankind at large. It is contemplated to destroy all those who shall have reached a certain fixed age. The arguments put forward to justify so strange a measure I need not here explain at length. It is founded on the acknowledged weakness of those who survive that period of life at which men cease to work. This terrible doctrine has been adopted at the advice of an eloquent citizen of the republic, who is at present its President, and whose general popularity seems to be so great, that, in compliance with his views, even this measure will be carried out unless Great Britain shall interfere.

"You are desired to proceed at once to Britannula, to reannex the island, and to assume the duties of the Governor of a Crown colony. It is understood that a year of probation is to be allowed to those victims who have agreed to their own immolation. You will therefore arrive there in ample time to prevent the first bloodshed. But it is surmised that you will find difficulties in the way of your entering at once upon your government. So great is the popularity of their President, Mr Neverbend, that, if he be left on the island, your Excellency will find a dangerous rival. It is therefore desired that you should endeavour to obtain information as to his intentions; and that, if the Fixed Period be not abandoned altogether, with a clear conviction as to its cruelty on the part of the inhabitants generally, you should cause him to be carried away and brought to England.

"To enable you to effect this, Captain Battleax, of H.M. gunboat the John Bright,

has been instructed to carry you out. The John Bright is armed with a weapon of great power, against which it is impossible that the people of Britannula should prevail. You will carry out with you 100 men of the North-north-west Birmingham regiment, which will probably suffice for your own security, as it is thought that if Mr Neverbend be withdrawn, the people will revert easily to their old habits of obedience.

"In regard to Mr Neverbend himself, it is the especial wish of H.M. Government that he shall be treated with all respect, and that those honours shall be paid to him which are due to the President of a friendly republic. It is to be expected that he should not allow himself to make an enforced visit to England without some opposition; but it is considered in the interests of humanity to be so essential that this scheme of the Fixed Period shall not be carried out, that H.M. Government consider that his absence from Britannula shall

be for a time insured. You will therefore insure it; but will take care that, as far as lies in your Excellency's power, he be treated with all that respect and hospitality which would be due to him were he still the President of an allied republic.

"Captain Battleax, of the John Bright, will have received a letter to the same effect from the First Lord of the Admiralty, and you will find him ready to co-operate with your Excellency in every respect.—I have the honour to be, sir, your Excellency's most obedient servant, HATFIELD."

This I read with great attention, while they sat silent. "I understand it; and that is all, I suppose, that I need say upon the subject. When do you intend that the John Bright shall start?"

"We have already lighted our fires, and our sailors are weighing the anchors. Will twelve o'clock suit you?"

"To-day!" I shouted.

"I rather think we must move to-day," said the captain.

"If so, you must be content to take my dead body. It is now nearly eleven."

"Half-past ten," said the captain, looking at his watch.

"And I have no one ready to whom I can give up the archives of the Government."

"I shall be happy to take charge of them," said Sir Ferdinando.

"No doubt,—knowing nothing of the forms of our government, or——"

"They, of course, must all be altered."

"Or of the habits of our people. It is quite impossible. I, too, have the complicated affairs of my entire life to arrange, and my wife and son to leave;—though I would not for a moment be supposed to put these private matters forward when the public service is concerned. But the time you name is so unreasonable as to create a feeling of horror at your tyranny."

"A feeling of horror would be created on the other side of the water," said Sir Ferdinando, "at the idea of what you may do if you escape us. I should not consider my head to be safe on my own shoulders were it to come to pass that while I am on the island an old man were executed in compliance with your system."

Alas! I could not but feel how little he knew of the sentiment which prevailed in Britannula; how false was his idea of my power; and how potent was that love of life which had been evinced in the city when the hour for deposition had become nigh. All this I could hardly explain to him, as I should thus be giving to him the strongest evidence against my own philosophy. And yet it was necessary that I should say something to make him understand that this sudden deportation was not necessary. And then during that moment there came to me suddenly an idea that it might be well that I should take this

journey to England, and there begin again my career, — as Columbus, after various obstructions, had recommenced his, — and that I should endeavour to carry with me the people of Great Britain, as I had already carried the more quickly intelligent inhabitants of Britannula. And in order that I may do so, I have now prepared these pages, writing them on board H.M. gunboat, the John Bright.

"Your power is sufficient," I said.

"We are not sure of that," said Sir Ferdinando. "It is always well to be on the safe side."

"Are you so afraid of what a single old man can do, — you with your 250-ton swivellers, and your guard of marines, and your North-north-west Birmingham soldiery?"

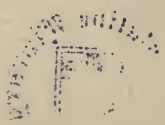
"That depends on who and what the old man may be." This was the first complimentary speech which Sir Ferdinando had made,

and I must confess that it was efficacious. I did not after that feel so strong a dislike to the man as I had done before. "We do not wish to make ourselves disagreeable to you, Mr Neverbend." I shrugged my shoulders. "Unnecessarily disagreeable, I should have said. You are a man of your word." Here I bowed to him. "If you will give us your promise to meet Captain Battleax here at this time to-morrow, we will stretch a point and delay the departure of the John Bright for twenty-four hours." To this again I objected violently; and at last, as an extreme favour, two entire days were allowed for my departure.

The craft of men versed in the affairs of the old Eastern world is notorious. I afterwards learned that the stokers on board the ship were only pretending to get up their fires, and the sailors pretending to weigh their anchors, in order that their operations might be visible,

and that I might suppose that I had received a great favour from my enemies' hands. And this plan was adopted, too, in order to extract from me a promise that I would depart in peace. At any rate, I did make the promise, and gave these two gentlemen my word that I would be present there in my own room in the executive chambers at the same hour on the day but one following.

"And now," said Sir Ferdinando, "that this matter is settled between us, allow me most cordially to shake you by the hand, and to express my great admiration for your character. I cannot say that I agree with you in theory as to the Fixed Period,—my wife and children could not, I am sure, endure to see me led away when a certain day should come,—but I can understand that much may be said on the point, and I admire greatly the eloquence and energy which you have devoted to the matter. I shall be happy to meet you



here at any hour to-morrow, and to receive the Britannulan archives from your hands. You, Mr Neverbend, will always be regarded as the father of your country—

'Roma patrem patriæ Ciceronem libera dixit.'"

With this the two gentlemen left the room.

CHAPTER X.

THE TOWN-HALL.

When I went home and told them what was to be done, they were of course surprised, but apparently not very unhappy. Mrs Neverbend suggested that she should accompany me, so as to look after my linen and other personal comforts. But I told her, whether truly or not I hardly then knew, that there would be no room for her on board a ship of war such as the John Bright. Since I have lived on board her, I have become aware that they would willingly have accommodated, at my request, a very much larger family than my own. Mrs Neverbend at once went to work to provide for my enforced absence, and in the course of the day

Eva Crasweller came in to help her. Eva's manner to myself had become perfectly altered since the previous morning. Nothing could be more affectionate, more gracious, or more winning, than she was now; and I envied Jack the short moments of *tête-à-tête* retreat which seemed from time to time to be necessary for carrying out the arrangements of the day.

I may as well state here, that from this time Abraham Grundle showed himself to be a declared enemy, and that the partnership was dissolved between Crasweller and himself. He at once brought an action against my old friend for the recovery of that proportion of his property to which he was held to be entitled under our marriage laws. This Mr Crasweller immediately offered to pay him; but some of our more respectable lawyers interfered, and persuaded him not to make the sacrifice. There then came on a long action, with an appeal,—all which was given against Grundle, and nearly ruined the Grundles. It

seemed to me, as far as I could go into the matter, that Grundle had all the law on his side. But there arose certain quibbles and questions, all of which Jack had at his fingers'-ends, by the strength of which the unfortunate young man was trounced. As I learned by the letters which Eva wrote to me, Crasweller was all through most anxious to pay him; but the lawyers would not have it so, and therefore so much of the property of Little Christchurch was saved for the ultimate benefit of that happy fellow Jack Neverbend.

On the afternoon of the one day which, as a matter of grace, had been allowed to me, Sir Ferdinando declared his intention of making a speech to the people of Gladstonopolis. "He was desirous," he said, "of explaining to the community at large the objects of H.M. Government in sending him to Britannula, and in requesting the inhabitants to revert to their old form of government." "Request indeed," I said to Crasweller, throwing all possible

scorn into the tone of my voice,—"request! with the North-north-west Birmingham regiment, and his 250-ton steam-swiveller in the harbour! That Ferdinando Brown knows how to conceal his claws beneath a velvet glove. We are to be slaves,—slaves because England so wills it. We are robbed of our constitution, our freedom of action is taken from us, and we are reduced to the lamentable condition of a British Crown colony! And all this is to be done because we had striven to rise above the prejudices of the day." Crasweller smiled, and said not a word to oppose me, and accepted all my indignation with assent; but he certainly did not show any enthusiasm. A happier old gentleman, or one more active for his years, I had never known. It was but yesterday that I had seen him so absolutely cowed as to be hardly able to speak a word. And all this change had occurred simply because he was to be allowed to die out in the open world, instead of enjoying the honour of having been the first

to depart in conformity with the new theory. He and I, however, spent thus one day longer in sweet friendship; and I do not doubt but that, when I return to Britannula, I shall find him living in great comfort at Little Christchurch.

At three o'clock we all went into our great town-hall to hear what Sir Ferdinando had to say to us. The chamber is a very spacious one, fitted up with a large organ, and all the arrangements necessary for a music-hall; but I had never seen a greater crowd than was collected there on this occasion. There was not a vacant corner to be found; and I heard that very many of the inhabitants went away greatly displeased in that they could not be accommodated. Sir Ferdinando had been very particular in asking the attendance of Captain Battleax, and as many of the ship's officers as could be spared. This, I was told, he did in order that something of the *éclat* of his oration might be taken back to England. Sir Ferdinando was a man who thought much of his

own eloquence,—and much also of the advantage which he might reap from it in the opinion of his fellow-countrymen generally. I found that a place of honour had been reserved for me too at his right hand, and also one for my wife at his left. I must confess that in these last moments of my sojourn among the people over whom I had ruled, I was treated with the most distinguished courtesy. But, as I continued to say to myself, I was to be banished in a few hours as one whose intended cruelties were too abominable to allow of my remaining in my own country. On the first seat behind the chair sat Captain Battleax, with four or five of his officers behind him. "So you have left Lieutenant Crosstrees in charge of your little toy," I whispered to Captain Battleax.

"With a glass," he replied, "by which he will be able to see whether you leave the building. In that case, he will blow us all into atoms."

Then Sir Ferdinando rose to his legs, and began his speech. I had never before heard

a specimen of that special oratory to which the epithet flowery may be most appropriately applied. It has all the finished polish of England, joined to the fervid imagination of Ireland. It streams on without a pause, and without any necessary end but that which the convenience of time may dictate. It comes without the slightest effort, and it goes without producing any great effect. It is sweet at the moment. It pleases many, and can offend none. But it is hardly afterwards much remembered, and is efficacious only in smoothing somewhat the rough ways of this harsh world. But I have observed that in what I have read of British debates, those who have been eloquent after this fashion are generally firm to some purpose of self-interest. Sir Ferdinando had on this occasion dressed himself with minute care; and though he had for the hour before been very sedulous in manipulating certain notes, he now was careful to show not a scrap of paper; and I must do him the justice to

declare that he spun out the words from the reel of his memory as though they all came spontaneous and pat to his tongue.

"Mr Neverbend," he said, "ladies and gentlemen,—I have to-day for the first time the great pleasure of addressing an intelligent concourse of citizens in Britannula. I trust that before my acquaintance with this prosperous community may be brought to an end, I may have many another opportunity afforded me of addressing you. It has been my lot in life to serve my Sovereign in various parts of the world, and humbly to represent the throne of England in every quarter of the globe. But by the admitted testimony of all people,—my fellow-countrymen at home in England, and those who are equally my fellow-countrymen in the colonies to which I have been sent,—it is acknowledged that in prosperity, intelligence, and civilisation, you are excelled by no English-speaking section of the world. And if by none who speak English, who shall then

aspire to excel you? Such, as I have learned, has been the common verdict given; and as I look round this vast room, on a spot which fifty years ago the marsupial races had under their own dominion, and see the feminine beauty and manly grace which greet me on every side, I can well believe that some peculiarly kind freak of nature has been at work, and has tended to produce a people as strong as it is beautiful, and as clever in its wit as it is graceful in its actions." Here the speaker paused, and the audience all clapped their hands and stamped their feet, which seemed to me to be a very improper mode of testifying their assent to their own praises. But Sir Ferdinando took it all in good part, and went on with his speech.

"I have been sent here, ladies and gentlemen, on a peculiar mission,—on a duty as to which, though I am desirous of explaining it to all of you in every detail, I feel a difficulty of saying a single word." "Fixed Period,"

was shouted from one of the balconies in a voice which I recognised as that of Mr Tallowax. "My friend in the gallery," continued Sir Ferdinando, "reminds me of the very word for which I should in vain have cudgelled my brain. The Fixed Period is the subject on which I am called upon to say to you a few words;—the Fixed Period, and the man who has, I believe, been among you the chief author of that system of living,—and if I may be permitted to say so, of dying also." Here the orator allowed his voice to fade away in a melancholy cadence, while he turned his face towards me, and with a gentle motion laid his right hand upon my shoulder. "Oh, my friends, it is, to say the least of it, a startling project." "Uncommon, if it was your turn next," said Tallowax in the gallery. "Yes, indeed," continued Sir Ferdinando, "if it were my turn next! I must own, that though I should consider myself to be affronted if I were told that I were faint-hearted,

—though I should know myself to be maligned if it were said of me that I have a coward's fear of death,—still I should feel far from comfortable if that age came upon me which this system has defined, and were I to live in a country in which it has prevailed. Though I trust that I may be able to meet death like a brave man when it may come, still I should wish that it might come by God's hand, and not by the wisdom of a man.

"I have nothing to say against the wisdom of that man," continued he, turning to me again. "I know all the arguments with which he has fortified himself. They have travelled even as far as my ears; but I venture to use the experience which I have gathered in many countries, and to tell him that in accordance with God's purposes the world is not as yet ripe for his wisdom." I could not help thinking as he spoke thus, that he was not perhaps acquainted with all the arguments on which my system of the Fixed Period was founded;

and that if he would do me the honour to listen to a few words which I proposed to speak to the people of Britannula before I left them, he would have clearer ideas about it than had ever yet entered into his mind. "Oh, my friends," said he, rising to the altitudes of his eloquence, "it is fitting for us that we should leave these things in the hands of the Almighty. It is fitting for us, at any rate, that we should do so till we have been brought by Him to a state of god-like knowledge infinitely superior to that which we at present possess." Here I could perceive that Sir Ferdinando was revelling in the sounds of his own words, and that he had prepared and learnt by heart the tones of his voice, and even the motion of his hands. "We all know that it is not allowed to us to rush into His presence by any deed of our own. You all remember what the poet says,—

> 'Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!'

Is not this self-slaughter, this theory in accordance with which a man shall devote himself to death at a certain period? And if a man may not slay himself, how shall he then, in the exercise of his poor human wit, devote a fellow-creature to certain death?" "And he as well as ever he was in his life," said Tallowax in the gallery.

"My friend does well to remind me. Though Mr Neverbend has named a Fixed Period for human life, and has perhaps chosen that at which its energies may usually be found to diminish, who can say that he has even approached the certainty of that death which the Lord sends upon us all at His own period? The poor fellow to whom nature has been unkind, departs from us decrepit and worn out at forty; whereas another at seventy is still hale and strong in performing the daily work of his life."

"I am strong enough to do a'most anything for myself, and I was to be the next to go,—

the very next." This in a treble voice came from that poor fellow Barnes, who had suffered nearly the pangs of death itself from the Fixed Period.

"Yes, indeed; in answer to such an appeal as that, who shall venture to say that the Fixed Period shall be carried out with all its startling audacity? The tenacity of purpose which distinguishes our friend here is known to us all. The fame of his character in that respect had reached my ears even among the thick-lipped inhabitants of Central Africa." I own I did wonder whether this could be true. "'Justum et tenacem propositi virum!' Nothing can turn him from his purpose, or induce him to change his inflexible will. You know him, and I know him, and he is well known throughout England. Persuasion can never touch him; fear has no power over him. He, as one unit, is strong against a million. He is invincible, imperturbable, and ever self-assured."

I, as I sat there listening to this character of

myself, heroic somewhat, but utterly unlike the person for whom it was intended, felt that England knew very little about me, and cared less; and I could not but be angry that my name should be used in this way to adorn the sentences of Sir Ferdinando's speech. Here in Gladstonopolis I was well known,—and well known to be neither imperturbable nor self-assured. But all the people seemed to accept what he said, and I could not very well interrupt him. He had his opportunity now, and I perhaps might have mine by-and-by.

"My friends," continued Sir Ferdinando, "at home in England, where, though we are powerful by reason of our wealth and numbers——" "Just so," said I. "Where we are powerful, I repeat, by reason of our wealth and numbers, though perhaps less advanced than you are in the philosophical arrangements of life, it has seemed to us to be impossible that the theory should be allowed to be carried to its legitimate end. The whole country would be

horrified were one life sacrificed to this theory." "We knew that,—we knew that," said the voice of Tallowax. "And yet your Assembly had gone so far as to give to the system all the stability of law. Had not the John Bright steamed into your harbour yesterday, one of your most valued citizens would have been already—deposited." When he had so spoken, he turned round to Mr Crasweller, who was sitting on my right hand, and bowed to him. Crasweller looked straight before him, and took no notice of Sir Ferdinando. He was at the present moment rather on my side of the question, and having had his freedom secured to him, did not care for Sir Ferdinando.

"But that has been prevented, thanks to the extraordinary rapidity with which my excellent friend Captain Battleax has made his way across the ocean. And I must say that every one of these excellent fellows, his officers, has done his best to place H.M. ship the John Bright in her commanding position with the

least possible delay." Here he turned round and bowed to the officers, and by keen eyes might have been observed to bow through the windows also to the vessel, which lay a mile off in the harbour. "There will not, at any rate for the present, be any Fixed Period for human life in Britannula. That dream has been dreamed,—at any rate for the present. Whether in future ages such a philosophy may prevail, who shall say? At present we must all await our death from the hands of the Almighty. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'

"And now, gentlemen, I have to request your attention for a few moments to another matter, and one which is very different from this which we have discussed. I am to say a few words of the past and the present,—of your past constitution, and of that which it is my purpose to inaugurate." Here there arose a murmur through the room very audible, and threatening by its sounds to disturb the orator. "I will ask your favour for a few minutes; and

when you shall have heard me to-day, I will in my turn hear you to-morrow. Great Britain at your request surrendered to you the power of self-government. To so small an English-speaking community has this never before been granted. And I am bound to say that you have in many respects shown yourselves fit for the responsibility imposed upon you. You have been intelligent, industrious, and prudent. Ignorance has been expelled from your shores, and poverty has been forced to hide her diminished head." Here the orator paused to receive that applause which he conceived to be richly his due; but the occupants of the benches before him sat sternly silent. There were many there who had been glad to see a ship of war come in to stop the Fixed Period, but hardly one who was pleased to lose his own independence. "But though that is so," said Sir Ferdinando, a little nettled at the want of admiration with which his words had been received, "H.M. Government is under the necessity of

putting an end to the constitution under which the Fixed Period can be allowed to prevail. While you have made laws for yourselves, any laws so made must have all the force of law." "That's not so certain," said a voice from a distance, which I shrewdly suspect to have been that of my hopeful son, Jack Neverbend. "As Great Britain cannot and will not permit the Fixed Period to be carried out among any English-speaking race of people——"

"How about the United States?" said a voice.

"The United States have made no such attempt; but I will proceed. It has therefore sent me out to assume the reins, and to undertake the power, and to bear the responsibility of being your governor during a short term of years. Who shall say what the future may disclose? For the present I shall rule here. But I shall rule by the aid of your laws."

"Not the Fixed Period law," said Exors,

who was seated on the floor of the chamber immediately under the orator.

"No; that law will be specially wiped out from your statute-book. In other respects, your laws and those of Great Britain are nearly the same. There may be divergences, as in reference to the non-infliction of capital punishment. In such matters I shall endeavour to follow your wishes, and so to govern you that you may still feel that you are living under the rule of a president of your own selection." Here I cannot but think that Sir Ferdinando was a little rash. He did not quite know the extent of my popularity, nor had he gauged the dislike which he himself would certainly encounter. He had heard a few voices in the hall, which, under fear of death, had expressed their dislike to the Fixed Period; but he had no idea of the love which the people felt for their own independence, or,—I believe I may say,—for their own president. There arose in the hall a certain amount of clamour,

in the midst of which Sir Ferdinando sat down.

Then there was a shuffling of feet as of a crowd going away. Sir Ferdinando having sat down, got up again and shook me warmly by the hand. I returned his greeting with my pleasantest smile; and then, while the people were moving, I spoke to them two or three words. I told them that I should start to-morrow at noon for England, under a promise made by me to their new governor, and that I purposed to explain to them, before I went, under what circumstances I had given that promise, and what it was that I intended to do when I should reach England. Would they meet me there, in that hall, at eight o'clock that evening, and hear the last words which I should have to address to them? Then the hall was filled with a mighty shout, and there arose a great fury of exclamation. There was a waving of handkerchiefs, and a holding up of hats, and all those signs of enthusiasm which

are wont to greet the popular man of the hour. And in the midst of them, Sir Ferdinando Brown stood up upon his legs, and continued to bow without cessation.

At eight, the hall was again full to overflowing. I had been busy, and came down a little late, and found a difficulty in making my way to the chair which Sir Ferdinando had occupied in the morning. I had had no time to prepare my words, though the thoughts had rushed quickly,—too quickly,—into my mind. It was as though they would tumble out from my own mouth in precipitate energy. On my right hand sat the governor, as I must now call him; and in the chair on my left was placed my wife. The officers of the gunboat were not present, having occupied themselves, no doubt, in banking up their fires.

"My fellow-citizens," I said, "a sudden end has been brought to that self-government of which we have been proud, and by which Sir Ferdinando has told you that 'ignorance has

been expelled from your shores, and poverty has been forced to hide her diminished head.' I trust that, under his experience, which he tells us as a governor has been very extensive, those evils may not now fall upon you. We are, however, painfully aware that they do prevail wherever the concrete power of Great Britain is found to be in full force. A man ruling us,—us and many other millions of subjects,—from the other side of the globe, cannot see our wants and watch our progress as we can do ourselves. And even Sir Ferdinando coming upon us with all his experience, can hardly be able to ascertain how we may be made happy and prosperous. He has with him, however, a company of a celebrated English regiment, with its attendant officers, who, by their red coats and long swords, will no doubt add to the cheerfulness of your social gatherings. I hope that you may not find that they shall ever interfere with you after a rougher fashion.

"But upon me, my fellow-citizens, has fallen

the great disgrace of having robbed you of your independence." Here a murmur ran through the hall, declaring that this was not so. "So your new Governor has told you, but he has not told you the exact truth. With whom the doctrine of the Fixed Period first originated, I will not now inquire. All the responsibility I will take upon myself, though the honour and glory I must share with my fellow-countrymen.

"Your Governor has told you that he is aware of all the arguments by which the Fixed Period is maintained; but I think that he must be mistaken here, as he has not ventured to attack one of them. He has told us that it is fitting that we should leave the question of life and death in the hands of the Almighty. If so, why is all Europe bristling at this moment with arms,—prepared, as we must suppose, for shortening life,—and why is there a hangman attached to the throne of Great Britain as one of its necessary executive officers? Why in the Old Testament was Joshua commanded to slay

mighty kings? And why was Pharaoh and his hosts drowned in the Red Sea? Because the Almighty so willed it, our Governor will say, taking it for granted that He willed everything of which a record is given in the Old Testament. In those battles which have ravished the North-west of India during the last half-century, did the Almighty wish that men should perish miserably by ten thousands and twenty thousands? Till any of us can learn more than we know at present of the will of the Almighty, I would, if he will allow me, advise our Governor to be silent on that head.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it would be a long task, and one not to be accomplished before your bedtime, were I to recount to you, for his advantage, a few of the arguments which have been used in favour of the Fixed Period,—and it would be useless, as you are all acquainted with them. But Sir Ferdinando is evidently not aware that the general prolongation of life on an average, is one of the effects to be gained,

and that, though he himself might not therefore live the longer if doomed to remain here in Britannula, yet would his descendants do so, and would live a life more healthy, more useful, and more sufficient for human purposes.

"As far as I can read the will of the Almighty, or rather the progress of the ways of human nature, it is for man to endeavour to improve the conditions of mankind. It would be as well to say that we would admit no fires into our establishments because a life had now and again been lost by fire, as to use such an argument as that now put forward against the Fixed Period. If you will think of the line of reasoning used by Sir Ferdinando, you will remember that he has, after all, only thrown you back upon the old prejudices of mankind. If he will tell me that he is not as yet prepared to discard them, and that I am in error in thinking that the world is so prepared, I may perhaps agree with him. The John Bright in our harbour is the strongest possible proof that

such prejudices still exist. Sir Ferdinando Brown is now your Governor, a fact which in itself is strong evidence. In opposition to these witnesses I have nothing to say. The ignorance which we are told that we had expelled from our shores, has come back to us; and the poverty is about, I fear, to show its head." Sir Ferdinando here arose and expostulated. But the people hardly heard him, and at my request he again sat down.

"I do think that I have endeavoured in this matter to advance too quickly, and that Sir Ferdinando has been sent here as the necessary reprimand for that folly. He has required that I shall be banished to England; and as his order is backed by a double file of red-coats,—an instrument which in Britannula we do not possess,—I purpose to obey him. I shall go to England, and I shall there use what little strength remains to me in my endeavour to put forward those arguments for conquering the prejudices of the people which have pre-

vailed here, but which I am very sure would have no effect upon Sir Ferdinando Brown.

"I cannot but think that Sir Ferdinando gave himself unnecessary trouble in endeavouring to prove to us that the Fixed Period is a wicked arrangement. He was not likely to succeed in that attempt. But he was sure to succeed in telling us that he would make it impossible by means of the double file of armed men by whom he is accompanied, and the 250-ton steam-swiveller with which, as he informed me, he is able to blow us all into atoms, unless I would be ready to start with Captain Battleax to-morrow. It is not his religion but his strength that has prevailed. That Great Britain is much stronger than Britannula none of us can doubt. Till yesterday I did doubt whether she would use her strength to perpetuate her own prejudices and to put down the progress made by another people.

"But, fellow-citizens, we must look the truth in the face. In this generation probably, the

Fixed Period must be allowed to be in abeyance." When I had uttered these words there came much cheering and a loud sound of triumph, which was indorsed probably by the postponement of the system, which had its terrors; but I was enabled to accept these friendly noises as having been awarded to the system itself. "Well, as you all love the Fixed Period, it must be delayed till Sir Ferdinando and the English have—been converted."

"Never, never!" shouted Sir Ferdinando; "so godless an idea shall never find a harbour in this bosom," and he struck his chest violently.

"Sir Ferdinando is probably not aware to what ideas that bosom may some day give a shelter. If he will look back thirty years, he will find that he had hardly contemplated even the weather-watch which he now wears constantly in his waistcoat-pocket. At the command of his Sovereign he may still live to

carry out the Fixed Period somewhere in the centre of Africa."

"Never!"

"In what college among the negroes he may be deposited, it may be too curious to inquire. I, my friends, shall leave these shores to-morrow; and you may be sure of this, that while the power of labour remains to me, I shall never desist to work for the purpose that I have at heart. I trust that I may yet live to return among you, and to render you an account of what I have done for you and for the cause in Europe." Here I sat down, and was greeted by the deafening applause of the audience; and I did feel at the moment that I had somewhat got the better of Sir Ferdinando.

I have been able to give the exact words of these two speeches, as they were both taken down by the reporting telephone-apparatus, which on the occasion was found to work with

great accuracy. The words as they fell from the mouth of the speakers were composed by machinery, and my speech appeared in the London morning newspapers within an hour of the time of its utterance.

CHAPTER XI.

FAREWELL!

I WENT home to my house in triumph; but I had much to do before noon on the following day, but very little time in which to do it. I had spent the morning of that day in preparing for my departure, and in so arranging matters with my clerks that the entrance of Sir Ferdinando on his new duties might be easy. I had said nothing, and had endeavoured to think as little as possible, of the Fixed Period. An old secretary of mine,—old in years of work, though not as yet in age,—had endeavoured to comfort me by saying that the college up the hill might still be used before long. But I had told him frankly that we in Britannula

had all been too much in a hurry, and had foolishly endeavoured to carry out a system in opposition to the world's prejudices, which system, when successful, must pervade the entire world. "And is nothing to be done with those beautiful buildings?" said the secretary, putting in the word beautiful by way of flattery to myself. "The chimneys and the furnaces may perhaps be used," I replied. "Cremation is no part of the Fixed Period. But as for the residences, the less we think about them the better." And so I determined to trouble my thoughts no further with the college. And I felt that there might be some consolation to me in going away to England, so that I might escape from the great vexation and eyesore which the empty college would have produced.

But I had to bid farewell to my wife and my son, and to Eva and Crasweller. The first task would be the easier, because there would be no necessity for any painful allusion to my

own want of success. In what little I might say to Mrs Neverbend on the subject, I could continue that tone of sarcastic triumph in which I had replied to Sir Ferdinando. What was pathetic in the matter I might altogether ignore. And Jack was himself so happy in his nature, and so little likely to look at anything on its sorrowful side, that all would surely go well with him. But with Eva, and with Eva's father, things would be different. Words must be spoken which would be painful in the speaking, and regrets must be uttered by me which could not certainly be shared by him. "I am broken down and trampled upon, and all the glory is departed from my name, and I have become a byword and a reproach rather than a term of honour in which future ages may rejoice, because I have been unable to carry out my long-cherished purpose by—depositing you, and insuring at least your departure!" And then Crasweller would answer me with his general kindly feeling, and I

should feel at the moment of my leaving him the hollowness of his words. I had loved him the better because I had endeavoured to commence my experiment on his body. I had felt a vicarious regard for the honour which would have been done him, almost regarding it as though I myself were to go in his place. All this had received a check when he in his weakness had pleaded for another year. But he had yielded; and though he had yielded without fortitude, he had done so to comply with my wishes, and I could not but feel for the man an extraordinary affection. I was going to England, and might probably never see him again; and I was going with aspirations in my heart so very different from those which he entertained!

From the hours intended for slumber, a few minutes could be taken for saying adieu to my wife. "My dear," said I, "this is all very sudden. But a man engaged in public life has to fit himself to the public demands. Had I

not promised to go to-day, I might have been taken away yesterday or the day before."

"Oh, John," said she, "I think that everything has been put up to make you comfortable."

"Thanks; yes, I'm sure of it. When you hear my name mentioned after I am gone, I hope that they'll say of me that I did my duty as President of the republic."

"Of course they will. Every day you have been at these nasty executive chambers from nine till five, unless when you've been sitting in that wretched Assembly."

"I shall have a holiday now, at any rate," said I, laughing gently under the bedclothes.

"Yes; and I am sure it will do you good, if you only take your meals regular. I sometimes think that you have been encouraged to dwell upon this horrid Fixed Period by the melancholy of an empty stomach."

It was sad to hear such words from her lips after the two speeches to which she had lis-

tened, and to feel that no trace had been left on her mind of the triumph which I had achieved over Sir Ferdinando; but I put up with that, and determined to answer her after her own heart. "You have always provided a sandwich for me to take to the chambers."

"Sandwiches are nothing. Do remember that. At your time of life you should always have something warm,—a frizzle or a cutlet, and you shouldn't eat it without thinking of it. What has made me hate the Fixed Period worse than anything is, that you have never thought of your victuals. You gave more attention to the burning of these pigs than to the cooking of any food in your own kitchen."

"Well, my dear, I'm going to England now," said I, beginning to feel weary of her reminiscences.

"Yes, my dear, I know you are; and do remember that as you get nearer and nearer to that chilly country the weather will always be colder and colder. I have put you up four

pairs of flannel drawers, and a little bag which you must wear upon your chest. I observed that Sir Ferdinando, when he was preparing himself for his speech, showed that he had just such a little bag on. And all the time I endeavoured to spy how it was that he wore it. When I came home I immediately went to work, and I shall insist on your putting it on the first thing in the morning, in order that I may see that it sits flat. Sir Ferdinando's did not sit flat, and it looked bulgy. I thought to myself that Lady Brown did not do her duty properly by him. If you would allow me to come with you, I could see that you always put it on rightly. As it is, I know that people will say that it is all my fault when it hangs out and shows itself." Then I went to sleep, and the parting words between me and my wife had been spoken.

Early on the following morning I had Jack into my dressing-room, and said good-bye to him. "Jack," said I, "in this little contest

which there has been between us, you have got the better in everything."

"Nobody thought so when they heard your answer to Sir Ferdinando last night."

"Well, yes; I think I managed to answer him. But I haven't got the better of you."

"I didn't mean anything," said Jack, in a melancholy tone of voice. "It was all Eva's doing. I never cared twopence whether the old fellows were deposited or not, but I do think that if your own time had come near, I shouldn't have liked it much."

"Why not? why not? If you will only think of the matter all round, you will find that it is all a false sentiment."

"I should not like it," said Jack, with determination.

"Yes, you would, after you had got used to it." Here he looked very incredulous. "What I mean is, Jack, that when sons were accustomed to see their fathers deposited at a certain age, and were aware that they were treated

with every respect, that kind of feeling which you describe would wear off. You would have the idea that a kind of honour was done to your parents."

"When I knew that somebody was going to kill him on the next day, how would it be then?"

"You might retire for a few hours to your thoughts,—going into mourning, as it were." Jack shook his head. "But, at any rate, in this matter of Mr Crasweller you have got the better of me."

"That was for Eva's sake."

"I suppose so. But I wish to make you understand, now that I am going to England, and may possibly never return to these shores again——"

"Don't say that, father."

"Well, yes; I shall have much to do there, and of course it may be that I shall not come back, and I wish you to understand that I do not part from you in the least in anger. What

you have done shows a high spirit, and great devotion to the girl."

"It was not quite altogether for Eva either."

"What then?" I demanded.

"Well, I don't know. The two things went together, as it were. If there had been no question about the Fixed Period, I do think I could have cut out Abraham Grundle. And as for Sir Kennington Oval, I am beginning to believe that that was all Eva's pretence. I like Sir Kennington, but Eva never cared a button for him. She had taken to me because I had shown myself an anti-Fixed-Period man. I did it at first simply because I hated Grundle. Grundle wanted to fix-period old Crasweller for the sake of the property; and therefore I belonged naturally to the other side. It wasn't that I liked opposing you. If it had been Tallowax that you were to begin with, or Exors, you might have burnt 'em up without a word from me."

"I am gratified at hearing that."

"Though the Fixed Period does seem to be horrible, I would have swallowed all that at your bidding. But you can see how I tumbled into it, and how Eva egged me on, and how the nearer the thing came the more I was bound to fight. Will you believe it?—Eva swore a most solemn oath, that if her father was put into that college she would never marry a human being. And up to that moment when the lieutenant met us at the top of the hill, she was always as cold as snow."

"And now the snow is melted?"

"Yes,—that is to say, it is beginning to thaw!" As he said this I remembered the kiss behind the parlour-door which had been given to her by another suitor before these troubles began, and my impression that Jack had seen it also; but on that subject I said nothing. "Of course it has all been very happy for me," Jack continued; "but I wish to say to you before you go, how unhappy it makes me to think that I have opposed you."

"All right, Jack; all right. I will not say that I should not have done the same at your age, if Eva had asked me. I wish you always to remember that we parted as friends. It will not be long before you are married now."

"Three months," said Jack, in a melancholy tone.

"In an affair of importance of this kind, that is the same as to-morrow. I shall not be here to wish you joy at your wedding."

"Why are you to go if you don't wish it?"

"I promised that I would go when Captain Battleax talked of carrying me off the day before yesterday. With a hundred soldiers, no doubt he could get me on board."

"There are a great many more than a hundred men in Britannula as good as their soldiers. To take a man away by force, and he the President of the republic! Such a thing was never heard of. I would not stir if I were you. Say the word to me, and I will undertake that not one of these men shall touch you."

I thought of his proposition; and the more I thought of it, the more unreasonable it did appear that I, who had committed no offence against any law, should be forced on board the John Bright. And I had no doubt that Jack would be as good as his word. But there were two causes which persuaded me that I had better go. I had pledged my word. When it had been suggested that I should at the moment be carried on board,—which might no doubt then have been done by the soldiers,—I had said that if a certain time were allowed me I would again be found in the same place. If I were simply there, and were surrounded by a crowd of Britannulans ready to fight for me, I should hardly have kept my promise. But a stronger reason than this perhaps actuated me. It would be better for me for a while to be in England than in Britannula. Here in Britannula I should be the ex-President of an abolished republic, and as such subject to the notice of all men; whereas in England I

should be nobody, and should escape the constant mortification of seeing Sir Ferdinando Brown. And then in England I could do more for the Fixed Period than at home in Britannula. Here the battle was over, and I had been beaten. I began to perceive that the place was too small for making the primary efforts in so great a cause. The very facility which had existed for the passing of the law through the Assembly had made it impossible for us to carry out the law; and therefore, with the sense of failure strong upon me, I should be better elsewhere than at home. And the desire of publishing a book in which I should declare my theory,—this very book which I have so nearly brought to a close,—made me desire to go. What could I do by publishing anything in Britannula? And though the manuscript might have been sent home, who would see it through the press with any chance of success? Now I have my hopes, which I own seem high, and I shall be able

to watch from day to day the way in which my arguments in favour of the Fixed Period are received by the British public. Therefore it was that I rejected Jack's kind offer. "No, my boy," said I, after a pause, "I do not know but that on the whole I shall prefer to go."

"Of course if you wish it."

"I shall be taken there at the expense of the British public, which is in itself a triumph, and shall, I presume, be sent back in the same way. If not, I shall have a grievance in their parsimony, which in itself will be a comfort to me; and I am sure that I shall be treated well on board. Sir Ferdinando with his eloquence will not be there, and the officers are, all of them, good fellows. I have made up my mind, and I will go. The next that you will hear of your father will be the publication of a little book that I shall write on the journey, advocating the Fixed Period. The matter has never been explained to them in England, and perhaps my words may prevail." Jack, by shaking his head

mournfully, seemed to indicate his idea that this would not be the case; but Jack is resolute, and will never yield on any point. Had he been in my place, and had entertained my convictions, I believe that he would have deposited Crasweller in spite of Sir Ferdinando Brown and Captain Battleax. "You will come and see me on board, Jack, when I start."

"They won't take me off, will they?"

"I should have thought you would have liked to have seen England."

"And leave Eva! They'd have to look very sharp before they could do that. But of course I'll come." Then I gave him my blessing, told him what arrangements I had made for his income, and went down to my breakfast, which was to be my last meal in Britannula.

When that was over, I was told that Eva was in my study waiting to see me. I had intended to have gone out to Little Christchurch, and should still do so, to bid farewell to her father. But I was not sorry to have

Eva here in my own house, as she was about to become my daughter-in-law. "Eva has come to bid you good-bye," said Jack, who was already in the room, as I entered it.

"Eva, my dear," said I.

"I'll leave you," said Jack. "But I've told her that she must be very fond of you. Bygones have to be bygones, — particularly as no harm has been done." Then he left the room.

She still had on the little round hat, but as Jack went she laid it aside. "Oh, Mr Neverbend," she said, "I hope you do not think that I have been unkind."

"It is I, my dear, who should express that hope."

"I have always known how well you have loved my dear father. I have been quite sure of it. And he has always said so. But——"

"Well, Eva, it is all over now."

"Oh yes, and I am so happy! I have got to tell you how happy I am."

"I hope you love Jack."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and in a moment she was in my arms and I was kissing her. "If you knew how I hate that Mr Grundle; and Jack is all,—all that he ought to be. One of the things that makes me like him best is his great affection for you. There is nothing that he would not do for you."

"He is a very good young man," said I, thinking of the manner in which he had spoken against me on the Town Flags.

"Nothing!" said Eva.

"And nothing that he would not do for you, my dear. But that is all as it should be. He is a high-spirited, good boy; and if he will think a little more of the business and a little less of cricket, he will make an excellent husband."

"Of course he had to think a little of the match when the Englishmen were here; and he did play well, did he not? He beat them all there." I could perceive that Eva was quite as

intent upon cricket as was her lover, and probably thought just as little about the business. "But, Mr Neverbend, must you really go?"

"I think so. It is not only that they are determined to take me, but that I am myself anxious to be in England."

"You wish to—to preach the Fixed Period?"

"Well, my dear, I have got my own notions, which at my time of life I cannot lay aside. I shall endeavour to ventilate them in England, and see what the people there may say about them."

"You are not angry with me?"

"My child, how could I be angry with you? What you did, you did for your father's sake."

"And papa? You will not be angry with papa because he didn't want to give up Little Christchurch, and to leave the pretty place which he has made himself, and to go into the college,—and be killed!"

I could not quite answer her at the moment, because in truth I was somewhat angry with

him. I thought that he should have understood that there was something higher to be achieved than an extra year or two among the prettinesses of Little Christchurch. I could not but be grieved because he had proved himself to be less of a man than I had expected. But as I remained silent for a few moments, Eva held my hand in hers, and looked up into my face with beseeching eyes. Then my anger went, and I remembered that I had no reason to expect heroism from Crasweller, simply because he had been my friend. "No, dear, no; all feeling of anger is at an end. It was natural that he should wish to remain at Little Christchurch; and it was better than natural, it was beautiful, that you should wish to save him by the use of the only feminine weapon at your command."

"Oh, but I did love Jack," she said.

"I have still an hour or two before I depart, and I shall run down to Little Christchurch to take your father by the hand once more. You

may be sure that what I shall say to him will not be ill-natured. And now good-bye, my darling child. My time here in Britannula is but short, and I cannot give up more of it even to my chosen daughter." Then again she kissed me, and putting on her little hat, went away to Mrs Neverbend,—or to Jack.

It was now nearly ten o'clock, and I had out my tricycle in order to go down as quickly as possible to Little Christchurch. At the door of my house I found a dozen of the English soldiers with a sergeant. He touched his hat, and asked me very civilly where I was going. When I told him that it was but five or six miles out of town, he requested my permission to accompany me. I told him that he certainly might if he had a vehicle ready, and was ready to use it. But as at that moment my luggage was brought out of the house with the view of being taken on board ship, the man thought that it would be as well and much easier to follow the luggage; and the

twelve soldiers marched off to see my portmanteaus put safely on board the John Bright.

And I was again,—and I could not but say to myself, probably for the last time,—once again on the road to Little Christchurch. During the twenty minutes which were taken in going down there, I could not but think of the walks I had had up and down with Crasweller in old times, talking as we went of the glories of a Fixed Period, and of the absolute need which the human race had for such a step in civilisation. Probably on such occasions the majority of the words spoken had come from my own mouth; but it had seemed to me then that Crasweller had been as energetic as myself. The period which we had then contemplated at a distance had come round, and Crasweller had seceded wofully. I could not but feel that had he been stanch to me, and allowed himself to be deposited not only willingly but joyfully, he would have set an example which could not but have been effica-

cious. Barnes and Tallowax would probably have followed as a matter of course, and the thing would have been done. My name would have gone down to posterity with those of Columbus and Galileo, and Britannula would have been noted as the most prominent among the nations of the earth, instead of having become a by-word among countries as a deprived republic and reannexed Crown colony. But all that on the present occasion had to be forgotten, and I was to greet my old friend with true affection, as though I had received from his hands no such ruthless ruin of all my hopes.

"Oh, Mr President," he said, as he met me coming up the drive towards the house, "this is kind of you. And you who must be so busy just before your departure!"

"I could not go without a word of farewell to you." I had not spoken with him since we had parted on the top of the hill on our way out to the college, when the horses had been taken

from the carriage, and he had walked back to life and Little Christchurch instead of making his way to his last home, and to find deposition with all the glory of a great name.

"It is very kind of you. Come in. Eva is not at home."

"I have just parted with her at my own house. So she and Jack are to make a match of it. I need not tell you how more than contented I shall be that my son should have such a wife. Eva to me has been always dear, almost as a daughter. Now she is like my own child."

"I am sure that I can say the same of Jack."

"Yes; Jack is a good lad too. I hope he will stick to the business."

"He need not trouble himself about that. He will have Little Christchurch and all that belongs to it as soon as I am gone. I had made up my mind only to allow Eva an income out of it while she was thinking of that fellow Grundle. That man is a knave."

I could not but remember that Grundle had

been a Fixed-Periodist, and that it would not become me to abuse him; and I was aware that though Crasweller was my sincere friend, he had come to entertain of late an absolute hatred of all those, beyond myself, who had advocated his own deposition.

"Jack, at any rate, is happy," said I, "and Eva. You and I, Crasweller have had our little troubles to imbitter the evenings of our life."

"You are yet in the full daylight."

"My ambition has been disappointed. I cannot conceal the fact from myself,—nor from you. It has come to pass that during the last year or two we have lived with different hopes. And these hopes have been founded altogether on the position which you might occupy."

"I should have gone mad up in that college, Neverbend."

"I would have been with you."

"I should have gone mad all the same. I should have committed suicide."

"To save yourself from an honourable—deposition!"

"The fixed day, coming at a certain known hour; the feeling that it must come, though it came at the same time so slowly and yet so fast; every day growing shorter day by day, and every season month by month; the sight of these chimneys——"

"That was a mistake, Crasweller; that was a mistake. The cremation should have been elsewhere."

"A man should have been an angel to endure it,—or so much less than a man. I struggled,—for your sake. Who else would have struggled as I did to oblige a friend in such a matter?"

"I know it—I know it."

"But life under such a weight became impossible to me. You do not know what I endured even for the last year. Believe me that man is not so constituted as to be able to make such efforts."

"He would get used to it. Mankind would get used to it."

"The first man will never get used to it. That college will become a madhouse. You must think of some other mode of letting them pass their last year. Make them drunk, so that they shall not know what they are doing. Drug them and make them senseless; or, better still, come down upon them with absolute power, and carry them away to instant death. Let the veil of annihilation fall upon them before they know where they are. The Fixed Period, with all its damnable certainty, is a mistake. I have tried it and I know it. When I look back at the last year, which was to be the last, not of my absolute life but of my true existence, I shudder as I think what I went through. I am astonished at the strength of my own mind in that I did not go mad. No one would have made such an effort for you as I made. Those other men had determined to rebel since the feeling of the Fixed Period came

near to them. It is impossible that human nature should endure such a struggle and not rebel. I have been saved now by these Englishmen, who have come here in their horror, and have used their strength to prevent the barbarity of your benevolence. But I can hardly keep myself quiet as I think of the sufferings which I have endured during the last month."

"But, Crasweller, you had assented."

"True; I did assent. But it was before the feeling of my fate had come near to me. You may be strong enough to bear it. There is nothing so hard but that enthusiasm will make it tolerable. But you will hardly find another who will not succumb. Who would do more for you than I have done? Who would make a greater struggle? What honester man is there whom you know in this community of ours? And yet even me you drove to be a liar. Think how strong must have been the facts against you when they have had this effect. To have died at your behest at the in-

stant would have been as nothing. Any danger, —any immediate certainty,—would have been child's-play; but to have gone up into that frightful college, and there to have remained through that year, which would have wasted itself so slowly, and yet so fast,—that would have required a heroism which, as I think, no Greek, no Roman, no Englishman ever possessed."

Then he paused, and I was aware that I had overstayed my time. "Think of it," he continued; "think of it on board that vessel, and try to bring home to yourself what such a phase of living would mean." Then he grasped me by the hand, and taking me out, put me upon my tricycle, and returned into the house.

As I went back to Gladstonopolis, I did think of it, and for a moment or two my mind wavered. He had convinced me that there was something wrong in the details of my system; but not,—when I came to argue the matter with myself,—that the system itself was at

fault. But now at the present moment I had hardly time for meditation. I had been surprised at Crasweller's earnestness, and also at his eloquence, and I was in truth more full of his words than of his reasons. But the time would soon come when I should be able to devote tranquil hours to the consideration of the points which he had raised. The long hours of enforced idleness on board ship would suffice to enable me to sift his objections, which seemed at the spur of the moment to resolve themselves into the impatience necessary to a year's quiescence. Crasweller had declared that human nature could not endure it. Was it not the case that human nature had never endeavoured to train itself? As I got back to Gladstonopolis, I had already a glimmering of an idea that we must begin with human nature somewhat earlier, and teach men from their very infancy to prepare themselves for the undoubted blessings of the Fixed Period. But certain aids must be given, and the cremating

furnace must be removed, so as to be seen by no eye and smelt by no nose.

As I rode up to my house there was that eternal guard of soldiers,—a dozen men, with abominable guns and ungainly military hats or helmets on their heads. I was so angered by their watchfulness, that I was half minded to turn my tricycle, and allow them to pursue me about the island. They could never have caught me had I chosen to avoid them; but such an escape would have been below my dignity. And moreover, I certainly did wish to go. I therefore took no notice of them when they shouldered their arms, but went into the house to give my wife her last kiss. "Now, Neverbend, remember you wear the flannel drawers I put up for you, as soon as ever you get out of the opposite tropics. Remember it becomes frightfully cold almost at once; and whatever you do, don't forget the little bag." These were Mrs Neverbend's last words to me. I there found Jack waiting for

me, and we together walked down to the quay. "Mother would like to have gone too," said Jack.

"It would not have suited. There are so many things here that will want her eye."

"All the same, she would like to have gone." I had felt that it was so, but yet she had never pressed her request.

On board I found Sir Ferdinando, and all the ship's officers with him, in full dress. He had come, as I supposed, to see that I really went; but he assured me, taking off his hat as he addressed me, that his object had been to pay his last respects to the late President of the republic. Nothing could now be more courteous than his conduct, or less like the bully that he had appeared to be when he had first claimed to represent the British sovereign in Britannula. And I must confess that there was absent all that tone of domineering ascendancy which had marked his speech as to the Fixed Period. The Fixed Period was not again

mentioned while he was on board; but he devoted himself to assuring me that I should be received in England with every distinction, and that I should certainly be invited to Windsor Castle. I did not myself care very much about Windsor Castle; but to such civil speeches I could do no other than make civil replies; and there I stood for half an hour grimacing and paying compliments, anxious for the moment when Sir Ferdinando would get into the six-oared gig which was waiting for him, and return to the shore. To me it was of all half-hours the weariest, but to him it seemed as though to grimace and to pay compliments were his second nature. At last the moment came when one of the junior officers came up to Captain Battleax and told him that the vessel was ready to start. "Now, Sir Ferdinando," said the captain, "I am afraid that the John Bright must leave you to the kindness of the Britannulists."

"I could not be left in more generous

hands," said Sir Ferdinando, "nor in those of warmer friends. The Britannulists speak English as well as I do, and will, I am sure, admit that we boast of a common country."

"But not a common Government," said I, determined to fire a parting shot. "But Sir Ferdinando is quite right in expecting that he personally will receive every courtesy from the Britannulists. Nor will his rule be in any respect disobeyed until the island shall, with the agreement of England, again have resumed its own republican position." Here I bowed, and he bowed, and we all bowed. Then he departed, taking Jack with him, leaning on whose arm he stepped down into the boat; and as the men put their oars into the water, I jumped with a sudden start at the sudden explosion of a subsidiary cannon, which went on firing some dozens of times till the proper number had been completed supposed to be due to an officer of such magnitude.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR VOYAGE TO ENGLAND.

THE boat had gone ashore and returned before the John Bright had steamed out of the harbour. Then everything seemed to change, and Captain Battleax bade me make myself quite at home. "He trusted," he said, "that I should always dine with him during the voyage, but that I should be left undisturbed during all other periods of the day. He dined at seven o'clock, but I could give my own orders as to breakfast and tiffin. He was sure that Lieutenant Crosstrees would have pleasure in showing me my cabins, and that if there was anything on board which I did not feel to be comfortable, it should be at once altered.

Lieutenant Crosstrees would tell my servant to wait upon me, and would show me all the comforts,—and discomforts,—of the vessel." With that I left him, and was taken below under the guidance of the lieutenant. As Mr Crosstrees became my personal friend during the voyage,—more peculiarly than any of the other officers, all of whom were my friends,—I will give some short description of him. He was a young man, perhaps eight-and-twenty years old, whose great gift in the eyes of all those on board was his personal courage. Stories were told to me by the junior officers of marvellous things which he had done, which, though never mentioned in his own presence, either by himself or by others, seemed to constitute for him a special character,—so that had it been necessary that any one should jump overboard to attack a shark, all on board would have thought that the duty as a matter of course belonged to Lieutenant Crosstrees. Indeed, as I learnt

afterwards, he had quite a peculiar name in the British navy. He was a small fair-haired man, with a pallid face and a bright eye, whose idiosyncrasy it was to conceive that life afloat was infinitely superior in all its attributes to life on shore. If there ever was a man entirely devoted to his profession, it was Lieutenant Crosstrees. For women he seemed to care nothing, nor for bishops, nor for judges, nor for members of Parliament. They were all as children skipping about the world in their foolish playful ignorance, whom it was the sailor's duty to protect. Next to the sailor came the soldier, as having some kindred employment; but at a very long interval. Among sailors the British sailor, —that is, the British fighting sailor, — was the only one really worthy of honour; and among British sailors the officers on board H.M. gunboat the John Bright were the happy few who had climbed to the top of the tree. Captain Battleax he regarded as the sultan

of the world; but he was the sultan's vizier, and having the discipline of the ship altogether in his own hands, was, to my thinking, its very master. I should have said beforehand that a man of such sentiments and feelings was not at all to my taste. Everything that he loved I have always hated, and all that he despised I have revered. Nevertheless I became very fond of him, and found in him an opponent to the Fixed Period that has done more to shake my opinion than Crasweller with all his feelings, or Sir Ferdinando with all his arguments. And this he effected by a few curt words which I have found almost impossible to resist. "Come this way, Mr President," he said. "Here is where you are to sleep; and considering that it is only a ship, I think you'll find it fairly comfortable." Anything more luxurious than the place assigned to me, I could not have imagined on board ship. I afterwards learned that the cabins had been designed for the use

of a travelling admiral, and I gathered from the fact that they were allotted to me an idea that England intended to atone for the injury done to the country by personal respect shown to the late President of the republic.

"I, at any rate, shall be comfortable while I am here. That in itself is something. Nevertheless I have to feel that I am a prisoner."

"Not more so than anybody else on board," said the lieutenant.

"A guard of soldiers came up this morning to look after me. What would that guard of soldiers have done supposing that I had run away?"

"We should have had to wait till they had caught you. But nobody conceived that to be possible. The President of a republic never runs away in his own person. There will be a cup of tea in the officers' mess-room at five o'clock. I will leave you till then, as you may wish to employ yourself." I went up immediately afterwards on deck, and looking back

over the tafferel, could only just see the glittering spires of Gladstonopolis in the distance.

Now was the time for thought. I found an easy seat on the stern of the vessel, and sat myself down to consider all that Crasweller had said to me. He and I had parted,—perhaps for ever. I had not been in England since I was a little child, and I could not but feel now that I might be detained there by circumstances, or die there, or that Crasweller, who was ten years my senior, might be dead before I should have come back. And yet no ordinary farewell had been spoken between us. In those last words of his he had confined himself to the Fixed Period, so full had his heart been of the subject, and so intent had he felt himself to be on convincing me. And what was the upshot of what he had said? Not that the doctrine of the Fixed Period was in itself wrong, but that it was impracticable because of the horrors attending its last moments. These were the solitude in which should be

passed the one last year; the sight of things which would remind the old man of coming death; and the general feeling that the business and pleasures of life were over, and that the stillness of the grave had been commenced. To this was to be added a certainty that death would come on some prearranged day. These all referred manifestly to the condition of him who was to go, and in no degree affected the welfare of those who were to remain. He had not attempted to say that for the benefit of the world at large the system was a bad system. That these evils would have befallen Crasweller himself, there could be no doubt. Though a dozen companions might have visited him daily, he would have felt the college to be a solitude, because he would not have been allowed to chose his promiscuous comrades as in the outer world. But custom would no doubt produce a cure for that evil. When a man knew that it was to be so, the dozen visitors would suffice for him. The young

man of thirty travels over all the world, but the old man of seventy is contented with the comparative confinement of his own town, or perhaps of his own house. As to the ghastliness of things to be seen, they could no doubt be removed out of sight; but even that would be cured by custom. The business and pleasures of life at the prescribed time were in general but a pretence at business and a reminiscence of pleasure. The man would know that the fated day was coming, and would prepare for it with infinitely less of the anxious pain of uncertainty than in the outer world. The fact that death must come at the settled day, would no doubt have its horror as long as the man were able habitually to contrast his position with that of the few favoured ones who had, within his own memory, lived happily to a more advanced age; but when the time should come that no such old man had so existed, I could not but think that a frame of mind would be created not indisposed to con-

tentment. Sitting there, and turning it all over in my mind, while my eyes rested on the bright expanse of the glass-clear sea, I did perceive that the Fixed Period, with all its advantages, was of such a nature that it must necessarily be postponed to an age prepared for it. Crasweller's eloquence had had that effect upon me. I did see that it would be impossible to induce, in the present generation, a feeling of satisfaction in the system. I should have declared that it would not commence but with those who were at present unborn; or, indeed, to allay the natural fears of mothers, not with those who should be born for the next dozen years. It might have been well to postpone it for another century. I admitted so much to myself, with the full understanding that a theory delayed so long must be endangered by its own postponement. How was I to answer for the zeal of those who were to come so long after me? I sometimes thought of a more immediate date in which I myself might be

the first to be deposited, and that I might thus be allowed to set an example of a happy final year passed within the college. But then, how far would the Tallowaxes, and Barneses, and Exors of the day be led by my example?

I must on my arrival in England remodel altogether the Fixed Period, and name a day so far removed that even Jack's children would not be able to see it. It was with sad grief of heart that I so determined. All my dreams of a personal ambition were at once shivered to the ground. Nothing would remain of me but the name of the man who had caused the republic of Britannula to be destroyed, and her government to be resumed by her old mistress. I must go to work, and with pen, ink, and paper, with long written arguments and studied logic, endeavour to prove to mankind that the world should not allow itself to endure the indignities, and weakness, and selfish misery of extreme old age. I confess that my belief in the efficacy of spoken words, of words run-

ning like an electric spark from the lips of the speaker right into the heart of him who heard them, was stronger far than my trust in written arguments. They must lack a warmth which the others possess; and they enter only on the minds of the studious, whereas the others touch the feelings of the world at large. I had already overcome in the breasts of many listeners the difficulties which I now myself experienced. I would again attempt to do so with a British audience. I would again enlarge on the meanness of the man who could not make so small a sacrifice of his latter years for the benefit of the rising generation. But even spoken words would come cold to me, and would fall unnoticed on the hearts of others, when it was felt that the doctrine advocated could not possibly affect any living man. Thinking of all this, I was very melancholy when I was summoned down to tea by one of the stewards who attended the officers' mess.

"Mr President, will you take tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, or preserved dates? There are muffins and crumpets, dry toast, buttered toast, plum-cake, seed-cake, peach-fritters, apple-marmalade, and bread and butter. There are put-up fruits of all kinds, of which you really wouldn't know that they hadn't come this moment from graperies and orchard-houses; but we don't put them on the table, because we think that we can't eat quite so much dinner after them." This was the invitation which came from a young naval lad who seemed to be about fifteen years old.

"Hold your tongue, Percy," said an elder officer. "The fruits are not here because Lord Alfred gorged himself so tremendously that we were afraid his mother, the duchess, would withdraw him from the service when she heard that he had made himself sick."

"There are curaçoa, chartreuse, pepperwick, mangostino, and Russian brandy on the side-board," suggested a third.

"I shall have a glass of madeira—just a thimbleful," said another, who seemed to be a few years older than Lord Alfred Percy. Then one of the stewards brought the madeira, which the young man drank with great satisfaction. "This wine has been seven times round the world," he said, "and the only time for drinking it is five-o'clock tea,—that is, if you understand what good living means." I asked simply for a cup of tea, which I found to be peculiarly good, partly because of the cream which accompanied it. I then went upstairs to take a constitutional walk with Mr Crosstrees on the deck. "I saw you sitting there for a couple of hours very thoughtful," said he, "and I wouldn't disturb you. I hope it doesn't make you unhappy that you are carried away to England?"

"Had it done so, I don't know whether I should have gone—alive."

"They said that when it was suggested, you promised to be ready in two days."

"I did say so—because it suited me. But I can hardly imagine that they would have carried me on board with violence, or that they would have put all Gladstonopolis to the sword because I declined to go on board."

"Brown had told us that we were to bring you off dead or alive; and dead or alive, I think we should have had you. If the soldiers had not succeeded, the sailors would have taken you in hand." When I asked him why there was this great necessity for kidnapping me, he assured me that feeling in England had run very high on the matter, and that sundry bishops had declared that anything so barbarous could not be permitted in the twentieth century. "It would be as bad, they said, as the cannibals of New Zealand."

"That shows the absolute ignorance of the bishops on the subject."

"I daresay; but there is a prejudice about killing an old man, or a woman. Young men don't matter."

"Allow me to assure you, Mr Crosstrees," said I, "that your sentiment is carrying you far away from reason. To the State the life of a woman should be just the same as that of a man. The State cannot allow itself to indulge in romance."

"You get a sailor, and tell him to strike a woman, and see what he'll say."

"The sailor is irrational. Of course, we are supposing that it is for the public benefit that the woman should be struck. It is the same with an old man. The good of the commonwealth,—and his own,—requires that, beyond a certain age, he shall not be allowed to exist. He does not work, and he cannot enjoy living. He wastes more than his share of the necessaries of life, and becomes, on the aggregate, an intolerable burden. Read Shakespeare's description of man in his last stage—

> 'Second childishness, and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything;'

and the stage before is merely that of the

'lean and slippered pantaloon.' For his own sake, would you not save mankind from having to encounter such miseries as these?"

"You can't do it, Mr President."

"I very nearly did do it. The Britannulist Assembly, in the majesty of its wisdom, passed a law to that effect." I was sorry afterwards that I had spoken of the majesty of the Assembly's wisdom, because it savoured of buncombe. Our Assembly's wisdom was not particularly majestic; but I had intended to allude to the presumed majesty attached to the highest council in the State.

"Your Assembly in the majesty of its wisdom could do nothing of the kind. It might pass a law, but the law could be carried out only by men. The Parliament in England, which is, I take it, quite as majestic as the Assembly in Britannula——"

"I apologise for the word, Mr Crosstrees, which savours of the ridiculous. I did not quite explain my idea at the moment."

"It is forgotten," he said; and I must acknowledge that he never used the word against me again. "The Parliament in England might order a three-months-old baby to be slain, but could not possibly get the deed done."

"Not if it were for the welfare of Great Britain?"

"Not to save Great Britain from destruction. Strength is very strong, but it is not half so powerful as weakness. I could, with the greatest alacrity in the world, fire that big gun in among battalions of armed men, so as to scatter them all to the winds, but I could not point it in the direction of a single girl." We went on discussing the matter at considerable length, and his convictions were quite as strong as mine. He was sure that under no circumstances would an old man ever be deprived of his life under the Fixed Period. I was as confident as he on the other side,—or, at any rate, pretended to be so,—and told him that he made no allowance for the progressive wisdom

of mankind. But we parted as friends, and soon after went to dinner.

I was astonished to find how very little the captain had to do with his officers. On board ship he lived nearly alone, having his first lieutenant with him for a quarter of an hour every morning. On the occasion of this my first day on board, he had a dinner-party in honour of my coming among them; and two or three days before we reached England, he had another. I dined with him regularly every day except twice, when I was invited to the officers' mess. I breakfasted alone in my own cabin, where everything was provided for me that I could desire, and always lunched and took five-o'clock tea with the officers. I remained alone till one o'clock, and spent four hours every morning during our entire journey in composing this volume as it is now printed. I have put it into the shape of a story, because I think that I may so best depict the feelings of the people around me as I made my great

endeavour to carry out the Fixed Period in Britannula, and because I may so describe the kind of opposition which was shown by the expression of those sentiments on which Lieutenant Crosstrees depended. I do not at this minute doubt but that Crasweller would have been deposited had not the John Bright appeared. Whether Barnes and Tallowax would have followed peaceably, may be doubted. They, however, are not men of great weight in Britannula, and the officers of the law might possibly have constrained them to have followed the example which Crasweller had set. But I do confess that I doubt whether I should have been able to proceed to carry out the arrangements for the final departure of Crasweller. Looking forward, I could see Eva kneeling at my feet, and could acknowledge the invincible strength of that weakness to which Crosstrees had alluded. A godlike heroism would have been demanded,—a heroism which must have submitted to have been

called brutal,—and of such I knew myself not to be the owner. Had the British Parliament ordered the three-months-old baby to be slaughtered, I was not the man to slaughter it, even though I were the sworn servant of the British Parliament. Upon the whole, I was glad that the John Bright had come into our waters, and had taken me away on its return to England. It was a way out of my immediate trouble against which I was able to expostulate, and to show with some truth on my side that I was an injured man. All this I am willing to admit in the form of a tale, which I have adopted for my present work, and for which I may hope to obtain some popularity in England. Once on shore there, I shall go to work on a volume of altogether a different nature, and endeavour to be argumentative and statistical, as I have here been fanciful, though true to details.

During the whole course of my journey to England, Captain Battleax never said a word

to me about the Fixed Period. He was no doubt a gallant officer, and possessed of all necessary gifts for the management of a 250-ton steam swivel-gun; but he seemed to me to be somewhat heavy. He never even in conversation alluded to Britannula, and spoke always of the dockyard at Devonport as though I had been familiar with its every corner. He was very particular about his clothes, and I was told by Lieutenant Crosstrees on the first day that he would resent it as a bitter offence had I come down to dinner without a white cravat. "He's right, you know; those things do tell," Crosstrees had said to me when I had attempted to be jocose about these punctilios. I took care, however, always to put on a white cravat both with the captain and with the officers. After dinner with the captain, a cup of coffee was always brought in on a silver tray, in a silver coffee-pot. This was leisurely consumed; and then, as I soon understood, the captain expected that I should depart. I

learnt afterwards that he immediately put his feet up on the sofa and slept for the remainder of the evening. I retired to the lieutenant's cabin, and there discussed the whole history of Britannula over many a prolonged cigar.

"Did you really mean to kill the old men?" said Lord Alfred Percy to me one day; "regularly to cut their throats, you know, and carry them out and burn them."

"I did not mean it, but the law did."

"Every poor old fellow would have been put an end to without the slightest mercy?"

"Not without mercy," I rejoined.

"Now, there's my governor's father," said Lord Alfred; "you know who he is?"

"The Duke of Northumberland, I'm informed."

"He's a terrible swell. He owns three castles, and half a county, and has half a million a-year. I can hardly tell you what sort of an old fellow he is at home. There isn't any one who doesn't pay him the most

profound respect, and he's always doing good to everybody. Do you mean to say that some constable or cremator,—some sort of first hangman,—would have come to him and taken him by the nape of his neck, and cut his throat, just because he was sixty-eight years old? I can't believe that anybody would have done it."

"But the duke is a man."

"Yes, he's a man, no doubt."

"If he committed murder, he would be hanged in spite of his dukedom."

"I don't know how that would be," said Lord Alfred, hesitating. "I cannot imagine that my grandfather should commit a murder."

"But he would be hanged; I can tell you that. Though it be very improbable, — impossible, as you and I may think it,—the law is the same for him as for others. Why should not all other laws be the same also?"

"But it would be murder."

"What is your idea of murder?"

"Killing people."

"Then you are murderers who go about with this great gun of yours for the sake of killing many people."

"We've never killed anybody with it yet."

"You are not the less murderers if you have the intent to murder. Are soldiers murderers who kill other soldiers in battle? The murderer is the man who illegally kills. Now, in accordance with us, everything would have been done legally; and I'm afraid that if your grandfather were living among us, he would have to be deposited like the rest."

"Not if Sir Ferdinando were there," said the boy. I could not go on to explain to him that he thus ran away from his old argument about the duke. But I did feel that a new difficulty would arise from the extreme veneration paid to certain characters. In England how would it be with the Royal Family? Would it be necessary to exempt them down to the extremest cousins; and if so, how large

a body of cousins would be generated! I feared that the Fixed Period could only be good for a republic in which there were no classes violently distinguished from their inferior brethren. If so, it might be well that I should go to the United States, and there begin to teach my doctrine. No other republic would be strong enough to stand against those hydra-headed prejudices with which the ignorance of the world at large is fortified. "I don't believe," continued the boy, bringing the conversation to an end, "that all the men in this ship could take my grandfather and kill him in cold blood."

I was somewhat annoyed, on my way to England, by finding that the men on board,— the sailors, the stokers, and stewards, — regarded me as a most cruel person. The prejudices of people of this class are so strong as to be absolutely invincible. It is necessary that a new race should come up before the prejudices are eradicated. They were civil

enough in their demeanour to me personally, but they had all been taught that I was devoted to the slaughter of old men; and they regarded me with all that horror which the modern nations have entertained for cannibalism. I heard a whisper one day between two of the stewards. "He'd have killed that old fellow that came on board as sure as eggs if we hadn't got there just in time to prevent him."

"Not with his own hands," said a listening junior.

"Yes; with his own hands. That was just the thing. He wouldn't allow it to be done by anybody else." It was thus that they regarded the sacrifice that I had thought to make of my own feelings in regard to Crasweller. I had no doubt suggested that I myself would use the lancet in order to save him from any less friendly touch. I believed afterwards, that when the time had come I should have found myself incapacitated for the operation. The natural weakness incidental to my feelings

would have prevailed. But now that promise,—once so painfully made, and since that, as I had thought, forgotten by all but myself,—was remembered against me as a proof of the diabolical inhumanity of my disposition.

"I believe that they think that we mean to eat them," I said one day to Crosstrees. He had gradually become my confidential friend, and to him I made known all the sorrows which fell upon me during the voyage from the ignorance of the men around me. I cannot boast that I had in the least affected his opinion by my arguments; but he at any rate had sense enough to perceive that I was not a bloody-minded cannibal, but one actuated by a true feeling of philanthropy. He knew that my object was to do good, though he did not believe in the good to be done.

"You've got to endure that," said he.

"Do you mean to say, that when I get to England I shall be regarded with personal feelings of the same kind?"

"Yes; so I imagine." There was an honesty about Crosstrees which would never allow him to soften anything.

"That will be hard to bear."

"The first reformers had to bear such hardships. I don't exactly remember what it was that Socrates wanted to do for his ungrateful fellow-mortals; but they thought so badly of him, that they made him swallow poison. Your Galileo had a hard time when he said that the sun stood still. Why should we go further than Jesus Christ for an example? If you are not able to bear the incidents, you should not undertake the business."

But in England I should not have a single disciple! There would not be one to solace or to encourage me! Would it not be well that I should throw myself into the ocean, and have done with a world so ungrateful? In Britannula they had known my true disposition. There I had received the credit due to a tender heart and loving feelings. No one thought

there that I wanted to eat up my victims, or that I would take a pleasure in spilling their blood with my own hands. And tidings so misrepresenting me would have reached England before me, and I should there have no friend. Even Lieutenant Crosstrees would be seen no more after I had gone ashore. Then came upon me for the first time an idea that I was not wanted in England at all,—that I was simply to be brought away from my own home to avoid the supposed mischief I might do there, and that for all British purposes it would be well that I should be dropped into the sea, or left ashore on some desert island. I had been taken from the place where, as governing officer, I had undoubtedly been of use,—and now could be of use no longer. Nobody in England would want me or would care for me, and I should be utterly friendless there, and alone. For aught I knew, they might put me in prison and keep me there, so as to be sure that I should not return to my own people. If

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I asked for my liberty, I might be told that because of my bloodthirstiness it would be for the general welfare that I should be deprived of it. When Sir Ferdinando Brown had told me that I should certainly be asked down to Windsor, I had taken his flowery promises as being worth nothing. I had no wish to go to Windsor. But what should I do with myself immediately on my arrival? Would it not be best to return at once to my own country,—if only I might be allowed to do so. All this made me very melancholy, but especially the feeling that I should be regarded by all around as a monster of cruelty. I could not but think of the words which Lieutenant Crosstrees had spoken to me. The Saviour of the world had His disciples who believed in Him, and the one dear youth who loved Him so well. I almost doubted my own energy as a teacher of progress to carry me through the misery which I saw in store for me.

"I shall not have a very bright time when

I arrive in England," I said to my friend Cross-trees, two days before our expected arrival.

"It will be all new, and there will be plenty for you to see."

"You will go upon some other voyage?"

"Yes; we shall be wanted up in the Baltic at once. We are very good friends with Russia; but no dog is really respected in this world unless he shows that he can bite as well as bark."

"I shall not be respected, because I can neither bark nor bite. What will they do with me?"

"We shall put you on shore at Plymouth, and send you up to London—with a guard of honour."

"And what will the guard of honour do with me?"

"Ah! for that I cannot answer. He will treat you with all kind of respect, no doubt."

"It has not occurred to you to think," said I, "where he will deposit me? Why should it

do so? But to me the question is one of some moment. No one there will want me; nobody knows me. They to whom I must be the cause of some little trouble will simply wish me out of the way; and the world at large, if it hears of me at all, will simply have been informed of my cruelty and malignity. I do not mean to destroy myself."

"Don't do that," said the lieutenant, in a piteous tone.

"But it would be best, were it not that certain scruples prevent one. What would you advise me to do with myself, to begin with?" He paused before he replied, and looked painfully into my face. "You will excuse my asking you, because, little as my acquaintance is with you, it is with you alone of all Englishmen that I have any acquaintance."

"I thought that you were intent about your book."

"What shall I do with my book? Who will publish it? How shall I create an interest

for it? Is there one who will believe, at any rate, that I believe in the Fixed Period?"

"I do," said the lieutenant.

"That is because you first knew me in Britannula, and have since passed a month with me at sea. You are my one and only friend, and you are about to leave me,—and you also disbelieve in me. You must acknowledge to yourself that you have never known one whose position in the world was more piteous, or whose difficulties were more trying." Then I left him, and went down to complete my manuscript.

THE END.

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