

resignation, combined with melancholy candour; "it is not a name as I could wish any one that I had a respect for to call *me* by; but there may be persons that would not view it with the same objections. I don't know why," Mr. Wegg added, anticipating another question.

"Noddy Boffin," said that gentleman. "Noddy. That's my name. Noddy — or Nick — Boffin. What's your name?"

"Silas Wegg. I don't," said Mr. Wegg, bestirring himself to take the same precaution as before; "I don't know why Silas, and I don't know why Wegg."

"Now, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, hugging his stick closer, "I want to make a sort of offer to you. Do you remember when you first see me?"

The wooden Wegg looked at him with a meditative eye, and also with a softened air, as descrying possibility of profit. "Let me think. I ain't quite sure, and yet I generally take a powerful sight of notice, too. Was it on a Monday morning, when the butcher-boy had been to our house for orders, and bought a ballad of me, which, being unacquainted with the tune, I run it over to him?"

"Right, Wegg, right! But he bought more than one."

"Yes, to be sure, sir; he bought several; and wishing to lay out his money to the best, he took my opinion to guide his choice, and we went over the collection together. To be sure we did. Here was him as it might be, and here was myself as it might be, and there was you, Mr. Boffin, as you identically are, with your self-same stick under your very same arm, and your very same back toward us. To — be — sure!" added Mr. Wegg, looking a little round Mr. Boffin, to take him in the rear, and identify this last extraordinary coincidence, "your wery, self-same back!"

"What do you think I was doing, Wegg?"

"I should judge, sir, that you might be glancing your eye down the street."

"No, Wegg. I was a listening."

"Was you, indeed?" said Mr. Wegg, dubiously.

"Not in a dishonourable way, Wegg, because you was singing to the butcher; and you wouldn't sing secrets to a butcher in the street, you know."

"It never happened that I did so yet, to the best of my remembrance," said Mr. Wegg, cautiously. "But I might do it. A man can't say what he might wish to do some day or

another." (This, not to release any little advantage he might derive from Mr. Boffin's avowal.)

"Well," repeated Boffin, "I was a listening to you and to him. And what do you — you haven't got another stool, have you? I'm rather thick in my breath."

"I haven't got another, but you're welcome to this," said Wegg, resigning it. "It's a treat to me to stand."

"Lard!" exclaimed Mr. Boffin, in a tone of great enjoyment, as he settled himself down, still nursing his stick like a baby, "it's a pleasant place, this! And then to be shut in on each side, with these ballads, like so many book-leaf blinkers! Why, it's delightful!"

"If I am not mistaken, sir," Mr. Wegg delicately hinted, resting a hand on his stall, and bending over the discursive Boffin, "you alluded to some offer or another that was in your mind?"

"I'm coming to it! All right. I'm coming to it! I was going to say that when I listened that morning, I listened with admiration amounting to hawe. I thought to myself, 'Here's a man with a wooden leg — a literary man with —'"

"N—not exactly so, sir," said Mr. Wegg.

"Why, you know every one of these songs by name and by tune, and if you want to read or to sing any one on 'em off straight, you've only to whip on your spectacles and do it!" cried Mr. Boffin. "I see you at it!"

"Well, sir," returned Mr. Wegg, with a conscious inclination of the head; "we'll say literary, then."

"A literary man — *with* a wooden leg — and all Print is open to him!" That's what I thought to myself, that morning," pursued Mr. Boffin, leaning forward to describe, uncramped by the clothes-horse, as large an arc as his right arm could make; "'all Print is open to him!' And it is, ain't it?"

"Why, truly, sir," Mr. Wegg admitted, with modesty; "I believe you couldn't show me the piece of English print, that I wouldn't be equal to collaring and throwing."

"On the spot?" said Mr. Boffin.

"On the spot."

"I know'd it! Then consider this. Here am I, a man without a wooden leg, and yet all print is shut to me."

"Indeed, sir?" Mr. Wegg returned with increasing self-complacency. "Education neglected?"

"Neg—lected!" repeated Boffin, with

emphasis. "That ain't no word for it. I don't mean to say but what if you showed me a B, I could so far give you change for it, as to answer 'Boffin.'"

"Come, come, sir," said Mr. Wegg, throwing in a little encouragement, "that's something, too."

"It's something," answered Mr. Boffin, "but I'll take my oath it ain't much."

"Perhaps it's not as much as could be wished by an inquiring mind, sir," Mr. Wegg, admitted.

"Now, look here. I'm retired from business. Me and Mrs. Boffin — Henerietty Boffin — which her father's name was Henerly, and her mother's name was Hetty, and so you get it — we live on a compittance, under the will of a deceased governor."

"Gentleman dead, sir?"

"Man alive, don't I tell you? A deceased governor? Now, it's too late for me to begin shovelling and sifting at alphabeds and grammar-books. I'm getting to be an old bird, and I want to take it easy. But I want some reading — some fine bold reading, some splendid book in a gorging Lord-Mayor's-Show of wollumes" (probably meaning gorgeous, but misled by association of ideas); "as'll reach right down your pint of view, and take time to go by you. How can I get that reading, Wegg? By," tapping him on the breast with the head of his thick stick, "paying a man truly qualified to do it, so much an hour (say twopence) to come and do it."

"Hem! Flattered, sir, I am sure," said Wegg, beginning to regard himself in quite a new light. "Hem! This is the offer you mentioned, sir?"

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"I am considering of it, Mr. Boffin."

"I don't," said Boffin, in a free-handed manner, "want to tie a literary man — *with* a wooden leg — down too tight. A halfpenny an hour shan't part us. The hours are your own to choose, after you've done for the day with your house here. I live over Maiden-Lane way — out Holloway direction — and you've only got to go East-and-by-North when you've finished here, and you're there. Twopence halfpenny an hour," said Boffin, taking a piece of chalk from his pocket and getting off the stool to work the sum on the top of it in his own way; "two long'uns and a short'un — twopence halfpenny; two short'uns is a long'un' and two two long'uns is four long'uns — making five long'uns; six nights a week at five long'uns

a night," scoring them all down separately, "and you mount up to thirty long'uns. A round'un! Half a crown!"

Pointing to this result as a large and satisfactory one, Mr. Boffin smeared it out with his moistened glove, and sat down on the remains.

"Half a crown," said Wegg, meditating, "Yes. (It ain't much, sir.) Half a crown."

"Per week, you know."

"Per week. Yes. As to the amount of strain upon the intellect now. Was you thinking at all of poetry?" Mr. Wegg inquired, musing.

"Would it come dearer?" Mr. Boffin asked.

"It would come dearer," Mr. Wegg returned. "For when a person comes to grind off poetry night after night, it is but right he should expect to be paid for its weakening effect on his mind."

"To tell you the truth, Wegg," said Boffin, "I wasn't thinking of poetry, except in so far as this: — If you was to happen now and then to feel yourself in the mind to tip me and Mrs. Boffin one of your ballads, why then we should drop into poetry."

"I follow you, sir," said Wegg. "But not being a regular musical professional, I should be loath to engage myself for that; and therefore when I dropped into poetry, I should ask to be considered so far, in the light of a friend."

At this, Mr. Boffin's eyes sparkled, and he shook Silas earnestly by the hand; protesting that it was more than he could have asked, and that he took it very kindly indeed.

"What do you think of the terms, Wegg?" Mr. Boffin then demanded, with unconcealed anxiety.

Silas, who had stimulated this anxiety by his hard reserve of manner, and who had begun to understand his man very well, replied with an air; as if he were saying something extraordinarily generous and great:

"Mr. Boffin, I never bargain."

"So I should have thought of you!" said Mr. Boffin, admiringly.

"No, sir. I never did 'aggle and I never will 'aggle. Consequently I meet you at once, free and fair, with — Done, for double the money!"

Mr. Boffin seemed a little unprepared for this conclusion, but assented with the remark, "You know better what it ought to be than I do, Wegg," and again shook hands with him upon it.

"Could you begin to-night, Wegg?" he then demanded.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Wegg, careful to leave all the eagerness to him. "I see no difficulty

if you wish it. You are provided with the needful implement — a book, sir?"

"Bought him at a sale," said Mr. Boffin. "Eight wollumes. Red and gold. Purple ribbon in every wollume, to keep the place where you leave off. Do you know him?"

"The book's name, sir?" inquired Silas.

"I thought you might have know'd him without it," said Mr. Boffin, slightly disappointed. "His name is Decline-And-Fall-Off The-Rooshan-Empire." (Mr. Boffin went over these stones slowly and with much caution.)

"Ay, indeed!" said Mr. Wegg, nodding his head with an air of friendly recognition.

"You know him, Wegg?"

"I haven't been not to say right slap through him, very lately," Mr. Wegg made answer, "having been otherways employed, Mr. Boffin. But know him? Old familiar declining and falling off the Rooshan? Rather, sir! Ever since I was not so high as your stick. Ever since my eldest brother left our cottage to enlist into the army. On which occasion, as the ballad that was made about it describes:

"Beside that cottage door, Mr. Boffin,
A girl was on her knees;
She held aloft a snowy scarf, Sir,
Which (my eldest brother noticed) fluttered in
the breeze.
She breathed a prayer for him, Mr. Boffin;
A prayer he could not hear.
And my eldest brother lean'd upon his sword,
Mr. Boffin,
And wiped away a tear."

Much impressed by this family circumstance, and also by the friendly disposition of Mr. Wegg, as exemplified in his so soon dropping into poetry, Mr. Boffin again shook hands with that ligneous sharper, and besought him to name his hour. Mr. Wegg named eight.

"Where I live," said Mr. Boffin, "is called The Bower. Boffin's Bower is the name Mrs. Boffin christened it when we come into it as a property. If you should meet with anybody that don't know it by that name (which hardly anybody does), when you've got nigh upon about a odd mile, or say a quarter if you like, up Maiden Lane, Battle Bridge, ask for Harmony Jail, and you'll be put right. I shall expect you, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, clapping him on the shoulder with the greatest enthusiasm, "most joyfully. I shall have no peace or patience till you come. Print is now opening ahead of me. This night, a literary man — *with* a wooden leg —" he bestowed an admiring look upon that decoration, as if

it greatly enhanced the relish of Mr. Wegg's attainments — "will begin to lead me a new life! My fist again, Wegg. Morning, morning, morning!"

Left alone at his stall as the other ambled off, Mr. Wegg subsided into his screen, produced a small pocket-handkerchief of a penitentially-scrubbing character, and took himself by the nose with a thoughtful aspect. Also, while he still grasped that feature, he directed several thoughtful looks down the street, after the retiring figure of Mr. Boffin. But, profound gravity sat enthroned on Wegg's countenance. For, while he considered within himself that this was an old fellow of rare simplicity, that this was an opportunity to be improved, and that here might be money to be got beyond present calculation, still he compromised himself by no admission that his new engagement was at all out of his way, or involved the least element of the ridiculous. Mr. Wegg would even have picked a handsome quarrel with any one who should have challenged his deep acquaintance with those aforesaid eight volumes of Decline and Fall. His gravity was unusual, portentous, and immeasurable, not because he admitted any doubt of himself, but because he perceived it necessary to forestall any doubt of himself in others. And herein he ranged with that very numerous class of impostors, who are quite as determined to keep up appearances to themselves, as to their neighbours.

A certain loftiness, likewise, took possession of Mr. Wegg; a condescending sense of being in request as an official expounder of mysteries. It did not move him to commercial greatness, but rather to littleness, inasmuch that if it had been within the possibilities of things for the wooden measure to hold fewer nuts than usual, it would have done so that day. But, when night came, and with her veiled eyes beheld him stumping toward Boffin's Bower, he was elated too.

The Bower was as difficult to find as Fair Rosamond's without the clew. Mr. Wegg, having reached the quarter indicated, inquired for the Bower half a dozen times, without the least success, until he remembered to ask for Harmony Jail. This occasioned a quick change in the spirit of a hoarse gentleman and a donkey, whom he had much perplexed.

"Why, yer mean Old Harmon's, do yer?" said the hoarse gentleman, who was driving his donkey in a truck, with a carrot for a whip. "Why didn't yer niver say so? Eddard and me is a goin' by *him!* Jump in."

Mr. Wegg complied, and the hoarse gentleman invited his attention to the third person in company, thus:

"Now, you look at Eddard's ears. What was it as you named, agin? Whisper."

Mr. Wegg whispered, "Boffin's Bower."

"Eddard! (keep yer hi on his ears) cut away to Boffin's Bower!"

Edward, with his ears lying back, remained immovable.

"Eddard! (keep yer hi on his ears) cut away to Old Harmon's."

Edward instantly pricked up his ears to their utmost, and rattled off at such a pace that Mr. Wegg's conversation was jolted out of him in a most dislocated state.

"Was-it-Ev-verajail?" asked Mr. Wegg, holding on.

"Not a proper jail, wot you and me would get committed to," returned his escort; "they giv' it the name on accounts of Old Harmon living solitary there."

"And-why-did-they-callitharm-Ony?" asked Wegg.

"On accounts of his never agreeing with nobody. Like a speeches of chaff. Harmon's Jail; Harmony Jail. Working it round like."

"Doyouknow-Mist-Erboff-in?" asked Wegg.

"I should think so! Everybody do about here. Eddard knows him. (Keep yer hi on his ears.) Noddy Boffin, Eddard!"

The effect of the name was so very alarming, in respect of causing a temporary disappearance of Edward's head, casting his hind hoofs in the air, greatly accelerating the pace and increasing the jolting, that Mr. Wegg was fain to devote his attention exclusively to holding on, and to relinquish his desire of ascertaining whether this homage to Boffin was to be considered complimentary or the reverse.

Presently, Edward stopped at a gateway, and Wegg discreetly lost no time in slipping out at the back of the truck. The moment he was landed, his late driver with a wave of the carrot, said "Supper, Eddard!" and he, the hind hoofs, the truck, and Edward, all seemed to fly into the air together, in a kind of apotheosis.

Pushing the gate, which stood ajar, Wegg looked into an enclosed space where certain tall dark mounds rose high against the sky, and where the pathway to the Bower was indicated, as the moonlight showed, between two lines of broken crockery set in ashes. A white figure advancing along this path, proved to be nothing more ghostly than Mr. Boffin, easily attired for the pursuit of knowledge, in

an undress garment of short white smock-frock. Having received his literary friend with great cordiality, he conducted him to the interior of the Bower, and there presented him to Mrs. Boffin, a stout lady, of a rubicund and cheerful aspect, dressed (to Mr. Wegg's consternation) in a low evening-dress of sable satin, and a large black velvet hat and feathers.

"Mrs. Boffin, Wegg," said Boffin, "is a highflyer at Fashion. And her make is such, that she does it credit. As to myself, I ain't yet as Fash'nable as I may come to be. Henrietty, old lady, this is the gentleman that's a going to decline and fall off the Rooshan Empire."

"And I am sure I hope it'll do you both good," said Mrs. Boffin.

It was the queerest of rooms, fitted and furnished more like a luxurious amateur tap-room than anything else within the ken of Silas Wegg. There were two wooden settles by the fire, one on either side of it, with a corresponding table before each. On one of these tables, the eight volumes were ranged flat, in a row, like a galvanic battery; on the other, certain squat case-bottles, of inviting appearance, seemed to stand on tiptoe to exchange glances with Mr. Wegg over a front row of tumblers and a basin of white sugar. On the hob, a kettle steamed; on the hearth, a cat reposed. Facing the fire between the settles, a sofa, a footstool, and a little table, formed a centrepiece, devoted to Mrs. Boffin. They were garish in taste and colour, but were expensive articles of drawing-room furniture, that had a very odd look beside the settles and the flaring gaslight pendent from the ceiling. There was a flowery carpet on the floor; but, instead of reaching to the fireside, its glowing vegetation stopped short at Mrs. Boffin's footstool, and gave place to a region of sand and sawdust. Mr. Wegg also noticed with admiring eyes, that, while the flowery land displayed such hollow ornamentation as stuffed birds and waxen fruits under glass-shades, there were, in the territory where vegetation ceased, compensatory shelves on which the best part of a large pie, and likewise of a cold joint, were plainly discernible among other solids. The room itself was large, though low, and the heavy frames of its old-fashioned windows, and the heavy beams in its crooked ceiling, seemed to indicate that it had once been a house of some mark, standing alone in the country.

"Do you like it, Wegg?" asked Mr. Boffin, in his pouncing manner.

"I admire it greatly, sir," said Wegg. "Peculiar comfort at this fireside, sir."

"Do you understand it, Wegg?"

"Why, in a general way, sir," Mr. Wegg was beginning slowly and knowingly, with his head stuck on one side, as evasive people do begin, when the other cut him short:

"You *don't* understand it, Wegg, and I'll explain it. These arrangements is made by mutual consent between Mrs. Boffin and me. Mrs. Boffin, as I've mentioned, is a high-flyer at Fashion; at present I'm not. I don't go higher than comfort, and comfort of the sort that I'm equal to the enjoyment of. Well then. Where would be the good of Mrs. Boffin and me quarrelling over it? We never did quarrel before we come into Boffin's Bower as a property; why quarrel when we *have* come into Boffin's Bower as a property? So Mrs. Boffin, she keeps up her part of the room in her way; I keep up my part of the room in mine. In consequence of which we have at once, Sociability (I should go melancholy mad without Mrs. Boffin), Fashion, and Comfort. If I get by degrees to be a highflyer at Fashion, then Mrs. Boffin will by degrees come for'arder. If Mrs. Boffin should ever be less of a dab at Fashion than she is at the present time, then Mrs. Boffin's carpet would go back'arder. If we should both continny as we are, why then *here* we are, and give us a kiss, old lady."

Mrs. Boffin, who, perpetually smiling, had approached and drawn her plump arm through her lord's, most willingly complied. Fashion, in the form of her black velvet hat and feathers, tried to prevent it; but got deservedly crushed in the endeavour.

"So now, Wegg," said Mr. Boffin, wiping his mouth with an air of much refreshment, "you begin to know us as we are. This is a charming spot, is the Bower, but you must get to appreciate it by degrees. It's a spot to find out the merits of, little by little, and a new 'un every day. There's a serpentine walk up each of the mounds, that gives you the yard and neighbourhood changing every moment. When you get to the top, there's a view of the neighbouring premises, not to be surpassed. The premises of Mrs. Boffin's late father (Canine Provision Trade), you look down into, as if they was your own. And the top of the High Mound is crowned with a lattice-work Arbor, in which, if you don't read out loud many a book in the summer, ay, and as a friend, drop many a time into poetry too, it shan't be my fault. Now what'll you read on?"

"Thank you, sir," returned Wegg, as if there were nothing new in his reading at all. "I generally do it on gin and water."

"Keeps the organ moist, does it, Wegg?" asked Mr. Boffin, with innocent eagerness.

"N—no, sir," replied Wegg, coolly, "I should hardly describe it so, sir. I should say, mellers it. Mellers it, is the word I should employ, Mr. Boffin."

His wooden conceit and craft kept exact pace with the delighted expectations of his victim. The visions rising before his mercenary mind, of the many ways in which this connection was to be turned to account, never obscured the foremost idea natural to a dull, over-reaching, man, that he must not make himself too cheap.

Mrs. Boffin's Fashion, as a less inexorable deity than the idol usually worshipped under that name, did not forbid her mixing for her literary guest, or asking if he found the result to his liking. On his returning a gracious answer and taking his place at the literary settle, Mr. Boffin began to compose himself as a listener at the opposite settle, with exultant eyes.

"Sorry to deprive you of a pipe, Wegg," he said, filling his own, "but you can't do both together. Oh! and another thing I forgot to name! When you come here of an evening, and look round you, and notice anything on a shelf that happens to catch your fancy, mention it."

Wegg, who had been going to put on his spectacles, immediately laid them down, with the sprightly observation:

"You read my thoughts, sir. *Do* my eyes deceive me, or is that object up there — a pie? It can't be a pie."

"Yes, it's a pie, Wegg," replied Mr. Boffin, with a glance of some little discomfiture at the Decline and Fall.

"*Have* I lost my smell for fruits, or is it a apple pie, sir?" asked Wegg.

"It's a veal and ham pie," said Mr. Boffin.

"Is it indeed, sir? And it would be hard, sir, to name the pie that is a better pie than a veal and ham," said Mr. Wegg, nodding his head emotionally.

"Have some, Wegg?"

"Thank you, Mr. Boffin, I think I will, at your invitation. I wouldn't at any other party's, at the present juncture; but at yours, sir! — And meaty jelly too, especially when a little salt, which is the case where there's ham, is mellinging to the organ, is very mellinging to

the organ." Mr. Wegg did not say what organ, but spoke with a cheerful generality.

So the pie was brought down, and the worthy Mr. Boffin exercised his patience until Wegg, in the exercise of his knife and fork, had finished the dish: only profiting by the opportunity to inform Wegg that "although it was not strictly Fashionable to keep the contents of a larder thus exposed to view, he (Mr. Boffin) considered it hospitable; for the reason, that instead of saying, in a comparatively unmeaning manner, to a visitor, 'There are such and such edibles down stairs; will you have anything up?' you took the bold practical course of saying, 'Cast your eye along the shelves, and, if you see anything you like there, have it down.'"

And now, Mr. Wegg at length pushed away his plate and put on his spectacles, and Mr. Boffin lighted his pipe and looked with beaming eyes into the opening world before him, and Mrs. Boffin reclined in a fashionable manner on her sofa: as one who would be part of the audience if she found she could, and would go to sleep if she found she couldn't.

"Hem!" began Wegg. "This, Mr. Boffin and Lady, is the first chapter of the first wollume of the Decline and Fall of —" here he looked hard at the book, and stopped.

"What's the matter, Wegg?"

"Why, it comes into my mind, do you know, sir," said Wegg with an air of insinuating frankness (having first again looked hard at the book), "that you made a little mistake this morning, which I had meant to set you right in, only something put it out of my head. I think you said Rooshan Empire, sir?"

"It is Rooshan; ain't it, Wegg?"

"No, sir. Roman. Roman."

"What's the difference, Wegg?"

"The difference, sir?" Mr. Wegg was faltering and in danger of breaking down, when a bright thought flashed upon him. "The difference, sir? There you place me in a difficulty, Mr. Boffin. Suffice it to observe, that the difference is best postponed to some other occasion when Mrs. Boffin does not honour us with her company. In Mrs. Boffin's presence, sir, we had better drop it."

Mr. Wegg thus came out of his disadvantage with quite a chivalrous air, and not only that, but by dint of repeating with a manly delicacy, "In Mrs. Boffin's presence, sir, we had better drop it!" turned the disadvantage on Boffin, who felt that he had committed himself in a very painful manner.

Then, Mr. Wegg, in a dry, unflinching way, entered on his task; going straight across country at everything that came before him; taking all the hard words, biographical and geographical; getting rather shaken by Hadrian, Trajan, and the Antonines; stumbling at Polybius (pronounced Polly Beeious, and supposed by Mr. Boffin to be a Roman virgin, and by Mrs. Boffin to be responsible for that necessity of dropping it); heavily unseated by Titus Antoninus Pius; up again and galloping smoothly with Augustus; finally, getting over the ground well with Commodus: who, under the appellation of Commodious, was held by Mr. Boffin to have been quite unworthy of his English origin, and "not to have acted up to his name" in his government of the Roman people. With the death of this personage, Mr. Wegg terminated his first reading; long before which consummation several total eclipses of Mrs. Boffin's candle behind her black velvet disc, would have been very alarming, but for being regularly accompanied by a potent smell of burnt pens when her feathers took fire, which acted as a restorative and woke her. Mr. Wegg, having read on by rote and attached as few ideas as possible to the text, came out of the encounter fresh; but Mr. Boffin, who had soon laid down his unfinished pipe, and had ever since sat intently staring with his eyes and mind at the confounding enormities of the Romans, was so severely punished that he could hardly wish his literary friend good-night, and articulate "To-morrow."

"Commodious," gasped Mr. Boffin, staring at the moon, after letting Wegg out at the gate and fastening it: "Commodious fights in that wild-beast-show, seven hundred and thirty-five times, in one character only! As if that wasn't stunning enough, a hundred lions is turned into the same wild-beast-show all at once! As if that wasn't stunning enough, Commodious, in another character, kills 'em all off in a hundred goes! As if that wasn't stunning enough, Vittleus (and well named too) eats six millions' worth, English money, in seven months! Wegg takes it easy, but upon-my-soul to a old bird like myself these are scarers. And even now that Commodious is strangled, I don't see a way to our bettering ourselves." Mr. Boffin added as he turned his pensive steps toward the Bower and shook his head, "I didn't think this morning there was half so many Scarers in Print. But I'm in for it now!"

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE
(1818-1894)

CÆSAR: A SKETCH

CHAPTER XIII

The consulship of Cæsar was the last chance for the Roman aristocracy. He was not a revolutionist. Revolutions are the last desperate remedy when all else has failed. They may create as many evils as they cure, and wise men always hate them. But if revolution was to be escaped, reform was inevitable, and it was for the Senate to choose between the alternatives. Could the noble lords have known, then, in that their day, the things that belonged to their peace — could they have forgotten their fish-ponds and their game preserves, and have remembered that, as the rulers of the civilised world, they had duties which the eternal order of nature would exact at their hands, the shaken constitution might have regained its stability, and the forms and even the reality of the Republic might have continued for another century. It was not to be. Had the Senate been capable of using the opportunity, they would long before have undertaken a reformation for themselves. Even had their eyes been opened, there were disintegrating forces at work which the highest political wisdom could do no more than arrest; and little good is really effected by prolonging artificially the lives of either constitutions or individuals beyond their natural period. From the time when Rome became an Empire, mistress of provinces to which she was unable to extend her own liberties, the days of her self-government were numbered. A homogeneous and vigorous people may manage their own affairs under a popular constitution so long as their personal characters remain undegenerate. Parliaments and Senates may represent the general will of the community, and may pass laws and administer them as public sentiment approves. But such bodies can preside successfully only among subjects who are directly represented in them. They are too ignorant, too selfish, too divided, to govern others; and Imperial aspirations draw after them, by obvious necessity, an Imperial rule. Cæsar may have known this in his heart, yet the most far-seeing statesman will not so trust his own misgivings as to refuse to hope for the regeneration of the institutions into which he is born. He will determine that justice shall be done. Justice

is the essence of government, and without justice all forms, democratic or monarchic, are tyrannies alike. But he will work with the existing methods till the inadequacy of them has been proved beyond dispute. Constitutions are never overthrown till they have pronounced sentence on themselves.

Cæsar accordingly commenced office by an endeavour to conciliate. The army and the moneyed interests, represented by Pompey and Crassus, were already with him; and he used his endeavours, as has been seen, to gain Cicero, who might bring with him such part of the landed aristocracy as were not hopelessly incorrigible. With Cicero he but partially succeeded. The great orator solved the problem of the situation by going away into the country and remaining there for the greater part of the year, and Cæsar had to do without an assistance which, in the speaking department, would have been invaluable to him. His first step was to order the publication of the "Acta Diurna," a daily journal of the doings of the Senate. The light of day being thrown in upon that august body might prevent honourable members from laying hands on each other as they had lately done, and might enable the people to know what was going on among them — on a better authority than rumour. He then introduced his Agrarian law, the rough draft of which had been already discussed, and had been supported by Cicero in the preceding year. Had he meant to be defiant, like the Gracchi, he might have offered it at once to the people. Instead of doing so, he laid it before the Senate, inviting them to amend his suggestions, and promising any reasonable concessions if they would coöperate. No wrong was to be done to any existing occupiers. No right of property was to be violated which was any real right at all. Large tracts in Campania which belonged to the State were now held on the usual easy terms by great landed patricians. These Cæsar proposed to buy out, and to settle on the ground twenty thousand of Pompey's veterans. There was money enough and to spare in the treasury, which they had themselves brought home. Out of the large funds which would still remain, land might be purchased in other parts of Italy for the rest, and for a few thousand of the unemployed population which was crowded into Rome. The measure in itself was admitted to be a moderate one. Every pains had been taken to spare the interests and to avoid hurting the susceptibilities of the aristocrats. But, as Cicero said, the

very name of an Agrarian law was intolerable to them. It meant in the end spoliation and division of property, and the first step would bring others after it. The public lands they had shared conveniently among themselves from immemorial time. The public treasure was their treasure, to be laid out as they might think proper. Cato headed the opposition. He stormed for an entire day, and was so violent that Cæsar threatened him with arrest. The Senate groaned and foamed; no progress was made or was likely to be made; and Cæsar, as much in earnest as they were, had to tell them that if they would not help him, he must appeal to the assembly. "I invited you to revise the law," he said; "I was willing that if any clause displeased you it should be expunged. You will not touch it. Well, then, the people must decide."

The Senate had made up their minds to fight the battle. If Cæsar went to the assembly, Bibulus, their second consul, might stop the proceedings. If this seemed too extreme a step, custom provided other impediments, to which recourse might be had. Bibulus might survey the heavens, watch the birds, or the clouds, or the direction of the wind, and declare the aspects unfavourable; or he might proclaim day after day to be holy, and on holy days no legislation was permitted. Should these religious cobwebs be brushed away, the Senate had provided a further resource in three of the tribunes whom they had bribed. Thus they held themselves secure, and dared Cæsar to do his worst. Cæsar on his side was equally determined. The assembly was convoked. The Forum was choked to overflowing. Cæsar and Pompey stood on the steps of the Temple of Castor, and Bibulus and his tribunes were at hand ready with their interpellations. Such passions had not been roused in Rome since the days of Cinna and Octavius, and many a young lord was doubtless hoping that the day would not close without another lesson to ambitious demagogues and howling mobs. In their eyes the one reform which Rome needed was another Sylla.

Cæsar read his law from the tablet on which it was inscribed; and, still courteous to his antagonist, he turned to Bibulus and asked him if he had any fault to find. Bibulus said sullenly that he wanted no revolutions, and that while he was consul there should be none. The people hissed; and he then added in a rage, "You shall not have your law this year though every man of you demand it." Cæsar

answered nothing, but Pompey and Crassus stood forward. They were not officials, but they were real forces. Pompey was the idol of every soldier in the State, and at Cæsar's invitation he addressed the assembly. He spoke for his veterans. He spoke for the poor citizens. He said that he approved the law to the last letter of it.

"Will you, then," asked Cæsar, "support the law if it be illegally opposed?" "Since," replied Pompey, "you, consul, and you, my fellow citizens, ask aid of me, a poor individual without office and without authority, who nevertheless has done some service to the State, I say that I will bear the shield, if others draw the sword." Applause rang out from a hundred thousand throats. Crassus followed to the same purpose, and was received with the same wild delight. A few senators, who retained their senses, saw the uselessness of opposition, and retired. Bibulus was of duller and tougher metal. As the vote was about to be taken he and his tribunes rushed to the rostra. The tribunes pronounced their veto. Bibulus said that he had consulted the sky; the gods forbade further action being taken that day, and he declared the assembly dissolved. Nay, as if a man like Cæsar could be stopped by a shadow, he proposed to sanctify the whole remainder of the year, that no further business might be transacted in it. Yells drowned his voice. The mob rushed upon the steps; Bibulus was thrown down, and the rods of the lictors were broken; the tribunes who had betrayed their order were beaten; Cato held his ground, and stormed at Cæsar, till he was led off by the police, raving and gesticulating. The law was then passed, and a resolution besides, that every senator should take an oath to obey it.

So in ignominy the Senate's resistance collapsed: the Cæsar whom they had thought to put off with their "woods and forests" had proved stronger than the whole of them; and, prostrate at the first round of the battle, they did not attempt another. They met the following morning. Bibulus told his story, and appealed for support. Had the Senate complied, they would probably have ceased to exist. The oath was unpalatable, but they made the best of it. Metellus Celer, Cato, and Favonius, a senator whom men called Cato's ape, struggled against their fate, but, "swearing they would ne'er consent, consented." The unwelcome formula was swallowed by the whole of them; and Bibulus, who had done his part, and had been beaten and kicked and trampled upon,

and now found his employers afraid to stand by him, went off sulkily to his house, shut himself up there, and refused to act as consul further during the remainder of the year.

There was no further active opposition. A commission was appointed by Cæsar to carry out the Land Act, composed of twenty of the best men that could be found, one of them being Atius Balbus, the husband of Cæsar's only sister, and grandfather of a little child now three years old, who was known afterwards to the world as Augustus. Cicero was offered a place, but declined. The land question having been disposed of, Cæsar then proceeded with the remaining measures by which his consulship was immortalised. He had redeemed his promise to Pompey by providing for his soldiers. He gratified Crassus by giving the desired relief to the farmers of the taxes. He confirmed Pompey's arrangements for the government of Asia, which the Senate had left in suspense. The Senate was now itself suspended. The consul acted directly with the assembly, without obstruction, and without remonstrance, Bibulus only from time to time sending out monotonous admonitions from within doors that the season was consecrated, and that Cæsar's acts had no validity. Still more remarkably, and as the distinguishing feature of his term of office, Cæsar carried, with the help of the people, the body of admirable laws which are known to jurists as the "Leges Juliae," and mark an epoch in Roman history. They were laws as unwelcome to the aristocracy as they were essential to the continued existence of the Roman State, laws which had been talked of in the Senate, but which could never pass through the preliminary stage of resolutions, and were now enacted over the Senate's head by the will of Cæsar and the sovereign power of the nation. A mere outline can alone be attempted here. There was a law declaring the inviolability of the persons of magistrates during their term of authority, reflecting back on the murder of Saturninus, and touching by implication the killing of Lentulus and his companions. There was a law for the punishment of adultery, most disinterestedly singular if the popular accounts of Cæsar's habits had any grain of truth in them. There were laws for the protection of the subject from violence, public or private; and laws disabling persons who had laid hands illegally on Roman citizens from holding office in the Commonwealth. There was a law, intended at last to be effective, to deal with judges who

allowed themselves to be bribed. There were laws against defrauders of the revenue; laws against debasing the coin; laws against sacrilege; laws against corrupt State contracts; laws against bribery at elections. Finally, there was a law, carefully framed, *De repetundis*, to exact retribution from pro-consuls or pro-prætors of the type of Verres, who had plundered the provinces. All governors were required, on relinquishing office, to make a double return of their accounts, one to remain for inspection among the archives of the province, and one to be sent to Rome; and where peculation or injustice could be proved, the offender's estate was made answerable to the last sesterce.

Such laws were words only, without the will to execute them; but they affirmed the principles on which Roman or any other society could alone continue. It was for the officials of the constitution to adopt them, and save themselves and the Republic, or to ignore them as they had ignored the laws which already existed, and see it perish as it deserved. All that man could do for the preservation of his country from revolution Cæsar had accomplished. Sylla had re-established the rule of the aristocracy, and it had failed grossly and disgracefully. Cinna and Marius had tried democracy, and that had failed. Cæsar was trying what law would do, and the result remained to be seen. Bibulus, as each measure was passed, croaked that it was null and void. The leaders of the Senate threatened between their teeth that all should be undone when Cæsar's term was over. Cato, when he mentioned the "Leges Juliae," spoke of them as enactments, but refused them their author's name. But the excellence of these laws was so clearly recognised that they survived the irregularity of their introduction; and the "Lex de Repetundis" especially remained a terror to evildoers, with a promise of better days to the miserable and pillaged subjects of the Roman Empire.

So the year of Cæsar's consulship passed away. What was to happen when it had expired? The Senate had provided "the woods and forests" for him. But the Senate's provision in such a matter could not be expected to hold. He asked for nothing, but he was known to desire an opportunity of distinguished service. Cæsar was now forty-three. His life was ebbing away, and, with the exception of his two years in Spain, it had been spent in struggling with the base elements of Roman faction. Great men will bear such sordid work

when it is laid on them, but they loathe it notwithstanding, and for the present there was nothing more to be done. A new point of departure had been taken. Principles had been laid down for the Senate and people to act on, if they could and would. Cæsar could only wish for a long absence in some new sphere of usefulness, where he could achieve something really great which his country would remember.

And on one side only was such a sphere open to him. The East was Roman to the Euphrates. No second Mithridates could loosen the grasp with which the legions now held the civilised parts of Asia. Parthians might disturb the frontier, but could not seriously threaten the Eastern dominions; and no advantage was promised by following on the steps of Alexander, and annexing countries too poor to bear the cost of their maintenance. To the west it was different. Beyond the Alps there was still a territory of unknown extent, stretching away to the undefined ocean, a territory peopled with warlike races, some of whom in ages long past had swept over Italy and taken Rome, and had left their descendants and their name in the northern province, which was now called Cisalpine Gaul. With these races the Romans had as yet no clear relations, and from them alone could any serious danger threaten the State. The Gauls had for some centuries ceased their wanderings, had settled down in fixed localities. They had built towns and bridges; they had cultivated the soil, and had become wealthy and partly civilised. With the tribes adjoining Provence the Romans had alliances more or less precarious, and had established a kind of protectorate over them. But even here the inhabitants were uneasy for their independence, and troubles were continually arising with them; while into these districts and into the rest of Gaul a fresh and stormy element was now being introduced. In earlier times the Gauls had been stronger than the Germans, and not only could they protect their own frontier, but they had formed settlements beyond the Rhine. These relations were being changed. The Gauls, as they grew in wealth, declined in vigour. The Germans, still roving and migratory, were throwing covetous eyes out of their forests on the fields and vineyards of their neighbours, and enormous numbers of them were crossing the Rhine and Danube, looking for new homes. How feeble a barrier either the Alps or the Gauls themselves might prove against such

invaders had been but too recently experienced. Men who were of middle age at the time of Cæsar's consulship could still remember the terrors which had been caused by the invasion of the Cimbri and Teutons. Marius had saved Italy then from destruction, as it were, by the hair of its head. The annihilation of those hordes had given Rome a passing respite. But fresh generations had grown up. Fresh multitudes were streaming out of the North. Germans in hundreds of thousands were again passing the Upper Rhine, rooting themselves in Burgundy, and coming in collision with tribes which Rome protected. There were uneasy movements among the Gauls themselves, whole nations of them breaking up from their homes and again adrift upon the world. Gaul and Germany were like a volcano giving signs of approaching eruption; and, at any moment and hardly with warning, another lava stream might be pouring down into Venetia and Lombardy.

To deal with this danger was the work marked out for Cæsar. It is the fashion to say that he sought a military command that he might have an army behind him to overthrow the constitution. If this was his object, ambition never chose a more dangerous or less promising route for itself. Men of genius who accomplish great things in this world do not trouble themselves with remote and visionary aims. They encounter emergencies as they rise, and leave the future to shape itself as it may. It would seem that at first the defence of Italy was all that was thought of. "The woods and forests" were set aside, and Cæsar, by a vote of the people, was given the command of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyria for five years; but either he himself desired, or especial circumstances which were taking place beyond the mountains recommended, that a wider scope should be allowed him. The Senate, finding that the people would act without them if they hesitated, gave him in addition Gallia Comata, the land of the Gauls with the long hair, the governorship of the Roman province beyond the Alps, with untrammelled liberty to act as he might think good throughout the country which is now known as France and Switzerland and the Rhine provinces of Germany.

He was to start early in the approaching year. It was necessary before he went to make some provision for the quiet government of the capital. The alliance with Pompey and Crassus gave temporary security. Pompey

had less stability of character than could have been wished, but he became attached to Cæsar's daughter Julia; and a fresh link of marriage was formed to hold them together. Cæsar himself married Calpurnia, the daughter of Calpurnius Piso. The Senate having temporarily abdicated, he was able to guide the elections; and Piso and Pompey's friend Gabinius, who had obtained the command of the pirate war for him, were chosen consuls for the year 58. Neither of them, if we can believe a title of Cicero's invective, was good for much; but they were staunch partisans, and were to be relied on to resist any efforts which might be made to repeal the "Leges Juliae." These matters being arranged, and his own term having expired, Cæsar withdrew, according to custom, to the suburbs beyond the walls to collect troops and prepare for his departure. Strange things, however, had yet to happen before he was gone.

It is easy to conceive how the Senate felt at these transactions, how ill they bore to find themselves superseded, and the State managed over their heads. Fashionable society was equally furious, and the three allies went by the name of Dynasts, or "Reges Superbi." After resistance had been abandoned, Cicero came back to Rome to make cynical remarks from which all parties suffered equally. His special grievance was the want of consideration which he conceived to have been shown for himself. He mocked at the Senate; he mocked at Bibulus, whom he particularly abominated; he mocked at Pompey and the Agrarian law. Mockery turned to indignation when he thought of the ingratitude of the Senate, and his chief consolation in their discomfiture was that it had fallen on them through the neglect of their most distinguished member. "I could have saved them, if they would have let me," he said. "I could save them still, if I were to try; but I will go study philosophy in my own family." "Freedom is gone," he wrote to Atticus; "and if we are to be worse enslaved, we shall bear it. Our lives and properties are more to us than liberty. We sigh, and we do not even remonstrate."

Cato, in the desperation of passion, called Pompey a Dictator in the assembly, and nearly escaped being killed for his pains. The patricians revenged themselves in private by savage speeches and plots and purposes. Fashionable society gathered in the theatres and hissed the popular leaders. Lines were introduced into the plays reflecting on Pompey,

and were encored a thousand times. Bibulus from his closet continued to issue venomous placards, reporting scandals about Cæsar's life, and now for the first time bringing up the story of Nicomedes. The streets were impassable where these papers were pasted up, from the crowds of loungers which were gathered to read them, and Bibulus for the moment was the hero of patrician saloons. Some malicious comfort Cicero gathered out of these manifestations of feeling. He had no belief in the noble lords, and small expectations from them. Bibulus was, on the whole, a fit representative for the gentry of the fishponds. But the Dynasts were at least heartily detested in quarters which had once been powerful, and might be powerful again; and he flattered himself, though he affected to regret it, that the animosity against them was spreading. To all parties there is attached a draggled trail of disreputables, who hold themselves entitled to benefits when their side is in power, and are angry when they are passed over.

"The State," Cicero wrote in the autumn of 59 to Atticus, "is in a worse condition than when you left us; then we thought that we had fallen under a power which pleased the people, and which, though abhorrent to the good, yet was not totally destructive to them. Now all hate it equally, and we are in terror as to where the exasperation may break out. We had experienced the ill-temper and irritation of those who in their anger with Cato had brought ruin on us; but the poison worked so slowly that it seemed we might die without pain. — I hoped, as I often told you, that the wheel of the constitution was so turning that we should scarcely hear a sound or see any visible track; and so it would have been could men have waited for the tempest to pass over them. But the secret sighs turned to groans, and the groans to universal clamour; and thus our friend Pompey, who so lately swam in glory, and never heard an evil word of himself, is broken-hearted, and knows not whither to turn. A precipice is before him, and to retreat is dangerous. The good are against him — the bad are not his friends. I could scarce help weeping the other day when I heard him complaining in the Forum of the publications of Bibulus. He who but a short time since bore himself so proudly there, with the people in raptures with him, and with the world on his side, was now so humble and abject as to disgust even himself, not to say his hearers. Crassus enjoyed the scene, but no one else.

Pompey had fallen down out of the stars — not by a gradual descent, but in a single plunge; and as Apelles if he had seen his Venus, or Protogenes his Ialysus, all daubed with mud, would have been vexed and annoyed, so was I grieved to the very heart to see one whom I had painted out in the choicest colours of art thus suddenly defaced. — Pompey is sick with irritation at the placards of Bibulus. I am sorry about them; they give such excessive annoyance to a man whom I have always liked. And Pompey is so prompt with his sword, and so unaccustomed to insult, that I fear what he may do. What the future may have in store for Bibulus I know not. At present he is the admired of all."

"Sampsiceramus," Cicero wrote a few days later, "is greatly penitent. He would gladly be restored to the eminence from which he has fallen. Sometimes he imparts his griefs to me, and asks me what he should do, which I cannot tell him."

Unfortunate Cicero, who knew what was right, but was too proud to do it! Unfortunate Pompey, who still did what was right, but was too sensitive to bear the reproach of it, who would so gladly not leave his duty unperformed, and yet keep the "sweet voices" whose applause had grown so delicious to him! Bibulus was in no danger. Pompey was too good-natured to hurt him; and Cæsar let fools say what they pleased, as long as they were fools without teeth, who would bark but could not bite. The risk was to Cicero himself, little as he seemed to be aware of it. Cæsar was to be long absent from Rome, and he knew that as soon as he was engaged in Gaul the extreme oligarchic faction would make an effort to set aside his Land Commission and undo his legislation. When he had a clear purpose in view, and was satisfied that it was a good purpose, he was never scrupulous about his instruments. It was said of him, that when he wanted any work done, he chose the persons best able to do it, let their general character be what it might. The rank and file of the patricians, proud, idle, vicious, and self-indulgent, might be left to their mistresses and their gaming-tables. They could do no mischief, unless they had leaders at their head, who could use their resources more effectively than they could do themselves. There were two men only in Rome with whose help they could be really dangerous — Cato, because he was a fanatic, impregnable to argument, and not to be influenced by temptation of advantage to

himself; Cicero, on account of his extreme ability, his personal ambition, and his want of political principle. Cato he knew to be impracticable. Cicero he had tried to gain; but Cicero, who had played a first part as consul, could not bring himself to play a second, and, if the chance offered, had both power and will to be troublesome. Some means had to be found to get rid of these two, or at least to tie their hands and to keep them in order. There would be Pompey and Crassus still at hand. But Pompey was weak, and Crassus understood nothing beyond the art of manipulating money. Gabinius and Piso, the next consuls, had an indifferent reputation and narrow abilities, and at best they would have but their one year of authority. Politics, like love, makes strange bedfellows. In this difficulty accident threw in Cæsar's way a convenient but most unexpected ally.

Young Clodius, after his escape from prosecution by the marvellous methods which Crassus had provided for him, was more popular than ever. He had been the occasion of a scandal which had brought infamy on the detested Senate. His offence in itself seemed venial in so loose an age, and was as nothing compared with the enormity of his judges. He had come out of his trial with a determination to be revenged on the persons from whose tongues he had suffered most severely in the senatorial debates. Of these Cato had been the most savage; but Cicero had been the most exasperating, from his sarcasms, his airs of patronage, and perhaps his intimacy with his sister. The noble youth had exhausted the common forms of pleasure. He wanted a new excitement, and politics and vengeance might be combined. He was as clever as he was dissolute, and, as clever men are fortunately rare in the licentious part of society, they are always idolised, because they make vice respectable by connecting it with intellect. Clodius was a second, an abler Catiline, equally unprincipled, and far more dexterous and prudent. In times of revolution there is always a disreputable wing to the radical party, composed of men who are the natural enemies of established authority, and these all rallied about their new leader with devout enthusiasm. Clodius was not without political experience. His first public appearance had been as leader of a mutiny. He was already quæstor, and so a senator; but he was too young to aspire to the higher magistracies which were open to him as a patrician. He declared his intention of