

Face to Face

OR, GERVASE RICKMAN'S
AMBITION.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued).

Even while they spoke, Raysh Squire came to the end of his monotonous and melancholy office in the chill belfry, and went out into the sunny afternoon, stretching his stiffened arms and yawning. As he did so, he saw a figure in shirt-sleeves by a barrow on the other side of the church-yard wall in the vicarage grounds stretching his arms and yawning with equal intensity, and since nothing fosters friendship like a community of interests and occupation, this sympathetic sight moved him to drag his slow steps across the mounded turf to that quarter, and, resting his arms on the wall, to look over it, just as the figure in shirt-sleeves, which was that of a young and stalwart man, executed a final yawn of surpassing excellence, and seating himself on the barrow, began drawing out and filling a short pipe.

"Warm," said the sexton, a long, wiry, bony figure, with a fleshless face, black hair, and whiskers touched with grey.

"Warmish," replied the gardener, slowly, without raising his eyes from the turf on which he was gazing, while he kindled the pipe he held in the hollow of his hands.

Then the sexton, turning round toward his cottage, which stood at the church-yard gate, beckoned to his grandchild to bring him the mug she held in her hand, which contained his "four o'clock," a modest portion of small beer.

"Buryen' of mankind, Josh Baker," said the sexton, after applying himself to this refreshing cup, and thus concealing his features for some moments, "is a dryen' trade."

"Ay," returned the gardener, after slowly and solemnly surveying the sexton's withered features for some time, "you looks dried, Raysh Squire." Then he withdrew his gaze and puffed with long, slow puffs at his pipe, bending forward, his arms resting on his legs, which were stretched out apart before him, and his hands clasped together.

"Buryen' of mankind," continued Raysh, after a thoughtful pause, during which he sought fresh inspiration from the "four o'clock," "is a ongrateful trade. Vur fur? Volk never thanks anybody fur putting of 'em under ground."

Josh pulled his felt hat back on his yellow curls, and apparently made a strong effort to take in this strikingly new idea for a moment or two, when he replied, "I never yeard o' nobody returning thanks vur the buryen', not as I knows on, I haint."

"Ay, Josh Baker, and I war'n't you never will, wudd beans as you med make. A ongrateful trade is buryen', a ongrateful trade."

"I reckon you've put a tidy lot under the ground, Master Squire," said the gardener, after a pause.

"Hreckon I hev, Josh," returned the sexton, with a slow lateral extension of the lines of his withered face, which resembled a smile. "Hreckon I've put more under ground than you ever drewed out on't, ay, or ever will. I've put a power o' quality under ground, let alone the common zart. Wuld passon, I buried he, and the Lord knows where I be to put this 'ere one, the ground's that vull. Eln Gate, she's a-gwine up under tree there. I shown her the place; 'And I'll do ee up comfortable, Eln,' I zays. 'Thankee kindly, Master Squire,' zays she; 'you allays stood my friend,' she zays. 'Ay, and I allays ool, Eln,' I zays I, and 'I'll do ee up proper and comfortable, and won't put nobody long side of 'ee this twenty year to come.' 'Thankee kindly, Master Squire,' she zes, 'tis pleasant and heartsome up under tree when the primroses blows, and you allays stood my friend.' There ain't a many like Eln. A ongrateful trade is buryen' and a dryin' trade."

"You ain't been burying of this vor Capen Annesley, Raysh," objected the gardener after some thought. "How be um to bury he, if so be as he's yet by a elephant?"

"Hreckon they'll hae to bury the elephant, Josh Baker, if so be as they hae Christian buryen' in their outlandish places o' the yearth. I've ben a hringen of an out vur dree martial hours, and I've a done what I could vor 'n, I can't do no more. I hriaged 's grandfather out and 's brothers, hriinged 'em out mezzel, and terble dry work 'twas. Ay, I've pretty nigh hriinged 'em all out. Annesley's is come to their last end."

He illustrated this melancholy assertion by a final application to the "four o'clock," having brought which to its last end, he handed the mug to the little wide-eyed grandchild, who trotted off with it.

"This yere doctor o' ourn's a Annesley; there's he left," objected the gardener.

"There's Annesleys, an' there's Annesleys, Josh Baker. Zame as wi' apples, there's Rhestone Pippins and there's Codlings. They Medington Annesleys is a common zart," said the sexton, his voice conveying severe rebuke for the

gardener's ignorance, mingled with compassion for his youth. "Ay, Josh Baker, this yere's a knowledgable world, terble knowledgable world 'tis to be zure."

The gardener was too much crushed by this combination of axiom and illustration to make any reply, beyond doubtfully hazarding the observation, "Codlings likes well," which was frowned down, so he continued to smoke steadily with his eyes fixed on three daisies before him, while the scent of his tobacco, which was a doubtful odor, mingled with the scent of the mown grass in his barrow with most agreeable results.

The sexton meantime leaned upon the mossed stone wall, enjoying the double pleasure of successful controversy within and the warmth of the March sunbeams without, and listened with vague delight to the rich flute-notes of a blackbird near, till the click of the church-yard wicket made him turn his head in that direction and walk slowly thither, while the gardener still more slowly rose and wheeled his barrow with its fragrant burden to its destination.

"Afternoon," growled Raysh, pulling his hair slightly as he approached the ladies from the manor, and looking at them as much as to say, "what do you want now?"

"You may as well look pleasant, if you can, Raysh," said Sibyl; "we have only brought you an old friend."

"You - don't remember me, Master Squire, I dare say," said Annesley. "I was here as a boy with Mr. Gervase Rickman and my cousin, Paul Annesley."

"I minds ye well enough," replied Raysh. "Master Edward you be, and a terble bad buoy you was, to be zure. You and 'others, between ye, pretty nigh gallied me to death. Not as I bears no malice, bless 'ee. Buoy is made a purpose to tarment mankind, zame as malicysnags (caterpillars) and vlags, and buoy they'll be till kingdom come, I hreckon."

"I fear we did lead you a life of it. I seem to remember getting into the tower and ringing the bells at some unholy hour."

"D'ye mind how I whacked ye vor't?" replied the old man, brightening at the recollection. "You minds, Miss Sibyl; you zeen me laying the stick athirt the shoulders of en, an' you zinged out to me to let en off, and I let en off. I'd gin en a pretty penneth avore you come," he added, with satisfaction.

"And I had forgotten this service, Miss Rickman," said Annesley, laughing. "Perhaps some day I may repay the debt, though not in kind. Can we get into the church, Raysh?"

"You med get into church if you'd got ar a kay," replied the old man; "but if you ain't got ar a kay you'll hae to wait till I velches one vor 'ee."

"He gets more arbitrary every day of his life," explained Sibyl, laughing; "and we spoil him more and more."

Alice stopped at the church-yard gate to see the sexton's ailing wife, and this circumstance caused Annesley to hurry through the church with only half an interest in the tombs of his ancestors and the humors of his old friend Raysh, whose "ehrisom" name was Horatio, he told him. He had rung out George the Third, his two sons, and rung in the latter and Queen Victoria, he informed them, evidently thinking that neither of those sovereigns could have quitted this mortal scene without his aid.

"Ryalty," he observed, "takes a power o' hringen, and well wuth it they be. I don't hold with these yer publicans, Mr. Annesley, as wants to do away wi' Queen Victoria. They med so well let she alone, a lone lorn ooman what have rared nine children. Wants to make everythink so vial as the back o' my hand, they publicans doos. Ah, you med take my word vor't, when you begins zetting down what the Lord have made high, you never knows where 't will end. They began wi' clerks. Thirty-four year I stood under passon, and eddicated the volk with amens, and give out the psalms what was zung to dree viddles, a clarinet and a bugle, as you med mind when a buoy. And now they've a zet me down long wi' the lay volk, as though I wasn't nar a bit better than they. Ay, that's hew they began, zure enough, and the Lord only knows where they med ena. We caint all on us be queens, and we caint all on us be clerks, as stands to rayson. Zo those yer Radical chaps they ups and zays, 'we won't hae no clerks, nor no queens, nor no nothink,' zays they. Ay, that's how 'tis, zure enough."

Annesley replied that, being himself a plain man, whose business it was to serve the Queen, he was no politician, and, having sealed this assertion by the pressure of a crown-piece into his fleshless palm, came out of the church, leaving a good impression upon the old sexton, who remained behind to tidy up the belfry before finally locking the doors.

CHAPTER VI.

It would have been better for all if Edward Annesley had resisted the spell

which kept him chained to the spot that afternoon; but he did not. He lingered outside the sexton's cottage, waiting for Alice, and talking to Sibyl of the days when they were children.

"We were such extremely tiresome children," Sibyl said, "that I can't help hopnig that we have a chance of growing into at least average Christians."

Then it was that some demon inspired him with the mischievous notion of forwarding Paul's suit by proxy, and he replied that one of them, namely Paul, had matured into something far beyond the human average, and that all he wanted to bring him to absolute perfection was a good wife. When he said this he looked straight into Sibyl's bright eyes, but without evoking the embarrassment he expected.

Then he blundered further into some observations upon the wisdom of marrying a friend known from childhood, and said finally that he thought such a friendship the best feeling to marry upon.

"Do you think so?" she returned, wistfully, and with the self-forgetfulness which lent such a charm to all she said, "I can't help thinking that I should like a little love."

"A little," he echoed, looking with warm admiration at the bright face so naively unconscious of itself; "oh! Miss Sibyl, it is not a little, but a great deal of love that such a face as yours commands!" He broke off, feeling that he had blundered seriously, though not fully conscious of the fervor with which he had spoken. Sibyl flushed, and bent over a honey-plant incrustated with pink-scented blossom, about which the bees from Raysh Squire's hives were humming—an old-fashioned cottage plant, the scent of which ever after stirred unspeakable feelings within her—for a moment, and then, quickly regaining her composure, replied with an airy laugh, "What rubbish we are talking! we want Gervase to put us down with one of his little cynical speeches."

"Has Gervase grown into a cynic?" he asked, wondering how great an ass he had made of himself, and greatly relieved when, the long recital of Grandmother Squire's woes being at last ended, Alice came out from the honey-suckle porch.

"Grandmother Squire is in the loveliest frame of mind to-day, Sibyl," she said. "Sure enough, Miss Lingard, she told me, 'we be bound to put up with Providence, rheumatics and all. Not but what I've a had mercies. There was the twins took off, and what we yarned in the chollery.'"

"Poor old soul!" commented Sibyl, as they turned away from the cottage, "her rheumatism does try her. She said only yesterday, 'Raysh is bad enough, and I've a put with he this your-and-forty year. But Raysh ain't nothing to rheumatics, bless un!' Oh!" Sibyl's gay voice suddenly changed to a shriek of terror—"he will be killed!" she cried, and flew down the lane to the high-road, preceded by Annesley, who leaped the gale she was obliged to open, while Alice ran to call Raysh.

At Sibyl's cry, and the grating sound of an overturned vehicle dragged over the gravel, the others turned their faces to the high-road, where they saw a half-shattered dog-cart jolted along by a powerful iron-gray horse, which was kicking against the ruin at his heels and maddening himself afresh at every kick. At the horse's head, and holding him with a grasp of iron, was Gervase Rickman, hatless, and in imminent peril in his backward course, but making his weight tell fully against the plunging horse, whose progress he occasionally arrested altogether for a moment, and which he soothed from time to time with his hand and voice.

He had evidently been struggling for some time with the frightened animal; his face was pale with fatigue, and his hair damp with sweat. At some distance further up the road lay the unfortunate groom, who had been thrown out by the overturning of the vehicle, and who occasionally got up and tried to walk, and, then, throwing up his arms in agony, fell again, hurt in the leg; while Gervase struggled pluckily on, now and then calling for help. Some women came out into the cottage gardens and shouted the first male name that occurred to them. Joshua Baker came pounding heavily over the vicarage lawn, with wide-spread arms and an action like that of a run-away cart-horse. Raysh issued from the church-yard with a lengthened but certainly not hurried stride, and arrived in time to bestow his benediction on the cutting of the last strap. Annesley reached the spot first, Sibyl and Josh were a good second, and in a few minutes the first-comers had cut away the wreck and set the frightened horse free. Gervase still clinging gallantly to the beast's head, in spite of his indignation with Sibyl, who tried to help the men, and certainly kept the wreck from falling upon instead of away from the horse, until the creature, released from the clattering incumbrance at his heels, gradually

quieted down, snorting and quivering less and less.

By that time the owner of the equipage came running up from a house beyond the village, where he had been visiting a patient, while the unlucky groom had dozed off in the afternoon stillness, and had been taken by surprise, when some pigeons flying suddenly up under the horse's nose started him off on a mad career, which, before the frightened lad could get the reins properly in hand, was terminated by a cannon against the bank at the corner.

In a very few minutes the wreck was cleared from the road, the runaway led off, the injured lad taken into the Golden Horse, and attended to by his master, for whom a four-wheel had been got ready, and the Manor party moved off slowly homeward.

Annesley forgot his prejudice against the "squint-eyed fellow" of the previous day; he could not have renewed his acquaintance with Rickman, whom he had last seen a lad in his teens, under better circumstances. His heart warmed toward the sturdy figure he had seen putting out all its strength against the great horse, with eyes glowing with courage and determination and every nerve instinct with vigor and gallantry.

(To be continued).

IRVING AND THE LAWYER.

Sir Henry Irving was at one time a witness in a case of street robbery. He had seen a sneak thief make off with a girl's pocketbook and he consented to appear as a witness for the girl.

The thief's lawyer was of the type that roars and rants at witnesses and attempts to break them down. He tried this method on the distinguished actor. "And what hour, sir, did this happen?" asked the lawyer.

"I think—" began Sir Henry, when the lawyer interrupted with:

"It isn't what you think, sir; it's what you know that we want!"

"Don't you want to know what I think?" mildly asked the actor.

"I do not," the lawyer snapped out.

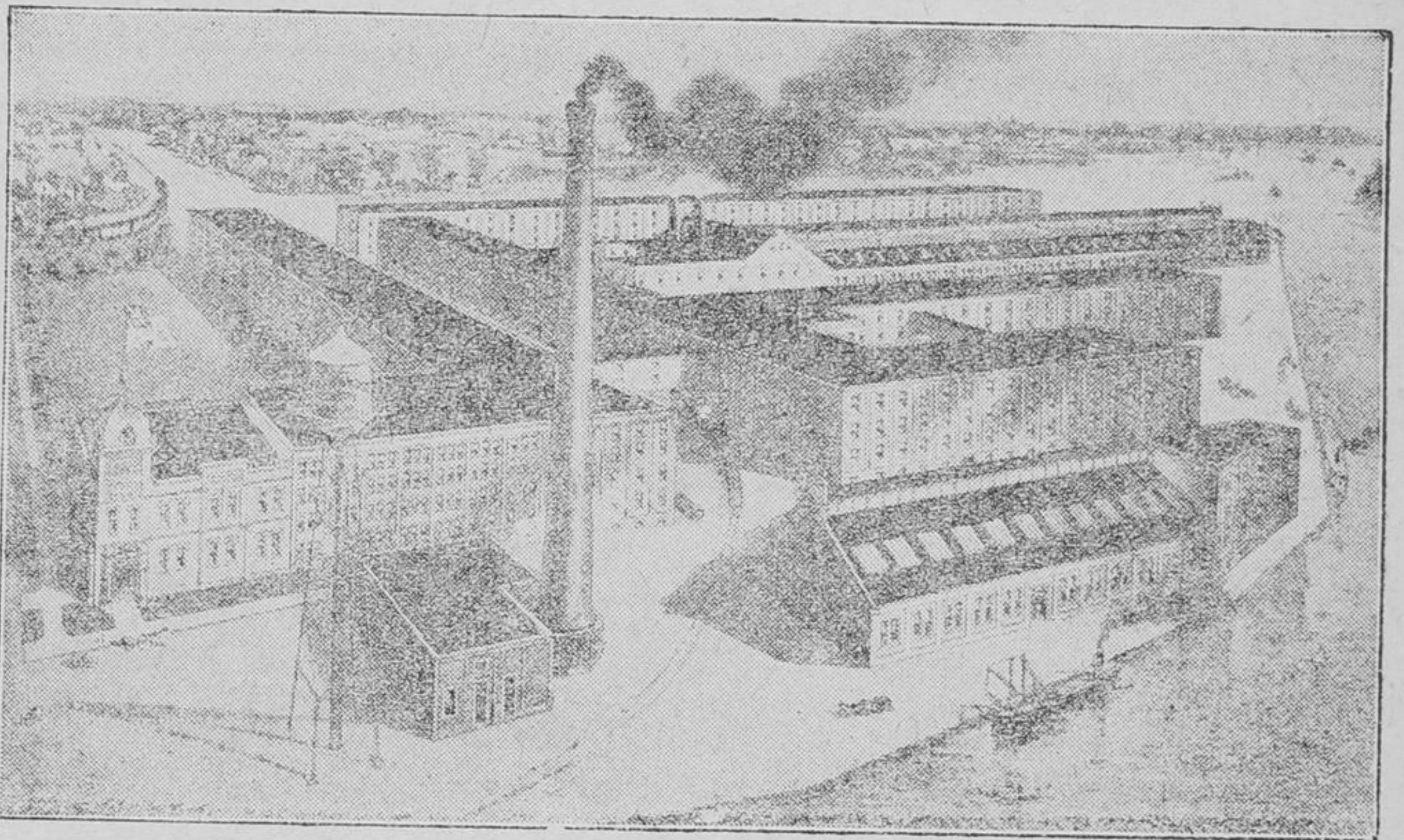
"Well, then," said Sir Henry, "I might as well leave the witness box. I can't talk without thinking. I'm not a lawyer."

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY.

"Now, Tom," said young Newlied's mother, "don't you think you two had better economize a little?"

"Oh! No," he replied, "it isn't time yet, for we've still got some of our savings. In about six months we'll be broke and we'll have to economize."

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