







“Let business be discussed.

“When late our sire beloved  
Was taken deadly ill,  
Sir Lawyer, you attended him 105  
(I mean to tax your bill);  
And, as you signed and wrote it,  
I prithee read the will.”

The lawyer wiped his spectacles,  
And drew the parchment out; 110  
And all the Brentford family  
Sat eager round about:  
Poor Ned was somewhat anxious,  
But Tom had ne'er a doubt.

“My son, as I make ready 115  
To seek my last long home,  
Some cares I had for Neddy,  
But none for thee, my Tom:  
Sobriety and order  
You ne'er departed from. 120

“Ned hath a brilliant genius,  
And thou a plodding brain;  
On thee I think with pleasure,  
On him with doubt and pain.”  
 (“You see, good Ned,” says Thomas, 125  
“What he thought about us twain.”)

“Though small was your allowance,  
You saved a little store;  
And those who save a little  
Shall get a plenty more.” 130  
As the lawyer read this compliment,  
Tom's eyes were running o'er.

“The tortoise and the hare, Tom,  
Set out at each his pace;  
The hare it was the fleeter, 135  
The tortoise won the race;

And since the world's beginning  
This ever was the case.

"Ned's genius, blithe and singing,  
Steps gaily o'er the ground; 140  
As steadily you trudge it,  
He clears it with a bound;  
But dulness has stout legs, Tom,  
And wind that's wondrous sound.

"O'er fruits and flowers alike, Tom, 145  
You pass with plodding feet;  
You heed not one nor t'other,  
But onwards go your beat;  
While genius stops to loiter  
With all that he may meet; 150

"And ever as he wanders,  
Will have a pretext fine  
For sleeping in the morning,  
Or loitering to dine,  
Or dozing in the shade, 155  
Or basking in the shine.

"Your little steady eyes, Tom,  
Though not so bright as those  
That restless round about him  
His flashing genius throws, 160  
Are excellently suited  
To look before your nose.

"Thank Heaven, then, for the blinkers  
It placed before your eyes;  
The stupidest are strongest, 165  
The witty are not wise;  
Oh, bless your good stupidity!  
It is your dearest prize.

"And though my lands are wide,  
And plenty is my gold, 170  
Still better gifts from Nature,

My Thomas, do you hold —  
A brain that's thick and heavy,  
A heart that's dull and cold.

“Too dull to feel depression, 175  
Too hard to heed distress,  
Too cold to yield to passion  
Or silly tenderness.

March on — your road is open  
To wealth, Tom, and success. 180

“Ned sinneth in extravagance,  
And you in greedy lust.”  
 (“I faith,” says Ned, “our father  
Is less polite than just.”)  
“In you, son Tom, I’ve confidence, 185  
But Ned I cannot trust.

“Wherefore my lease and copyholds,  
My lands and tenements,  
My parks, my farms, and orchards,  
My houses and my rents, 190  
My Dutch stock and my Spanish stock,  
My five and three per cents,

“I leave to you, my Thomas” —  
 (“What, all?” poor Edward said.  
“Well, well, I should have spent them, 195  
And Tom’s a prudent head”) —  
“I leave to you, my Thomas, —  
To you IN TRUST for Ned.”

The wrath and consternation  
What poet e’er could trace 200  
That at this fatal passage  
Came o’er Prince Tom his face;  
The wonder of the company,  
And honest Ned’s amaze?

“Tis surely some mistake,” 205  
Good-naturedly cries Ned;

The lawyer answered gravely,  
    “’Tis even as I said;  
’Twas thus his gracious Majesty  
    Ordain’d on his death-bed. 210

“See, here the will is witness’d.  
    And here’s his autograph.”  
“In truth, our father’s writing,”  
    Says Edward, with a laugh;  
“But thou shalt not be a loser, Tom; 215  
    We’ll share it half and half.”

“Alas! my kind young gentleman,  
    This sharing cannot be;  
’Tis written in the testament  
    That Brentford spoke to me, 220  
I do forbid Prince Ned to give  
    Prince Tom a halfpenny.

‘He hath a store of money,  
    But ne’er was known to lend it;  
He never helped his brother; 225  
    The poor he ne’er befriended;  
He hath no need of property  
    Who knows not how to spend it.

“Poor Edward knows but how to spend,  
    And thrifty Tom to hoard; 230  
Let Thomas be the steward then,  
    And Edward be the lord;  
And as the honest labourer  
    Is worthy his reward,

“I pray Prince Ned, my second son, 235  
    And my successor dear,  
To pay to his intendant  
    Five hundred pounds a year;  
And to think of his old father,  
    And live and make good cheer.” 240

Such was old Brentford’s honest testament,

He did devise his moneys for the best,  
And lies in Brentford church in peaceful rest.  
Prince Edward lived, and money made and spent;  
But his good sire was wrong, it is confess'd, 245  
To say his son, young Thomas, never lent.  
He did. Young Thomas lent at interest,  
And nobly took his twenty-five per cent.

Long time the famous reign of Ned endured  
O'er Chiswick, Fulham, Brentford, Putney, Kew, 250  
But of extravagance he ne'er was cured.  
And when both died, as mortal men will do,  
'Twas commonly reported that the steward  
Was very much the richer of the two.

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