ENDYMION.

CHAPTER I.

It was a rich, warm night, at the beginning of August, when a gentleman enveloped in a cloak, for he was in evening dress, emerged from a club-house at the top of St. James' Street, and descended that celebrated eminence. He had not proceeded more than half way down the street when, encountering a friend, he stopped with some abruptness.

'I have been looking for you everywhere,' he said.

'What is it?'

'We can hardly talk about it here.'

'Shall we go to White's?'

'I have just left it, and, between ourselves, I would rather we should be more alone. 'Tis as warm as noon. Let us cross the street and get into St. James' Place. That is always my idea of solitude.'

So they crossed the street, and, at the corner of St. James' Place, met several gentlemen who had just come out of Brookes' Club-house. These saluted the companions as they passed, and said, 'Capital account from Chiswick—Lord Howard says the chief will be in Downing Street on Monday.'

'It is of Chiswick that I am going to speak to you,' said the gentleman in the cloak, putting his arm in that of his companion as they walked on. 'What I am about to tell you is known only to three persons, and is the most sacred of secrets. Nothing but our friendship could authorise me to impart it to you.'

'I hope it is something to your advantage,' said his companion.

'Nothing of that sort; it is of yourself that I am thinking. Since our political estrangement, I have never had a contented moment. From Christ Church, until that unhappy paralytic stroke, which broke up a government that had lasted fifteen years, and might have continued fifteen more, we seemed always to have been working together. That we should again unite is my dearest wish. A crisis is at hand. I want you to use it to your advantage. Know then, that what they were just saying about Chiswick is moonshine. His case is hopeless, and it has been communicated to the King.'

'Hopeless!'

'Rely upon it; it came direct from the Cottage to my friend.'

'I thought he had a mission?' said his companion, with emotion; 'and men with missions do not disappear till they have fulfilled them.'

'But why did you think so? How often have I asked you for your grounds for such a conviction! There are none. The man of the age is clearly the Duke, the saviour of Europe, in the perfection of manhood, and with an iron constitution.'

'The salvation of Europe is the affair of a past generation,' said his companion. 'We want something else now. The salvation of England should be the subject rather of our present thoughts.'

'England! why when were things more sound? Except the split among our own men, which will be now cured, there is not a cause of disquietude.'

'I have much,' said his friend.

'You never used to have any, Sidney. What extraordinary revelations can have been made to you during three months of office under a semi-Whig Ministry?'

'Your taunt is fair, though it pains me. And I confess to you that when I resolved to follow Canning and join his new allies, I had many a twinge. I was bred in the Tory camp; the Tories put me in Parliament and gave me office; I lived with

them and liked them; we dined and voted together, and together pasquinaded our opponents. And yet, after Castlereagh's death, to whom like yourself I was much attached, I had great misgivings as to the position of our party, and the future of the country. I tried to drive them from my mind, and at last took refuge in Canning, who seemed just the man appointed for an age of transition.'

'But a transition to what?'

'Well, his foreign policy was Liberal.'

'The same as the Duke's; the same as poor dear Castlereagh's. Nothing more unjust than the affected belief that there was any difference between them—a ruse of the Whigs to foster discord in our ranks. And as for domestic affairs, no one is stouter against Parliamentary Reform, while he is for the Church and no surrender, though he may make a harmless speech now and then, as many of us do, in favour of the Catholic claims.'

'Well, we will not now pursue this old controversy, my dear Ferrars, particularly if it be true, as you say, that Mr. Canning now lies upon his deathbed.'

'If! I tell you at this very moment it may be all over.'

'I am shaken to my very centre.'

'It is doubtless a great blow to you,' rejoined Mr. Ferrars, 'and I wish to alleviate it. That is why I was looking for you. The King will, of course, send for the Duke, but I can tell you there will be a disposition to draw back our friends that left us, at least the younger ones of promise. If you are awake, there is no reason why you should not retain your office.'

'I am not so sure the King will send for the Duke.'

'It is certain.'

'Well,' said his companion musingly, 'it may be fancy, but I cannot resist the feeling that this country, and the world generally, are on the eve of a great change—and I do not think the Duke is the man for the epoch.'

'I see no reason why there should be any great change; certainly not in this country,' said Mr. Ferrars. 'Here we have changed everything that was required. Peel has settled the

criminal law, and Huskisson the currency, and though I am prepared myself still further to reduce the duties on foreign imports, no one can deny that on this subject the Government is in advance of public opinion.'

'The whole affair rests on too contracted a basis,' said his companion. 'We are habituated to its exclusiveness, and, no doubt, custom in England is a power; but let some event suddenly occur which makes a nation feel or think, and the whole thing might vanish like a dream.'

'What can happen? Such affairs as the Luddites do not occur twice in a century, and as for Spafields riots, they are impossible now with Peel's new police. The country is employed and prosperous, and were it not so, the landed interest would always keep things straight.'

'It is powerful, and has been powerful for a long time; but there are other interests besides the landed interest now.'

'Well, there is the colonial interest, and the shipping interest,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and both of them thoroughly with us.'

'I was not thinking of them,' said his companion. 'It is the increase of population, and of a population not employed in the cultivation of the soil, and all the consequences of such circumstances that were passing over my mind.'

'Don't you be too doctrinaire, my dear Sidney; you and I are practical men. We must deal with the existing, the urgent; and there is nothing more pressing at this moment than the formation of a new government. What I want is to see you a member of it.'

'Ah!' said his companion with a sigh, 'do you really think it so near as that?'

'Why, what have we been talking of all this time, my dear Sidney? Clear your head of all doubt, and, if possible, of all regrets; we must deal with facts, and we must deal with them to-morrow.'

'I still think he had a mission,' said Sidney with a sigh, 'if it were only to bring hope to a people.'

'Well, I do not see he could have done anything more,' said

Mr. Ferrars, 'nor do I believe his government would have lasted during the session. However, I must now say good-night, for I must look in at the Square. Think well of what I have said, and let me hear from you as soon as you can.'

CHAPTER II.

Zenobia was the queen of London, of fashion, and of the Tory party. When she was not holding high festivals, or attending them, she was always at home to her intimates, and as she deigned but rarely to honour the assemblies of others with her presence, she was generally at her evening post to receive the initiated. To be her invited guest under such circumstances proved at once that you had entered the highest circle of the social Paradise.

Zenobia was leaning back on a brilliant sofa, supported by many cushions, and a great personage, grey-headed and blue-ribboned, who was permitted to share the honours of the high place, was hanging on her animated and inspiring accents. An ambassador, in an armed chair which he had placed somewhat before her, while he listened with apparent devotion to the oracle, now and then interposed a remark, polished and occasionally cynical. More remote, some dames of high degree were surrounded by a chosen band of rank and fashion and celebrity; and now and then was heard a silver laugh, and now and then was breathed a gentle sigh. Servants glided about the suite of summer chambers, occasionally with sherbets and ices, and sometimes a lady entered and saluted Zenobia, and then retreated to the general group, and sometimes a gentleman entered, and pressed the hand of Zenobia to his lips, and then vanished into air.

'What I want you to see,' said Zenobia, 'is that reaction is

the law of life, and that we are on the eve of a great reaction. Since Lord Castlereagh's death we have had five years of revolution—nothing but change, and every change has been disastrous. Abroad we are in league with all the conspirators of the Continent, and if there were a general war we should not have an ally; at home our trade, I am told, is quite ruined, and we are deluged with foreign articles; while, thanks to Mr. Huskisson, the country banks, which enabled Mr. Pitt to carry on the war and saved England, are all broken. There was one thing, of which I thought we should always be proud, and that was our laws and their administration; but now our most sacred enactments are questioned, and people are told to call out for the reform of our courts of judicature, which used to be the glory of the land. This cannot last. I see, indeed, many signs of national disgust; people would have borne a great deal from poor Lord Liverpool—for they knew he was a good man, though I always thought a weak one; but when it was found that this boasted Liberalism only meant letting the Whigs into office—who, if they had always been in office, would have made us the slaves of Bonaparte—their eyes were opened. Depend upon it, the reaction has commenced.'

'We shall have some trouble with France,' said the ambassador, 'unless there is a change here.'

'The Church is weary of the present men,' said the great personage. 'No one really knows what they are after.'

'And how can the country be governed without the Church?' exclaimed Zenobia. 'If the country once thinks the Church is in danger, the affair will soon be finished. The King ought to be told what is going on.'

'Nothing is going on,' said the ambassador; 'but everybody is afraid of something.'

'The King's friends should impress upon him never to lose sight of the landed interest,' said the great personage.

'How can any government go on without the support of the Church and the land?' exclaimed Zenobia. 'It is quite unnatural.'

'That is the mystery,' remarked the ambassador. 'Here

is a government, supported by none of the influences hitherto deemed indispensable, and yet it exists.'

'The newspapers support it,' said the great personage, 'and the Dissenters, who are trying to bring themselves into notice, and who are said to have some influence in the northern counties, and the Whigs, who are in a hole, are willing to seize the hand of the ministry to help them out of it; and then there is always a number of people who will support any government—and so the thing works.'

'They have got a new name for this hybrid sentiment,' said the ambassador. 'They call it public opinion.'

'How very absurd!' said Zenobia; 'a mere nickname. As if there could be any opinion but that of the Sovereign and the two Houses of Parliament.'

'They are trying to introduce here the continental Liberalism,' said the great personage. 'Now we know what Liberalism means on the continent. It means the abolition of property and religion. Those ideas would not suit this country; and I often puzzle myself to foresee how they will attempt to apply Liberal opinions here.'

'I shall always think,' said Zenobia, 'that Lord Liverpool went much too far, though I never said so in his time; for I always uphold my friends.'

'Well, we shall see what Canning will do about the Test and Corporation Acts,' said the great personage. 'I understand they mean to push him.'

'By the by, how is he really?' said the ambassador. 'What are the accounts this afternoon?'

'Here is a gentleman who will tell us,' said Zenobia, as Mr. Ferrars entered and saluted her.

'And what is your news from Chiswick?' she inquired.

They say at Brookes', that he will be at Downing Street on Monday.'

'I doubt it,' said Zenobia, but with an expression of disappointment.

Zenobia invited Mr. Ferrars to join her immediate circle.

The great personage and the ambassador were confidentially affable to one whom Zenobia so distinguished. Their conversation was in hushed tones, as become the initiated. Even Zenobia seemed subdued, and listened; and to listen, among her many talents, was perhaps her rarest. Mr. Ferrars was one of her favourites, and Zenobia liked young men who she thought would become ministers of State.

An Hungarian Princess who had quitted the opera early that she might look in at Zenobia's was now announced. The arrival of this great lady made a stir. Zenobia embraced her, and the great personage with affectionate homage yielded to her instantly the place of honour, and then soon retreated to the laughing voices in the distance that had already more than once attracted and charmed his ear.

'Mind; I see you to-morrow,' said Zenobia to Mr. Ferrars as he also withdrew. 'I shall have something to tell you.'

CHAPTER III.

The father of Mr. Ferrars had the reputation of being the son of a once somewhat celebrated statesman, but the only patrimony he inherited from his presumed parent was a clerkship in the Treasury, where he found himself drudging at an early age. Nature had endowed him with considerable abilities, and peculiarly adapted to the scene of their display. It was difficult to decide which was most remarkable, his shrewdness or his capacity of labour. His quickness of perception and mastery of details made him in a few years an authority in the office, and a Secretary of the Treasury, who was quite ignorant of details, but who was a good judge of human character, had the sense to appoint Ferrars his private secretary. This happy preferment in time opened the whole official world to one not only singularly qualified for that kind of life, but who possessed the peculiar

gifts that were then commencing to be much in demand in those circles. We were then entering that era of commercial and financial reform which had been, if not absolutely occasioned, certainly precipitated, by the revolt of our colonies. Knowledge of finance and acquaintance with tariffs were then rare gifts, and before five years of his private secretaryship had expired, Ferrars was mentioned to Mr. Pitt as the man at the Treasury who could do something that the great minister required. This decided his lot. Mr. Pitt found in Ferrars the instrument he wanted, and appreciating all his qualities placed him in a position which afforded them full play. The minister returned Ferrars to Parliament, for the Treasury then had boroughs of its own, and the new member was preferred to an important and laborious post. So long as Pitt and Grenville were in the ascendant, Mr. Ferrars toiled and flourished. He was exactly the man they liked; unwearied, vigilant, clear and cold; with a dash of natural sarcasm developed by a sharp and varied experience. He disappeared from the active world in the latter years of the Liverpool reign, when a newer generation and more bustling ideas successfully asserted their claims; but he retired with the solace of a sinecure, a pension, and a privy-councillorship. The Cabinet he had never entered, nor dared to hope to enter. It was the privilege of an inner circle even in our then contracted public life. It was the dream of Ferrars to revenge in this respect his fate in the person of his son, and only child. He was resolved that his offspring should enjoy all those advantages of education and breeding and society of which he himself had been deprived. For him was to be reserved a full initiation in those costly ceremonies which, under the names of Eton and Christ Church, in his time fascinated and dazzled mankind. His son, William Pitt Ferrars, realised even more than his father's hopes. Extremely good-looking, he was gifted with a precocity of talent. He was the marvel of Eton and the hope of Oxford. As a boy, his Latin verses threw enraptured tutors into paroxysms of praise, while debating societies hailed with acclamation clearly another heaven-born minister. He went up to Oxford

about the time that the examinations were reformed and rendered really efficient. This only increased his renown, for the name of Ferrars figured among the earliest double-firsts. Those were days when a crack university reputation often opened the doors of the House of Commons to a young aspirant; at least, after a season. But Ferrars had not to wait. His father, who watched his career with the passionate interest with which a Newmarket man watches the development of some gifted yearling, took care that all the odds should be in his favour in the race of life. An old colleague of the elder Mr. Ferrars, a worthy peer with many boroughs, placed a seat at the disposal of the youthful hero, the moment he was prepared to accept it, and he might be said to have left the University only to enter the House of Commons.

There, if his career had not yet realised the dreams of his youthful admirers, it had at least been one of progress and unbroken prosperity. His first speech was successful, though florid, but it was on foreign affairs, which permit rhetoric, and in those days demanded at least one Virgilian quotation. In this latter branch of oratorical adornment Ferrars was never deficient. No young man of that time, and scarcely any old one, ventured to address Mr. Speaker without being equipped with a Latin passage. Ferrars, in this respect, was triply armed. Indeed, when he entered public life, full of hope and promise, though disciplined to a certain extent by his mathematical training, he had read very little more than some Latin writers, some Greek plays, and some treatises of Aristotle. These with a due course of Bampton Lectures and some dipping into the 'Quarterly Review,' then in its prime, qualified a man in those days, not only for being a member of Parliament, but becoming a candidate for the responsibility of statesmanship. Ferrars made his way; for two years he was occasionally asked by the minister to speak, and then Lord Castlereagh, who liked young men, made him a Lord of the Treasury. He was Under-Secretary of State, and 'very rising,' when the death of Lord Liverpool brought about the severance of the Tory party, and Mr. Ferrars, mainly under the advice of Zenobia, resigned his office when Mr. Canning was

appointed Minister, and cast in his lot with the great destiny of the Duke of Wellington.

The elder Ferrars had the reputation of being wealthy. It was supposed that he had enjoyed opportunities of making money, and had availed himself of them, but this was not true. Though a cynic, and with little respect for his fellow-creatures, Ferrars had a pride in official purity, and when the Government was charged with venality and corruption, he would observe, with a dry chuckle, that he had seen a great deal of life, and that for his part he would not much trust any man out of Downing Street. He had been unable to resist the temptation of connecting his life with that of an individual of birth and rank; and in a weak moment, perhaps his only one, he had given his son a stepmother in a still good-looking and very expensive Viscountess-Dowager.

Mr. Ferrars was anxious that his son should make a great alliance, but he was so distracted between prudential considerations and his desire that in the veins of his grand-children there should flow blood of undoubted nobility, that he could never bring to his purpose that clear and concentrated will which was one of the causes of his success in life; and, in the midst of his perplexities, his son unexpectedly settled the question himself. Though naturally cold and calculating, William Ferrars, like most of us, had a vein of romance in his being, and it asserted itself. There was a Miss Carey, who suddenly became the beauty of the season. She was an orphan, and reputed to be no inconsiderable heiress, and was introduced to the world by an aunt who was a duchess, and who meant that her niece should be the same. Everybody talked about them, and they went everywhere—among other places to the House of Commons, where Miss Carey, spying the senators from the old ventilator in the ceiling of St. Stephen's Chapel, dropped in her excitement her opera-glass, which fell at the feet of Mr. Under-Secretary Ferrars. He hastened to restore it to its beautiful owner, whom he found accompanied by several of his friends, and he was not only thanked, but invited to remain with them;

and the next day he called, and he called very often afterwards, and many other things happened, and at the end of July the beauty of the season was married not to a Duke, but to a rising man, who Zenobia, who at first disapproved of the match—for Zenobia never liked her male friends to marry—was sure would one day be Prime Minister of England.

Mrs. Ferrars was of the same opinion as Zenobia, for she was ambitious, and the dream was captivating. And Mrs. Ferrars soon gained Zenobia's good graces, for she had many charms, and, though haughty to the multitude, was a first-rate flatterer. Zenobia liked flattery, and always said she did. Mr. Under-Secretary Ferrars took a mansion in Hill Street, and furnished it with befitting splendour. His dinners were celebrated, and Mrs. Ferrars gave suppers after the opera. The equipages of Mrs. Ferrars were distinguished, and they had a large retinue of servants. They had only two children, and they were twins, a brother and a sister, who were brought up like the children of princes. Partly for them, and partly because a minister should have a Tusculum, the Ferrars soon engaged a magnificent villa at Wimbledon, which had the advantage of admirable stables, convenient, as Mrs. Ferrars was fond of horses, and liked the children too, with their fancy ponies, to be early accustomed to riding. All this occasioned expenditure, but old Mr. Ferrars made his son a liberal allowance, and young Mrs. Ferrars was an heiress, or the world thought so, which is nearly the same, and then, too, young Mr. Ferrars was a rising man, in office, and who would always be in office for the rest of his life; at least, Zenobia said so, because he was on the right side and the Whigs were nowhere, and never would be anywhere, which was quite right, as they had wished to make us the slaves of Bonaparte.

When the King, after much hesitation, sent for Mr. Canning, on the resignation of Lord Liverpool, the Zenobian theory seemed a little at fault, and William Ferrars absolutely out of office had more than one misgiving; but after some months of doubt and anxiety, it seemed after all the great lady was

right. The unexpected disappearance of Mr. Canning from the scene, followed by the transient and embarrassed phantom of Lord Goderich, seemed to indicate an inexorable destiny that England should be ruled by the most eminent man of the age, and the most illustrious of her citizens. William Ferrars, under the inspiration of Zenobia, had thrown in his fortunes with the Duke, and after nine months of disquietude found his due reward. In the January that succeeded the August conversation in St. James' Street with Sidney Wilton, William Ferrars was sworn of the Privy Council, and held high office, on the verge of the Cabinet.

Mr. Ferrars had a dinner party in Hill Street on the day he had returned from Windsor with the seals of his new office. The catastrophe of the Goderich Cabinet, almost on the eve of the meeting of Parliament, had been so sudden, that, not anticipating such a state of affairs, Ferrars, among his other guests, had invited Sidney Wilton. He was rather regretting this when, as his carriage stopped at his own door, he observed that very gentleman on his threshold.

Wilton greeted him warmly, and congratulated him on his promotion. 'I do so at once,' he added, 'because I shall not have the opportunity this evening. I was calling here in the hope of seeing Mrs. Ferrars, and asking her to excuse me from being your guest to-day.'

'Well, it is rather awkward,' said Ferrars, 'but I could have no idea of this when you were so kind as to say you would come.'

'Oh, nothing of that sort,' said Sidney. 'I am out and you are in, and I hope you may be in for a long, long time. I dare say it may be so, and the Duke is the man of the age, as you always said he was. I hope your being in office is not to deprive me of your pleasant dinners; it would be too bad to lose my place both at Whitehall and in Hill Street.'

'I trust that will never happen, my dear fellow; but to-day I thought it might be embarrassing.'

'Not at all; I could endure without wincing even the trium-

phant glance of Zenobia. The fact is, I have some business of the most pressing nature which has suddenly arisen, and which demands my immediate attention.'

Ferrars expressed his regret, though in fact he was greatly relieved, and they parted.

Zenobia did dine with the William Ferrars to-day, and her handsome husband came with her, a knight of the garter, and just appointed to a high office in the household by the new government. Even the excitement of the hour did not disturb his indigenous repose. It was a dignified serenity, quite natural, and quite compatible with easy and even cordial manners, and an address always considerate even when not sympathetic. He was not a loud or a long talker, but his terse remarks were full of taste and a just appreciation of things. If they were sometimes trenchant, the blade was of fine temper. Old Mr. Ferrars was there and the Viscountess Edgware. His hair had become quite silvered, and his cheek rosy as a December apple. His hazel eyes twinkled with satisfaction as he remembered the family had now produced two privy councillors. Lord Pomeroy was there, the great lord who had returned William Ferrars to Parliament, a little man, quiet, shy, rather insignificant in appearance, but who observed everybody and everything; a conscientious man, who was always doing good, in silence and secrecy, and denounced as a boroughmonger, had never sold a seat in his life, and was always looking out for able men of character to introduce them to public affairs. It was not a formal party, but had grown up in great degree out of the circumstances of the moment. There were more men than women, and all men in office or devoted supporters of the new ministry.

Mrs. Ferrars, without being a regular beauty, had a voluptuous face and form. Her complexion was brilliant, with large and long-lashed eyes of blue. Her mouth was certainly too large, but the pouting richness of her lips and the splendour of her teeth baffled criticism. She was a woman who was always gorgeously or fantastically attired.

'I never can understand,' would sometimes observe Zenobia's husband to his brilliant spouse, 'how affairs are carried on in this world. Now we have, my dear, fifty thousand per annum; and I do not see how Ferrars can have much more than five; and yet he lives much as we do, perhaps better. I know Gibson showed me a horse last week that I very much wanted, but I would not give him two hundred guineas for it. I called there to-day to look after it again, for it would have suited me exactly, but I was told I was too late, and it was sold to Mrs. Ferrars.'

'My dear, you know I do not understand money matters,' Zenobia said in reply. 'I never could; but you should remember that old Ferrars must be very rich, and that William Ferrars is the most rising man of the day, and is sure to be in the Cabinet before he is forty.'

Everybody had an appetite for dinner to-day, and the dinner was worthy of the appetites. Zenobia's husband declared to himself that he never dined so well, though he gave his *chef* £500 a year, and old Lord Pomeroy, who had not yet admitted French wines to his own table, seemed quite abashed with the number of his wine-glasses and their various colours, and, as he tasted one succulent dish after another, felt a proud satisfaction in having introduced to public life so distinguished a man as William Ferrars.

With the dessert, not without some ceremony, were introduced the two most remarkable guests of the entertainment, and these were the twins; children of singular beauty, and dressed, if possible, more fancifully and brilliantly than their mamma. They resembled each other, and had the same brilliant complexions, rich chestnut hair, delicately arched brows, and dark blue eyes. Though only eight years of age, a most unchildlike self-possession distinguished them. The expression of their countenances was haughty, disdainful, and supercilious. Their beautiful features seemed quite unimpassioned, and they moved as if they expected everything to yield to them. The girl, whose long ringlets were braided with pearls, was ushered

to a seat next to her father, and, like her brother, who was placed by Mrs. Ferrars, was soon engaged in negligently tasting delicacies, while she seemed apparently unconscious of any one being present, except when she replied to those who addressed her with a stare and a haughty monosyllable. The boy, in a black velvet jacket with large Spanish buttons of silver filagree, a shirt of lace, and a waistcoat of white satin, replied with reserve, but some condescension, to the good-natured but half-humorous inquiries of the husband of Zenobia.

'And when do you go to school?' asked his lordship in a kind voice and with a laughing eye.

'I shall go to Eton in two years,' replied the child without the slightest emotion, and not withdrawing his attention from the grapes he was tasting, or even looking at his inquirer, 'and then I shall go to Christ Church, and then I shall go into Parliament.'

'Myra,' said an intimate of the family, a handsome private secretary of Mr. Ferrars, to the daughter of the house, as he supplied her plate with some choicest delicacies, 'I hope you have not forgotten your engagement to me which you made at Wimbledon two years ago?'

'What engagement?' she haughtily inquired.

'To marry me.'

'I should not think of marrying any one who was not in the House of Lords,' she replied, and she shot at him a glance of contempt.

The ladies rose. As they were ascending the stairs, one of them said to Mrs. Ferrars, 'Your son's name is very pretty, but it is very uncommon, is it not?'

''Tis a family name. The first Carey who bore it was a courtier of Charles the First, and we have never since been without it. William wanted our boy to be christened Pom roy, but I was always resolved, if I ever had a son, that he should be named ENDYMION.'

CHAPTER IV.

About the time that the ladies rose from the dinner-table in Hill Street, Mr. Sidney Wilton entered the hall of the Clarendon Hotel, and murmured an inquiry of the porter. Whereupon a bell was rung, and soon a foreign servant appeared, and bowing, invited Mr. Wilton to ascend the staircase and follow him. Mr. Wilton was ushered through an ante-chamber into a room of some importance, lofty and decorated, and obviously adapted for distinguished guests. On a principal table a desk was open and many papers strewn about. Apparently some person had only recently been writing there. There were in the room several musical instruments; the piano was open, there was a harp and a guitar. The room was rather dimly lighted, but cheerful from the steady blaze of the fire, before which Mr. Wilton stood, not long alone, for an opposite door opened, and a lady advanced leading with her left hand a youth of interesting mien, and about twelve years of age. The lady was fair and singularly thin. It seemed that her delicate hand must really be transparent. Her cheek was sunk, but the expression of her large brown eyes was inexpressibly pleasing. She wore her own hair, once the most celebrated in Europe, and still uncovered. Though the prodigal richness of the tresses had disappeared, the arrangement was still striking from its grace. That rare quality pervaded the being of this lady, and it was impossible not to be struck with her carriage as she advanced to greet her guest; free from all affectation and yet full of movement and gestures, which might have been the study of painters.

'Ah!' she exclaimed as she gave him her hand, which he pressed to his lips, 'you are ever faithful.'

Seating themselves, she continued, 'You have not seen my boy since he sate upon your knee. Florestan, salute Mr. Wilton, your mother's most cherished friend.'

'This is a sudden arrival,' said Mr. Wilton.

'Well, they would not let us rest,' said the lady. 'Our only

refuge was Switzerland, but I cannot breathe among the mountains, and so, after a while, we stole to an obscure corner of the south, and for a time we were tranquil. But soon the old story: representations, remonstrances, warnings, and threats, appeals to Vienna, and lectures from Prince Metternich, not the less impressive because they were courteous, and even gallant.'

'And had nothing occurred to give a colour to such complaints? Or was it sheer persecution?'

'Well, you know,' replied the lady, 'we wished to remain quiet and obscure; but where the lad is, they will find him out. It often astonishes me. I believe if we were in the centre of a forest in some Indian isle, with no companions but monkeys and elephants, a secret agent would appear—some devoted victim of our family, prepared to restore our fortunes and renovate his own. I speak the truth to you always. I have never countenanced these people; I have never encouraged them; but it is impossible rudely to reject the sympathy of those who, after all, are your fellow-sufferers, and some of whom have given proof of even disinterested devotion. For my own part, I have never faltered in my faith, that Florestan would some day sit on the throne of his father, dark as appears to be our life; but I have never much believed that the great result could be occasioned or precipitated by intrigues, but rather by events more powerful than man, and led on by that fatality in which his father believed.'

'And now you think of remaining here?' said Mr. Wilton.

'No,' said the lady; 'that I cannot do. I love everything in this country except its climate and, perhaps, its hotels. I think of trying the south of Spain, and fancy, if quite alone, I might vegetate there unnoticed. I cannot bring myself altogether to quit Europe. I am, my dear Sidney, intensely European. But Spain is not exactly the country I should fix upon to form kings and statesmen. And this is the point on which I wish to consult you. I want Florestan to receive an English education, and I want you to put me in the way of accomplishing this. It might be convenient, under such cir-

cumstances, that he should not obtrude his birth—perhaps, that it should be concealed. He has many honourable names besides the one which indicates the state to which he was born. But, on all these points, we want your advice.' And she seemed to appeal to her son, who bowed his head with a slight smile, but did not speak.

Mr. Wilton expressed his deep interest in her wishes, and promised to consider how they might best be accomplished, and then the conversation took a more general tone.

'This change of government in your country,' said the lady, 'so unexpected, so utterly unforeseen, disturbs me; in fact, it decided my hesitating movements. I cannot but believe that the accession of the Duke of Wellington to power must be bad, at least, for us. It is essentially reactionary. They are triumphing at Vienna.'

'Have they cause?' said Mr. Wilton. 'I am an impartial witness, for I have no post in the new administration; but the leading colleagues of Mr. Canning form part of it, and the conduct of foreign affairs remains in the same hands.'

'That is consoling,' said the lady. 'I wonder if Lord Dudley would see me. Perhaps not. Ministers do not love pretenders. I knew him when I was not a pretender,' added the lady, with the sweetest of smiles, 'and thought him agreeable. He was witty. Ah! Sidney, those were happy days. I look back to the past with regret, but without remorse. One might have done more good, but one did some;' and she sighed.

'You seemed to me,' said Sidney with emotion, 'to diffuse benefits and blessings among all around you.'

'And I read,' said the lady, a little indignant, 'in some memoirs the other day, that our court was a corrupt and dissolute court. It was a court of pleasure, if you like; but of pleasure that animated and refined, and put the world in good humour, which, after all, is good government. The most corrupt and dissolute courts on the continent of Europe that I have known,' said the lady, 'have been outwardly the dullest and most decorous.'

'My memory of those days,' said Mr. Wilton, 'is of ceaseless grace and inexhaustible charm.'

'Well,' said the lady, 'if I sinned I have at least suffered. And I hope they were only sins of omission. I wanted to see everybody happy, and tried to make them so. But let us talk no more of ourselves. The unfortunate are always egotistical. Tell me something of Mr. Wilton; and, above all, tell me why you are not in the new government.'

'I have not been invited,' said Mr. Wilton. 'There are more claimants than can be satisfied, and my claims are not very strong. It is scarcely a disappointment to me. I shall continue in public life; but, so far as political responsibility is concerned, I would rather wait. I have some fancies on that head, but I will not trouble you with them. My time, therefore, is at my command; and so,' he added smilingly, 'I can attend to the education of Prince Florestan.'

'Do you hear that, Florestan?' said the lady to her son; 'I told you we had a friend. Thank Mr. Wilton.'

And the young Prince bowed as before, but with a more serious expression. He, however, said nothing.

'I see you have not forgotten your most delightful pursuit,' said Mr. Wilton, and he looked towards the musical instruments.

'No,' said the lady; 'throned or discrowned, music has ever been the charm or consolation of my life.'

'Pleasure should follow business,' said Mr. Wilton, 'and we have transacted ours. Would it be too bold if I asked again to hear those tones which have so often enchanted me?'

'My voice has not fallen off,' said the lady, 'for you know it was never first-rate. But they were kind enough to say it had some expression, probably because I generally sang my own words to my own music. I will sing you my farewell to Florestan,' she added gaily, and she took up her guitar, and then in tones of melancholy sweetness, breaking at last into a gushing burst of long-controlled affection, she expressed the agony and devotion of a mother's heart. Mr. Wilton was a little agitated; her son left the room. The mother turned round with a smiling

face, and said, 'The darling cannot bear to hear it, but I sing it on purpose, to prepare him for the inevitable.'

'He is soft-hearted,' said Mr. Wilton.

'He is the most affectionate of beings,' replied the mother. 'Affectionate and mysterious. I can say no more. I ought to tell you his character. I cannot. You may say he may have none. I do not know. He has abilities, for he acquires knowledge with facility, and knows a great deal for a boy. But he never gives an opinion. He is silent and solitary. Poor darling! he has rarely had companions, and that may be the cause. He seems to me always to be thinking.'

'Well, a public school will rouse him from his reveries,' said Mr. Wilton.

'As he is away at this moment, I will say that which I should not care to say before his face,' said the lady. 'You are about to do me a great service, not the first; and before I leave this, we may—we must—meet again more than once, but there is no time like the present. The separation between Florestan and myself may be final. It is sad to think of such things, but they must be thought of, for they are probable. I still look in a mirror, Sidney; I am not so frightened by what has occurred since we first met, to be afraid of that—but I never deceive myself. I do not know what may be the magical effect of the raisins of Malaga, but if it save my life the grape cure will indeed achieve a miracle. Do not look gloomy. Those who have known real grief seldom seem sad. I have been struggling with sorrow for ten years, but I have got through it with music and singing, and my boy. See now—he will be a source of expense, and it will not do for you to be looking to a woman for supplies. Women are generous, but not precise in money matters. I have some excuse, for the world has treated me not very well. I never got my pension regularly; now I never get it at all. So much for the treaties, but everybody laughs at them. Here is the fortune of Florestan, and I wish it all to be spent on his education,' and she took a case from her bosom. 'They are not the crown jewels, though.

The memoirs I was reading the other day say I ran away with them. That is false, like most things said of me. But these are gems of Golconda, which I wish you to realise and expend for his service. They were the gift of love, and they were worn in love.'

'It is unnecessary,' said Mr. Wilton, deprecating the offer by his attitude.

'Hush!' said the lady. 'I am still a sovereign to you, and I must be obeyed.'

Mr. Wilton took the case of jewels, pressed it to his lips, and then placed it in the breast pocket of his coat. He was about to retire, when the lady added, 'I must give you this copy of my song.'

'And you will write my name on it?'

'Certainly,' replied the lady, as she went to the table and wrote, 'For Mr. Sidney Wilton, from AGRIPPINA.'

CHAPTER V.

IN the meantime, power and prosperity clustered round the roof and family of Ferrars. He himself was in the prime of manhood, with an exalted position in the world of politics, and with a prospect of the highest. The Government of which he was a member was not only deemed strong, but eternal. The favour of the Court and the confidence of the country were alike lavished on it. The government of the Duke could only be measured by his life, and his influence was irresistible. It was a dictatorship of patriotism. The country, long accustomed to a strong and undisturbed administration, and frightened by the changes and catastrophes which had followed the retirement of Lord Liverpool, took refuge in the powerful will and splendid reputation of a real hero.

Mrs. Ferrars was as ambitious of social distinction as her

husband was of political power. She was a woman of taste, but of luxurious taste. She had a passion for splendour, which, though ever regulated by a fine perception of the fitness of things, was still costly. Though her mien was in general haughty, she flattered Zenobia, and consummately. Zenobia, who liked handsome people, even handsome women, and persons who were dressed beautifully, and delighted her eye by their grace and fine manners, was quite won by Mrs. Ferrars, against whom at first she was inclined to be a little prejudiced. There was an entire alliance between them, and though Mrs. Ferrars greatly influenced and almost ruled Zenobia, the wife of the minister was careful always to acknowledge the Queen of Fashion as her suzerain.

The great world then, compared with the huge society of the present period, was limited in its proportions, and composed of elements more refined though far less various. It consisted mainly of the great landed aristocracy, who had quite absorbed the nabobs of India, and had nearly appropriated the huge West Indian fortunes. Occasionally, an eminent banker or merchant invested a large portion of his accumulations in land, and in the purchase of parliamentary influence, and was in time duly admitted into the sanctuary. But those vast and successful invasions of society by new classes which have since occurred, though impending, had not yet commenced. The manufacturers, the railway kings, the colossal contractors, the discoverers of nuggets, had not yet found their place in society and the senate. There were then, perhaps, more great houses open than at the present day, but there were very few little ones. The necessity of providing regular occasions for the assembling of the miscellaneous world of fashion led to the institution of Almack's, which died out in the advent of the new system of society, and in the fierce competition of its inexhaustible private entertainments.

The season then was brilliant and sustained, but it was not flurried. People did not go to various parties on the same night. They remained where they were assembled, and, not being in a

hurry, were more agreeable than they are at the present day. Conversation was more cultivated; manners, though unconstrained, were more stately; and the world, being limited, knew itself much better. On the other hand, the sympathies of society were more contracted than they are at present. The pressure of population had not opened the heart of man. The world attended to its poor in its country parishes, and subscribed and danced for the Spitalfields weavers when their normal distress had overflowed, but their knowledge of the people did not exceed these bounds, and the people knew very little more about themselves. They were only half born.

The darkest hour precedes the dawn, and a period of unusual stillness often, perhaps usually, heralds the social convulsion. At this moment the general tranquillity and even content were remarkable. In politics the Whigs were quite prepared to extend to the Duke the same provisional confidence that had been accepted by Mr. Canning, and conciliation began to be an accepted phrase, which meant in practice some share on their part of the good things of the State. The country itself required nothing. There was a general impression, indeed, that they had been advancing at a rather rapid rate, and that it was as well that the reins should be entrusted to a wary driver. Zenobia, who represented society, was enraptured that the career of revolution had been stayed. She still mourned over the concession of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway in a moment of Liberal infatuation, but flattered herself that any extension of the railway system might certainly be arrested, and on this head the majority of society, perhaps even of the country, was certainly on her side.

'I have some good news for you,' said one of her young favourites as he attended her reception. 'We have prevented this morning the lighting of Grosvenor Square by gas by a large majority.'

'I felt confident that disgrace would never occur,' said Zenobia, triumphant. 'And by a large majority! I wonder how Lord Pomeroy voted.'

'Against us.'

'How can one save this country?' exclaimed Zenobia. 'I believe now the story that he has ordered Lady Pomeroy not to go to the Drawing Room in a sedan chair.'

One bright May morning in the spring that followed the formation of the government that was to last for ever, Mrs. Ferrars received the world at a fanciful entertainment in the beautiful grounds of her Wimbledon villa. The day was genial, the scene was flushed with roses and pink thorns, and brilliant groups, amid bursts of music, clustered and sauntered on the green turf of bowery lawns. Mrs. Ferrars, on a rustic throne, with the wondrous twins in still more wonderful attire, distributed alternate observations of sympathetic gaiety to a Russian Grand Duke and to the serene heir of a German principality. And yet there was really an expression on her countenance of restlessness, not to say anxiety, which ill accorded with the dulcet tones and the wreathed smiles which charmed her august companions. Zenobia, the great Zenobia, had not arrived, and the hours were advancing. The Grand Duke played with the beautiful and haughty infants, and the German Prince inquired of Endymion whether he were destined to be one of His Majesty's guards; but still Zenobia did not come, and Mrs. Ferrars could scarcely conceal her vexation. But there was no real occasion for it. For even at this moment, with avant-courier and outriders and badged postillions on her four horses of race, the lodge-gates were opening for the reception of the great lady, who herself soon appeared in the distance; and Mrs. Ferrars, accompanied by her distinguished guests, immediately rose and advanced to receive the Queen of Fashion. No one appreciated a royal presence more highly than Zenobia. It was her habit to impress upon her noble fellows of both sexes that there were relations of intimacy between herself and the royal houses of Europe, which were not shared by her class. She liked to play the part of a social mediator between the aristocracy and royal houses. A German Serenity was her delight, but a Russian Grand Duke was

her embodiment of power and pomp, and sound principles in their most authentic and orthodox form. And yet though she addressed their highnesses with her usual courtly vivacity, and poured forth inquiries which seemed to indicate the most familiar acquaintance with the latest incidents from Schönbrunn or the Rhine, though she embraced her hostess, and even kissed the children, the practised eye of Mrs. Ferrars, whose life was a study of Zenobia, detected that her late appearance had been occasioned by an important cause, and, what was more, that Zenobia was anxious to communicate it to her. With feminine tact Mrs. Ferrars moved on with her guests until the occasion offered when she could present some great ladies to the princes; and then dismissing the children on appropriate missions, she was not surprised when Zenobia immediately exclaimed: 'Thank heaven, we are at last alone! You must have been surprised I was so late. Well, guess what has happened?' and then as Mrs. Ferrars shook her head, she continued: 'They are all four out!'

'All four!'

'Yes; Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, and Charles Grant follow Huskisson. I do not believe the first ever meant to go, but the Duke would not listen to his hypocritical explanations, and the rest have followed. I am surprised about Lord Dudley, as I know he loved his office.'

'I am alarmed,' said Mrs. Ferrars.

'Not the slightest cause for fear,' exclaimed the intrepid Zenobia. 'It must have happened sooner or later. I am delighted at it. We shall now have a cabinet of our own. They never would have rested till they had brought in some Whigs, and the country hates the Whigs. No wonder, when we remember that if they had had their way we should have been wearing sabots at this time, with a French prefect probably in Holland House.'

'And whom will they put in the cabinet?' inquired Mrs. Ferrars.

'Our good friends, I hope,' said Zenobia, with an inspiring

smile; 'but I have heard nothing about that yet. I am a little sorry about Lord Dudley, as I think they have drawn him into their mesh; but as for the other three, especially Huskisson and Lord Palmerston, I can tell you the Duke has never had a quiet moment since they joined him. We shall now begin to reign. The only mistake was ever to have admitted them. I think now we have got rid of Liberalism for ever.'

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Ferrars did not become a cabinet minister, but this was a vexation rather than a disappointment, and transient. The unexpected vacancies were filled by unexpected personages. So great a change in the frame of the ministry, without any promotion for himself, was on the first impression not agreeable, but reflection and the sanguine wisdom of Zenobia soon convinced him that all was for the best, that the thought of such rapid preferment was unreasonable, and that time and the due season must inevitably bring all that he could desire, especially as any term to the duration of the ministry was not now to be foreseen: scarcely indeed possible. In short, it was shown to him that the Tory party, renovated and restored, had entered upon a new lease of authority, which would stamp its character on the remainder of the nineteenth century, as Mr. Pitt and his school had marked its earlier and memorable years.

And yet this very reconstruction of the government necessarily led to an incident which, in its consequences, changed the whole character of English politics, and commenced a series of revolutions which has not yet closed.

One of the new ministers who had been preferred to a place which Mr. Ferrars might have filled was an Irish gentleman, and a member for one of the most considerable counties in his country. He was a good speaker, and the government was de-

ficient in debating power in the House of Commons; he was popular and influential.

The return of a cabinet minister by a large constituency was more appreciated in the days of close boroughs than at present. There was a rumour that the new minister was to be opposed, but Zenobia laughed the rumour to scorn. As she irresistibly remarked at one of her evening gatherings, 'Every landowner in the county is in his favour; therefore it is impossible.' The statistics of Zenobia were quite correct, yet the result was different from what she anticipated. An Irish lawyer, a professional agitator, himself a Roman Catholic and therefore ineligible, announced himself as a candidate in opposition to the new minister, and on the day of election, thirty thousand peasants, setting at defiance all the landowners of the county, returned O'Connell at the head of the poll, and placed among not the least memorable of historical events—the Clare election.

This event did not, however, occur until the end of the year 1828, for the state of the law then prevented the writ from being moved until that time, and during the whole of that year the Ferrars family had pursued a course of unflagging display. Courage, expenditure, and tact combined, had realised almost the height of that social ambition to which Mrs. Ferrars soared. Even in the limited and exclusive circle which then prevailed, she began to be counted among the great dames. As for the twins, they seemed quite worthy of their beautiful and luxurious mother. Proud, wilful, and selfish, they had one redeeming quality, an intense affection for each other. The sister seemed to have the commanding spirit, for Endymion was calm, but if he were ruled by his sister, she was ever willing to be his slave, and to sacrifice every consideration to his caprice and his convenience.

The year 1829 was eventful, but to Ferrars more agitating than anxious. When it was first known that the head of the cabinet, whose colleague had been defeated at Clare, was himself about to propose the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, there was a thrill throughout the country; but after a time the success of the operation was not doubted, and was anticipated

as a fresh proof of the irresistible fortune of the heroic statesman. There was some popular discontent in the country at the proposal, but it was mainly organised and stimulated by the Dissenters, and that section of Churchmen who most resembled them. The High Church party, the descendants of the old connection which had rallied round Sacheverell, had subsided into formalism, and shrank from any very active co-operation with their evangelical brethren.

The English Church had no competent leaders among the clergy. The spirit that has animated and disturbed our latter times seemed quite dead, and no one anticipated its resurrection. The bishops had been selected from college dons, men profoundly ignorant of the condition and the wants of the country. To have edited a Greek play with second-rate success, or to have been the tutor of some considerable patrician, was the qualification then deemed desirable and sufficient for an office, which at this day is at least reserved for eloquence and energy. The social influence of the episcopal bench was nothing. A prelate was rarely seen in the saloons of Zenobia. It is since the depths of religious thought have been probed, and the influence of woman in the spread and sustenance of religious feeling has again been recognised, that fascinating and fashionable prelates have become favoured guests in the refined saloons of the mighty, and, while apparently indulging in the vanities of the hour, have re-established the influence which in old days guided a Matilda or the mother of Constantine.

The end of the year 1829, however, brought a private event of moment to the Ferrars family. The elder Mr. Ferrars died. The world observed at the time how deeply affected his son was at this event. The relations between father and son had always been commendable, but the world was hardly prepared for Mr. Ferrars, junior, being so entirely overwhelmed. It would seem that nothing but the duties of public life could have restored him to his friends, and even these duties he relinquished for an unusual time. The world was curious to know the amount of his inheritance, but the proof of the will was unusually delayed,

and public events soon occurred which alike consigned the will and the will-maker to oblivion.

CHAPTER VII.

The Duke of Wellington applied himself to the treatment of the critical circumstances of 1830 with that blended patience and quickness of perception to which he owed the success of many campaigns. Quite conscious of the difficulties he had to encounter, he was nevertheless full of confidence in his ability to control them. It is probable that the paramount desire of the Duke in his effort to confirm his power was to rally and restore the ranks of the Tory party, disturbed rather than broken up by the passing of the Relief Bill. During the very heat of the struggle it was significantly observed that the head of the powerful family of Lowther, in the House of Commons, was never asked to resign his office, although both himself and his following voted invariably against the Government measure. The order of the day was the utmost courtesy to the rebels, who were treated, as some alleged, with more consideration than the compliant. At the same time the desire of the Whigs to connect, perhaps even to merge themselves in the ministerial ranks, was not neglected. A Whig had been appointed to succeed the eccentric and too uncompromising Wetherell in the office of attorney-general, other posts had been placed at their disposal, and one even, an old companion in arms of the Duke, had entered the cabinet. The confidence in the Duke's star was not diminished, and under ordinary circumstances this balanced strategy would probably have been successful. But it was destined to cope with great and unexpected events.

The first was the unexpected demise of the crown. The death of King George the Fourth at the end of the month of June, according to the then existing constitution, necessitated a disso-

lution of parliament, and so deprived the minister of that invaluable quality of time, necessary to soften and win back his estranged friends. Nevertheless, it is not improbable, that the Duke might still have succeeded, had it not been for the occurrence of the French insurrection of 1830, in the very heat of the preparations for the general election in England. The Whigs, who found the Duke going to the country without that reconstruction of his ministry on which they had counted, saw their opportunity and seized it. The triumphant riots of Paris were dignified into 'the three glorious days,' and the three glorious days were universally recognised as the triumph of civil and religious liberty. The names of Polignac and Wellington were adroitly connected together, and the phrase Parliamentary Reform began to circulate.

It was Zenobia's last reception for the season; on the morrow she was about to depart for her county, and canvass for her candidates. She was still undaunted, and never more inspiring. The excitement of the times was reflected in her manner. She addressed her arriving guests as they made their obeisance to her, asked for news and imparted it before she could be answered, declared that nothing had been more critical since '93, that there was only one man who was able to deal with the situation, and thanked Heaven he was not only in England, but in her drawing-room.

Ferrars, who had been dining with his patron, Lord Pomeroy, and had the satisfaction of feeling, that at any rate his return to the new parliament was certain, while helping himself to coffee could not refrain from saying in a low tone to a gentleman who was performing the same office, 'Our Whig friends seem in high spirits, baron.'

The gentleman thus addressed was Baron Sergius, a man of middle age. His countenance was singularly intelligent, tempered with an expression mild and winning. He had attended the Congress of Vienna to represent a fallen party, a difficult and ungracious task, but he had shown such high qualities in the fulfilment of his painful duties—so much knowledge, so

much self-control, and so much wise and unaffected conciliation —that he had won universal respect, and especially with the English plenipotentiaries, so that when he visited England, which he did frequently, the houses of both parties were open to him, and he was as intimate with the Whigs as he was with the great Duke, by whom he was highly esteemed.

'As we have got our coffee, let us sit down,' said the baron, and they withdrew to a settee against the wall.

'You know I am a Liberal, and have always been a Liberal,' said the baron; 'I know the value of civil and religious liberty, for I was born in a country where we had neither, and where we have since enjoyed either very fitfully. Nothing can be much drearier than the present lot of my country, and it is probable that these doings at Paris may help my friends a little, and they may again hold up their heads for a time; but I have seen too much, and am too old, to indulge in dreams. You are a young man and will live to see what I can only predict. The world is thinking of something else than civil and religious liberty. Those are phrases of the eighteenth century. The men who have won these 'three glorious days' at Paris, want neither civilisation nor religion. They will not be content till they have destroyed both. It is possible that they may be parried for a time; that the adroit wisdom of the house of Orleans, guided by Talleyrand, may give this movement the resemblance, and even the character, of a middle-class revolution. It is no such thing; the barricades were not erected by the middle class. I know these people; it is a fraternity, not a nation. Europe is honeycombed with their secret societies. They are spread all over Spain. Italy is entirely mined. I know more of the southern than the northern nations; but I have been assured by one who should know that the brotherhood are organised throughout Germany and even in Russia. I have spoken to the Duke about these things. He is not indifferent, or altogether incredulous, but he is so essentially practical that he can only deal with what he sees. I have spoken to the Whig leaders. They tell me that there is only one specific, and that a complete

one—constitutional government; that with representative institutions, secret societies cannot co-exist. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that with these secret societies representative institutions rather will disappear.'

CHAPTER VIII.

What unexpectedly took place in the southern part of England, and especially in the maritime counties, during the autumn of 1830, seemed rather to confirm the intimations of Baron Sergius. The people in the rural districts had become disaffected. Their discontent was generally attributed to the abuses of the Poor Law, and to the lowness of their wages. But the abuses of the Poor Law, though intolerable, were generally in favour of the labourer, and though wages in some parts were unquestionably low, it was observed that the tumultuous assemblies, ending frequently in riot, were held in districts where this cause did not prevail. The most fearful feature of the approaching anarchy was the frequent acts of incendiaries. The blazing homesteads baffled the feeble police and the helpless magistrates; and the government had reason to believe that foreign agents were actively promoting these mysterious crimes.

Amid partial discontent and general dejection came the crash of the Wellington ministry, and it required all the inspiration of Zenobia to sustain William Ferrars under the trial. But she was undaunted and sanguine as a morning in spring. Nothing could persuade her that the Whigs could ever form a government, and she was quite sure that the clerks in the public offices alone could turn them out. When the Whig government was formed, and its terrible programme announced, she laughed it to scorn, and derided with inexhaustible merriment the idea of the House of Commons passing a Reform Bill. She held a great assembly the night that General Gascoyne defeated the first

measure, and passed an evening of ecstasy in giving and receiving congratulations. The morrow brought a graver brow, but still an indomitable spirit, and through all these tempestuous times Zenobia never quailed, though mobs burnt the castles of dukes and the palaces of bishops.

Serious as was the state of affairs to William Ferrars, his condition was not so desperate as that of some of his friends. His seat at least was safe in the new parliament that was to pass a Reform Bill. As for the Tories generally, they were swept off the board. Scarcely a constituency, in which was a popular element, was faithful to them. The counties in those days were the great expounders of popular principles, and whenever England was excited, which was rare, she spoke through her freeholders. In this instance almost every Tory knight of the shire lost his seat except Lord Chandos, the member for Buckinghamshire, who owed his success entirely to his personal popularity. 'Never mind,' said Zenobia, 'what does it signify? The Lords will throw it out.'

And bravely and unceasingly she worked for this end. To assist this purpose it was necessary that a lengthened and powerful resistance to the measure should be made in the Commons; that the public mind should be impressed with its dangerous principles, and its promoters cheapened by the exposure of their corrupt arrangements and their inaccurate details. It must be confessed that these objects were resolutely kept in view, and that the Tory opposition evinced energy and abilities not unworthy of a great parliamentary occasion. Ferrars particularly distinguished himself. He rose immensely in the estimation of the House, and soon the public began to talk of him. His statistics about the condemned boroughs were astounding and unanswerable: he was the only man who seemed to know anything of the elements of the new ones. He was as eloquent too as exact,—sometimes as fervent as Burke, and always as accurate as Cocker.

'I never thought it was in William Ferrars,' said a member, musingly, to a companion as they walked home one night; I

always thought him a good man of business, and all that sort of thing—but, somehow or other, I did not think this was in him.'

'Well, he has a good deal at stake, and that brings it out of a fellow,' said his friend.

It was, however, pouring water upon sand. Any substantial resistance to the measure was from the first out of the question. Lord Chandos accomplished the only important feat, and that was the enfranchisement of the farmers. This perpetual struggle, however, occasioned a vast deal of excitement, and the actors in it often indulged in the wild credulity of impossible expectations. The saloon of Zenobia was ever thronged, and she was never more confident than when the bill passed the Commons. She knew that the King would never give his assent to the bill. His Majesty had had quite enough of going down in hackney coaches to carry revolutions. After all, he was the son of good King George, and the court would save the country, as it had often done before. 'But it will not come to that,' she added. 'The Lords will do their duty.'

'But Lord Waverley tells me,' said Ferrars, 'that there are forty of them who were against the bill last year who will vote for the second reading.'

'Never mind Lord Waverley and such addlebrains,' said Zenobia, with a smile of triumphant mystery. 'So long as we have the court, the Duke, and Lord Lyndhurst on our side, we can afford to laugh at such conceited poltroons. His mother was my dearest friend, and I know he used to have fits. Look bright,' she continued; 'things never were better. Before a week has passed these people will be nowhere.'

'But how is it possible?'

'Trust me.'

'I always do—and yet'——

'You never were nearer being a cabinet minister,' she said, with a radiant glance.

And Zenobia was right. Though the government, with the aid of the waverers, carried the second reading of the bill, a

week afterwards, on May 7, Lord Lyndhurst rallied the waverers again to his standard and carried his famous resolution, that the enfranchising clauses should precede the disfranchisement in the great measure. Lord Grey and his colleagues resigned, and the King sent for Lord Lyndhurst. The bold chief baron advised His Majesty to consult the Duke of Wellington, and was himself the bearer of the King's message to Apsley House. The Duke found the King 'in great distress,' and he therefore did not hesitate in promising to endeavour to form a ministry.

'Who was right?' said Zenobia to Mr. Ferrars. 'He is so busy he could not write to you, but he told me to tell you to call at Apsley House at twelve to-morrow. You will be in the cabinet.'

'I have got it at last!' said Ferrars to himself. 'It is worth living for and at any peril. All the cares of life sink into insignificance under such circumstances. The difficulties are great, but their very greatness will furnish the means of their solution. The Crown cannot be dragged in the mud, and the Duke was born for conquest.'

A day passed, and another day, and Ferrars was not again summoned. The affair seemed to hang fire. Zenobia was still brave, but Ferrars, who knew her thoroughly, could detect her lurking anxiety. Then she told him in confidence that Sir Robert made difficulties, 'but there is nothing in it,' she added. 'The Duke has provided for everything, and he means Sir Robert to be Premier. He could not refuse that; it would be almost an act of treason.' Two days after she sent for Mr. Ferrars, early in the morning, and received him in her boudoir. Her countenance was excited, but serious. 'Don't be alarmed,' she said; 'nothing will prevent a government being formed, but Sir Robert has thrown us over; I never had confidence in him. It is most provoking, as Mr. Baring had joined us, and it was such a good name for the City. But the failure of one man is the opportunity of another. We want a leader in the House of Commons. He must be a man who can speak; of

experience, who knows the House, its forms, and all that. There is only one man indicated. You cannot doubt about him. I told you honours would be tumbling on your head. You are the man; you are to have one of the highest offices in the cabinet, and lead the House of Commons.'

'Peel declines,' said Ferrars, speaking slowly and shaking his head. 'That is very serious.'

'For himself,' said Zenobia, 'not for you. It makes your fortune.'

'The difficulties seem too great to contend with.'

'What difficulties are there? You have got the court, and you have got the House of Lords. Mr. Pitt was not nearly so well off, for he had never been in office, and had at the same time to fight Lord North and that wicked Mr. Fox, the orator of the day, while you have only got Lord Althorp, who can't order his own dinner.'

'I am in amazement,' said Ferrars, and he seemed plunged in thought.

'But you do not hesitate?'

'No,' he said, looking up dreamily, for he had been lost in abstraction; and speaking in a measured and hollow voice, 'I do not hesitate.' Then resuming a brisk tone he said, 'This is not an age for hesitation; if asked, I will do the deed.'

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and the groom of the chambers brought in a note for Mr. Ferrars, which had been forwarded from his own residence, and which requested his presence at Apsley House. Having read it, he gave it to Zenobia, who exclaimed with delight, 'Do not lose a moment. I am so glad to have got rid of Sir Robert with his doubts and his difficulties. We want new blood.'

That was a wonderful walk for William Ferrars, from St. James' Square to Apsley House. As he moved along, he was testing his courage and capacity for the sharp trials that awaited him. He felt himself not unequal to conjunctures in which he had never previously indulged even in imagination. His had been an ambitious, rather than a soaring spirit. He had never

contemplated the possession of power except under the ægis of some commanding chief. Now it was for him to control senates and guide councils. He screwed himself up to the sticking-point. Desperation is sometimes as powerful an inspirer as genius.

The great man was alone,—calm, easy, and courteous. He had sent for Mr. Ferrars, because having had one interview with him, in which his co-operation had been requested in the conduct of affairs, the Duke thought it was due to him to give him the earliest intimation of the change of circumstances. The vote of the House of Commons on the motion of Lord Ebrington had placed an insurmountable barrier to the formation of a government, and his Grace had accordingly relinquished the commission with which he had been entrusted by the King.

CHAPTER IX.

Availing himself of his latch-key, Ferrars re-entered his home unnoticed. He went at once to his library, and locked the door of the apartment. There sitting before his desk, he buried his face in his hands and remained in that posture for a considerable time.

They were tumultuous and awful thoughts that passed over his brain. The dreams of a life were dissipated, and he had to encounter the stern reality of his position—and that was Ruin. He was without hope and without resource. His debts were vast; his patrimony was a fable; and the mysterious inheritance of his wife had been tampered with. The elder Ferrars had left an insolvent estate; he had supported his son liberally, but latterly from his son's own resources. The father had made himself the principal trustee of the son's marriage settlement. His colleague, a relative of the heiress, had died, and care was taken that no one should be substituted in his stead. All this

had been discovered by Ferrars on his father's death, but ambition, and the excitement of a life of blended elation and peril, had sustained him under the concussion. One by one every chance had vanished: first his private means and then his public prospects; he had lost office, and now he was about to lose parliament. His whole position, so long, and carefully and skilfully built up, seemed to dissolve and dissipate into insignificant fragments. And now he had to break the situation to his wife. She was to become the unprepared partner of the secret which had gnawed at his heart for years, during which to her his mien had often been smiling and always serene. Mrs. Ferrars was at home, and alone, in her luxurious boudoir, and he went to her at once. After years of dissimulation, now that all was over, Ferrars could not bear the suspense of four-and-twenty hours.

It was difficult to bring her into a mood of mind capable of comprehending a tithe of what she had to learn; and yet the darkest part of the tale she was never to know. Mrs. Ferrars, though singularly intuitive, shrank from controversy, and settled everything by contradiction and assertion. She maintained for a long time that what her husband communicated to her could not be; that it was absurd and even impossible. After a while, she talked of selling her diamonds and reducing her equipages, sacrificing which she assumed would put everything right. And when she found her husband still grave and still intimating that the sacrifices must be beyond all this, and that they must prepare for the life and habits of another social sphere, she became violent, and wept and declared her wrongs; that she had been deceived and outraged and infamously treated.

Remembering how long and with what apparent serenity in her presence he had endured his secret woes, and how one of the principal objects of his life had ever been to guard her even from a shade of solicitude, even the restrained Ferrars was affected; his countenance changed and his eye became suffused. When she observed this, she suddenly threw her arms round his neck and with many embraces, amid sighs and tears, exclaimed,

'O William! if we love each other, what does anything signify?'

And what could anything signify under such circumstances and on such conditions? As Ferrars pressed his beautiful wife to his heart, he remembered only his early love, which seemed entirely to revive. Unconsciously to himself, too, he was greatly relieved by this burst of tenderness on her part, for the prospect of this interview had been most distressful to him. 'My darling,' he said, 'ours is not a case of common imprudence or misfortune. We are the victims of a revolution, and we must bear our lot as becomes us under such circumstances. Individual misfortunes are merged in the greater catastrophe of the country.'

'That is the true view,' said his wife; 'and, after all, the poor King of France is much worse off than we are. However, I cannot now buy the Duchesse of Sevres' lace, which I had promised her to do. It is rather awkward. However, the best way always is to speak the truth. I must tell the duchess I am powerless, and that we are the victims of a revolution, like herself.'

Then they began to talk quite cosily together over their prospects, he sitting on the sofa by her side and holding her hand. Mrs. Ferrars would not hear of retiring to the continent. 'No,' she said, with all her sanguine vein returning, 'you always used to say I brought you luck, and I will bring you luck yet. There must be a reaction. The wheel will turn and bring round our friends again. Do not let us then be out of the way. Your claims are immense. They must do something for you. They ought to give you India, and if we only set our mind upon it, we shall get it. Depend upon it, things are not so bad as they seem. What appear to be calamities are often the sources of fortune. I would much sooner that you should be Governor-General than a cabinet minister. That odious House of Commons is very wearisome. I am not sure any constitution can bear it very long. I am not sure whether I would not prefer being Governor-General of India even to being Prime Minister.'

CHAPTER X.

In consequence of the registration under the Reform Act it was not possible for parliament to be dissolved, and an appeal made to the new constituency, until the end of the year. This was advantageous to Mr. Ferrars, and afforded him six months of personal security to arrange his affairs. Both husband and wife were proud, and were anxious to quit the world with dignity. All were so busy about themselves at that period, and the vicissitudes of life between continental revolutions and English reform so various and extensive, that it was not difficult to avoid the scrutiny of society. Mrs. Ferrars broke to Zenobia that, as her husband was no longer to be in parliament, they had resolved to retire for some time to a country life, though, as Mr. Ferrars had at length succeeded in impressing on his wife that their future income was to be counted by hundreds, instead of thousands, it was difficult for her to realise a rural establishment that should combine dignity and economy. Without, however, absolutely alleging the cause, she contrived to baffle the various propositions of this kind which the energetic Zenobia made to her, and while she listened with apparent interest to accounts of deer parks, and extensive shooting, and delightful neighbourhoods, would just exclaim, 'Charming! but rather more, I fancy, than we require, for we mean to be very quiet till my girl is presented.'

That young lady was now thirteen, and though her parents were careful to say nothing in her presence which would materially reveal their real situation, for which they intended very gradually to prepare her, the scrutinising powers with which nature had prodigally invested their daughter were not easily baffled. She asked no questions, but nothing seemed to escape the penetrative glance of that dark blue eye, calm amid all the mystery, and tolerating rather than sharing the frequent embrace of her parents. After a while her brother came home from Eton, to which he was never to return. A few days

before this event she became unusually restless, and even agitated. When he arrived, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ferrars was at home. He knocked gaily at the door, a schoolboy's knock, and was hardly in the hall when his name was called, and he caught the face of his sister, leaning over the balustrade of the landing-place. He ran upstairs with wondrous speed, and was in an instant locked in her arms. She kissed him and kissed him again, and when he tried to speak, she stopped his mouth with kisses. And then she said, 'Something has happened. What it is I cannot make out, but we are to have no more ponies.'

CHAPTER XI.

At the foot of the Berkshire downs, and itself on a gentle elevation, there is an old hall with gable ends and lattice windows, standing in grounds which once were stately, and where there are yet glade-like terraces of yew trees, which give an air of dignity to a neglected scene. In the front of the hall huge gates of iron, highly wrought, and bearing an ancient date as well as the shield of a noble house, opened on a village green, round which were clustered the cottages of the parish with only one exception, and that was the vicarage house, a modern building, not without taste, and surrounded by a small but brilliant garden. The church was contiguous to the hall, and had been raised by the lord on a portion of his domain. Behind the hall and its enclosure, the country was common land but picturesque. It had once been a beech forest, and though the timber had been greatly cleared, the green land was still occasionally dotted, sometimes with groups and sometimes with single trees, while the juniper which here abounded, and rose to a great height, gave a rich wildness to the scene, and sustained its forest character.

Hurstley had for many years been deserted by the family to which it belonged. Indeed, it was rather difficult to say to

whom it did belong. A dreary fate had awaited an ancient, and, in its time, even not immemorable home. It had fallen into chancery, and for the last half-century had either been uninhabited or let to strangers. Mr. Ferrars' lawyer was in the chancery suit, and knew all about it. The difficulty of finding a tenant for such a place, never easy, was increased by its remoteness from any railway communication, which was now beginning to figure as an important element in such arrangements. The Master in Chancery would be satisfied with a nominal rent, provided only he could obtain a family of consideration to hold under him. Mr. Ferrars was persuaded to go down alone to reconnoitre the place. It pleased him. It was aristocratic, yet singularly inexpensive. The house contained an immense hall, which reached the roof, and which would have become a baronial mansion, and a vast staircase in keeping; but the living rooms were moderate, even small, in dimensions, and not numerous. The land he was expected to take consisted only of a few meadows, which he could let if necessary, and a single labourer could manage the garden.

Mrs. Ferrars was so delighted with the description of the galleried hall, that she resolved on their taking Hurstley without even her previously visiting it. The only things she cared for in the country were a hall and a pony-chair.

All the carriages were sold, and all the servants discharged. Two or three maid-servants and a man who must be found in the country, who could attend them at table, and valet alike his master and the pony, was the establishment which was to succeed the crowd of retainers who had so long lounged away their lives in the saloons of Hill Street, and the groves and gardens of Wimbledon.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars and their daughter travelled down to Hurstley in a post-chaise; Endymion, with the servants, was sent by the stage-coach, which accomplished the journey of sixty miles in ten hours. Myra said little during the journey, but an expression of ineffable contempt and disgust seemed permanent on her countenance. Sometimes she shrugged her

shoulders, sometimes she raised her eyebrows, and sometimes she turned up her nose. And then she gave a sigh; but it was a sigh not of sorrow, but of impatience. Her parents lavished attentions on her which she accepted without recognition, only occasionally observing that she wished she had gone with Endymion.

It was dusk when they arrived at Hurstley, and the melancholy hour did not tend to raise their spirits. However, the gardener's wife had lit a good fire of beechwood in the drawing-room, and threw as they entered a pannier of cones upon the logs, which crackled and cheerfully blazed away. Even Myra seemed interested by the novelty of the wood fire and the iron dogs. She remained by their side, looking abstractedly on the expiring logs, while her parents wandered about the house and examined or prepared the requisite arrangements. While they were yet absent, there was some noise and a considerable bustle in the hall. Endymion and his retinue had arrived. Then Myra immediately roused herself, and listened like a startled deer. But the moment she caught his voice, an expression of rapture suffused her countenance. It beamed with vivacity and delight. She rushed away, pushed through the servants and the luggage, embraced him and said, 'We will go over the house and see our rooms together.'

Wandering without a guide and making many mistakes, fortunately they soon met their parents. Mrs. Ferrars good-naturedly recommenced her labours of inspection, and explained all her plans. There was a very pretty room for Endymion, and to-morrow it was to be very comfortable. He was quite pleased. Then they were shown Myra's room, but she said nothing, standing by with a sweet scoff, as it were, lingering on her lips, while her mother disserted on all the excellences of the chamber. Then they were summoned to tea. The gardener's wife was quite a leading spirit, and had prepared everything; the curtains were drawn, and the room lighted; an urn hissed; there were piles of bread and butter and a pyramid of buttered toast. It was wonderful what an air of comfort had been conjured up in

this dreary mansion, and it was impossible for the travellers, however wearied or chagrined, to be insensible to the convenience and cheerfulness of all around them.

When the meal was over, the children sate together in whispering tattle. Mrs. Ferrars had left the room to see if all was ready for their hour of retirement, and Mrs. Ferrars was walking up and down the room, absorbed in thought.

'What do you think of it all, Endymion?' whispered Myra to her twin.

'I rather like it,' he replied.

She looked at him with a glance of blended love and mockery, and then she said in his ear, 'I feel as if we had fallen from some star.'

CHAPTER XII.

The morrow brought a bright autumnal morn, and every one woke, if not happy, interested. There was much to see and much to do. The dew was so heavy that the children were not allowed to quit the broad gravel walk that bounded one side of the old house, but they caught enticing vistas of the gleamy glades, and the abounding light and shade softened and adorned everything. Every sight and sound too was novel, and from the rabbit that started out of the grove, stared at them and then disappeared, to the jays chattering in the more distant woods, all was wonderment at least for a week. They saw squirrels for the first time, and for the first time beheld a hedgehog. Their parents were busy in the house; Mr. Ferrars unpacking and settling his books, and his wife arranging some few articles of ornamental furniture that had been saved from the London wreck, and rendering their usual room of residence as refined as was in her power. It is astonishing how much effect a woman of taste can produce with a pretty chair or two full of fancy and colour, a table clothed with a few books, some

family miniatures, a workbag of rich material, and some toys that we never desert. 'I have not much to work with,' said Mrs. Ferrars, with a sigh, 'but I think the colouring is pretty.'

On the second day after their arrival, the rector and his wife made them a visit. Mr. Penruddock was a naturalist, and had written the history of his parish. He had escaped being an Oxford don by being preferred early to this college living, but he had married the daughter of a don, who appreciated the grand manners of their new acquaintances, and who, when she had overcome their first rather awe-inspiring impression, became communicative and amused them much with her details respecting the little world in which they were now to live. She could not conceal her wonderment at the beauty of the twins, though they were no longer habited in those dresses which had once astonished even Mayfair.

Part of the scheme of the new life was the education of the children by their parents. Mr. Ferrars had been a distinguished scholar, and was still a good one. He was patient and methodical, and deeply interested in his contemplated task. So far as disposition was concerned the pupil was not disappointing. Endymion was of an affectionate disposition and inclined to treat his father with deference. He was gentle and docile; but he did not acquire knowledge with facility, and was remarkably deficient in that previous information on which his father counted. The other pupil was of a different temperament. She learned with a glance, and remembered with extraordinary tenacity everything she had acquired. But she was neither tender nor deferential, and to induce her to study you could not depend on the affections, but only on her intelligence. So she was often fitful, capricious, or provoking, and her mother, who, though accomplished and eager, had neither the method nor the self-restraint of Mr. Ferrars, was often annoyed and irritable. Then there was scenes, or rather ebullitions on one side, for Myra were always unmoved and enraging from her total want of sensibility. Sometimes it became necessary to appeal to Mr. Ferrars, and her manner to her father, though devoid of feeling,

was at least not contemptuous. Nevertheless, on the whole the scheme, as time went on, promised to be not unsuccessful. Endymion, though not rapidly, advanced surely, and made some amends for the years that had been wasted in fashionable private schools and the then frivolity of Eton. Myra, who, notwithstanding her early days of indulgence, had enjoyed the advantage of admirable governesses, was well grounded in more than one modern language, and she soon mastered them. And in due time, though much after the period on which we are now touching, she announced her desire to become acquainted with German, in those days a much rarer acquirement than at present. Her mother could not help her in this respect, and that was perhaps an additional reason for the study of this tongue, for Myra was impatient of tuition, and not unjustly full of self-confidence. She took also the keenest interest in the progress of her brother, made herself acquainted with all his lessons, and sometimes helped him in their achievement.

Though they had absolutely no acquaintance of any kind except the rector and his family, life was not dull. Mr. Ferrars was always employed, for besides the education of his children, he had systematically resumed a habit in which he had before occasionally indulged, and that was political composition. He had in his lofty days been the author of more than one essay, in the most celebrated periodical publication of the Tories, which had commanded attention and obtained celebrity. Many a public man of high rank and reputation, and even more than one Prime Minister, had contributed in their time to its famous pages, but never without being paid. It was the organic law of this publication, that gratuitous contributions should never be admitted. And in this principle there was as much wisdom as pride. Celebrated statesmen would point with complacency to the snuff-box or the picture which had been purchased by their literary labour, and there was more than one bracelet on the arm of Mrs. Ferrars, and more than one genet in her stable, which had been the reward of a profound or a slashing article by William.

What had been the occasional diversion of political life was now to be the source of regular income. Though living in profound solitude, Ferrars had a vast sum of political experience to draw upon, and though his training and general intelligence were in reality too exclusive and academical for the stirring age which had now opened, and on which he had unhappily fallen, they nevertheless suited the audience to which they were particularly addressed. His Corinthian style, in which the Mænad of Mr. Burke was habited in the last mode of Almack's, his sarcasms against the illiterate and his invectives against the low, his descriptions of the country life of the aristocracy contrasted with the horrors of the guillotine, his Horatian allusions and his Virgilian passages, combined to produce a whole which equally fascinated and alarmed his readers.

These contributions occasioned some communications with the editor or publisher of the Review, which were not without interest. Parcels came down by the coach, enclosing not merely proof sheets, but frequently new books—the pamphlet of the hour before it was published, or a volume of discoveries in unknown lands. It was a link to the world they had quitted without any painful associations. Otherwise their communications with the outer world were slight and rare. It is difficult for us, who live in an age of railroads, telegraphs, penny posts and penny newspapers, to realise how uneventful, how limited in thought and feeling, as well as in incident, was the life of an English family of retired habits and limited means, only forty years ago. The whole world seemed to be morally, as well as materially, 'adscripti glebæ.'

Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars did not wish to move, but had they so wished, it would have been under any circumstances for them a laborious and costly affair. The only newspaper they saw was the 'Evening Mail,' which arrived three times a week, and was the 'Times' newspaper with all its contents except its advertisements. As the 'Times' newspaper had the credit of mainly contributing to the passing of Lord Grey's Reform Bill, and was then whispered to enjoy the incredible sale of twelve thousand

copies daily, Mr. Ferrars assumed that in its columns he would trace the most authentic intimations of coming events. The cost of postage was then so heavy, that domestic correspondence was necessarily very restricted. But this vexatious limitation hardly applied to the Ferrars. They had never paid postage. They were born and had always lived in the franking world, and although Mr. Ferrars had now himself lost the privilege, both official and parliamentary, still all their correspondents were frankers, and they addressed their replies without compunction to those who were free. Nevertheless, it was astonishing how little in their new life they cared to avail themselves of this correspondence. At first Zenobia wrote every week, almost every day, to Mrs. Ferrars, but after a time Mrs. Ferrars, though at first pleased by the attention, felt its recognition a burthen. Then Zenobia, who at length, for the first time in her life, had taken a gloomy view of affairs, relapsed into a long silence, and in fact had nearly forgotten the Ferrars, for as she herself used to say, 'How can one recollect people whom one never meets?'

In the meantime, for we have been a little anticipating in our last remarks, the family at Hurstley were much pleased with the country they now inhabited. They made excursions of discovery into the interior of their world, Mrs. Ferrars and Myra in the pony-chair, her husband and Endymion walking by their side, and Endymion sometimes taking his sister's seat against his wish, but in deference to her irresistible will. Even Myra could hardly be insensible to the sylvan wildness of the old chase, and the romantic villages in the wooded clefts of the downs. As for Endymion he was delighted, and it seemed to him, perhaps he unconsciously felt it, that this larger and more frequent experience of nature was a compensation for much which they had lost.

After a time, when they had become a little acquainted with their simple neighbourhood, and the first impression of wildness and novelty had worn out, the twins were permitted to walk together alone, though within certain limits. The village and

its vicinity was quite free, but they were not permitted to enter the woods, and not to wander on the chase out of sight of the mansion. These walks alone with Endymion were the greatest pleasure of his sister. She delighted to make him tell her of his life at Eton, and if she ever sighed it was when she lamented that his residence there had been so short. Then they found an inexhaustible fund of interest and sympathy in the past. They wondered if they ever should have ponies again. 'I think not,' said Myra, 'and yet how merry to scamper together over this chase!'

'But they would not let us go,' said Endymion, 'without a groom.'

'A groom!' exclaimed Myra, with an elfish laugh; 'I believe, if the truth were really known, we ought to be making our own beds and washing our own dinner plates.'

'And are you sorry, Myra, for all that has happened?' asked Endymion.

'I hardly know what has happened. They keep it very close. But I am too astonished to be sorry. Besides, what is the use of whimpering?'

'I cried very much one day,' said Endymion.

'Ah, you are soft, dear darling. I never cried in my life, except once with rage.'

At Christmas a new character appeared on the stage, the rector's son, Nigel. He had completed a year with a private tutor, and was on the eve of commencing his first term at Oxford, being eighteen, nearly five years older than the twins. He was tall, with a countenance of remarkable intelligence and power, though still softened by the innocence and bloom of boyhood. He was destined to be a clergyman. The twins were often thrown into his society, for though too old to be their mere companion, his presence was an excuse for Mrs. Penruddock more frequently joining them in their strolls, and under her auspices their wanderings had no limit, except the shortness of the days; but they found some compensation for this in their frequent visits to the rectory, which was a cheerful and agree-

able home, full of stuffed birds, and dried plants, and marvellous fishes, and other innocent trophies and triumphs over nature.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE tenant of the Manor Farm was a good specimen of his class; a thorough Saxon, ruddy and bright visaged, with an athletic though rather bulky frame, hardened by exposure to the seasons and constant exercise. Although he was the tenant of several hundred acres, he had an eye to the main chance in little things, which is a characteristic of farmers, but he was good-natured and obliging, and while he foraged their pony, furnished their woodyard with logs and faggots, and supplied them from his dairy, he gratuitously performed for the family at the hall many other offices which tended to their comfort and convenience, but which cost him nothing.

Mr. Ferrars liked to have a chat every now and then with Farmer Thornberry, who had a shrewd and idiomatic style of expressing his limited, but in its way complete, experience of men and things, which was amusing and interesting to a man of the world whose knowledge of rural life was mainly derived from grand shooting parties at great houses.

The pride and torment of Farmer Thornberry's life was his only child, Job.

'I gave him the best of educations,' said the farmer; 'he had a much better chance than I had myself, for I do not pretend to be a scholar, and never was; and yet I cannot make head or tail of him. I wish you would speak to him some day, sir. He goes against the land, and yet we have been on it for three generations, and have nothing to complain of; and he is a good farmer, too, is Job, none better; a little too fond of experimenting, but then he is young. But I am very much afraid he will leave me. I think it is this new thing the big-wigs have set up