speculation, some of them very rich and some of them without a sou, seemed only to think of the festive hour and all its joys. Neither wealth nor poverty brought them cares. Every face sparkled, every word seemed witty, and every sound seemed sweet. A band played upon the lawn during the dinner, and were succeeded, when the dessert commenced, by strange choruses from singers of some foreign land, who for the first time aired their picturesque costumes on the banks of the Thames.

When the ladies had withdrawn to the saloon, the first comic singer of the age excelled himself; and when they rejoined their fair friends, the primo-tenore and the prima-donna gave them a grand scena, succeeded by the English performers in a favourite scene from a famous farce. Then Mrs. Gamme had an opportunity of dealing with her diamond rings, and the rest danced—a waltz of whirling grace, or merry cotillon of jocund bouquets.

'Well, Clarence,' said Waldershare to the young earl, as they stood for a moment apart, 'was I right?'

'By Jove! yes. It is the only life. You were quite right. We should indeed be fools to sacrifice ourselves to the conventional.'

The Rodney party returned home in the drag of the last speaker. They were the last to retire, as Mr. Vigo wished for one cigar with his noble friend. As he bade farewell, and cordially, to Endymion, he said, 'Call on me to-morrow morning in Burlington Street in your way to your office. Do not mind the hour. I am an early bird.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

'It is no favour,' said Mr. Vigo; 'it is not even an act of friendliness; it is a freak, and it is my freak; the favour, if there be one, is conferred by you.'

'But I really do not know what to say,' said Endymion, hesitating and confused.

'I am not a classical scholar,' said Mr. Vigo, 'but there are two things which I think I understand—men and horses. I like to back them both when I think they ought to win.'

'But I am scarcely a man,' said Endymion, rather piteously, 'and I sometimes think I shall never win anything.'

'That is my affair,' replied Mr. Vigo; 'you are a yearling, and I have formed my judgment as to your capacity. What I wish to do in your case is what I have done in others, and some memorable ones. Dress does not make a man, but it often makes a successful one. The most precious stone, you know, must be cut and polished. I shall enter your name in my books for an unlimited credit, and no account to be settled till you are a privy councillor. I do not limit the credit, because you are a man of sense and a gentleman, and will not abuse it. But be quite as careful not to stint yourself as not to be needlessly extravagant. In the first instance, you would be interfering with my experiment, and that would not be fair.'

This conversation took place in Mr. Vigo's counting-house the morning after the entertainment at his villa. Endymion called upon Mr. Vigo in his way to his office, as he had been requested to do, and Mr. Vigo had expressed his wishes and intentions with regard to Endymion, as intimated in the preceding remarks.

'I have known many an heiress lost by her suitor being ill-dressed,' said Mr. Vigo. 'You must dress according to your age, your pursuits, your object in life; you must dress too, in some cases, according to your set. In youth a little fancy is rather expected, but if political life be your object, it should be avoided, at least after one-and-twenty. I am dressing two brothers now, men of considerable position; one is a mere man of pleasure, the other will probably be a minister of state. They are as like as two peas, but were I to dress the dandy and the minister the same, it would be bad taste—it would be ridiculous. No man gives me the trouble which Lord Eglantine does; he has not made up his mind whether he will be a great poet or prime minister. "You must choose, my lord," I tell him. "I cannot send you out looking like Lord Byron if you mean to be a Canning or a Pitt." I have dressed a great many of our statesmen and orators, and I always dressed them according to their style and the nature of their duties. What all men should avoid is the "shabby genteel." No man ever gets over it. I will save you from that. You had better be in rags.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

When the twins had separated, they had resolved on a system of communication which had been, at least on the part of Myra, scrupulously maintained. They were to interchange letters every week, and each letter was to assume, if possible, the shape of a journal, so that when they again met no portion of the interval should be a blank in their past lives. There were few incidents in the existence of Myra; a book, a walk, a visit to the rectory, were among the chief. The occupations of their father were unchanged, and his health seemed sustained, but that of her mother was not satisfactory. Mrs. Ferrars had never rallied since the last discomfiture of her political hopes, and had never resumed her previous tenour of life. She was secluded, her spirits uncertain, moods of depression succeeded by fits of unaccountable excitement, and, on the whole, Myra feared a general and chronic disturbance of her nervous system. His sister prepared Endymion for encountering a great change in their parent when he returned home. Myra, however, never expatiated on the affairs of Hurstley. Her annals in this respect were somewhat dry. She fulfilled her promise of recording them, but no more. Her pen was fuller and more eloquent in her comments on the life of her brother, and of the new characters with whom he had become acquainted. She delighted to hear about Mr. Jawett, and especially about Mr. St. Barbe, and was much pleased that he had been to the Derby, though she did not exactly collect who were his companions. Did he go with that kind Mr. Trenchard? It would seem that Endymion's account of the Rodney family had been limited to vague though earnest acknowledgments of their great civility and attention, which added much to the comfort of his life. Impelled by some of these grateful though general remarks, Mrs. Ferrars, in a paroxysm of stately gratitude, had sent a missive to Sylvia, such as a sovereign might address to a deserving subject, at the same time acknowledging and commending her duteous services. Such was the old domestic superstition of the Rodneys, that, with all

their worldliness, they treasured this effusion as if it had really emanated from the centre of power and courtly favour.

Myra, in her anticipations of speedily meeting her brother, was doomed to disappointment. She had counted on Endymion obtaining some holidays in the usual recess, but in consequence of having so recently joined the office, Endymion was retained for summer and autumnal work, and not until Christmas was there any prospect of his returning home.

The interval between midsummer and that period, though not devoid of seasons of monotony and loneliness, passed in a way not altogether unprofitable to Endymion. Waldershare, who had begun to notice him, seemed to become interested in his career. Waldershare knew all about his historic ancestor, Endymion Carey. The bubbling imagination of Waldershare clustered with a sort of wild fascination round a living link with the age of the cavaliers. He had some Stuart blood in his veins, and his ancestors had fallen at Edgehill and Marston Moor. Waldershare, whose fancies alternated between Strafford and St. Just, Archbishop Laud and the Goddess of Reason, reverted for the moment to his visions on the banks of the Cam, and the brilliant rhapsodies of his boyhood. His converse with Nigel Penruddock had prepared Endymion in some degree for these mysteries, and perhaps it was because Waldershare found that Endymion was by no means ill-informed on these matters, and therefore there was less opportunity of dazzling and moulding him, which was a passion with Waldershare, that he soon quitted the Great Rebellion for pastures new, and impressed upon his pupil that all that had occurred before the French Revolution was ancient history. The French Revolution had introduced the cosmopolitan principle into human affairs instead of the national, and no public man could succeed who did not comprehend and acknowledge that truth. Waldershare lent Endymion books, and books with which otherwise he would not have become acquainted. Unconsciously to himself, the talk of Waldershare, teeming with knowledge, and fancy, and playfulness, and airy sarcasm of life, taught him something of the art of conversation—to be prompt without

being stubborn, to refute without argument, and to clothe grave matters in a motley garb.

But in August Waldershare disappeared, and at the beginning of September, even the Rodneys had gone to Margate. St. Barbe was the only clerk left in Endymion's room. They dined together almost every day, and went on the top of an omnibus to many a suburban paradise. 'I tell you what,' said St. Barbe, as they were watching one day together the humours of the world in the crowded tea-garden and bustling bowling-green of Canonbury Tavern; 'a fellow might get a good chapter out of this scene. I could do it, but I will not. What is the use of lavishing one's brains on an ungrateful world? Why, if that fellow Gushy were to write a description of this place, which he would do like a penny-a-liner drunk with ginger beer, every countess in Mayfair would be reading him, not knowing, the idiot, whether she ought to smile or shed tears, and sending him cards with "at home" upon them as large as life. Oh! it is disgusting! absolutely disgusting. It is a nefarious world, sir. You will find it out some day. I am as much robbed by that fellow Gushy as men are on the highway. He is appropriating my income, and the income of thousands of honest fellows. And then he pretends he is writing for the people! The people! What does he know about the people? Annals of the New Cut and Saffron Hill. He thinks he will frighten some lord, who will ask him to dinner. And that he calls Progress. I hardly know which is the worst class in this country—the aristocracy, the middle class, or what they call the people. I hate them all.'

About the fall of the leaf the offices were all filled again, and among the rest Trenchard returned. 'His brother has been ill,' said St. Barbe. 'They say that Trenchard is very fond of him. Fond of a brother who keeps him out of four thousand pounds per annum! What will man not say? And yet I could not go and congratulate Trenchard on his brother's death. It would be "bad taste." Trenchard would perhaps never speak to me again, though he had been lying awake all night chuckling over the event. And Gushy takes an amiable view of this

world of hypocrisy and plunder. And that is why Gushy is so popular!'

There was one incident at the beginning of November, which eventually exercised no mean influence on the life of Endymion. Trenchard offered one evening to introduce him as a guest to a celebrated debating society, of which Trenchard was a distinguished member. This society had grown out of the Union at Cambridge, and was originally intended to have been a metropolitan branch of that famous association. But in process of time it was found that such a constitution was too limited to ensure those numbers and that variety of mind desirable in such an institution. It was therefore opened to the whole world duly qualified. The predominant element, however, for a long time consisted of Cambridge men.

This society used to meet in a large room, fitted up as much like the House of Commons as possible, and which was in Freemasons' Tavern, in Great Queen Street. Some hundred and fifty members were present when Endymion paid his first visit there, and the scene to Endymion was novel and deeply interesting. Though only a guest, he was permitted to sit in the body of the chamber, by the side of Trenchard, who kindly gave him some information, as the proceedings advanced, as to the principal personages who took part in them.

The question to-night was, whether the decapitation of Charles the First were a justifiable act, and the debate was opened in the affirmative by a young man with a singularly sunny face and a voice of music. His statement was clear and calm. Though nothing could be more uncompromising than his opinions, it seemed that nothing could be fairer than his facts.

'That is Hortensius,' said Trenchard; 'he will be called this term. They say he did nothing at the university, and is too idle to do anything at the bar; but I think highly of him. You should hear him in reply.'

The opening speech was seconded by a very young man, in a most artificial style, remarkable for its superfluity of intended sarcasm, which was delivered in a highly elaborate tone, so that the speaker seemed severe without being keen.

'Tis the new Cambridge style,' whispered Trenchard, 'but it will not go down here.'

The question having been launched, Spruce arose, a very neat speaker; a little too mechanical, but plausible. Endymion was astonished at the dexterous turns in his own favour which he gave to many of the statements of Hortensius, and how he mangled and massacred the seconder, who had made a mistake in a date.

'He is the Tory leader,' said Trenchard. 'There are not twenty Tories in the Union, but we always listen to him. He is sharp, Jawett will answer him.'

And, accordingly, that great man rose. Jawett, in dulcet tones of philanthropy, intimated that he was not opposed to the decapitation of kings; on the contrary, if there were no other way of getting rid of them, he would have recourse to such a method. But he did not think the case before them was justifiable.

'Always crotchety,' whispered Trenchard.

Jawett thought the whole conception of the opening speech erroneous. It proceeded on the assumption that the execution of Charles was the act of the people; on the contrary, it was an intrigue of Cromwell, who was the only person who profited by it.

Cromwell was vindicated and panegyrised in a flaming speech by Montreal, who took this opportunity of denouncing alike kings and bishops, Church and State, with powerful invective, terminating his address by the expression of an earnest hope that he might be spared to witness the inevitable Commonwealth of England.

'He only lost his election for Rattleton by ten votes,' said Trenchard. 'We call him the Lord Protector, and his friends here think he will be so.'

The debate was concluded, after another hour, by Hortensius, and Endymion was struck by the contrast between his first and second manner. Safe from reply, and reckless in his security, it is not easy to describe the audacity of his retorts, or the tumult of his eloquence. Rapid, sarcastic, humorous, picturesque, impassioned, he seemed to carry everything before him, and to

resemble his former self in nothing but the music of his voice, which lent melody to scorn, and sometimes reached the depth of pathos.

Endymion walked home with Mr. Trenchard, and in a musing mood. 'I should not care how lazy I was,' said Endymion, 'if I could speak like Hortensius.'

CHAPTER XXV.

The snow was falling about the time when the Swindon coach, in which Endymion was a passenger, was expected at Hurstley, and the snow had been falling all day. Nothing had been more dreary than the outward world, or less entitled to the merry epithet which is the privilege of the season. The gardener had been despatched to the village inn, where the coach stopped, with a lantern and cloaks and umbrellas. Within the house the huge blocks of smouldering beech sent forth a hospitable heat, and, whenever there was a sound, Myra threw cones on the inflamed mass, that Endymion might be welcomed with a blaze. Mrs. Ferrars, who had appeared to-day, though late, and had been very nervous and excited, broke down half an hour before her son could arrive, and, murmuring that she would reappear, had retired. Her husband was apparently reading, but his eye wandered and his mind was absent from the volume.

The dogs barked, Mr. Ferrars threw down his book, Myra forgot her cones; the door burst open, and she was in her brother's arms.

'And where is mamma?' said Endymion, after he had greeted his father.

'She will be here directly,' said Mr. Ferrars. 'You are late, and the suspense of your arrival a little agitated her.'

Three quarters of a year had elapsed since the twins had parted, and they were at that period of life when such an interval often produces no slight changes in personal appearance. Endymion, always tall for his years, had considerably grown; his air, and manner, and dress were distinguished. But three quarters of a year had produced a still greater effect upon his

sister. He had left her a beautiful girl: her beauty was not less striking, but it was now the beauty of a woman. Her mien was radiant but commanding, and her brow, always remarkable, was singularly impressive.

They stood in animated converse before the fire, Endymion between his father and his sister and retaining of each a hand, when Mr. Ferrars nodded to Myra and said, 'I think now;' and Myra, not reluctantly, but not with happy eagerness, left the room.

'She is gone for your poor mother,' said Mr. Ferrars; 'we are uneasy about her, my dear boy.'

Myra was some time away, and when she returned she was alone. 'She says she must see him first in her room,' said Myra, in a low voice, to her father; 'but that will never do; you or I must go with him.'

'You had better go,' said Mr. Ferrars.

She took her brother's hand and led him away. 'I go with you, to prevent dreadful scenes,' said his sister on the staircase. 'Try to behave just as in old times, and as if you saw no change.'

Myra went into the chamber first, to give to her mother, if possible, the keynote of the interview, and of which she had already furnished the prelude. 'We are all so happy to see Endymion again, dear mamma. Papa is quite gay.'

And then when Endymion, answering his sister's beckon, entered, Mrs. Ferrars rushed forward with a sort of laugh, and cried out, 'Oh! I am so happy to see you again, my child. I feel quite gay.'

He embraced her, but he could not believe it was his mother. A visage at once haggard and bloated had supplanted that soft and rich countenance which had captivated so many. A robe concealed her attenuated frame; but the lustrous eyes were bleared and bloodshot, and the accents of the voice, which used to be at once melodious and a little drawling, hoarse, harsh, and hurried.

She never stopped talking; but it was all in one key, and that the prescribed one—her happiness at his arrival, the universal gaiety it had produced, and the merry Christmas they

were to keep. After a time she began to recur to the past, and to sigh; but instantly Myra interfered with 'You know, mamma, you are to dine downstairs to-day, and you will hardly have time to dress;' and she motioned to Endymion to retire.

Mrs. Ferrars kept the dinner waiting a long time, and, when she entered the room, it was evident that she was painfully excited. She had a cap on, and had used some rouge.

'Endymion must take me in to dinner,' she hurriedly exclaimed as she entered, and then grasped her son's arm.

It seemed a happy and even a merry dinner, and yet there was something about it forced and constrained. Mrs. Ferrars talked a great deal, and Endymion told them a great many anecdotes of those men and things which most interested them, and Myra seemed to be absorbed in his remarks and narratives, and his mother would drink his health more than once, when suddenly she went into hysterics, and all was anarchy. Mr. Ferrars looked distressed and infinitely sad; and Myra, putting her arm round her mother, and whispering words of calm or comfort, managed to lead her out of the room, and neither of them returned.

'Poor creature!' said Mr. Ferrars, with a sigh. 'Seeing you has been too much for her.'

The next morning Endymion and his sister paid a visit to the rectory, and there they met Nigel, who was passing his Christmas at home. This was a happy meeting. The rector had written an essay on squirrels, and showed them a glass containing that sportive little animal in all its frolic forms. Farmer Thornberry had ordered a path to be cleared on the green from the hall to the rectory; and 'that is all,' said Mrs. Penruddock, 'we have to walk upon, except the high road. The snow has drifted to such a degree that it is impossible to get to the Chase. I went out the day before yesterday with Carlo as a guide. When I did not clearly make out my way, I sent him forward, and sometimes I could only see his black head emerging from the snow. So I had to retreat.'

Mrs. Ferrars did not appear this day. Endymion visited her in her room. He found her flighty and incoherent. She seemed to think that he had returned permanently to Hurstley, and said

she never had any good opinion of the scheme of his leaving them. If it had been the Foreign Office, as was promised, and his father had been in the Cabinet, which was his right, it might have been all very well. But, if he were to leave home, he ought to have gone into the Guards, and it was not too late. And then they might live in a small house in town, and look after him. There were small houses in Wilton Crescent, which would do very well. Besides, she herself wanted change of air. Hurstley did not agree with her. She had no appetite. She never was well except in London, or Wimbledon. She wished that, as Endymion was here, he would speak to his father on the subject. She saw no reason why they should not live at their place at Wimbledon as well as here. It was not so large a house, and, therefore, would not be so expensive.

Endymion's holiday was only to last a week, and Myra seemed jealous of his sparing any portion of it to Nigel; yet the rector's son was sedulous in his endeavours to enjoy the society of his former companion. There seemed some reason for his calling at the hall every day. Mr. Ferrars broke through his habits, and invited Nigel to dine with them; and after dinner, saying that he would visit Mrs. Ferrars, who was unwell, left them alone. It was the only time they had yet been alone. Endymion found that there was no change in the feelings and views of Nigel respecting Church matters, except that his sentiments and opinions were more assured, and, if possible, more advanced. He would not tolerate any reference to the state of the nation; it was the state of the Church which engrossed his being. No government was endurable that was not divine. The Church was divine, and on that he took his stand.

Nigel was to take his degree next term, and orders as soon as possible. He looked forward with confidence, after doubtless a period of disturbance, confusion, probably violence, and even anarchy, to the establishment of an ecclesiastical polity that would be catholic throughout the realm. Endymion just intimated the very contrary opinions that Jawett held upon these matters, and mentioned, though not as an adherent, some of the cosmopolitan sentiments of Waldershare.

'The Church is cosmopolitan,' said Nigel; 'the only practic-

able means by which you can attain to identity of motive and action.'

Then they rejoined Myra, but Nigel soon recurred to the absorbing theme. His powers had much developed since he and Endymion used to wander together over Hurstley Chase. He had great eloquence, his views were startling and commanding, and his expressions forcible and picturesque. All was heightened, too, by his striking personal appearance and the beauty of his voice. He seemed something between a young prophet and an inquisitor; a remarkable blending of enthusiasm and self-control.

A person more experienced in human nature than Endymion might have observed, that all this time, while Nigel was to all appearance chiefly addressing himself to Endymion, he was, in fact, endeavouring to impress his sister. Endymion knew, from the correspondence of Myra, that Nigel had been, especially in the summer, much at Hurstley; and when he was alone with his sister, he could not help remarking, 'Nigel is as strong as ever in his views.'

'Yes,' she replied; 'he is very clever and very good-looking. It is a pity he is going into the Church. I do not like clergymen.'

On the third day of the visit, Mrs. Ferrars was announced to be unwell, and in the evening very unwell; and Mr. Ferrars sent to the nearest medical man, and he was distant, to attend her. The medical man did not arrive until past midnight, and, after visiting his patient, looked grave. She had fever, but of what character it was difficult to decide. The medical man had brought some remedies with him, and he stayed the night at the hall. It was a night of anxiety and alarm, and the household did not retire until nearly the break of dawn.

The next day it seemed that the whole of the Penruddock family were in the house. Mrs. Penruddock insisted on nursing Mrs. Ferrars, and her husband looked as if he thought he might be wanted. It was unreasonable that Nigel should be left alone. His presence, always pleasing, was a relief to an anxious family, and who were beginning to get alarmed. The fever did not subside On the contrary, it increased, and there were other dangerous symptoms. There was a physician of fame at Oxford, whom Nigel wished they would call in. Matters were too pressing

to wait for posts, and too complicated to trust to an ordinary messenger. Nigel, who was always well mounted, was in his saddle in an instant. He seemed to be all resource, consolation, and energy: 'If I am fortunate, he will be here in four hours; at all events, I will not return alone.'

Four terrible hours were these: Mr. Ferrars, restless and sad, and listening with a vacant or an absent look to the kind and unceasing talk of the rector; Myra, silent in her mother's chamber; and Endymion, wandering about alone with his eyes full of tears. This was the Merrie Christmas he had talked of, and this his long-looked-for holiday. He could think of nothing but his mother's kindness; and the days gone by, when she was so bright and happy, came back to him with painful vividness. It seemed to him that he belonged to a doomed and unhappy family. Youth and its unconscious mood had hitherto driven this thought from his mind; but it occurred to him now, and would not be driven away.

Nigel was fortunate. Before sunset he returned to Hurstley in a postchaise with the Oxford physician, whom he had furnished with an able and accurate diagnosis of the case. All that art could devise, and all that devotion could suggest, were lavished on the sufferer, but in vain; and four days afterwards, the last day of Endymion's long-awaited holiday, Mr. Ferrars closed for ever the eyes of that brilliant being, who, with some weaknesses, but many noble qualities, had shared with no unequal spirit the splendour and the adversity of his existence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Nigel took a high degree and obtained first-class honours. He was ordained by the bishop of the diocese as soon after as possible. His companions, who looked up to him with every expectation of his eminence and influence, were disappointed, however, in the course of life on which he decided. It was different from that which he had led them to suppose it would be. They had counted on his becoming a resident light of the University, filling its highest offices, and ultimately reaching the

loftiest stations in the Church. Instead of that he announced that he had resolved to become a curate to his father, and that he was about to bury himself in the solitude of Hurstley.

It was in the early summer following the death of Mrs. Ferrars that he settled there. He was frequently at the hall, and became intimate with Mr. Ferrars. Notwithstanding the difference of age, there was between them a sympathy of knowledge and thought. In spite of his decided mind, Nigel listened to Mr. Ferrars with deference, soliciting his judgment, and hanging, as it were, on his accents of wise experience and refined taste. So Nigel became a favourite with Mr. Ferrars; for there are few things more flattering than the graceful submission of an accomplished intellect, and, when accompanied by youth, the spell is sometimes fascinating.

The death of his wife seemed to have been a great blow to Mr. Ferrars. The expression of his careworn, yet still handsome, countenance became, if possible, more saddened. It was with difficulty that his daughter could induce him to take exercise, and he had lost altogether that seeming interest in their outer world which once at least he affected to feel. Myra, though ever content to be alone, had given up herself much to her father since his great sorrow; but she felt that her efforts to distract him from his broodings were not eminently successful, and she hailed with a feeling of relief the establishment of Nigel in the parish, and the consequent intimacy that arose between him and her father.

Nigel and Myra were necessarily under these circumstances thrown much together. As time advanced he passed his evenings generally at the hall, for he was a proficient in the only game which interested Mr. Ferrars, and that was chess. Reading and writing all day, Mr. Ferrars required some remission of attention, and his relaxation was chess. Before the games, and between the games, and during delightful tea-time, and for the happy quarter of an hour which ensued when the chief employment of the evening ceased, Nigel appealed much to Myra, and endeavoured to draw out her mind and feelings. He lent her books, and books that favoured, indirectly at least, his own peculiar views—volumes of divine poesy that had none of the

twang of psalmody, tales of tender and sometimes wild and brilliant fancy, but ever full of symbolic truth.

Chess-playing requires complete abstraction, and Nigel, though he was a double first, occasionally lost a game from a lapse in that condensed attention that secures triumph. The fact is, he was too frequently thinking of something else besides the moves on the board, and his ear was engaged while his eye wandered, if Myra chanced to rise from her seat or make the slightest observation.

The woods were beginning to assume the first fair livery of autumn, when it is beautiful without decay. The lime and the larch had not yet dropped a golden leaf, and the burnished beeches flamed in the sun. Every now and then an occasional oak or elm rose, still as full of deep green foliage as if it were midsummer; while the dark verdure of the pines sprang up with effective contrast amid the gleaming and resplendent chestnuts.

There was a glade at Hurstley, bounded on each side with masses of yew, their dark green forms now studded with crimson berries. Myra was walking one morning in this glade when she met Nigel, who was on one of his daily pilgrimages, and he turned round and walked by her side.

'I am sure I cannot give you news of your brother,' he said, 'but I have had a letter this morning from Endymion. He seems to take great interest in his debating club.'

'I am so glad he has become a member of it,' said Myra. 'That kind Mr. Trenchard, whom I shall never see to thank him for all his goodness to Endymion, proposed him. It occupies his evenings twice a week, and then it gives him subjects to think of and read up in the interval.'

'Yes; it is a good thing,' said Nigel moodily; 'and if he is destined for public life, which perhaps he may be, no contemptible discipline.'

'Dear boy!' said Myra, with a sigh. 'I do not see what public life he is destined to, except slaving at a desk. But sometimes one has dreams.'

'Yes; we all have dreams,' said Nigel, with an air of abstraction.

'It is impossible to resist the fascination of a fine autumnal morn,' said Myra; 'but give me the long days of summer and its rich leafy joys. I like to wander about, and dine at nine o'clock.'

'Delightful, doubtless, with a sympathising companion.'

'Endymion was such a charming companion,' said Myra.

'But he has left us,' said Nigel; 'and you are alone.'

'I am alone,' said Myra; 'but I am used to solitude, and I can think of him.'

'Would I were Endymion,' said Nigel, 'to be thought of by you!'

Myra looked at him with something of a stare; but he continued—

'All seasons would be to me fascination, were I only by your side. Yes; I can no longer repress the irresistible confession of my love. I am here, and I am here only, because I love you. I quitted Oxford and all its pride that I might have the occasional delight of being your companion. I was not presumptuous in my thoughts, and believed that would content me; but I can no longer resist the consummate spell, and I offer you my heart and my life.'

'I am amazed; I am a little overwhelmed,' said Myra. 'Pardon me, dear Mr. Penruddock—dear Nigel—you speak of things of which I have not thought.'

'Think of them! I implore you to think of them, and now!'

'We are a fallen family,' said Myra, 'perhaps a doomed one. We are not people to connect yourself with. You have witnessed some of our sorrows, and soothed them. I shall be ever grateful to you for the past. But I sometimes feel our cup is not yet full, and I have long resolved to bear my cross alone. But, irrespective of all other considerations, I can never leave my father.'

'I have spoken to your father,' said Nigel, 'and he approved my suit.'

'While my father lives I shall not quit him,' said Myra; 'but, let me not mislead you, I do not live for my father—I live for another.'

'For another?' inquired Nigel, with anxiety.

'For one you know. My life is devoted to Endymion. There is a mystic bond between us, originating, perhaps, in the circumstance of our birth; for we are twins. I never mean to embarrass him with a sister's love, and perhaps hereafter may see less of him even than I see now; but I shall be in the world, whatever be my lot, high or low—the active, stirring world—working for him, thinking only of him. Yes; moulding events and circumstances in his favour;' and she spoke with fiery animation. 'I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction that a human being with a settled purpose must accomplish it, and that nothing can resist a will that will stake even existence for its fulfilment.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

ENDYMION had returned to his labours, after the death of his mother, much dispirited. Though young and hopeful, his tender heart could not be insensible to the tragic end. There is anguish in the recollection that we have not adequately appreciated the affection of those whom we have loved and lost. It tortured him to feel that he had often accepted with carelessness or indifference the homage of a heart that had been to him ever faithful in its multiplied devotion. Then, though he was not of a melancholy and brooding nature, in this moment of bereavement he could not drive from his mind the consciousness that there had long been hanging over his home a dark lot, as it were, of progressive adversity. His family seemed always sinking, and he felt conscious how the sanguine spirit of his mother had sustained them in their trials. His father had already made him the depositary of his hopeless cares; and if anything happened to that father, old and worn out before his time, what would become of Myra?

Nigel, who in their great calamity seemed to have thought of everything, and to have done everything, had written to the chief of the office, and also to Mr. Trenchard, explaining the cause of the absence of Endymion from his duties. There were

no explanations, therefore, necessary when he reappeared; no complaints, but only sympathy and general kindness. In Warwick Street there was unaffected sorrow; Sylvia wept and went into the prettiest mourning for her patroness, and Mr. Rodney wore a crape on his hat. 'I never saw her,' said Imogene, 'but I am told she was heavenly.'

Waldershare was very kind to Endymion, and used to take him to the House of Commons on interesting evenings, and, if he succeeded in getting Endymion a place under the gallery, would come and talk to him in the course of the night, and sometimes introduce him to the mysteries of Bellamy's, where Endymion had the satisfaction of partaking of a steak in the presence of statesmen and senators.

'You are in the precincts of public life,' said Waldershare; 'and if you ever enter it, which I think you will,' he would add thoughtfully, 'it will be interesting for you to remember that you have seen these characters, many of whom will then have passed away. Like the shades of a magic lantern,' he added, with something between a sigh and a smile. 'One of my constituents sent me a homily this morning, the burthen of which was, I never thought of death. The idiot! I never think of anything else. It is my weakness. One should never think of death. One should think of life. That is real piety.'

This spring and summer were passed tranquilly by Endymion, but not unprofitably. He never went to any place of public amusement, and, cherishing his sorrow, declined those slight openings to social life which occasionally offered themselves even to him; but he attended his debating club with regularity, and, though silent, studied every subject which was brought before it. It interested him to compare their sayings and doings with those of the House of Commons, and he found advantage in the critical comparison. Though not in what is styled society, his mind did not rust from the want of intelligent companions. The clear perception, accurate knowledge, and unerring judgment of Trenchard, the fantastic cynicism of St. Barbe, and all the stores of the exuberant and imaginative Waldershare were brought to bear on a young and plastic intelligence, gifted with a quick though not a too profound sen-

sibility which soon ripened into tact, and which, after due discrimination, was tenacious of beneficial impressions.

In the autumn, Endymion returned home for a long visit and a happy one. He found Nigel settled at Hurstley, and almost domesticated at the hall; his father more cheerful than his sister's earlier letters had led him to suppose; and she herself so delighted by the constant companionship of her brother that she seemed to have resumed all her original pride of life.

Nearly two years' acquaintance, however limited, with the world, had already exercised a ripening influence over Endymion. Nigel soon perceived this, though, with a native tact which circumstances had developed, Endymion avoided obtruding his new conclusions upon his former instructor. But that deep and eager spirit, unwilling ever to let a votary escape, and absorbed intellectually by one vast idea, would not be baffled. Nigel had not renounced the early view of Endymion taking orders, and spoke of his London life as an incident which, with his youth, he might in time only look upon as an episode in his existence.

'I trust I shall ever be a devoted son of the Church,' said Endymion; 'but I confess I feel no predisposition to take orders, even if I had the opportunity, which probably I never shall have. If I were to choose my career it would be public life. I am on the last step of the ladder, and I do not suppose that I can ever be anything but a drudge. But even that would interest me. It brings one in contact with those who are playing the great game. One at least fancies one comprehends something of the government of mankind. Mr. Waldershare takes me often to the House of Commons, and I must say, I am passionately fond of it.'

After Endymion's return to London that scene occurred between Nigel and Myra, in the glade at Hurstley, which we have noticed in the preceding chapter. In the evening of that day Nigel did not pay his accustomed visit to the hall, and the father and the daughter were alone. Then it was, notwithstanding evident agitation, and even with some degree of solemnity, that Mr. Ferrars broke to his daughter that there was a subject on which he wished seriously to confer with her.

'Is it about Nigel?' she inquired with calmness.

'It is about Nigel.'

'I have seen him, and he has spoken to me.'

'And what have you replied?'

'What I fear will not be satisfactory to you, sir, but what is irrevocable.'

'Your union would give me life and hope,' said Mr. Ferrars; and then, as she remained silent, he continued after a pause: 'For its happiness there seems every security. He is of good family, and with adequate means, and, I firmly believe, no inconsiderable future. His abilities are already recognised; his disposition is noble. As for his personal qualities, you are a fitter judge than I am; but, for my part, I never saw a countenance that more became the beauty and nobility of his character.'

'I think him very good-looking,' said Myra, 'and there is no doubt he is clever, and he has shown himself, on more than one occasion, amiable.'

'Then what more can you require?' said Mr. Ferrars.

'I require nothing; I do not wish to marry.'

'But, my daughter, my dearest daughter,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'bear with the anxiety of a parent who is at least devoted to you. Our separation would be my last and severest sorrow, and I have had many; but there is no necessity to consider that case, for Nigel is content, is more than content, to live as your husband under this roof.'

'So he told me.'

'And that removed one objection that you might naturally feel?'

'I certainly should never leave you, sir,' said Myra, 'and I told Nigel so; but that contingency had nothing to do with my decision. I declined his offer, because I have no wish to marry.'

'Women are born to be married,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'And yet I believe most marriages are unhappy,' said Myra.

'Oh! if your objection to marry Nigel arises from an abstract objection to marriage itself,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'it is a subject which we might talk over calmly, and perhaps remove your prejudices.'

'I have no prejudices against marriage,' rejoined Myra. 'It is likely enough that I may marry some day, and probably make an unhappy marriage; but that is not the question before us. It is whether I should marry Nigel. That cannot be, my dear father, and he knows it. I have assured him so in a manner which cannot be mistaken.'

'We are a doomed family!' exclaimed the unhappy Mr. Ferrars, clasping his hands.

'So I have long felt,' said Myra. 'I can bear our lot; but I want no strangers to be introduced to share its bitterness, and soothe us with their sympathy.'

'You speak like a girl,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and a headstrong girl, which you always have been. You know not what you are talking about. It is a matter of life or death. Your decorous marriage would have saved us from absolute ruin.'

'Alone, I can meet absolute ruin,' said Myra. 'I have long contemplated such a contingency, and am prepared for it. My marriage with Nigel could hardly save you, sir, from such a visitation, if it be impending. But I trust in that respect, if in no other, you have used a little of the language of exaggeration. I have never received, and I have never presumed to seek, any knowledge of your affairs; but I have assumed, that for your life, somehow or other, you would be permitted to exist without disgrace. If I survive you, I have neither care nor fear.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the following spring a vexatious incident occurred in Warwick Street. The highly-considered county member, who was the yearly tenant of Mr. Rodney's first floor, and had been always a valuable patron, suddenly died. An adjourned debate, a tough beefsteak, a select committee still harder, and an influenza caught at three o'clock in the morning in an imprudent but irresistible walk home with a confidential Lord of the Treasury, had combined very sensibly to affect the income of Mr. Rodney. At first he was sanguine that such a desirable dwelling would soon find a suitable inhabitant, especially as Mr.

Waldershare assured him that he would mention the matter to all his friends. But time rolled on, and the rooms were still vacant; and the fastidious Rodneys, who at first would only listen to a yearly tenant, began to reduce their expectations. Matters had arrived at such a pass in May, that, for the first time in their experience, they actually condescended to hoist an announcement of furnished apartments.

In this state of affairs a cab rattled up to the house one morning, out of which a young gentleman jumped briskly, and, knocking at the door, asked, of the servant who opened it, whether he might see the apartments. He was a young man, apparently not more than one or two and twenty, of a graceful figure, somewhat above the middle height, fair, with a countenance not absolutely regular, but calm and high-bred. His dress was in the best taste, but to a practised eye had something of a foreign cut, and he wore a slight moustache.

'The rooms will suit me,' he said, 'and I have no doubt the price you ask for them is a just one;' and he bowed with high-bred courtesy to Sylvia, who was now in attendance on him, and who stood with her pretty hands in the pretty pockets of her pretty apron.

'I am glad to hear that,' said Sylvia. 'We have never let them before, except to a yearly tenant.'

'And if we suit each other,' said the gentleman, 'I should have no great objection to become such.'

'In these matters,' said Sylvia, after a little hesitation, 'we give and receive references. Mr. Rodney is well known in this neighbourhood and in Westminster generally; but I dare say,' she adroitly added, 'he has many acquaintances known to you, sir.'

'Not very likely,' replied the young gentleman; 'for I am a foreigner, and only arrived in England this morning;' though he spoke English without the slightest accent.

Sylvia looked a little perplexed; but he continued: 'It is quite just that you should be assured to whom you are letting your lodgings. The only reference I can give you is to my banker, but he is almost too great a man for such matters. Perhaps,' he added, pulling out a case from his breast pocket,

and taking out of it a note, which he handed to Sylvia, 'this may assure you that your rent will be paid.'

Sylvia took a rapid glance at the hundred-pound-note, and twisting it into her little pocket with apparent *sangfroid*, though she held it with a tight grasp, murmured that it was quite unnecessary, and then offered to give her new lodger an acknowledgment of it.

'That is really unnecessary,' he replied. 'Your appearance commands from me that entire confidence which on your part you very properly refuse to a stranger and a foreigner like myself.'

'What a charming young man!' thought Sylvia, pressing with emotion her hundred-pound-note.

'Now,' continued the young gentleman, 'I will return to the station to release my servant, who is a prisoner there with my luggage. Be pleased to make him at home. I shall myself not return probably till the evening; and in the meantime,' he added, giving Sylvia his card, 'you will admit anything that arrives here addressed to Colonel Albert.'

The settlement of Colonel Albert in Warwick Street was an event of no slight importance. It superseded for a time all other topics of conversation, and was discussed at length in the evenings, especially with Mr. Vigo. Who was he? And in what service was he colonel? Mr. Rodney, like a man of the world, assumed that all necessary information would in time be obtained from the colonel's servant; but even men of the world sometimes miscalculate. The servant, who was a Belgian, had only been engaged by the colonel at Brussels a few days before his departure for England, and absolutely knew nothing of his master, except that he was a gentleman with plenty of money and sufficient luggage. Sylvia, who was the only person who had seen the colonel, was strongly in his favour. Mr. Rodney looked doubtful, and avoided any definite opinion until he had had the advantage of an interview with his new lodger. But this was not easy to obtain. Colonel Albert had no wish to see the master of the house, and, if he ever had that desire, his servant would accordingly communicate it in the proper quarter. At present he was satisfied with all the arrangements, and

wished neither to make nor to receive remarks. The habits of the new lodger were somewhat of a recluse. He was generally engaged in his rooms the whole day, and seldom left them till the evening, and nobody, as yet, had called upon him. Under these circumstances, Imogene was instructed to open the matter to Mr. Waldershare when she presided over his breakfast-table; and that gentleman said he would make inquiries about the colonel at the Travellers' Club, where Waldershare passed a great deal of his time. 'If he be anybody,' said Mr. Waldershare, 'he is sure in time to be known there, for he will be introduced as a visitor.' At present, however, it turned out that the 'Travellers'' knew nothing of Colonel Albert; and time went on, and Colonel Albert was not introduced as a visitor there.

After a little while there was a change in the habits of the colonel. One morning, about noon, a groom, extremely well appointed, and having under his charge a couple of steeds of breed and beauty, called at Warwick Street, and the colonel rode out, and was long absent, and after that, every day, and generally at the same hour, mounted his horse. Mr. Rodney was never wearied of catching a glimpse of his distinguished lodger over the blinds of the ground-floor room, and of admiring the colonel's commanding presence in his saddle, distinguished as his seat was alike by its grace and vigour.

In the course of a little time, another incident connected with the colonel occurred which attracted notice and excited interest. Towards the evening a brougham, marked, but quietly, with a foreign coronet, stopped frequently at Mr. Rodney's house, and a visitor to the colonel appeared in the form of a middle-aged gentleman who never gave his name, and evaded, it seemed with practised dexterity, every effort, however adroit, to obtain it. The valet was tried on this head also, and replied with simplicity that he did not know the gentleman's name, but he was always called the Baron.

In the middle of June a packet arrived one day by the coach, from the rector of Hurstley, addressed to Endymion, announcing his father's dangerous illness, and requesting him instantly to repair home. Myra was too much occupied to write even a line.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was strange that Myra did not write, were it only a line. It was so unlike her. How often this occurred to Endymion during his wearisome and anxious travel! When the coach reached Hurstley, he found Mr. Penruddock waiting for him. Before he could inquire after his father, that gentleman said, 'Myra is at the rectory; you are to come on there.'

'And my father?'——

'Matters are critical,' said Mr. Penruddock, as it were avoiding a direct answer, and hastening his pace.

It was literally not a five minutes' walk from the village inn to the rectory, and they walked in silence. The rector took Endymion at once into his study; for we can hardly call it a library, though some shelves of books were there, and many stuffed birds.

The rector closed the door with care, and looked distressed; and, beckoning to Endymion to be seated, he said, while still standing and half turning away his head, 'My dear boy, prepare yourself for the worst.'

'Ah! he is gone then! my dear, dear father!' and Endymion burst into passionate tears, and leant on the table, his face hid in his hands.

The rector walked up and down the room with an agitated countenance. He could not deny, it would seem, the inference of Endymion; and yet he did not proffer those consolations which might be urged, and which it became one in his capacity peculiarly to urge.

'I must see Myra,' said Endymion eagerly, looking up with a wild air and streaming eyes.

'Not yet,' said the rector; 'she is much disturbed. Your poor father is no more; it is too true; but,' and here the rector hesitated, 'he did not die happily.'

'What do you mean?' said Endymion.

'Your poor father had much to try him,' said the rector. 'His life, since he was amongst us here, was a life, for him, of adversity—perhaps of great adversity—yet he bore up against

it with a Christian spirit; he never repined. There was much that was noble and exalted in his character. But he never overcame the loss of your dear mother. He was never himself afterwards. He was not always master of himself. I could bear witness to that,' said the rector, talking, as it were, to himself. 'Yes; I could conscientiously give evidence to that effect'——

'What effect?' asked Endymion, with a painful scrutiny.

'I could show,' said the rector, speaking slowly, and in a low voice, 'and others could show, that he was not master of himself when he committed the rash act.'

'O Mr. Penruddock!' exclaimed Endymion, starting from his chair, and seizing the rector by his arm. 'What is all this?'

'That a great sorrow has come upon you, and your sister, and all of us,' said Mr. Penruddock; 'and you, and she, and all of us must bow before the Divine will in trembling, though in hope. Your father's death was not natural.'

Such was the end of William Pitt Ferrars, on whom nature, opportunity, and culture appeared to have showered every advantage. His abilities were considerable, his ambition greater. Though intensely worldly, he was not devoid of affections. He found refuge in suicide, as many do, from want of imagination. The present was too hard for him, and his future was only a chaotic nebula.

Endymion did not see his sister that evening. She was not made aware of his arrival, and was alone with Mrs. Penruddock, who never left her night or day. The rector took charge of her brother, and had a sofa-bed made for him in the kind man's room. He was never to be alone. Never the whole night did poor Endymion close his eyes; and he was almost as much agitated about the impending interview with Myra, as about the dark event of terror that had been disclosed to him.

Yet that dreaded interview must take place; and, about noon, the rector told him that Myra was in the drawing-room alone, and would receive him. He tottered as he crossed the hall; grief and physical exhaustion had unmanned him; his eyes were streaming with tears; he paused for a moment with his hand upon the door; he dreaded the anguish of her countenance.

She advanced and embraced him with tenderness; her face was grave, but not a tear even glistened.

'I have been living in a tragedy for years,' said Myra, in a low, hollow voice; 'and the catastrophe has now arrived.'

'Oh, my dear father!' exclaimed Endymion; and he burst into a renewed paroxysm of grief.

'Yes; he was dear to us, and we were dear to him,' said Myra; 'but the curtain has fallen. We have to exert ourselves. Energy and self-control were never more necessary to two human beings than to us. Here are his keys; his papers must be examined by no one but ourselves. There is a terrible ceremony taking place, or impending. When it is all over, we must visit the hall at least once more.'

The whole neighbourhood was full of sorrow for the event, and of sympathy for those bereft. It was universally agreed that Mr. Ferrars had never recovered the death of his wife; had never been the same man after it; had become distrait, absent, wandering in his mind, and the victim of an invincible melancholy. Several instances were given of his inability to manage his affairs. The jury, with Farmer Thornberry for foreman, hesitated not in giving a becoming verdict. In those days information travelled slowly. There were no railroads then, and no telegraphs, and not many clubs. A week elapsed before the sad occurrence was chronicled in a provincial paper, and another week before the report was reproduced in London, and then in an obscure corner of the journal, and in small print. Everything gets about at last, and the world began to stare and talk; but it passed unnoticed to the sufferers, except by a letter from Zenobia, received at Hurstley after Myra had departed from her kind friends. Zenobia was shocked, nay, overwhelmed, by what she had heard; wanted to know if she could be of use; offered to do anything; begged Myra to come and stay with her in St. James' Square; and assured her that, if that were not convenient, when her mourning was over Zenobia would present her at court, just the same as if she were her own daughter.

When the fatal keys were used, and the papers of Mr. Ferrars examined, it turned out worse than even Myra, in her darkest prescience, had anticipated. Her father had died absolutely

penniless. As executor of his father, the funds settled on his wife had remained under his sole control, and they had entirely disappeared. There was a letter addressed to Myra on this subject. She read it with a pale face, said nothing, and, without showing it to Endymion, destroyed it. There was to be an immediate sale of their effects at the hall. It was calculated that the expenses of the funeral and all the country bills might be defrayed by its proceeds.

And there will be enough left for me,' said Myra. 'I only want ten pounds; for I have ascertained that there is no part of England where ten pounds will not take me.'

Endymion sighed and nearly wept when she said these things. 'No,' he would add; 'we must never part.'

'That would ensure our common ruin,' said Myra. 'No; I will never embarrass you with a sister. You can only just subsist; for you could not well live in a garret, except at the Rodneys'. I see my way,' said Myra; 'I have long meditated over this—I can draw, I can sing, I can speak many tongues: I ought to be able to get food and clothing; I may get something more. And I shall always be content; for I shall always be thinking of you. However humble even my lot, if my will is concentrated on one purpose, it must ultimately effect it. That is my creed,' she said, 'and I hold it fervently. I will stay with these dear people for a little while. They are not exactly the family on which I ought to trespass. But never mind. You will be a great man some day, Endymion, and you will remember the good Penruddocks.'

CHAPTER XXX.

One of the most remarkable families that have ever flourished in England were the Neuchatels. Their founder was a Swiss, who had established a banking house of high repute in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and, irrespective of a powerful domestic connection, had in time pretty well engrossed the largest and best portion of foreign banking business. When the great French Revolution occurred, all the emigrants deposited

their jewels and their treasure with the Neuchatels. As the disturbances spread, their example was followed by the alarmed proprietors and capitalists of the rest of Europe; and, independently of their own considerable means, the Neuchatels thus had the command for a quarter of a century, more or less, of adventitious millions. They were scrupulous and faithful stewards; but they were doubtless repaid for their vigilance, their anxiety, and often their risk, by the opportunities which these rare resources permitted them to enjoy. One of the Neuchatels was a favourite of Mr. Pitt, and assisted the great statesman in his vast financial arrangements. This Neuchatel was a man of large capacity, and thoroughly understood his period. The minister wished to introduce him to public life, would have opened Parliament to him, and no doubt have showered on him honours and titles. But Neuchatel declined these overtures. He was one of those strong minds who will concentrate their energies on one object; without personal vanity, but with a deep-seated pride in the future. He was always preparing for his posterity. Governed by this passion, although he himself would have been content to live for ever in Bishopsgate Street, where he was born, he had become possessed of a vast principality, and which, strange to say, with every advantage of splendour and natural beauty, was not an hour's drive from Whitechapel.

Hainault House had been raised by a British peer in the days when nobles were fond of building Palladian palaces. It was a chief work of Sir William Chambers, and in its style, its beauty, and almost in its dimensions, was a rival of Stowe or Wanstead. It stood in a deer park, and was surrounded by a royal forest. The family that had raised it wore out in the earlier part of this century. It was supposed that the place must be destroyed and dismantled. It was too vast for a citizen, and the locality was no longer sufficiently refined for a conscript father. In this dilemma, Neuchatel stepped in and purchased the whole affair—palace, and park, and deer, and pictures, and halls, and galleries of statue and bust, and furniture, and even wines, and all the farms that remained, and all the seigneurial rights in the royal forest. But he never lived there. Though

he spared nothing in the maintenance and the improvement of the domain, except on a Sunday he never visited it, and was never known to sleep under its roof. 'It will be ready for those who come after me,' he would remark, with a modest smile.

Those who came after him were two sons, between whom his millions were divided ; and Adrian, the eldest, in addition to his share, was made the lord of Hainault. Adrian had inherited something more, and something more precious, than his father's treasure—a not inferior capacity, united, in his case, with much culture, and with a worldly ambition to which his father was a stranger. So long as that father lived, Adrian had been extremely circumspect. He seemed only devoted to business, and to model his conduct on that of his eminent sire. That father who had recognised with pride and satisfaction his capacity, and who was without jealousy, had initiated his son during his lifetime in all the secrets of his wondrous craft, and had entrusted him with a leading part in their affairs. Adrian had waited in Downing Street on Lord Liverpool, as his father years before had waited on Mr. Pitt.

The elder Neuchatel departed this life a little before the second French Revolution of 1830, which had been so fatal to Mr. Ferrars. Adrian, who had never committed himself in politics, further than sitting a short time for a reputed Tory borough, for which he paid a rent of a thousand a year to the proprietor, but who was known to have been nurtured in the school of Pitt and Wellington, astonished the world by voting for Lord Grey's Reform Bill, and announcing himself as a Liberal. This was a large fish for the new Liberal Treasury to capture ; their triumph was great, and they determined to show that they appreciated the power and the influence of their new ally. At the dissolution of 1831, Adrian Neuchatel was a candidate for a popular constituency, and was elected at the head of the poll. His brother, Melchior, was also returned, and a nephew. The Liberals were alarmed by a subscription of fabulous dimensions said to have been collected by the Tories to influence the General Election ; and the undoubted contribution of a noble duke was particularly mentioned, which alone appalled the heart of Brooks'. The matter was put before Neuchatel, as he entered

the club, to which he had been recently elected with acclamation. 'So you are a little frightened,' he said, with a peculiarly witching smile which he had, half mockery and half good nature; as much as to say, 'I will do what you wish, but I see through you and everybody else.' 'So you are a little frightened. Well; we City men must see what we can do against the dukes. You may put me down for double his amount.'

Adrian purchased a very fine mansion in Portland Place, and took up his residence formally at Hainault. He delighted in the place, and to dwell there in a manner becoming the scene had always been one of his dreams. Now he lived there with unbounded expenditure. He was passionately fond of horses, and even in his father's lifetime had run some at Newmarket in another name. The stables at Hainault had been modelled on those at Chantilly, and were almost as splendid a pile as the mansion itself. They were soon full, and of first-rate animals in their different ways. With his choice teams Adrian could reach Bishopsgate from Hainault, particularly if there were no stoppages in Whitechapel, in much under an hour.

If he had fifty persons in his stables, there were certainly as many in his park and gardens. These latter were most elaborate. It seemed there was nothing that Hainault could not produce: all the fruits and flowers of the tropics. The conservatories and forcing-houses looked, in the distance, like a city of glass. But, after all, the portion of this immense establishment which was most renowned, and perhaps, on the whole, best appreciated, was the establishment of the kitchen. The chief was the greatest celebrity of Europe; and he had no limit to his staff, which he had selected with the utmost scrutiny, maintained with becoming spirit, and winnowed with unceasing vigilance. Every day at Hainault was a banquet. What delighted Adrian was to bring down without notice a troop of friends, conscious they would be received as well as if there had been a preparation of weeks. Sometimes it was a body from the Stock Exchange, sometimes a host from the House of Commons, sometimes a board of directors with whom he had been transacting business in the morning. It delighted Adrian to see them quaffing his burgundy, and stuffing down his truffles, and his choice pies from Strasbourg,

and all the delicate dishes which many of them looked at with wonder, and tasted with timidity. And then he would, with his particular smile, say to a brother bank director, whose mouth was full, and who could only answer him with his eyes, 'Business gives one an appetite; eh, Mr. Trodgits?'

Sunday was always a great day at Hainault. The Royal and the Stock Exchanges were both of them always fully represented; and then they often had an opportunity, which they highly appreciated, of seeing and conferring with some public characters, M.P.s of note or promise, and occasionally a secretary of the Treasury, or a privy councillor. 'Turtle makes all men equal,' Adrian would observe. 'Our friend Trodgits seemed a little embarrassed at first, when I introduced him to the Right Honourable; but when they sate next each other at dinner, they soon got on very well.'

On Sunday the guests walked about and amused themselves. No one was allowed to ride or drive; Mrs. Neuchatel did not like riding and driving on Sundays. 'I see no harm in it,' said Adrian, 'but I like women to have their way about religion. And you may go to the stables and see the horses, and that might take up the morning. And then there are the houses; they will amuse you. For my part, I am for a stroll in the forest;' and then he would lead his companions, after a delightful ramble, to some spot of agrestic charm, and, looking at it with delight, would say, 'Pretty, is not it? But then they say this place is not fashionable. It will do, I think, for us City men.'

Adrian had married, when very young, a lady selected by his father. The selection seemed a good one. She was the daughter of a most eminent banker, and had herself, though that was of slight importance, a large portion. She was a woman of abilities, highly cultivated. Nothing had ever been spared that she should possess every possible accomplishment, and acquire every information and grace that it was desirable to attain. She was a linguist, a fine musician, no mean artist; and she threw out, if she willed it, the treasures of her well-stored and not unimaginative mind with ease and sometimes eloquence. Her person, without being absolutely beautiful, was interesting. There was even a degree of fascination in her brown velvet eyes. And yet

Mrs. Neuchatel was not a contented spirit; and though she appreciated the great qualities of her husband, and viewed him even with reverence as well as affection, she scarcely contributed to his happiness as much as became her. And for this reason. Whether it were the result of physical organisation, or whether it were the satiety which was the consequence of having been born, and bred, and lived for ever, in a society in which wealth was the prime object of existence, and practically the test of excellence, Mrs. Neuchatel had imbibed not merely a contempt for money, but absolutely a hatred of it. The prosperity of her house depressed her. The stables with their fifty grooms, and the grounds with their fifty gardeners, and the daily visit of the head cook to pass the bill of fare, were incidents and circumstances that made her melancholy. She looked upon the Stock Exchange coming down to dinner as she would on an invasion of the Visigoths, and endured the stiff observations or the cumbrous liveliness of the merchants and bank directors with gloomy grace. Something less material might be anticipated from the members of Parliament. But whether they thought it would please the genius of the place, or whether Adrian selected his friends from those who sympathised with his pursuits, the members of Parliament seemed wonderfully to accord with the general tone of the conversation, or varied it only by indulging in technical talk of their own. Sometimes she would make a desperate effort to change the elements of their society; something in this way: 'I see M. Arago and M. Mignet have arrived here, Adrian. Do not you think we ought to invite them here? And then you might ask Mr. Macaulay to meet them. You said you wished to ask Mr. Macaulay.'

In one respect the alliance between Adrian and his wife was not an unfortunate one. A woman, and a woman of abilities, fastidious, and inclined to be querulous, might safely be counted on as, in general, ensuring for both parties in their union an unsatisfactory and unhappy life. But Adrian, though kind, generous, and indulgent, was so absorbed by his own great affairs, was a man at the same time of so serene a temper and so supreme a will, that the over-refined fantasies of his wife produced not the slightest effect on the course of his life. Adrian

Neuchatel was what very few people are—master in his own house. With a rich varnish of graciousness and favour, he never swerved from his purpose; and, though willing to effect all things by smiles and sweet temper, he had none of that morbid sensibility which allows some men to fret over a phrase, to be tortured by a sigh, or to be subdued by a tear.

There had been born of this marriage only one child, the greatest heiress in England. She had been christened after her father, ADRIANA. She was now about seventeen; and, had she not been endowed with the finest disposition and the sweetest temper in the world, she must have been spoiled, for both her parents idolised her. To see her every day was for Adrian a reward for all his labours, and in the midst of his greatest affairs he would always snatch a moment to think how he could contribute to her pleasure or her happiness. All that was rare and delightful and beautiful in the world was at her command. There was no limit to the gratification of her wishes. But, alas! this favoured maiden wished for nothing. Her books interested her, and a beautiful nature; but she liked to be alone, or with her mother. She was impressed with the horrible and humiliating conviction, that she was courted and admired only for her wealth.

'What my daughter requires,' said Adrian, as he mused over these domestic contrarieties, 'is a companion of her own age. Her mother is the very worst constant companion she could have. She requires somebody with charm, and yet of a commanding mind; with youthful sympathy, and yet influencing her in the right way. It must be a person of birth and breeding and complete self-respect. I do not want to have any parasites in my house, or affected fine ladies. That would do no good. What I do want is a thing very difficult to procure. And yet they say everything is to be obtained. At least, I have always thought so, and found it so. I have the greatest opinion of an advertisement in the 'Times.' I got some of my best clerks by advertisements in the 'Times.' If I had consulted friends, there would have been no end of jobbing for such patronage. One could not trust, in such matters, one's own brother. I will draw up an advertisement and insert it in the 'Times,' and have the references to my counting-house. I will

think over the wording as I drive to town.' This was the wording:—

ADVERTISEMENT.

A BANKER and his Wife require a Companion for their only child, a young lady whose accomplishments and acquirements are already considerable. The friend that they would wish for her must be of about the same age as herself, and in every other respect their lots will be the same. The person thus desired will be received and treated as a daughter of the house, will be allowed her own suite of apartments, her own servants and equipage. She must be a person of birth, breeding, and entire self-respect; with a mind and experience capable of directing conduct, and with manners which will engage sympathy.—Apply to H. H., 45 Bishopsgate Street Within.

This advertisement met the eye of Myra at Hurstley Rectory about a month after her father's death, and she resolved to answer it. Her reply pleased Mr. Neuchatel. He selected it out of hundreds, and placed himself in communication with Mr. Penruddock. The result was, that Miss Ferrars was to pay a visit to the Neuchatels; and if, on experience, they liked each other, the engagement was to take place.

In the meantime the good rector of Hurstley arrived on the previous evening with his precious charge at Hainault House; and was rewarded for his kind exertions, not only by the prospect of assisting Myra, but by some present experience of a splendid and unusual scene.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'WHAT do you think of her, mamma?' said Adriana, with glistening eyes, as she ran into Mrs. Neuchatel's dressing-room for a moment before dinner.

'I think her manners are perfect,' replied Mrs. Neuchatel; 'and as there can be no doubt, after all we have heard, of her principles, I think we are most fortunate. But what do you think of her, Adriana? For, after all, that is the main question.'

'I think she is divine,' said Adriana; 'but I fear she has no heart.'

'And why? Surely it is early to decide on such a matter as that!'

'When I took her to her room,' said Adriana, 'I suppose I was nervous; but I burst into tears, and threw my arms round her neck and embraced her, but she did not respond. She touched my forehead with her lips, and withdrew from my embrace.'

'She wished, perhaps, to teach you to control your emotions,' said Mrs. Neuchatel. 'You have known her only an hour, and you could not have done more to your own mother.'

It had been arranged that there should be no visitors to-day; only a nephew and a foreign consul-general, just to break the formality of the meeting. Mr. Neuchatel placed Myra next to himself at the round table, and treated her with marked consideration—cordial but courteous, and easy, with a certain degree of deference. His wife, who piqued herself on her perception of character, threw her brown velvet eyes on her neighbour, Mr. Penruddock, and cross-examined him in mystical whispers. She soon recognised his love of nature; and this allowed her to dissert on the subject, at once sublime and inexhaustible, with copiousness worthy of the theme. When she found he was an entomologist, and that it was not so much mountains as insects which interested him, she shifted her ground, but treated it with equal felicity. Strange, but nature is never so powerful as in insect life. The white ant can destroy fleets and cities, and the locusts erase a province. And then, how beneficent they are! Man would find it difficult to rival their exploits: the bee, that gives us honey; the worm, that gives us silk; the cochineal, that supplies our manufactures with their most brilliant dye.

Mr. Penruddock did not seem to know much about manufactures, but always recommended his cottagers to keep bees.

'The lime-tree abounds in our village, and there is nothing the bees love more than its blossoms.'

This direct reference to his village led Mrs. Neuchatel to an inquiry as to the state of the poor about Hurstley, and she made the inquiry in a tone of commiseration.

'Oh! we do pretty well,' said Mr. Penruddock.

'But how can a family live on ten or twelve shillings a week?' murmured Mrs. Neuchatel.

'There it is,' said Mr. Penruddock. 'A family has more than that. With a family the income proportionately increases.'

Mrs. Neuchatel sighed. 'I must say,' she said, 'I cannot help feeling there is something wrong in our present arrangements. When I sit down to dinner every day, with all these dishes, and remember that there are millions who never taste meat, I cannot resist the conviction that it would be better if there were some equal division, and all should have, if not much, at least something.'

'Nonsense, Emily!' said Mr. Neuchatel, who had an organ like Fine-ear, and could catch, when necessary, his wife's most mystical revelations. 'My wife, Mr. Penruddock, is a regular Communist. I hope you are not,' he added, with a smile, turning to Myra.

'I think life would be very insipid,' replied Myra, 'if all our lots were the same.'

When the ladies withdrew, Adriana and Myra walked out together hand-in-hand. Mr. Neuchatel rose and sate next to Mr. Penruddock, and began to talk politics. His reverend guest could not conceal his alarm about the position of the Church, and spoke of Lord John Russell's appropriation clause with well-bred horror.

'Well, I do not think there is much to be afraid of,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'This is a liberal age, and you cannot go against it. The people must be educated, and where are the funds to come from? We must all do something, and the Church must contribute its share. You know I am a Liberal, but I am not for any rash courses. I am not at all sorry that Sir Robert Peel gained so much at the last general election. I like parties to be balanced. I am quite content with affairs. My friends, the Liberals, are in office, and, being there, they can do very little. That is the state of things, is it not, Melchior?' he added, with a smile to his nephew, who was an M.P. 'A balanced state of parties, and the house of Neuchatel with three votes—that will do. We poor City men get a little attention paid to us now,

but before the dissolution three votes went for nothing. Now, shall we go and ask my daughter to give us a song?'

Mrs. Neuchatel accompanied her daughter on the piano, and after a time not merely on the instrument. The organ of both was fine and richly cultivated. It was choice chamber music. Mr. Neuchatel seated himself by Myra. His tone was more than kind, and his manner gentle. 'It is a little awkward the first day,' he said, 'among strangers, but that will wear off. You must bring your mind to feel that this is your home, and we shall all of us do everything in our power to convince you of it. Mr. Penruddock mentioned to me your wish, under present circumstances, to enter as little as possible into society, and this is a very social house. Your feeling is natural, and you will be in this matter entirely your own mistress. We shall always be glad to see you, but if you are not present we shall know and respect the cause. For my own part, I am one of those who would rather cherish affection than indulge grief, but every one must follow their mood. I hear you have a brother, to whom you are much attached; a twin, too, and they tell me strongly resembling you. He is in a public office, I believe? Now, understand this; your brother can come here whenever he likes, without any further invitation. Ask him whenever you please. We shall always be glad to see him. No sort of notice is necessary. This is not a very small house, and we can always manage to find a bed and a cutlet for a friend.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

NOTHING could be more successful than the connection formed between the Neuchatel family and Myra Ferrars. Both parties to the compact were alike satisfied. Myra had 'got out of that hole' which she always hated; and though the new life she had entered was not exactly the one she had mused over, and which was founded on the tradition of her early experience, it was a life of energy and excitement, of splendour and power, with a total absence of petty vexations and miseries, affording neither time nor cause for the wearing chagrin of a monotonous and

mediocre existence. But the crowning joy of her emancipation was the prospect it offered of frequent enjoyment of the society of her brother.

With regard to the Neuchatels, they found in Myra everything they could desire. Mrs. Neuchatel was delighted with a companion who was not the daughter of a banker, and whose schooled intellect not only comprehended all her doctrines, however abstruse or fanciful, but who did not hesitate, if necessary, to controvert or even confute them. As for Adriana, she literally idolised a friend whose proud spirit and clear intelligence were calculated to exercise a strong but salutary influence over her timid and sensitive nature. As for the great banker himself, who really had that faculty of reading character which his wife flattered herself she possessed, he had made up his mind about Myra from the first, both from her correspondence and her conversation. 'She has more common sense than any woman I ever knew, and more,' he would add, 'than most men. If she were not so handsome, people would find it out; but they cannot understand that so beautiful a woman can have a headpiece, that, I really believe, could manage the affairs in Bishopsgate Street.'

In the meantime life at Hainault resumed its usual course; streams of guests, of all parties, colours, and classes, and even nations. Sometimes Mr. Neuchatel would say, 'I really must have a quiet day that Miss Ferrars may dine with us, and she shall ask her brother. How glad I shall be when she goes into half-mourning! I scarcely catch a glimpse of her.' And all this time his wife and daughter did nothing but quote her, which was still more irritating, for, as he would say, half-grumbling and half-smiling, 'If it had not been for me she would not have been here.'

At first Adriana would not dine at table without Myra, and insisted on sharing her imprisonment. 'It does not look like a cell,' said Myra, surveying, not without complacency, her beautiful little chamber, beautifully lit, with its silken hangings and carved ceiling and bright with books and pictures; 'besides, there is no reason why you should be a prisoner. You have not lost a father, and I hope never will.'

'Amen!' said Adriana; 'that would indeed be the unhappiest day of my life.'

'You cannot be in society too much in the latter part of the day,' said Myra. 'The mornings should be sacred to ourselves, but for the rest of the hours people are to see and to be seen, and,' she added, 'to like and to be liked.'

Adriana shook her head; 'I do not wish any one to like me but you.'

'I am sure I shall always like you, and love you,' said Myra, 'but I am equally sure that a great many other people will do the same.'

'It will not be myself that they like or love,' said Adriana with a sigh.

'Now, spare me that vein, dear Adriana; you know I do not like it. It is not agreeable, and I do not think it is true. I believe that women are loved much more for themselves than is supposed. Besides, a woman should be content if she is loved; that is the point; and she is not to inquire how far the accidents of life have contributed to the result. Why should you not be loved for yourself? You have an interesting appearance. I think you very pretty. You have choice accomplishments and agreeable conversation and the sweetest temper in the world. You want a little self-conceit, my dear. If I were you and admired, I should never think of my fortune.'

'If you were the greatest heiress in the world, Myra, and were married, nobody would suppose for a moment that it was for your fortune.'

'Go down to dinner and smile upon everybody, and tell me about your conquests to-morrow. And say to your dear papa, that as he is so kind as to wish to see me, I will join them after dinner.'

And so, for the first two months, she occasionally appeared in the evening, especially when there was no formal party. Endymion came and visited her every Sunday, but he was also a social recluse, and though he had been presented to Mrs. Neuchatel and her daughter, and been most cordially received by them, it was some considerable time before he made the acquaintance of the great banker.

About September Myra may be said to have formally joined the circle at Hainault. Three months had elapsed since the terrible event, and she felt, irrespective of other considerations, her position hardly justified her, notwithstanding all the indulgent kindness of the family, in continuing a course of life which she was conscious to them was sometimes an inconvenience and always a disappointment. It was impossible to deny that she was interested and amused by the world which she now witnessed—so energetic, so restless, so various; so full of urgent and pressing life; never thinking of the past and quite heedless of the future, but worshipping an almighty present that sometimes seemed to roll on like the car of Juggernaut. She was much diverted by the gentlemen of the Stock Exchange, so acute, so audacious, and differing so much from the merchants in the style even of their dress, and in the ease, perhaps the too great facility, of their bearing. They called each other by their Christian names, and there were allusions to practical jokes which intimated a life something between a public school and a garrison. On more solemn days there were diplomatists and men in political office; sometimes great musical artists, and occasionally a French actor. But the dinners were always the same; dishes worthy of the great days of the Bourbons; and wines of rarity and price, which could not ruin Neuchatel, for in many instances the vineyards belonged to himself.

One morning at breakfast, when he rarely encountered them, but it was a holiday in the City, Mr. Neuchatel said, 'There are a few gentlemen coming to dine here to-day whom you know, with one exception. He is a young man, a very nice young fellow. I have seen a good deal of him of late on business in the City, and have taken a fancy to him. He is a foreigner, but he was partly educated in this country and speaks English as well as any of us.'

'Then I suppose he is not a Frenchman,' said Mrs. Neuchatel, 'for they never speak English.'

'I shall not say what he is. You must all find out; I dare say Miss Ferrars will discover him; but, remember, you must all of you pay him great attention, for he is not a common person, I can assure you.'

'You are mysterious, Adrian,' said his wife, 'and quite pique our curiosity.'

'Well, I wish somebody would pique mine,' said the banker. 'These holidays in the City are terrible things. I think I will go after breakfast and look at the new house, and I dare say Miss Ferrars will be kind enough to be my companion.'

Several of the visitors, fortunately for the banker whose time hung rather heavily on his hands, arrived an hour or so before dinner, that they might air themselves in the famous gardens and see some of the new plants. But the guest whom he most wished to greet, and whom the ladies were most curious to welcome, did not arrive. They had all entered the house and the critical moment was at hand, when, just as dinner was about to be announced, the servants ushered in a young man of distinguished appearance, and the banker exclaimed, 'You have arrived just in time to take Mrs. Neuchatel in to dinner,' and he presented to her—COLONEL ALBERT.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ladies were much interested by Colonel Albert. Mrs. Neuchatel exercised on him all the unrivalled arts by which she so unmistakably discovered character. She threw on him her brown velvet eyes with a subdued yet piercing beam, which would penetrate his most secret and even undeveloped intelligence. She asked questions in a hushed mystical voice, and as the colonel was rather silent and somewhat short in his replies, though ever expressed in a voice of sensibility and with refined deference of manner, Mrs. Neuchatel opened her own peculiar views on a variety of subjects of august interest, such as education, high art, the influence of women in society, the formation of character, and the distribution of wealth, on all of which this highly gifted lady was always in the habit of informing her audience, by way of accompaniment, that she was conscious that the views she entertained were peculiar. The views of Mrs Neuchatel were peculiar, and therefore not always, or even

easily, comprehended. That indeed she felt was rather her fate in life, but a superior intelligence like hers has a degree of sublimated self-respect which defies destiny.

When she was alone with the ladies, the bulletin of Mrs. Neuchatel was not so copious as had been expected. She announced that Colonel Albert was sentimental, and she suspected a poet. But for the rest she had discovered nothing, not even his nationality. She had tried him both in French and German, but he persisted in talking English, although he spoke of himself as a foreigner. After dinner he conversed chiefly with the men, particularly with the Governor of the Bank, who seemed to interest him much, and a director of one of the dock companies, who offered to show him over their establishment, an offer which Colonel Albert eagerly accepted. Then, as if he remembered that homage was due at such a moment to the fairer sex, he went and seated himself by Adriana, and was playful and agreeable, though when she was cross-examined afterwards by her friends as to the character of his conversation, she really could not recall anything particular except that he was fond of horses, and said that he should like very much to take a ride with her. Just before he took his departure, Colonel Albert addressed Myra, and in a rather strange manner. He said, 'I have been puzzling myself all dinner, but I cannot help feeling that we have met before.'

Myra shook her head and said, 'I think that is impossible.'

'Well,' said the colonel with a look a little perplexed and not altogether satisfied, 'I suppose then it was a dream. May dreams so delightful,' and he bowed, 'never be wanting!'

'So you think he is a poet, Emily,' said Mr. Neuchatel when they had all gone. We have got a good many of his papers in Bishopsgate Street, but I have not met with any verses in them yet.'

The visit of Colonel Albert was soon repeated, and he became a rather frequent guest at Hainault. It was evident that he was a favourite with Mr. Neuchatel. 'He knows very few people,' he would say, 'and I wish him to make some friends. Poor young fellow: he has had rather a hard life of it, and seen some service for such a youth. He is a perfect gentleman, and if he be a poet, Emily, that is all in your way. You like literary

people, and are always begging that I should ask them. Well, next Saturday you will have a sort of a lion—one of the principal writers in "Scaramouch." He is going to Paris as the foreign correspondent of the "Chuck-Farthing" with a thousand a year, and one of my friends in the Stock Exchange, who is his great ally, asked me to give him some letters. So he came to Bishopsgate Street—they all come to Bishopsgate Street—and I asked him to dine here on Saturday. By the by, Miss Ferrars, ask your brother to come on the same day and stay with us till Monday. I will take him up to town with me quite in time for his office.'

This was the first time that Endymion had remained at Hainault. He looked forward to the visit with anticipations of great pleasure. Hainault, and all the people there, and everything about it, delighted him, and most of all the happiness of his sister and the consideration, and generosity, and delicate affection with which she was treated. One morning, to his astonishment, Myra had insisted upon his accepting from her no inconsiderable sum of money. 'It is no part of my salary,' she said, when he talked of her necessities. 'Mr. Neuchatel said he gave it to me for outfit and to buy gloves. But being in mourning I want to buy nothing, and you, dear darling, must have many wants. Besides, Mrs. Neuchatel has made me so many presents that I really do not think that I shall ever want to buy anything again.'

It was rather a grand party at Hainault, such as Endymion had little experience of. There was a cabinet minister and his wife, not only an ambassador, but an ambassadress who had been asked to meet them, a nephew Neuchatel, the M.P. with a pretty young wife, and several apparently single gentlemen of note and position. Endymion was nervous when he entered, and more so because Myra was not in the room. But his trepidation was absorbed in his amazement when in the distance he observed St. Barbe, with a very stiff white cravat, and his hair brushed into unnatural order, and his whole demeanour forming a singular contrast to the rollicking cynicism of Joe's and the office.

Mr. Neuchatel presented St. Barbe to the lady of the mansion. 'Here is one of our great wits,' said the banker, 'and he is going

to Paris, which is the capital of wits.' The critical moment prevented prolonged conversation, but the lady of the mansion did contrive to convey to St. Barbe her admiring familiarity with some of his effusions, and threw out a phrase which proved how finely she could distinguish between wit and humour.

Endymion at dinner sate between two M.P.s, whom his experience at the House of Commons allowed him to recognise. As he was a young man whom neither of them knew, neither of them addressed him, but with delicate breeding carried on an active conversation across him, as if in fact he were not present. As Endymion had very little vanity, this did not at all annoy him. On the contrary, he was amused, for they spoke of matters with which he was not unacquainted, though he looked as if he knew or heard nothing. Their conversation was what is called 'shop:' all about the House and office; criticisms on speakers, speculations as to preferment, what Government would do about this, and how well Government got out of that.

Endymion was amused by seeing Myra, who was remote from him, sitting by St. Barbe, who, warmed by the banquet, was evidently holding forth without the slightest conception that his neighbour whom he addressed had long become familiar with his characteristics.

After dinner, St. Barbe pounced upon Endymion. 'Only think of our meeting here!' he said. 'I wonder why they asked you. You are not going to Paris, and you are not a wit. What a family this is!' he said; 'I had no idea of wealth before! Did you observe the silver plates? I could not hold mine with one hand, it was so heavy. I do not suppose there are such plates in the world. It gives one an idea of the galleons and Anson's plunder. But they deserve their wealth,' he added; 'nobody grudges it to them. I declare when I was eating that truffle, I felt a glow about my heart that, if it were not indigestion, I think must have been gratitude; though that is an article I had not believed in. He is a wonderful man, that Neuchatel. If I had only known him a year ago! I would have dedicated my novel to him. He is a sort of man who would have given you a cheque immediately. He would not have read it, to be sure, but what of that? If you had dedi-

cated it to a lord, the most he would have done would have been to ask you to dinner, and then perhaps cut up your work in one of the Quality reviews, and taken money for doing it out of our pockets! Oh! it's too horrid! There are some topsawyers here to-day, Ferrars! It would make Seymour Hicks' mouth water to be here. We should have had it in the papers, and he would have left us out of the list, and called us, etc. Now I dare say that ambassador has been blundering all his life, and yet there is something in that star and ribbon; I do not know how you feel, but I could almost go down on my knees to him. And there is a cabinet minister; well, we know what he is; I have been squibbing him for these two years, and now that I meet him I feel like a snob. Oh! there is an immense deal of superstition left in the world. I am glad they are going to the ladies. I am to be honoured by some conversation with the mistress of the house. She seems a first-rate woman, familiar with the glorious pages of a certain classic work, and my humble effusions. She praised one she thought I wrote, but between ourselves it was written by that fellow Seymour Hicks, who imitates me; but I would not put her right, as dinner might have been announced every moment. But she is a great woman, sir,—wonderful eyes! They are all great women here. I sat next to one of the daughters, or daughters-in-law, or nieces, I suppose. By Jove! it was tierce and quart. If you had been there, you would have been run through in a moment. I had to show my art. Now they are rising. I should not be surprised if Mr. Neuchatel were to present me to some of the grandees. I believe them to be all impostors, but still it is pleasant to talk to a man with a star.

"Ye stars, which are the poetry of heaven,"

Byron wrote; a silly line; he should have written,

"Ye stars, which are the poetry of dress."'

CHAPTER XXXIV.

St. Barbe was not disappointed in his hopes. It was an evening of glorious success for him. He had even the honour of sitting for a time by the side of Mrs. Neuchatel, and being

full of good claret, he, as he phrased it, showed his paces; that is to say, delivered himself of some sarcastic paradoxes duly blended with fulsome flattery. Later in the evening, he contrived to be presented both to the ambassador and the cabinet minister, and treated them as if they were demigods; listened to them as if with an admiration which he vainly endeavoured to repress; never spoke except to enforce and illustrate the views which they had condescended to intimate; successfully conveyed to his excellency that he was conversing with an enthusiast for his exalted profession; and to the minister that he had met an ardent sympathiser with his noble career. The ambassador was not dissatisfied with the impression he had made on one of the foreign correspondents of the 'Chuck-Farthing,' and the minister flattered himself that both the literary and the graphic representations of himself in 'Scaramouch' might possibly for the future be mitigated.

'I have done business to-night,' said St. Barbe to Endymion, towards the close of the evening. 'You did not know I had left the old shop? I kept it close. I could stand it no longer. One has energies, sir, though not recognised—at least not recognised much,' he added thoughtfully. 'But who knows what may happen? The age of mediocrity is not eternal. You see this thing offered, and I saw an opening. It has come already. You saw the big-wigs all talking to me? I shall go to Paris now with some *éclat*. I shall invent a new profession; the literary diplomatist. The bore is, I know nothing about foreign politics. My line has been the other way. Never mind; I will read the "Débats" and the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and make out something. Foreign affairs are all the future, and my views may be as right as anybody else's; probably more correct, not so conventional. What a fool I was, Ferrars! I was asked to remain here to-night and refused! The truth is, I could not stand those powdered gentlemen, and I should have been under their care. They seem so haughty and supercilious. And yet I was wrong. I spoke to one of them very rudely just now, when he was handing coffee, to show I was not afraid, and he answered me like a seraph. I felt remorse.'

'Well, I have made the acquaintance of Mr. St. Barbe,' said

Myra to Endymion. 'Strange as he is, he seemed quite familiar to me, and he was so full of himself that he never found me out. I hope some day to know Mr. Trenchard and Mr. Waldershare. Those I look upon as your chief friends.'

On the following afternoon, Adriana, Myra, and Endymion took a long walk together in the forest. The green glades in the autumnal woods were inviting, and sometimes they stood before the vast form of some doddered oak. The air was fresh and the sun was bright. Adriana was always gay and happy in the company of her adored Myra, and her happiness and her gaiety were not diminished by the presence of Myra's brother. So it was a lively and pleasant walk.

At the end of a long glade they observed a horseman followed by a groom approaching them. Endymion was some little way behind, gathering wild flowers for Adriana. Cantering along, the cavalier soon reached them, and then he suddenly pulled up his horse. It was Colonel Albert.

'You are walking, ladies? Permit me to join you,' and he was by their side. 'I delight in forests and in green alleys,' said Colonel Albert. 'Two wandering nymphs make the scene perfect.'

'We are not alone,' said Adriana, 'but our guardian is picking some wild flowers for us, which we fancied. I think it is time to return. You are going to Hainault, I believe, Colonel Albert, so we can all walk home together.'

So they turned, and Endymion with his graceful offering in a moment met them. Full of his successful quest, he offered with eager triumph the flowers to Adriana, without casting a glance at her new companion.

'Beautiful!' exclaimed Adriana, and she stopped to admire and arrange them. 'See, dear Myra, is not this lovely? How superior to anything in our glass-houses!'

Myra took the flower and examined it. Colonel Albert, who was silent, was watching all this time Endymion with intentness, who now looked up and encountered the gaze of the new comer. Their eyes met, their countenances were agitated, they seemed perplexed, and then it seemed that at the same time both extended their hands.

'It is a long time since we met,' said Colonel Albert, and he retained the hand of Endymion with affection. But Endymion, who was apparently much moved, said nothing, or rather only murmured an echo to the remarks of his new friend. And then they all walked on, but Myra fell a little back and made a signal to Endymion to join her.

'You never told me, darling, that you knew Colonel Albert.'

'Colonel Albert!' said Endymion, looking amazed, and then he added, 'Who is Colonel Albert?'

'That gentleman before us,' said Myra.

'That is the Count of Otranto, whose fag I was at Eton.'

'The Count of Otranto!'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Colonel Albert from this day became an object of increased and deeper interest to Myra. His appearance and manners had always been attractive, and the mystery connected with him was not calculated to diminish curiosity in his conduct or fate. But when she discovered that he was the unseen hero of her childhood, the being who had been kind to her Endymion in what she had ever considered the severest trial of her brother's life, had been his protector from those who would have oppressed him, and had cherished him in the desolate hour of his delicate and tender boyhood, her heart was disturbed. How often had they talked together of the Count of Otranto, and how often had they wondered who he was! His memory had been a delightful mystery to them in their Berkshire solitude, and Myra recalled with a secret smile the numberless and ingenious inquiries by which she had endeavoured to elicit from her brother some clue as to his friend, or to discover some detail which might guide her to a conclusion. Endymion had known nothing, and was clear always that the Count of Otranto must have been, and was, an English boy. And now the Count of Otranto called himself Colonel Albert, and though he persisted in speaking English, had admitted to Mrs. Neuchatel that he was a foreigner.