CHAPTER XC.

THE archbishop called at Hurstley House the next day. It was a visit to Mr. Thornberry, but all the family was soon present, and clustered round the visitor. Then they walked together in the gardens, which had become radiant under the taste and unlimited expenditure of Mrs. Thornberry; beds glowing with colour or rivalling mosaics, choice conifers with their green or purple fruit, and rare roses with their fanciful and beauteous names; one, by the by, named 'Mrs. Penruddock,' and a very gorgeous one, 'The Archbishop.'

As they swept along the terraces, restored to their pristine comeliness, and down the green avenues bounded by copper beeches and ancient yews, where men were sweeping away every leaf and twig that had fallen in the night and marred the consummate order, it must have been difficult for the Archbishop of Tyre not to recall the days gone by, when this brilliant and finished scene, then desolate and neglected, the abode of beauty and genius, yet almost of penury, had been to him a world of deep and familiar interest. Yes, he was walking in the same glade where he had once pleaded his own cause with an eloquence which none of his most celebrated sermons had excelled. Did he think of this? If he did, it was only to wrench the thought from his memory. Archbishops who are yet young, who are resolved to be cardinals, and who may be popes, are superior to all human weakness.

'I should like to look at your chapel,' said his Grace to Mr. Thornberry; 'I remember it a lumber room, and used to mourn over its desecration.'

'I never was in it,' said Job, 'and cannot understand why my wife is so anxious about it as she seems to be. When we first went to London, she always sate under the Reverend Socinus Frost, and seemed very satisfied. I have heard him; a sensible man—but sermons are not much in my way, and I do not belong to his sect, or indeed any other.'

However, they went to the chapel all the same, for Mrs.

Thornberry was resolved on the visit. It was a small chamber, but beautifully proportioned, like the mansion itself—of a blended Italian and Gothic style. The roof was flat, but had been richly gilt and painted, and was sustained by corbels of angels, divinely carved. There had been some pews in the building; some had fallen to pieces, and some remained, but these were not in the original design. The sacred table had disappeared, but two saintly statues, sculptured in black oak, seemed still to guard the spot which it had consecrated.

'I wonder what became of the communion table?' said Job.

'Oh! my dear father, do not call it a communion table,' exclaimed John Hampden pettishly.

'Why, what should I call it, my boy?'

'The altar.'

'Why, what does it signify what we call it? The thing is the same.'

'Ah!' exclaimed the young gentleman, in a tone of contemptuous enthusiasm, 'it is all the difference in the world. There should be a stone altar and a reredos. We have put up a reredos in our chapel at Bradley. All the fellows subscribed; I gave a sovereign.'

'Well, I must say,' said the archbishop, who had been standing in advance with Mrs. Thornberry and the children, while this brief and becoming conversation was taking place between father and son, 'I think you could hardly do a better thing than restore this chapel, Mr. Thornberry, but there must be no mistake about it. It must be restored to the letter, and it is a style that is not commonly understood. I have a friend, however, who is master of it, the most rising man in his profession, as far as church architecture is concerned, and I will get him just to run down and look at this, and if, as I hope, you resolve to restore it, rest assured he will do you justice, and you will be proud of your place of worship.'

'I do not care how much we spend on our gardens,' said Job, 'for they are transitory pleasures, and we enjoy what we produce; but why I should restore a chapel in a house which does not belong to myself is not so clear to me.'

'But it should belong to yourself,' rejoined the archbishop. 'Hurstley is not in the market, but it is to be purchased. Take it altogether, I have always thought it one of the most enviable possessions in the world. The house, when put in order, would be one of the ornaments of the kingdom. The acreage, though considerable, is not overwhelming, and there is a range of wild country of endless charm. I wandered about it in my childhood and my youth, and I have never known anything equal to it. Then as to the soil and all that, you know it. You are a son of the soil. You left it for great objects, and you have attained those objects. They have given you fame as well as fortune. There would be something wonderfully dignified and graceful in returning to the land after you have taken the principal part in solving the difficulties which pertained to it, and emancipating it from many perils.'

'I am sure it would be the happiest day of my life, if Job would purchase Hurstley,' said Mrs. Thornberry.

'I should like to go to Oxford, and my father purchase Hurstley,' said the young gentleman. 'If we have not landed property, I would sooner have none. If we have not land, I should like to go into the Church, and if I may not go to Oxford, I would go to Cuddesdon at once. I know it can be done, for I know a fellow who has done it.'

Poor Job Thornberry! He had ruled multitudes, and had conquered and commanded senates. His Sovereign had made him one of her privy councillors, and half a million of people had returned him their representative to parliament. And here he stood silent, and a little confused; sapped by his wife, bullied by his son, and after having passed a great part of his life in denouncing sacerdotalism, finding his whole future career chalked out, without himself being consulted, by a priest who was so polite, sensible, and so truly friendly, that his manner seemed to deprive its victims of every faculty of retort or repartee. Still he was going to say something when the door opened, and Mrs. Penruddock appeared, exclaiming in a cheerful voice, 'I thought I should find you here. I would not have troubled your Grace, but this letter marked "private, immediate, and to be forwarded," has been wandering about for

some time, and I thought it was better to bring it to you at once.'

The Archbishop of Tyre took the letter, and seemed to start as he read the direction. Then he stood aside, opened it, and read its contents. The letter was from Lady Roehampton, desiring to see him as soon as possible on a matter of the utmost gravity, and entreating him not to delay his departure, wherever he might be.

'I am sorry to quit you all,' said his Grace; 'but I must go up to town immediately. The business is urgent.'

CHAPTER XCI.

ENDYMION arrived at home very late from the Montfort ball, and rose in consequence at an unusually late hour. He had taken means to become sufficiently acquainted with the cause of his sister's absence the night before, so he had no anxiety on that head. Lady Roehampton had really intended to have been present, was indeed dressed for the occasion; but when the moment of trial arrived, she was absolutely unequal to the effort. All this was amplified in a little note from his sister, which his valet brought him in the morning. What, however, considerably surprised him in this communication was her announcement that her feelings last night had proved to her that she ought not to remain in London, and that she intended to find solitude and repose in the little watering-place where she had passed a tranquil autumn during the first year of her widowhood. What completed his astonishment, however, was the closing intimation that, in all probability, she would have left town before he rose. The moment she had got a little settled she would write to him, and when business permitted, he must come and pay her a little visit.

'She was always capricious,' exclaimed Lady Montfort, who had not forgotten the disturbance of her royal supper-table.

'Hardly that, I think,' said Endymion. 'I have always looked on Myra as a singularly consistent character.'

'I know, you never admit your sister has a fault.'

'You said the other day yourself that she was the only perfect character you knew.'

'Did I say that? I think her capricious.'

'I do not think you are capricious,' said Endymion, 'and yet the world sometimes says you are.'

'I change my opinion of persons when my taste is offended,' said Lady Montfort. 'What I admired in your sister, though I confess I sometimes wished not to admire her, was that she never offended my taste.'

'I hope satisfied it,' said Endymion.

'Yes, satisfied it, always satisfied it. I wonder what will be her lot, for, considering her youth, her destiny has hardly begun. Somehow or other, I do not think she will marry Sidney Wilton.'

'I have sometimes thought that would be,' said Endymion.

'Well, it would be, I think, a happy match. All the circumstances would be collected that form what is supposed to be happiness. But tastes differ about destinies as well as about manners. For my part, I think to have a husband who loved you, and he clever, accomplished, charming, ambitious, would be happiness; but I doubt whether your sister cares so much about these things. She may, of course does, talk to you more freely; but with others, in her most open hours, there seems a secret fund of reserve in her character which I never could penetrate, except, I think, it is a reserve which does not originate in a love of tranquillity, but quite the reverse. She is a strong character.'

'Then, hardly a capricious one.'

'No, not capricious; I only said that to tease you. I am capricious; I know it. I disregard people sometimes that I have patronised and flattered. It is not merely that I have changed my opinion of them, but I positively hate them.'

'I hope you will never hate me,' said Endymion.

'You have never offended my taste yet,' said Lady Montfort with a smile.

Endymion was engaged to dine to-day with Mr. Bertie Tremaine. Although now in hostile political camps, that great leader of men never permitted their acquaintance to cease. 'He is young,' reasoned Mr. Bertie Tremaine; 'every political party changes its principles on an average once in ten years. Those who are young must often then form new connections, and Ferrars will then come to me. He will be ripe and experienced, and I could give him a good deal. I do not want numbers. I want men. In opposition, numbers often only embarrass. The power of the future is ministerial capacity. The leader with a cabinet formed will be the minister of England. He is not to trouble himself about numbers; that is an affair of the constituencies.'

Male dinners are in general not amusing. When they are formed, as they usually are, of men who are supposed to possess a strong and common sympathy—political, sporting, literary, military, social—there is necessarily a monotony of thought and feeling, and of the materials which induce thought and feeling. In a male dinner of party politicians, conversation soon degenerates into what is termed 'shop;' anecdotes about divisions, criticism of speeches, conjectures about office, speculations on impending elections, and above all, that heinous subject on which enormous fibs are ever told, the registration. There are, however, occasional glimpses in their talk which would seem to intimate that they have another life outside the Houses of Parliament. But that extenuating circumstance does not apply to the sporting dinner. There they begin with odds and handicaps, and end with handicaps and odds, and it is doubtful whether it ever occurs to any one present, that there is any other existing combination of atoms than odds and handicaps. A dinner of wits is proverbially a palace of silence; and the envy and hatred which all literary men really feel for each other, especially when they are exchanging dedications of mutual affection, always ensure, in such assemblies, the agreeable presence of a general feeling of painful constraint. If a good thing occurs to a guest, he will not express it, lest his neighbour, who is publishing a novel in numbers, shall appropriate it next month, or he himself, who has the same responsibility of pro-

duction, be deprived of its legitimate appearance. Those who desire to learn something of the manœuvres at the Russian and Prussian reviews, or the last rumour at Aldershot or the military clubs, will know where to find this feast of reason. The flow of soul in these male festivals is perhaps, on the whole, more genial when found in a society of young gentlemen, graduates of the Turf and the Marlborough, and guided in their benignant studies by the gentle experience and the mild wisdom of White's. The startling scandal, the rattling anecdote, the astounding leaps, and the amazing shots, afford for the moment a somewhat pleasing distraction, but when it is discovered that all these habitual flim-flams are, in general, the airy creatures of inaccuracy and exaggeration—that the scandal is not true, the anecdote has no foundation, and that the feats of skill and strength are invested with the organic weakness of tradition, the vagaries lose something of the charm of novelty, and are almost as insipid as claret from which the bouquet has evaporated.

The male dinners of Mr. Bertie Tremaine were an exception to the general reputation of such meetings. They were never dull. In the first place, though to be known at least by reputation was an indispensable condition of being present, he brought different classes together, and this, at least for once, stimulates and gratifies curiosity. His house too was open to foreigners of celebrity, without reference to their political parties or opinions. Every one was welcome except absolute assassins. The host too had studied the art of developing character and conversation, and if sometimes he was not so successful in this respect as he deserved, there was no lack of amusing entertainment, for in these social encounters Mr. Bertie Tremaine was a reserve in himself, and if nobody else would talk, he would avail himself of the opportunity of pouring forth the treasures of his own teeming intelligence. His various knowledge, his power of speech, his eccentric paradoxes, his pompous rhetoric, relieved by some happy sarcasm, and the obvious sense, in all he said and did, of innate superiority to all his guests, made these exhibitions extremely amusing.

'What Bertie Tremaine will end in,' Endymion would some-

times say, 'perplexes me. Had there been no revolution in 1832, and he had entered parliament for his family borough, I think he must by this time have been a minister. Such tenacity of purpose could scarcely fail. But he has had to say and do so many odd things, first to get into parliament, and secondly to keep there, that his future now is not so clear. When I first knew him, he was a Benthamite; at present, I sometimes seem to foresee that he will end by being the leader of the Protectionists and the Protestants.'

'And a good strong party too,' said Trenchard, 'but query whether strong enough?'

'That is exactly what Bertie Tremaine is trying to find out.'

Mr. Bertie Tremaine's manner in receiving his guests was courtly and ceremonious; a contrast to the free and easy style of the time. But it was adopted after due reflection. 'No man can tell what will be the position he may be called upon to fill. But he has a right to assume he will always be ascending. I, for example, may be destined to be the president of a republic, the regent of a monarchy, or a sovereign myself. It would be painful and disagreeable to have to change one's manner at a perhaps advanced period of life, and become liable to the unpopular imputation that you had grown arrogant and overbearing. On the contrary, in my case, whatever my elevation, there will be no change. My brother, Mr. Tremaine Bertie, acts on a different principle. He is a Sybarite, and has a general contempt for mankind, certainly for the mob and the middle class, but he is "Hail fellow, well met!" with them all. He says it answers at elections; I doubt it. I myself represent a popular constituency, but I believe I owe my success in no slight measure to the manner in which I gave my hand when I permitted it to be touched. As I say sometimes to Mr. Tremaine Bertie, "You will find this habit of social familiarity embarrassing when I send you to St. Petersburg or Vienna."'

Waldershare dined there, now a peer, though, as he rejoiced to say, not a peer of parliament. An Irish peer, with an English constituency, filled, according to Waldershare, the most

enviable of positions. His rank gave him social influence, and his seat in the House of Commons that power which all aspire to obtain. The cynosure of the banquet, however, was a gentleman who had, about a year before, been the president of a republic for nearly six weeks, and who being master of a species of rhapsodical rhetoric, highly useful in troubled times, when there is no real business to transact, and where there is nobody to transact it, had disappeared when the treasury was quite empty, and there were no further funds to reward the enthusiastic citizens who had hitherto patriotically maintained order at wages about double in amount to what they had previously received in their handicrafts. This great reputation had been brought over by Mr. Tremaine Bertie, now introducing him into English political society. Mr. Tremaine Bertie hung upon the accents of the oracle, every word of which was intended to be picturesque or profound, and then surveyed his friends with a glance of appreciating wonder. Sensible Englishmen, like Endymion and Trenchard, looked upon the whole exhibition as fustian, and received the revelations with a smile of frigid courtesy.

The presence, however, of this celebrity of six weeks gave occasionally a tone of foreign politics to the conversation, and the association of ideas, which, in due course, rules all talk, brought them, among other incidents and instances, to the remarkable career of King Florestan.

'And yet he has his mortifications,' said a sensible man. 'He wants a wife, and the princesses of the world will not furnish him with one.'

'What authority have you for saying so?' exclaimed the fiery Waldershare. 'The princesses of the world would be great fools if they refused such a man, but I know of no authentic instance of such denial.'

'Well, it is the common rumour.'

'And, therefore, probably a common falsehood.'

'Were he wise,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'King Florestan would not marry. Dynasties are unpopular; especially new ones. The present age is monarchical, but not dynastic. The king, who is a man of reach, and who has been pondering such

circumstances all his life, is probably well aware of this, and will not be such a fool as to marry.'

'How is the monarchy to go on, if there is to be no successor?' inquired Trenchard. 'You would not renew the Polish constitution?'

'The Polish constitution, by the by, was not so bad a thing,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'Under it a distinguished Englishman might have mixed with the crowned heads of Europe, as Sir Philip Sidney nearly did. But I was looking to something superior to the Polish constitution, or perhaps any other; I was contemplating a monarchy with the principle of adoption. That would give you all the excellence of the Polish constitution, and the order and constancy in which it failed. It would realise the want of the age; monarchical, not dynastical, institutions, and it would act independent of the passions and intrigues of the multitude. The principle of adoption was the secret of the strength and endurance of Rome. It gave Rome alike the Scipios and the Antonines.'

'A court would be rather dull without a woman at its head.'

'On the contrary,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'It was Louis Quatorze who made the court; not his queen.'

'Well,' said Waldershare, 'all the same, I fear King Florestan will adopt no one in this room, though he has several friends here, and I am one; and I believe that he will marry, and I cannot help fancying the partner of his throne will not be as insignificant as Louis the Fourteenth's wife, or Catherine of Braganza.'

Jawett dined this day with Mr. Bertie Tremaine. He was a frequent guest there, and still was the editor of the 'Precursor,' though it sometimes baffled all that lucidity of style for which he was celebrated to reconcile the conduct of the party, of which the 'Precursor' was alike the oracle and organ, with the opinions with which that now well-established journal first attempted to direct and illuminate the public mind. It seemed to the editor that the 'Precursor' dwelt more on the past than became a harbinger of the future. Not that Mr. Bertie Tremaine ever for

a moment admitted that there was any difficulty in any case. He never permitted any dogmas that he had ever enunciated to be surrendered, however contrary at their first aspect.

'All are but parts of one stupendous whole,'

and few things were more interesting than the conferences in which Mr. Bertie Tremaine had to impart his views and instructions to the master of that lucid style, which had the merit of making everything so very clear when the master himself was, as at present, extremely perplexed and confused. Jawett lingered after the other guests, that he might have the advantage of consulting the great leader on the course which he ought to take in advocating a measure which seemed completely at variance with all the principles they had ever upheld.

'I do not see your difficulty,' wound up the host. 'Your case is clear. You have a principle which will carry you through everything. That is the charm of a principle. You have always an answer ready.'

'But in this case,' somewhat timidly inquired Mr. Jawett, 'what would be the principle on which I should rest?'

'You must show,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'that democracy is aristocracy in disguise; and that aristocracy is democracy in disguise. It will carry you through everything.'

Even Jawett looked a little amazed.

'But'— he was beginning, when Mr. Bertie Tremaine arose. 'Think of what I have said, and if on reflection any doubt or difficulty remain in your mind, call on me to-morrow before I go to the House. At present, I must pay my respects to Lady Beaumaris. She is the only woman the Tories can boast of; but she is a first-rate woman, and is a power which I must secure.'

CHAPTER XCII.

A MONTH had nearly elapsed since the Montfort ball; the season was over and the session was nearly finished. The pressure of parliamentary life for those in office is extreme during this last month, yet Endymion would have contrived, were it only for a day, to have visited his sister, had Lady Roehampton much encouraged his appearance. Strange as it seemed to him, she did not, but, on the contrary, always assumed that the prorogation of parliament would alone bring them together again. When he proposed on one occasion to come down for four-and-twenty hours, she absolutely, though with much affection, adjourned the fulfilment of the offer. It seemed that she was not yet quite settled.

Lady Montfort lingered in London even after Goodwood. She was rather embarrassed, as she told Endymion, about her future plans. Lord Montfort was at Princedown, where she wished to join him, but he did not respond to her wishes; on the contrary, while announcing that he was indisposed, and meant to remain at Princedown for the summer, he suggested that she should avail herself of the opportunity, and pay a long visit to her family in the north. 'I know what he means,' she observed; 'he wants the world to believe that we are separated. He cannot repudiate me—he is too great a gentleman to do anything coarsely unjust; but he thinks, by tact and indirect means, he may attain our virtual separation. He has had this purpose for years, I believe now ever since our marriage, but hitherto I have baffled him. I ought to be with him; I really believe he is indisposed, his face has become so pale of late; but were I to persist in going to Princedown I should only drive him away. He would go off in the night without leaving his address, and something would happen—dreadful or absurd. What I had best do, I think, is this. You are going at last to pay your visit to your sister; I will write to my lord and tell him that as he does not wish me to go to Princedown, I

propose to go to Montfort Castle. When the flag is flying at Montfort, I can pay a visit of any length to my family. It will only be a neighbouring visit from Montfort to them; perhaps, too, they might return it. At any rate, then they cannot say my lord and I are separated. We need not live under the same roof, but so long as I live under his roof the world considers us united. It is a pity to have to scheme in this manner, and rather degrading, particularly when one might be so happy with him. But you know, my dear Endymion, all about our affairs. Your friend is not a very happy woman, and if not a very unhappy one, it is owing much to your dear friendship, and a little to my own spirit which keeps me up under what is frequent and sometimes bitter mortification. And now adieu! I suppose you cannot be away less than a week. Probably on your return you will find me here. I cannot go to Montfort without his permission. But he will give it. I observe that he will always do anything to gain his immediate object. His immediate object is, that I shall not go to Princedown, and so he will agree that I shall go to Montfort.'

For the first time in his life, Endymion felt some constraint in the presence of Myra. There was something changed in her manner. No diminution of affection, for she threw her arms around him and pressed him to her heart; and then she looked at him anxiously, even sadly, and kissed both his eyes, and then she remained for some moments in silence with her face hid on his shoulder. Never since the loss of Lord Roehampton had she seemed so subdued.

'It is a long separation,' she at length said, with a voice and smile equally faint, 'and you must be a little wearied with your travelling. Come and refresh yourself, and then I will show you my boudoir I have made here; rather pretty, out of nothing. And then we will sit down and have a long talk together, for I have much to tell you, and I want your advice.'

'She is going to marry Sidney Wilton,' thought Endymion; 'that is clear.'

The boudoir was really pretty, 'made out of nothing;' a gay chintz, some shelves of beautiful books, some fanciful chairs, and a portrait of Lord Roehampton.

It was a long interview, very long, and if one could judge by the countenance of Endymion, when he quitted the boudoir and hastened to his room, of grave import. Sometimes his face was pale, sometimes scarlet; the changes were rapid, but the expression was agitated rather than one of gratification.

He sent instantly for his servant, and then penned this telegram to Lady Montfort: 'My visit here will be short. I am to see you immediately. Nothing must prevent your being at home when I call to-morrow, about four o'clock. Most, most important.'

CHAPTER XCIII.

'Well, something has happened at last,' said Lady Montfort with a wondering countenance; 'it is too marvellous!'

'She goes to Osborne to-day,' continued Endymion, 'and I suppose after that, in due course, it will be generally known. I should think the formal announcement would be made abroad. It has been kept wonderfully close. She wished you to know it first, at least from her. I do not think she ever hesitated about accepting him. There was delay from various causes; whether there should be a marriage by proxy first in this country, and other points; about religion, for example.'

'Well?'

'She enters the Catholic Church, the Archbishop of Tyre has received her. There is no difficulty and no great ceremonies in such matters. She was re-baptized, but only by way of precaution. It was not necessary, for our baptism, you know, is recognised by Rome.'

'And that was all!'

'All, with a first communion and confession. It is all consummated now; as you say, "It is too wonderful." A first confession, and to Nigel Penruddock, who says life is flat and insipid!'

'I shall write to her: I must write to her. I wonder if I shall see her before she departs.'

'That is certain if you wish it; she wishes it.'

'And when does she go? And who goes with her?'

'She will be under my charge,' said Endymion. 'It is fortunate that it should happen at a time when I am free. I am personally to deliver her to the king. The Duke of St. Angelo, Baron Sergius, and the archbishop accompany her, and Waldershare, at the particular request of his Majesty.'

'And no lady?'

'She takes Adriana with her.'

'Adriana!' repeated Lady Montfort, and a cloud passed over her brow. There was a momentary pause, and then Lady Montfort said, 'I wish she would take me.'

'That would be delightful,' said Endymion, 'and most becoming—to have for a companion the greatest lady of our court.'

'She will not take me with her,' said Lady Montfort, sorrowfully but decisively, and shaking her head. 'Dear woman! I loved her always, often most when I seemed least affectionate—but there was between us something'—and she hesitated. 'Heigho! I may be the greatest lady of our court, but I am a very unhappy woman, Endymion, and what annoys and dispirits me most, sometimes quite breaks me down, is that I cannot see that I deserve my lot.'

It happened as Endymion foresaw; the first announcement came from abroad. King Florestan suddenly sent a message to his parliament, that his Majesty was about to present them with a queen. She was not the daughter of a reigning house, but she came from the land of freedom and political wisdom, and from the purest and most powerful court in Europe. His subjects soon learnt that she was the most beautiful of women, for the portrait of the Countess of Roehampton, as it were by magic, seemed suddenly to fill every window in every shop in the teeming and brilliant capital where she was about to reign.

It was convenient that these great events should occur when everybody was out of town. Lady Montfort alone remained,

the frequent, if not constant, companion of the new sovereign. Berengaria soon recovered her high spirits. There was much to do and prepare in which her hints and advice were invaluable. Though she was not to have the honour of attending Myra to her new home, which, considering her high place in the English court, was perhaps hardly consistent with etiquette, for so she now cleverly put it, she was to pay her Majesty a visit in due time. The momentary despondency that had clouded her brilliant countenance had not only disappeared, but she had quite forgotten, and certainly would not admit, that she was anything but the most sanguine and energetic of beings, and rallied Endymion unmercifully for his careworn countenance and too frequent air of depression. The truth is, the great change that was impending was one which might well make him serious, and sometimes sad.

The withdrawal of a female influence, so potent on his life as that of his sister, was itself a great event. There had been between them from the cradle, which, it may be said, they had shared, a strong and perfect sympathy. They had experienced together vast and strange vicissitudes of life. Though much separated in his early youth, there had still been a constant interchange of thought and feeling between them. For the last twelve years or so, ever since Myra had become acquainted with the Neuchatel family, they may be said never to have separated —at least they had maintained a constant communication, and generally a personal one. She had in a great degree moulded his life. Her unfaltering, though often unseen, influence had created his advancement. Her will was more powerful than his. He was more prudent and plastic. He felt this keenly. He was conscious that, left to himself, he would probably have achieved much less. He remembered her words when they parted for the first time at Hurstley, 'Women will be your best friends in life.' And that brought his thoughts to the only subject on which they had ever differed—her wished-for union between himself and Adriana. He felt he had crossed her there—that he had prevented the fulfilment of her deeply-matured plans. Perhaps, had that marriage taken place, she would never have quitted England. Perhaps; but was that desirable? Was

it not fitter that so lofty a spirit should find a seat as exalted as her capacity? Myra was a sovereign! In this age of strange events, not the least strange. No petty cares and griefs must obtrude themselves in such majestic associations. And yet the days at Hainault were very happy, and the bright visits to Gaydene, and her own pleasant though stately home. His heart was agitated, and his eyes were often moistened with emotion. He seemed to think that all the thrones of Christendom could be no compensation for the loss of this beloved genius of his life, whom he might never see again. Sometimes, when he paid his daily visit to Berengaria, she who knew him by heart, who studied every expression of his countenance and every tone of his voice, would say to him, after a few minutes of desultory and feeble conversation, 'You are thinking of your sister, Endymion?'

He did not reply, but gave a sort of faint mournful smile.

'This separation is a trial, a severe one, and I knew you would feel it,' said Lady Montfort. 'I feel it; I loved your sister, but she did not love me. Nobody that I love ever does love me.'

'Oh! do not say that, Lady Montfort.'

'It is what I feel. I cannot console you. There is nothing I can do for you. My friendship, if you value it, which I will not doubt you do, you fully possessed before your sister was a Queen. So that goes for nothing.'

'I must say, I feel sometimes most miserable.'

'Nonsense, Endymion; if anything could annoy your sister more than another, it would be to hear of such feelings on your part. I must say she has courage. She has found her fitting place. Her brother ought to do the same. You have a great object in life, at least you had, but I have no faith in sentimentalists. If I had been sentimental, I should have gone into a convent long ago.'

'If to feel is to be sentimental, I cannot help it.'

'All feeling which has no object to attain is morbid and maudlin,' said Lady Montfort. 'You say you are very miserable, and at the same time you do not know what you want. Would you have your sister dethroned? And if you would,

could you accomplish your purpose? Well, then, what nonsense to think about her except to feel proud of her elevation, and prouder still that she is equal to it!'

'You always have the best of every argument,' said Endymion.

'Of course,' said Lady Montfort. 'What I want you to do is to exert yourself. You have now a strong social position, for Sidney Wilton tells me the Queen has relinquished to you her mansion and the whole of her income, which is no mean one. You must collect your friends about you. Our government is not too strong, I can tell you. We must brush up in the recess. What with Mr. Bertie Tremaine and his friends joining the Protectionists, and the ultra-Radicals wanting, as they always do, something impossible, I see seeds of discomfiture unless they are met with energy. You stand high, and are well spoken of even by our opponents. Whether we stand or fall, it is a moment for you to increase your personal influence. That is the element now to encourage in your career, because you are not like the old fogies in the cabinet, who, if they go out, will never enter another again. You have a future, and though you may not be an emperor, you may be what I esteem more, prime minister of this country.'

'You are always so sanguine.'

'Not more sanguine than your sister. Often we have talked of this. I wish she were here to help us, but I will do my part. At present let us go to luncheon.'

CHAPTER XCIV.

THERE was a splendid royal yacht, though not one belonging to our gracious Sovereign, lying in one of Her Majesty's southern ports, and the yacht was convoyed by a smart frigate. The crews were much ashore, and were very popular, for they spent a great deal of money. Everybody knew what was the purpose

of their bright craft, and every one was interested in it. A beautiful Englishwoman had been selected to fill a foreign and brilliant throne occupied by a prince, who had been educated in our own country, who ever avowed his sympathies with 'the inviolate island of the sage and free.' So in fact there was some basis for the enthusiasm which was felt on this occasion by the inhabitants of Nethampton. What every one wanted to know was when she would sail. Ah! that was a secret, still a secret that could hardly be kept for the eight-and-forty hours preceding her departure, and therefore, one day, with no formal notice, all the inhabitants of Nethampton were in gala; streets and ships dressed out with the flags of all nations; the church bells ringing; and busy little girls running about with huge bouquets.

At the very instant expected, the special train was signalled, and drove into the crimson station amid the thunder of artillery, the blare of trumpets, the beating of drums, and cheers from thousands even louder and longer than the voices of the cannon. Leaning on the arm of her brother, and attended by the Princess of Montserrat, and the Honourable Adriana Neuchatel, Baron Sergius, the Duke of St. Angelo, the Archbishop of Tyre, and Lord Waldershare, the daughter of William Ferrars, gracious, yet looking as if she were born to empire, received the congratulatory address of the mayor and corporation and citizens of Nethampton, and permitted her hand to be kissed, not only by his worship, but by at least two aldermen.

They were on the waters, and the shores of Albion, fast fading away, had diminished to a speck. It is a melancholy and tender moment, and Myra was in her ample and splendid cabin and alone. 'It is a trial,' she felt, 'but all that I love and value in this world are in this vessel,' and she thought of Endymion and Adriana. The gentlemen were on deck, chiefly smoking or reconnoitring their convoy through their telescopes.

'I must say,' said Waldershare, 'it was a grand idea of our kings making themselves sovereigns of the sea. The greater portion of this planet is water; so we at once became a first-rate power. We owe our navy entirely to the Stuarts. King

James the Second was the true founder and hero of the British navy. He was the worthy son of his admirable father, that blessed martyr, the restorer at least, if not the inventor, of ship money; the most patriotic and popular tax that ever was devised by man. The Nonconformists thought themselves so wise in resisting it, and they have got the naval estimates instead!'

The voyage was propitious, the weather delightful, and when they had entered the southern waters Waldershare confessed that he felt the deliciousness of life. If the scene and the impending events, and their own fair thoughts, had not been adequate to interest them, there were ample resources at their command; all the ladies were skilled musicians, their concerts commenced at sunset, and the sweetness of their voices long lingered over the moonlit waters.

Adriana, one evening, bending over the bulwarks of the yacht, was watching the track of phosphoric light, struck into brilliancy from the dark blue waters by the prow of their rapid vessel. 'It is a fascinating sight, Miss Neuchatel, and it seems one might gaze on it for ever.'

'Ah! Lord Waldershare, you caught me in a reverie.'

'What more sweet?'

'Well, that depends on its subject. To tell the truth, I was thinking that these lights resembled a little your conversation; all the wondrous things you are always saying or telling us.'

The archbishop was a man who never recurred to the past. One never could suppose that Endymion and himself had been companions in their early youth, or, so far as their intercourse was concerned, that there was such a place in the world as Hurstley. One night, however, as they were pacing the deck together, he took the arm of Endymion, and said, 'I trace the hand of Providence in every incident of your sister's life. What we deemed misfortunes, sorrows, even calamities, were forming a character originally endowed with supreme will, and destined for the highest purposes. There was a moment at Hurstley when I myself was crushed to the earth, and cared not to live; vain, short-sighted mortal! Our great Master was

at that moment shaping everything to His ends, and preparing for the entrance into His Church of a woman who may be, who will be, I believe, another St. Helena.'

'We have not spoken of this subject before,' said Endymion, 'and I should not have cared had our silence continued, but I must now tell you frankly, the secession of my sister from the Church of her fathers was to me by no means a matter of unmixed satisfaction.'

'The time will come when you will recognise it as the consummation of a Divine plan,' said the archbishop.

'I feel great confidence that my sister will never be the slave of superstition,' said Endymion. 'Her mind is too masculine for that; she will remember that the throne she fills has been already once lost by the fatal influence of the Jesuits.'

'The influence of the Jesuits is the influence of Divine truth,' said his companion. 'And how is it possible for such influence not to prevail? What you treat as defeats, discomfitures, are events which you do not comprehend. They are incidents all leading to one great end—the triumph of the Church—that is, the triumph of God.'

'I will not decide what are great ends; I am content to ascertain what is wise conduct. And it would not be wise conduct, in my opinion, for the King to rest upon the Jesuits.'

'The Jesuits never fell except from conspiracy against them. It is never the public voice that demands their expulsion or the public effort that accomplishes it. It is always the affair of sovereigns and statesmen, of politicians, of men, in short, who feel that there is a power at work, and that power one not favourable to their schemes or objects of government.'

'Well, we shall see,' said Endymion; 'I candidly tell you, I hope the Jesuits will have as little influence in my brother-in-law's kingdom as in my own country.'

'As little!' said Nigel, somewhat sarcastically; 'I should be almost content if the holy order in every country had as much influence as they now have in England.'

'I think your Grace exaggerates.'

'Before two years are past,' said the archbishop, speaking

very slowly, 'I foresee that the Jesuits will be privileged in England, and the hierarchy of our Church recognised.'

It was a delicious afternoon; it had been sultry, but the sun had now greatly declined, when the captain of the yacht came down to announce to the Queen that they were in sight of her new country, and she hastened on deck to behold the rapidly nearing shore. A squadron of ships of war had stood out to meet her, and in due time the towers and spires of a beautiful city appeared, which was the port of the capital, and itself almost worthy of being one. A royal barge, propelled by four-and-twenty rowers, and bearing the lord chamberlain, awaited the queen, and the moment her Majesty and the Princess of Montserrat had taken their seats, salutes thundered from every ship of war, responded to by fort and battery ashore.

When they landed, they were conducted by chief officers of the court to a pavilion which faced the western sky, now glowing like an opal with every shade of the iris, and then becoming of a light green colour varied only by some slight clouds burnished with gold. A troop of maidens brought flowers as bright as themselves, and then a company of pages advanced, and kneeling, offered to the Queen chocolate in a crystal cup.

According to the programme drawn up by the heralds, and every tittle of it founded on precedents, the King and the royal carriages were to have met the travellers on their arrival at the metropolis; but there are feelings which heralds do not comprehend, and which defy precedents. Suddenly there was a shout, a loud cheer, a louder salute. Some one had arrived unexpectedly. A young man, stately but pale, moved through the swiftly receding crowd, alone and unattended, entered the pavilion, advanced to the Queen, kissed her hand, and then both her cheeks, just murmuring, 'My best beloved, this, this indeed is joy'

The capital was fortified, and the station was without the walls; here the royal carriages awaited them. The crowd was immense; the ramparts on this occasion were covered with people. It was an almost sultry night, with every star visible, and clear and warm and sweet. As the royal carriage crossed

the drawbridge and entered the chief gates, the whole city was in an instant suddenly illuminated—in a flash. The architectural lines of the city walls, and of every street, were indicated, and along the ramparts at not distant intervals were tripods, each crowned with a silver flame, which cast around the radiance of day.

He held and pressed her hand as in silence she beheld the wondrous scene. They had to make a progress of some miles; the way was kept throughout by soldiery and civic guards, while beyond them was an infinite population, all cheering and many of them waving torches. They passed through many streets, and squares with marvellous fountains, until they arrived at the chief and royal street, which has no equal in the world. It is more than a mile long, never swerving from a straight line, broad, yet the houses so elevated that they generally furnish the shade this ardent clime requires. The architecture of this street is so varied that it never becomes monotonous, some beautiful church, or palace, or ministerial hotel perpetually varying the effect. All the windows were full on this occasion, and even the roofs were crowded. Every house was covered with tapestry, and the line of every building was marked out by artificial light. The moon rose, but she was not wanted; it was as light as day.

They were considerate enough not to move too rapidly through this heart of the metropolis, and even halted at some stations, where bands of music and choirs of singers welcomed and celebrated them. They moved on more quickly afterwards, made their way through a pretty suburb, and then entered a park. At the termination of a long avenue was the illumined and beautiful palace of the Prince of Montserrat, where Myra was to reside and repose until the momentous morrow, when King Florestan was publicly to place on the brow of his affianced bride the crown which to his joy she had consented to share.

CHAPTER XCV.

THERE are very few temperaments that can resist an universal and unceasing festival in a vast and beautiful metropolis. It is inebriating, and the most wonderful of all its accidents is how the population can ever calm and recur to the monotony of ordinary life. When all this happens, too, in a capital blessed with purple skies, where the moonlight is equal to our sunshine, and where half the population sleep in the open air and wish for no roof but the heavens, existence is a dream of phantasy and perpetual loveliness, and one is at last forced to believe that there is some miraculous and supernatural agency that provides the ever-enduring excitement and ceaseless incidents of grace and beauty.

After the great ceremony of the morrow in the cathedral, and when Myra, kneeling at the altar with her husband, received, under a canopy of silver brocade, the blessings of a cardinal and her people, day followed day with court balls and municipal banquets, state visits to operas, and reviews of sumptuous troops. At length the end of all this pageantry and enthusiasm approached, and amid a blaze of fireworks, the picturesque population of this fascinating city tried to return to ordinary feeling and to common sense.

If amid this graceful hubbub and this glittering riot any one could have found time to remark the carriage and conduct of an individual, one might have observed, and perhaps been surprised at, the change in those of Miss Neuchatel. That air of pensive resignation which distinguished her seemed to have vanished. She never wore that doleful look for which she was too remarkable in London saloons, and which marred a countenance favoured by nature and a form intended for gaiety and grace. Perhaps it was the influence of the climate, perhaps the excitement of the scene, perhaps some rapture with the wondrous fortunes of the friend whom she adored, but Adriana seemed suddenly to sympathise with everybody and to appreciate every-

thing; her face was radiant, she was in every dance, and visited churches and museums, and palaces and galleries, with keen delight. With many charms, the intimate friend of their sovereign, and herself known to be noble and immensely rich, Adriana became the fashion, and a crowd of princes were ever watching her smiles, and sometimes offering her their sighs.

'I think you enjoy our visit more than any one of us,' said Endymion to her one day, with some feeling of surprise.

'Well, one cannot mope for ever,' said Miss Neuchatel; 'I have passed my life in thinking of one subject, and I feel now it made me very stupid.'

Endymion felt embarrassed, and, though generally ready, had no repartee at command. Lord Waldershare, however, came to his relief, and claimed Adriana for the impending dance.

This wondrous marriage was a grand subject for 'our own correspondents,' and they abounded. Among them were Jawett and St. Barbe. St. Barbe hated Jawett, as indeed he did all his brethren, but his appointment in this instance he denounced as an infamous job. 'Merely to allow him to travel in foreign parts, which he has never done, without a single qualification for the office! However, it will ruin his paper, that is some consolation. Fancy sending here a man who has never used his pen except about those dismal statistics, and what he calls first principles! I hate his style, so neat and frigid. No colour, sir. I hate his short sentences, like a dog barking; we want a word-painter here, sir. My description of the wedding sold one hundred and fifty thousand, and it is selling now. If the proprietors were gentlemen, they would have sent me an unlimited credit, instead of their paltry fifty pounds a day and my expenses; but you never meet a liberal man now,—no such animal known. What I want you to do for me, Lord Waldershare, is to get me invited to the Villa Aurea when the court moves there. It will be private life there, and that is the article the British public want now. They are satiated with ceremonies and festivals. They want to know what the royal pair have for dinner when they are alone, how they pass their evenings, and whether the queen drives ponies'

'So far as I am concerned,' said Waldershare, 'they shall remain state secrets.'

'I have received no special favours here,' rejoined St. Barbe, 'though, with my claims, I might have counted on the uttermost. However, it is always so. I must depend on my own resources. I have a retainer, I can tell you, my lord, from the "Rigdum Funidos," in my pocket, and it is in my power to keep up such a crackling of jokes and sarcasms that a very different view would soon be entertained in Europe of what is going on here than is now the fashion. The "Rigdum Funidos" is on the breakfast-table of all England, and sells thousands in every capital of the world. You do not appreciate its power; you will now feel it.'

'I also am a subscriber to the "Rigdum Funidos,"' said Waldershare, 'and tell you frankly, Mr. St. Barbe, that if I see in its columns the slightest allusion to any person or incident in this country, I will take care that you be instantly consigned to the galleys; and, this being a liberal government, I can do that without even the ceremony of a primary inquiry.'

'You do not mean that?' said St. Barbe; 'of course, I was only jesting. It is not likely that I should say or do anything disagreeable to those whom I look upon as my patrons—I may say friends—through life. It makes me almost weep when I remember my early connection with Mr. Ferrars, now an under-secretary of state, and who will mount higher. I never had a chance of being a minister, though I suppose I am not more incapable than others who get the silver spoon into their mouths. And then his divine sister! Quite an heroic character! I never had a sister, and so I never had even the chance of being nearly related to royalty. But so it has been throughout my life. No luck, my lord; no luck. And then they say one is misanthropical. Hang it! who can help being misanthropical when he finds everybody getting on in life except himself?'

The court moved to their favourite summer residence, a Palladian palace on a blue lake, its banks clothed with forests abounding with every species of game, and beyond them loftier

mountains. The king was devoted to sport, and Endymion was always among his companions. Waldershare rather attached himself to the ladies, who made gay parties floating in gondolas, and refreshed themselves with picnics in sylvan retreats. It was supposed Lord Waldershare was a great admirer of the Princess of Montserrat, who in return referred to him as that 'lovable eccentricity.' As the autumn advanced, parties of guests of high distinction, carefully arranged, periodically arrived. Now, there was more ceremony, and every evening the circle was formed, while the king and queen exchanged words, and sometimes ideas, with those who were so fortunate as to be under their roof. Frequently there were dramatic performances, and sometimes a dance. The Princess of Montserrat was invaluable in these scenes; vivacious, imaginative, a consummate mimic, her countenance, though not beautiful, was full of charm. What was strange, Adriana took a great fancy to her Highness, and they were seldom separated. The only cloud for Endymion in this happy life was, that every day the necessity of his return to England was more urgent, and every day the days vanished more quickly. That return to England, once counted by weeks, would soon be counted by hours. He had conferred once or twice with Waldershare on the subject, who always turned the conversation; at last Endymion reminded him that the time of his departure was at hand, and that, originally, it had been agreed they should return together.

'Yes, my dear Ferrars, we did so agree, but the agreement was permissive, not compulsory. My views are changed. Perhaps I shall never return to England again; I think of being naturalised here.'

The queen was depressed at the prospect of being separated from her brother. Sometimes she remonstrated with him for his devotion to sport which deprived her of his society; frequently in a morning she sent for him to her boudoir, that they might talk together as in old times. 'The king has invited Lord and Lady Beaumaris to pay us a visit, and they are coming at once. I had hoped the dear Hainaults might have visited us here. I think she would have liked it. However, they will

certainly pass the winter with us. It is some consolation to me not to lose Adriana.'

'The greatest,' said Endymion, 'and she seems so happy here. She seems quite changed.'

'I hope she is happier,' said the queen, 'but I trust she is not changed. I think her nearly perfection. So pure, even so exalted a mind, joined with so sweet a temper, I have never met. And she is very much admired too, I can tell you. The Prince of Arragon would be on his knees to her to-morrow, if she would only give a single smile. But she smiles enough with the Princess of Montserrat. I heard her the other day absolutely in uncontrollable laughter. That is a strange friendship; it amuses me.'

'The princess has immense resource.'

The queen suddenly rose from her seat; her countenance was disturbed.

'Why do we talk of her, or of any other trifler of the court, when there hangs over us so great a sorrow, Endymion, as our separation? Endymion, my best beloved,' and she threw her arms round his neck, 'my heart! my life! Is it possible that you can leave me, and so miserable as I am?'

'Miserable!'

'Yes! miserable when I think of your position—and even my own. Mine own has risen like a palace in a dream, and may vanish like one. But that would not be a calamity if you were safe. If I quitted this world to-morrow, where would you be? It gives me sleepless nights and anxious days. If you really loved me as you say, you would save me this. I am haunted with the perpetual thought that all this glittering prosperity will vanish as it did with our father. God forbid that, under any circumstances, it should lead to such an end—but who knows? Fate is terribly stern; ironically just. O Endymion! if you really love me, your twin, half of your blood and life, who have laboured for you so much, and thought for you so much, and prayed for you so much—and yet I sometimes feel have done so little—O Endymion! my adored, my own Endymion, if you wish to preserve my life—if you wish me not only to live, but

really to be happy as I ought to be and could be, but for one dark thought, help me, aid me, save me—you can, and by one single act.'

'One single act!'

'Yes! marry Adriana.'

'Ah!' and he sighed.

'Yes, Adriana, to whom we both of us owe everything. Were it not for Adriana, you would not be here, you would be nothing,' and she whispered some words which made him start, and alternately blush and look pale.

'Is it possible?' he exclaimed. 'My sister, my beloved sister, I have tried to keep my brain cool in many trials. But I feel, as it were, as if life were too much for me. You counsel me to that which we should all repent.'

'Yes, I know it; you may for a moment think it a sacrifice, but believe me, that is all phantasy. I know you think your heart belongs to another. I will grant everything, willingly grant everything you could say of her. Yes, I admit, she is beautiful, she has many charms, has been to you a faithful friend, you delight in her society; such things have happened before to many men, to every man they say they happen, but that has not prevented them from being wise, and very happy too. Your present position, if you persist in it, is one most perilous. You have no root in the country; but for an accident you could not maintain the public position you have nobly gained. As for the great crowning consummation of your life, which we dreamed over at unhappy Hurstley, which I have sometimes dared to prophesy, that must be surrendered. The country at the best will look upon you only as a reputable adventurer to be endured, even trusted and supported, in some secondary post, but nothing more. I touch on this, for I see it is useless to speak of myself and my own fate and feelings; only remember, Endymion, I have never deceived you. I cannot endure any longer this state of affairs. When in a few days we part, we shall never meet again. And all the devotion of Myra will end in your destroying her.'

'My own, my beloved Myra, do with me what you like. If ——'

At this moment there was a gentle tap at the door, and the king entered.

'My angel,' he said, 'and you too, my dear Endymion. I have some news from England which I fear may distress you. Lord Montfort is dead.'

CHAPTER XCVI.

THERE was ever, when separated, an uninterrupted correspondence between Berengaria and Endymion. They wrote to each other every day, so that when they met again there was no void in their lives and mutual experience, and each was acquainted with almost every feeling and incident that had been proved, or had occurred, since they parted. The startling news, however, communicated by the king had not previously reached Endymion, because he was on the eve of his return to England, and his correspondents had been requested to direct their future letters to his residence in London.

His voyage home was an agitated one, and not sanguine or inspiriting. There was a terrible uncertainty in the future. What were the feelings of Lady Montfort towards himself? Friendly, kind, affectionate, in a certain sense, even devoted, no doubt; but all consistent with a deep and determined friendship which sought and wished for no return more ardent. But now she was free. Yes, but would she again forfeit her freedom? And if she did, would it not be to attain some great end, probably the great end of her life? Lady Montfort was a woman of far-reaching ambition. In a certain degree, she had married to secure her lofty aims; and yet it was only by her singular energy, and the playfulness and high spirit of her temperament, that the sacrifice had not proved a failure; her success, however, was limited, for the ally on whom she had counted rarely assisted and never sympathised with her. It was true she admired and even loved her husband; her vanity, which

was not slight, was gratified by her conquest of one whom it had seemed no one could subdue, and who apparently placed at her feet all the power and magnificence which she appreciated.

Poor Endymion, who loved her passionately, over whom she exercised the influence of a divinity, who would do nothing without consulting her, and who was moulded, and who wished to be moulded, in all his thoughts and feelings, and acts, and conduct, by her inspiring will, was also a shrewd man of the world, and did not permit his sentiment to cloud his perception of life and its doings. He felt that Lady Montfort had fallen from a lofty position, and she was not of a temperament that would quietly brook her fate. Instead of being the mistress of castles and palaces, with princely means, and all the splendid accidents of life at her command, she was now a dowager with a jointure! Still young, with her charms unimpaired, heightened even by the maturity of her fascinating qualities, would she endure this? She might retain her friendship for one who, as his sister ever impressed upon him, had no root in the land, and even that friendship, he felt conscious, must yield much of its entireness and intimacy to the influence of new ties; but for their lives ever being joined together, as had sometimes been his wild dream, his cheek, though alone, burned with the consciousness of his folly and self-deception.

'He is one of our rising statesmen,' whispered the captain of the vessel to a passenger, as Endymion, silent, lonely, and absorbed, walked, as was his daily custom, the quarterdeck. 'I daresay he has a good load on his mind. Do you know, I would sooner be a captain of a ship than a minister of state?'

Poor Endymion! Yes, he bore his burthen, but it was not secrets of state that overwhelmed him. If his mind for a moment quitted the contemplation of Lady Montfort, it was only to encounter the recollection of a heart-rending separation from his sister, and his strange and now perplexing relations with Adriana.

Lord Montfort had passed the summer, as he had announced, at Princedown, and alone; that is to say, without Lady Mont-

fort. She wrote to him frequently, and if she omitted doing so for a longer interval than usual, he would indite to her a little note, always courteous, sometimes even almost kind, reminding her that her letters amused him, and that of late they had been rarer than he wished. Lady Montfort herself made Montfort Castle her home, paying sometimes a visit to her family in the neighbourhood, and sometimes receiving them and other guests. Lord Montfort himself did not live in absolute solitude. He had society always at command. He always had a court about him; equerries, and secretaries, and doctors, and odd and amusing men whom they found out for him, and who were well pleased to find themselves in his beautiful and magnificent Princedown, wandering in woods and parks and pleasaunces, devouring his choice *entreés*, and quaffing his curious wines. Sometimes he dined with them, sometimes a few dined with him, sometimes he was not seen for weeks; but whether he were visible or not, he was the subject of constant thought and conversation by all under his roof.

Lord Montfort, it may be remembered, was a great fisherman. It was the only sport which retained a hold upon him. The solitude, the charming scenery, and the requisite skill, combined to please him. He had a love for nature, and he gratified it in this pursuit. His domain abounded in those bright chalky streams which the trout love. He liked to watch the moor-hens, too, and especially a kingfisher.

Lord Montfort came home late one day after much wading. It had been a fine day for anglers, soft and not too bright, and he had been tempted to remain long in the water. He drove home rapidly, but it was in an open carriage, and when the sun set there was a cold autumnal breeze. He complained at night, and said he had been chilled. There was always a doctor under the roof, who felt his patient's pulse, ordered the usual remedies, and encouraged him. Lord Montfort passed a bad night, and his physician in the morning found fever, and feared there were symptoms of pleurisy. He prescribed accordingly, but summoned from town two great authorities. The great authorities did not arrive until the next day. They approved of everything that

had been done, but shook their heads. 'No immediate danger, but serious.'

Four-and-twenty hours afterwards they inquired of Lord Montfort whether they should send for his wife. 'On no account whatever,' he replied. 'My orders on this head are absolute.' Nevertheless, they did send for Lady Montfort, and as there was even then a telegraph to the north, Berengaria, who departed from her castle instantly, and travelled all night, arrived in eight-and-forty hours at Princedown. The state of Lord Montfort then was critical.

It was broken to Lord Montfort that his wife had arrived.

'I perceive then,' he replied, 'that I am going to die, because I am disobeyed.'

These were the last words he uttered. He turned in his bed as it were to conceal his countenance, and expired without a sigh or sound.

There was not a single person at Princedown in whom Lady Montfort could confide. She had summoned the family solicitor, but he could not arrive until the next day, and until he came she insisted that none of her late lord's papers should be touched. She at first thought he had made a will, because otherwise all his property would go to his cousin, whom he particularly hated, and yet on reflection she could hardly fancy his making a will. It was a trouble to him—a disagreeable trouble; and there was nobody she knew whom he would care to benefit. He was not a man who would leave anything to hospitals and charities. Therefore, on the whole, she arrived at the conclusion he had not made a will, though all the guests at Princedown were of a different opinion, and each was calculating the amount of his own legacy.

At last the lawyer arrived, and he brought the will with him. It was very short, and not very recent. Everything he had in the world except the settled estates, Montfort Castle and Montfort House, he bequeathed to his wife. It was a vast inheritance; not only Princedown, but great accumulations of personal property, for Lord Montfort was fond of amassing, and admired the sweet simplicity of the three per cents.

CHAPTER XCVII.

When Endymion arrived in London he found among his letters two brief notes from Lady Montfort; one hurriedly written at Montfort Castle at the moment of her departure, and another from Princedown, with these words only, 'All is over.' More than a week had elapsed since the last was written, and he had already learnt from the newspapers that the funeral had taken place. It was a painful but still necessary duty to fulfil, to write to her, which he did, but he received no answer to his letter of sympathy, and to a certain degree, of condolence. Time flew on, but he could not venture to write again, and without any absolute cause for his discomfort, he felt harassed and unhappy. He had been so accustomed all his life to exist under the genial influence of women that his present days seemed lone and dark. His sister and Berengaria, two of the most gifted and charming beings in the world, had seemed to agree that their first duty had ever been to sympathise with his fortunes and to aid them. Even his correspondence with Myra was changed. There was a tone of constraint in their communications; perhaps it was the great alteration in her position that occasioned it? His heart assured him that such was not the case. He felt deeply and acutely what was the cause. The subject most interesting to both of them could not be touched on. And then he thought of Adriana, and contrasted his dull and solitary home in Hill Street with what it might have been, graced by her presence, animated by her devotion, and softened by the sweetness of her temper.

Endymion began to feel that the run of his good fortune was dried. His sister, when he had a trouble, would never hear of this; she always held that the misery and calamities of their early years had exhausted the influence of their evil stars, and apparently she had been right, and perhaps she would have always been right had he not been perverse, and thwarted her in the most important circumstances of his life.

In this state of mind, there was nothing for him to do but to plunge into business; and affairs of state are a cure for many cares and sorrows. What are our petty annoyances and griefs when we have to guard the fortunes and the honour of a nation?

The November cabinets had commenced, and this brought all the chiefs to town, Sidney Wilton among them; and his society was always a great pleasure to Endymion; the only social pleasure now left to him was a little dinner at Mr. Wilton's, and little dinners there abounded. Mr. Wilton knew all the persons that he was always thinking about, but whom, it might be noticed, they seemed to agree now rarely to mention. As for the rest, there was nobody to call upon in the delightful hours between official duties and dinner. No Lady Roehampton now, no brilliant Berengaria, not even the gentle Imogene with her welcome smile. He looked in at the Coventry Club, a club of fashion, and also much frequented by diplomatists. There were a good many persons there, and a foreign minister immediately buttonholed the Under-Secretary of State.

'I called at the Foreign Office to-day,' said the foreign minister. 'I assure you it is very pressing.'

'I had the American with me,' said Endymion, 'and he is lengthy. However, as to your business, I think we might talk it over here, and perhaps settle it.' And so they left the room together.

'I wonder what is going to happen to that gentleman,' said Mr. Ormsby, glancing at Endymion, and speaking to Mr. Cassilis.

'Why?' replied Mr. Cassilis, 'is anything up?'

'Will he marry Lady Montfort?'

'Poh!' said Mr. Cassilis.

'You may poh!' said Mr. Ormsby, 'but he was a great favourite.'

'Lady Montfort will never marry. She had always a poodle, and always will have. She was never so *liée* with Ferrars as with the Count of Ferroll, and half a dozen others. She must have a slave.'

'A very good mistress with thirty thousand a year.'

'She has not that,' said Mr. Cassilis doubtingly.

'What do you put Princedown at?' said Mr. Ormsby.

'That I can tell you to a T,' replied Mr. Cassilis, 'for it was offered to me when old Rambrooke died. You will never get twelve thousand a year out of it.'

'Well, I will answer for half a million consols,' said Ormsby, 'for my lawyer, when he made a little investment for me the other day, saw the entry himself in the bank-books; our names are very near, you know—M, and O. Then there is her jointure, something like ten thousand a year.'

'No, no; not seven.'

'Well, that would do.'

'And what is the amount of your little investment in consols altogether, Ormsby?'

'Well, I believe I top Montfort,' said Mr. Ormsby with a complacent smile, 'but then you know, I am not a swell like you; I have no land.'

'Lady Montfort, thirty thousand a year,' said Mr. Cassilis musingly. 'She is only thirty. She is a woman who will set the Thames on fire, but she will never marry. Do you dine to-day, by any chance, with Sidney Wilton?'

When Endymion returned home this evening, he found a letter from Lady Montfort. It was a month since he had written to her. He was so nervous that he absolutely for a moment could not break the seal, and the palpitation of his heart was almost overpowering.

Lady Montfort thanked him for his kind letter, which she ought to have acknowledged before, but she had been very busy—indeed, quite overwhelmed with affairs. She wished to see him, but was sorry she could not ask him down to Princedown, as she was living in complete retirement, only her aunt with her, Lady Gertrude, whom, she believed, he knew. He was aware, probably, how good Lord Montfort had been to her. Sincerely she could say, nothing could have been more unexpected. If she could have seen her husband before the fatal moment, it would have been a consolation to her. He had

always been kind to Endymion; she really believed sometimes that Lord Montfort was even a little attached to him. She should like Endymion to have some souvenir of her late husband. Would he choose something, or would he leave it to her?

One would rather agree, from the tone of this letter, that Mr. Cassilis knew what he was talking about. It fell rather cold on Endymion's heart, and he passed a night of some disquietude; not one of those nights, exactly, when we feel that the end of the world has at length arrived, and that we are the first victim, but a night when you slumber rather than sleep, and wake with the consciousness of some indefinable chagrin.

This was a dull Christmas for Endymion Ferrars. He passed it, as he had passed others, at Gaydene, but what a contrast to the old assemblies there! Every source of excitement that could make existence absolutely fascinating seemed then to unite in his happy fate. Entrancing love and the very romance of domestic affection, and friendships of honour and happiness, and all the charms of an accomplished society, and the feeling of a noble future, and the present and urgent interest in national affairs—all gone, except some ambition which might tend to consequences not more successful than those that had ultimately visited his house with irreparable calamity.

The meeting of parliament was a great relief to Endymion. Besides his office, he had now the House of Commons to occupy him. He was never absent from his place; no little runnings up to Montfort House or Hill Street just to tell them the authentic news, or snatch a hasty repast with furtive delight, with persons still more delightful, and flattering one's self all the time that, so far as absence was concerned, the fleetness of one's gifted brougham horse really made it no difference between Mayfair and Bellamy's.

Endymion had replied, but not very quickly, to Lady Montfort's letter, and he had heard from her again, but her letter requiring no reply, the correspondence had dropped. It was the beginning of March when she wrote to him to say, that she was obliged to come to town to see her lawyer and transact some

business; that she would be 'at papa's in Grosvenor Square,' though the house was shut up, on a certain day, that she much wished to see Endymion, and begged him to call on her.

It was a trying moment when about noon he lifted the knocker in Grosvenor Square. The door was not opened rapidly, and the delay made him more nervous. He almost wished the door would never open. He was shown into a small back room on the ground floor in which was a bookcase, and which chamber, in the language of Grosvenor Square, is called a library.

'Her ladyship will see you presently,' said the servant, who had come up from Princedown.

Endymion was standing before the fire, and as nervous as a man could well be. He sighed, and he sighed more than once. His breathing was oppressed; he felt that life was too short to permit us to experience such scenes and situations. He heard the lock of the door move, and it required all his manliness to endure it.

She entered; she was in weeds, but they became her admirably; her countenance was grave and apparently with an effort to command it. She did not move hurriedly, but held out both her hands to Endymion and retained his, and all without speaking. Her lips then seemed to move, when, rather suddenly, withdrawing her right hand, and placing it on his shoulder and burying her face in her arm, she wept.

He led her soothingly to a seat, and took a chair by her side. Not a word had yet been spoken by either of them; only a murmur of sympathy on the part of Endymion. Lady Montfort spoke first.

'I am weaker than I thought, but it is a great trial.' And then she said how sorry she was, that she could not receive him at Princedown; but she thought it best that he should not go there. 'I have a great deal of business to transact—you would not believe how much. I do not dislike it, it occupies me, it employs my mind. I have led so active a life, that solitude is rather too much for me. Among other business, I must buy a town house, and that is the most difficult of affairs. There never was so great a city with such small houses. I shall feel

the loss of Montfort House, though I never used it half so much as I wished. I want a mansion; I should think you could help me in this. When I return to society, I mean to receive. There must be therefore good reception rooms; if possible, more than good. And now let us talk about our friends. Tell me all about your royal sister, and this new marriage; it rather surprised me, but I think it excellent. Ah! you can keep a secret, but you see it is no use having a secret with me. Even in solitude everything reaches me.'

'I assure you most seriously, that I can annex no meaning to what you are saying.'

'Then I can hardly think it true; and yet it came from high authority, and it was not told me as a real secret.'

'A marriage, and whose?'

'Miss Neuchatel's,—Adriana.'

'And to whom?' inquired Endymion, changing colour.

'To Lord Waldershare.'

'To Lord Waldershare!'

'And has not your sister mentioned it to you?'

'Not a word; it cannot be true.'

'I will give to you my authority,' said Lady Montfort. 'Though I came here in the twilight in a hired brougham, and with a veil, I was caught before I could enter the house by, of all people in the world, Mrs. Rodney. And she told me this in what she called "real confidence," and it was announced to her in a letter from her sister, Lady Beaumaris. They seem all delighted with the match.'

CHAPTER XCVIII.

This marriage of Adriana was not an event calculated to calm the uneasy and dissatisfied temperament of Endymion. The past rendered it impossible that this announcement should not in some degree affect him. Then the silence of his sister on such a subject was too significant; the silence even of Waldershare. Somehow or other, it seemed that all these once dear and devoted friends stood in different relations to him and to each other from what they once filled. They had become more near and intimate together, but he seemed without the pale; he, that Endymion, who once seemed the prime object, if not the centre, of all their thoughts and sentiment. And why was this? What was the influence that had swayed him to a line contrary to what was once their hopes and affections? Had he an evil genius? And was it she? Horrible thought!

The interview with Lady Montfort had been deeply interesting—had for a moment restored him to himself. Had it not been for this news, he might have returned home, soothed, gratified, even again indulging in dreams. But this news had made him ponder; had made him feel what he had lost, and forced him to ask himself what he had gained.

There was one thing he had gained, and that was the privilege of calling on Lady Montfort the next day. That was a fact that sometimes dissipated all the shadows. Under the immediate influence of her presence, he became spell-bound as of yore, and in the intoxication of her beauty, the brightness of her mind, and her ineffable attraction, he felt he would be content with any lot, provided he might retain her kind thoughts and pass much of his life in her society.

She was only staying three or four days in town, and was much engaged in the mornings; but Endymion called on her every afternoon, and sate talking with her till dinner-time, and they both dined very late. As he really on personal and

domestic affairs never could have any reserve with her, he told her, in that complete confidence in which they always indulged, of the extraordinary revelation which his sister had made to him about the parliamentary qualification. Lady Montfort was deeply interested in this; she was even agitated, and looked very grave.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'we know this. Things cannot remain now as they are. You cannot return the money, that would be churlish; besides, you cannot return all the advantages which it gained for you, and they must certainly be considered part of the gift, and the most precious; and then, too, it would betray what your sister rightly called a "sacred confidence." And yet something must be done—you must let me think. Do not mention it again.' And then they talked a little of public affairs. Lady Montfort saw no one, and heard from no one now; but judging from the journals, she thought the position of the government feeble. 'There cannot be a Protectionist government,' she said; 'and yet that is the only parliamentary party of importance. Things will go on till some blow, and perhaps a slight one, will upset you all. And then who is to succeed? I think some queer *mélange* got up perhaps by Mr. Bertie Tremaine.'

The last day came. She parted from Endymion with kindness, but not with tenderness. He was choking with emotion, and tried to imitate her calmness.

'Am I to write to you?' he asked in a faltering voice.

'Of course you are,' she said, 'every day, and tell me all the news.'

The Hainaults, and the Beaumaris, and Waldershare, did not return to England until some time after Easter. The marriage was to take place in June—Endymion was to be Waldershare's best man. There were many festivities, and he was looked upon as an indispensable guest in all. Adriana received his congratulations with animation, but with affection. She thanked him for a bracelet which he had presented to her; 'I value it more,' she said, 'than all my other presents together, except what dear Waldershare has given to me.' Even with that

exception, the estimate was high, for never a bride in any land ever received the number of splendid offerings which crowded the tables of Lord Hainault's new palace, which he had just built in Park Lane. There was not a Neuchatel in existence, and they flourished in every community, who did not send her, at least, a rivière of brilliants. King Florestan and his queen sent offerings worthy of their resplendent throne and their invaluable friendship. But nothing surpassed, nothing approached, the contents of a casket, which, a day before the wedding, arrived at Hainault House. It came from a foreign land, and Waldershare superintended the opening of the case, and the appearance of a casket of crimson velvet, with genuine excitement. But when it was opened! There was a coronet of brilliants; a necklace of brilliants and emeralds, and one of sapphires and brilliants; and dazzling bracelets, and all the stones more than precious; gems of Golconda no longer obtainable, and lustrous companions which only could have been created in the hot earth of Asia. From whom? Not a glimpse of meaning. All that was written, in a foreign handwriting on a sheet of notepaper, was, 'For the Lady Viscountess Waldershare.'

'When the revolution comes,' said Lord Hainault, 'Lord Waldershare and my daughter must turn jewellers. Their stock in trade is ready.'

The correspondence between Lady Montfort and Endymion had resumed its ancient habit. They wrote to each other every day, and one day she told him that she had purchased a house, and that she must come up to town to examine and to furnish it. She probably should be a month in London, and remaining there until the end of the season, in whose amusements and business, of course, she could not share. She should 'be at papa's,' though he and his family were in town; but that was no reason why Endymion should not call on her. And he came, and called every day. Lady Montfort was full of her new house; it was in Carlton Gardens, the house she always wished, always intended to have. There is nothing like will; everybody can do exactly what they like in this world, provided

they really like it. Sometimes they think they do, but in general, it is a mistake. Lady Montfort, it seemed, was a woman who always could do what she liked. She could do what she liked with Endymion Ferrars; that was quite certain. Supposed by men to have a strong will and a calm judgment, he was a nose of wax with this woman. He was fascinated by her, and he had been fascinated now for nearly ten years. What would be the result of this irresistible influence upon him? Would it make or mar those fortunes that once seemed so promising? The philosophers of White's and the Coventry were generally of opinion that he had no chance.

Lady Montfort was busy every morning with her new house, but she never asked Endymion to accompany her, though it seemed natural to do so. But he saw her every day, and 'papa,' who was a most kind and courtly gentleman, would often ask him, 'if he had nothing better to do,' to dine there, and he dined there frequently; and if he were engaged, he was always of opinion that he had nothing better to do.

At last, however, the season was over; the world had gone to Goodwood, and Lady Montfort was about to depart to Princedown. It was a dreary prospect for Endymion, and he could not conceal his feelings. He could not help saying one day, 'Do you know, now that you are going I almost wish to die.'

Alas! she only laughed. But he looked grave. 'I am very unhappy,' he sighed rather than uttered.

She looked at him with seriousness. 'I do not think our separation need be very long. Papa and all my family are coming to me in September to pay me a very long visit. I really do not see why you should not come too.'

Endymion's countenance mantled with rapture. 'If I might come, I think I should be the happiest of men!'

The month that was to elapse before his visit, Endymion was really, as he said, the happiest of men; at least, the world thought him so. He seemed to walk upon tip-toe. Parliament was prorogued, office was consigned to permanent secretaries, and our youthful statesmen seemed only to live to enjoy, and

add to, the revelry of existence. Now at Cowes, now stalking in the Highlands, dancing at balls in the wilderness, and running races of fantastic feats, full of health, and frolic, and charm; he was the delight of society, while, the whole time, he had only one thought, and that was the sacred day when he should again see the being whom he adored, and that in her beautiful home, which her presence made more lovely.

Yes! he was again at Princedown, in the bosom of her family; none others there; treated like one of themselves. The courtly father pressed his hand; the amiable and refined mother smiled upon him; the daughters, pretty, and natural as the air, treated him as if they were sisters, and even the eldest son, who generally hates you, after a little stiffness, announced in a tone never questioned under the family roof, that 'Ferrars was a first-rate shot.'

And so a month rolled on; immensely happy, as any man who has loved, and loved in a beautiful scene, alone can understand. One morning Lady Montfort said to him, 'I must go up to London about my house. I want to go and return the same day. Do you know, I think you had better come with me? You shall give me a luncheon in Hill Street, and we shall be back by the last train. It will be late, but we shall wake in the morning in the country, and that I always think a great thing.'

And so it happened; they rose early and arrived in town in time to give them a tolerably long morning. She took him to her house in Carlton Gardens, and showed to him exactly how it was all she wanted; accommodation for a first-rate establishment; and then the reception rooms, few houses in London could compare with them; a gallery and three saloons. Then they descended to the dining-room. 'It is a dining-room, not a banqueting hall,' she said, 'which we had at Montfort House, but still it is much larger than most dining-rooms in London. But, I think this room, at least I hope you do, quite charming,' and she took him to a room almost as large as the dining-room, and looking into the garden. It was fitted up with exquisite taste; calm subdued colouring, with choice marble busts

of statesmen, ancient and of our times, but the shelves were empty.

'They are empty,' she said, 'but the volumes to fill them are already collected. Yes,' she added in a tremulous voice, and slightly pressing the arm on which she leant. 'If you will deign to accept it, this is the chamber I have prepared for you.'

'Dearest of women!' and he took her hand.

'Yes,' she murmured, 'help me to realise the dream of my life;' and she touched his forehead with her lips.

CHAPTER XCIX.

The marriage of Mr. Ferrars with Lady Montfort surprised some, but, on the whole, pleased everybody. They were both of them popular, and no one seemed to envy them their happiness and prosperity. The union took place at a season of the year when there was no London world to observe and to criticise. It was a quiet ceremony; they went down to Northumberland to Lady Montfort's father, and they were married in his private chapel. After that they went off immediately to pay a visit to King Florestan and his queen; Myra had sent her a loving letter.

'Perhaps it will be the first time that your sister ever saw me with satisfaction,' remarked Lady Montfort, 'but I think she will love me now! I always loved her; perhaps because she is so like you.'

It was a happy meeting and a delightful visit. They did not talk much of the past. The enormous change in the position of their host and hostess since the first days of their acquaintance, and, on their own part, some indefinite feeling of delicate reserve, combined to make them rather dwell on a present which was full of novelty so attractive and so absorb-

ing. In his manner, the king was unchanged; he was never a demonstrative person, but simple, unaffected, rather silent; with a sweet temper and a tender manner, he seemed to be gratified that he had the power of conferring happiness on those around him. His feeling to his queen was one of idolatry, and she received Berengaria as a sister and a much-loved one. Their presence and the season of the year made their life a festival, and when they parted, there were entreaties and promises that the visit should be often repeated.

'Adieu! my Endymion,' said Myra at the last moment they were alone. 'All has happened for you beyond my hopes; all now is safe. I might wish we were in the same land, but not if I lost my husband, whom I adore.'

The reason that forced them to curtail their royal visit was the state of politics at home, which had suddenly become critical. There were symptoms, and considerable ones, of disturbance and danger when they departed for their wedding tour, but they could not prevail on themselves to sacrifice a visit on which they had counted so much, and which could not be fulfilled on another occasion under the same interesting circumstances. Besides, the position of Mr. Ferrars, though an important, was a subordinate one, and though cabinet ministers were not justified in leaving the country, an under-secretary of state and a bridegroom might, it would seem, depart on his irresponsible holiday. Mr. Sidney Wilton, however, shook his head; 'I do not like the state of affairs,' he said, 'I think you will have to come back sooner than you imagine.'

'You are not going to be so foolish as to have an early session?' inquired Lady Montfort.

He only shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'We are in a mess.'

What mess? and what was the state of affairs?

This had happened. At the end of the autumn, his Holiness the Pope had made half a dozen new cardinals, and to the surprise of the world, and the murmurs of the Italians, there appeared among them the name of an Englishman, Nigel Penruddock, archbishop *in partibus*. Shortly after this, a

papal bull, 'given at St. Peter's, Rome, under the seal of the fisherman,' was issued, establishing a Romish hierarchy in England. This was soon followed by a pastoral letter by the new cardinal 'given out of the Appian Gate,' announcing that 'Catholic England had been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament.'

The country at first was more stupefied than alarmed. It was conscious that something extraordinary had happened, and some great action taken by an ecclesiastical power, which from tradition it was ever inclined to view with suspicion and some fear. But it held its breath for a while. It so happened that the prime minister was a member of a great house which had become illustrious by its profession of Protestant principles, and even by its sufferings in a cause which England had once looked on as sacred. The prime minister, a man of distinguished ability, not devoid even of genius, was also a wily politician, and of almost unrivalled experience in the management of political parties. The ministry was weak and nearly worn out, and its chief, influenced partly by noble and historical sentiments, partly by a conviction that he had a fine occasion to rally the confidence of the country round himself and his friends, and to restore the repute of his political connection, thought fit, without consulting his colleagues, to publish a manifesto denouncing the aggression of the Pope upon our Protestantism as insolent and insidious, and as expressing a pretension of supremacy over the realm of England which made the minister indignant.

A confused public wanted to be led, and now they were led. They sprang to their feet like an armed man. The corporation of London, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had audiences of the Queen; the counties met, the municipalities memorialised; before the first of January there had been held nearly seven thousand public meetings, asserting the supremacy of the Queen and calling on Her Majesty's Government to vindicate it by stringent measures.

Unfortunately, it was soon discovered by the minister that there had been nothing illegal in the conduct of the Pope or the

Cardinal, and a considerable portion of the Liberal party began to express the inconvenient opinion, that the manifesto of their chief was opposed to those principles of civil and religious liberty of which he was the hereditary champion. Some influential members of his own cabinet did not conceal their disapprobation of a step on which they had not been consulted.

Immediately after Christmas, Endymion and Lady Montfort settled in London. She was anxious to open her new mansion as soon as parliament met, and to organise continuous receptions. She looked upon the ministry as in a critical state, and thought it was an occasion when social influences might not inconsiderably assist them.

But though she exhibited for this object her wonted energy and high spirit, a fine observer—Mr. Sidney Wilton, for example—might have detected a change in the manner of Berengaria. Though the strength of her character was unaltered, there was an absence of that restlessness, it might be said, that somewhat feverish excitement, from which formerly she was not always free. The truth is, her heart was satisfied, and that brought repose. Feelings of affection, long mortified and pent up, were now lavished and concentrated on a husband of her heart and adoration, and she was proud that his success and greatness might be avowed as the objects of her life.

The campaign, however, for which such preparations were made, ended almost before it began. The ministry, on the meeting of parliament, found themselves with a discontented House of Commons, and discordant counsels among themselves. The anti-papal manifesto was the secret cause of this evil state, but the prime minister, to avoid such a mortifying admission, took advantage of two unfavourable divisions on other matters, and resigned.

Here was a crisis—another crisis! Could the untried Protectionists, without men, form an administration? It was whispered that Lord Derby had been sent for, and declined the attempt. Then there was another rumour, that he was going to try. Mr. Bertie Tremaine looked mysterious. The time for

the third party had clearly arrived. It was known that he had the list of the next ministry in his breast-pocket, but it was only shown to Mr. Tremaine Bertie, who confided in secrecy to the initiated that it was the strongest government since 'All the Talents.'

Notwithstanding this great opportunity, 'All the Talents' were not summoned. The leader of the Protectionists renounced the attempt in despair, and the author of the anti-papal manifesto was again sent for, and obliged to introduce the measure which had already destroyed a government and disorganised a party.

'Sidney Wilton,' said Lady Montfort to her husband, 'says that they are in the mud, and he for one will not go back—but he will go. I know him. He is too soft-hearted to stand an appeal from colleagues in distress. But were I you, Endymion, I would not return. I think you want a little rest, or you have got a great deal of private business to attend to, or something of that kind. Nobody notices the withdrawal of an under-secretary except those in office. There is no necessity why you should be in the mud. I will continue to receive, and do everything that is possible for our friends, but I think my husband has been an under-secretary long enough.'

Endymion quite agreed with his wife. The minister offered him preferment and the Privy Council, but Lady Montfort said it was really not so important as the office he had resigned. She was resolved that he should not return to them, and she had her way. Ferrars himself now occupied a rather peculiar position, being the master of a great fortune and of an establishment which was the headquarters of the party of which he was now only a private member; but, calm and collected, he did not lose his head; always said and did the right thing, and never forgot his early acquaintances. Trenchard was his bosom political friend. Seymour Hicks, who, through Endymion's kindness, had now got into the Treasury, and was quite fashionable, had the run of the House, and made himself marvellously useful, while St. Barbe, who had become by mistake a member of the Conservative Club, drank his frequent claret cup every Saturday

evening at Lady Montfort's receptions with many pledges to the welfare of the Liberal administration.

The flag of the Tory party waved over the magnificent mansion of which Imogene Beaumaris was the graceful life. As parties were nearly equal, and the ministry was supposed to be in decay, the rival reception was as well attended as that of Berengaria. The two great leaders were friends, intimate, but not perhaps quite so intimate as a few years before. 'Lady Montfort is very kind to me,' Imogene would say, 'but I do not think she now quite remembers we are cousins.' Both Lord and Lady Waldershare seemed equally devoted to Lady Beaumaris. 'I do not think,' he would say, 'that I shall ever get Adriana to receive. It is an organic gift, and very rare. What I mean to do is to have a first-rate villa and give the party strawberries. I always say Adriana is like Nell Gwyn, and she shall go about with a pottle. One never sees a pottle of strawberries now. I believe they went out, like all good things, with the Stuarts.'

And so, after all these considerable events, the season rolled on and closed tranquilly. Lord and Lady Hainault continued to give banquets, over which the hostess sighed; Sir Peter Vigo had the wisdom to retain his millions, which few manage to do, as it is admitted that it is easier to make a fortune than to keep one. Mrs. Rodney, supremely habited, still drove her ponies, looking younger and prettier than ever, and getting more fashionable every day, and Mr. Ferrars and Berengaria, Countess of Montfort, retired in the summer to their beautiful and beloved Princedown.