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THE AMERICAN SENATOR BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

THE

AMERICAN SENATOR

BY

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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THE AMERICAN SENATOR.

CHAPTER I.

"I have told him Everything."

THAT evening was very long and very sad to the three ladies assembled in the drawing-room at Bragton Park, but it was probably more so to Lady Augustus than the other two. She hardly spoke to either of them; nor did they to her; while a certain amount of conversation in a low tone was carried on between Lady Ushant and Miss Trefoil. When Arabella came down to dinner she received a message from the sick man. He sent his love, and would so willingly have seen her instantly,—only that the doctor would not allow it. But he was so glad,—so very glad that she had come! This Lady Ushant said to her in a whisper, and seemed to say it as though she had heard nothing of that frightful story which had been told to her not much more than an hour ago. Arabella did not utter a word in reply, but put out her hand, secretly as it were, and grasped that of the old lady to whom she had told the tale of her later intrigues. The dinner did not keep them long, but it was very grievous to them all. Lady Ushant might have made some effort to be at

least a complaisant hostess to Lady Augustus had she not heard this story,—had she not been told that the woman, knowing her daughter to be engaged to John Morton, had wanted her to marry Lord Rufford. The story having come from the lips of the girl herself had moved some pity in the old woman's breast in regard to her; but for Lady Augustus she could feel nothing but horror.

In the evening Lady Augustus sat alone, not even pretending to open a book or to employ her fingers. She seated herself on one side of the fire with a screen in her hand, turning over such thoughts in her mind as were perhaps customary to her. Would there ever come a period to her misery, an hour of release in which she might be in comfort ere she died? Hitherto from one year to another, from one decade to the following, it had all been struggle and misery, contumely and contempt. She thought that she had done her duty by her child, and her child hated and despised her. It was but the other day that Arabella had openly declared that in the event of her marriage she would not have her mother as a guest in her own house. There could be no longer hope for triumph and glory;—but how might she find peace so that she might no longer be driven hither and thither by this ungrateful tyrant child? Oh, how hard she had worked in the world, and how little the world had given her in return!

Lady Ushant and Arabella sat at the other side of the fire, at some distance from it, on a sofa, and carried on a fitful conversation in whispers, of which

a word would now and then reach the ears of the wretched mother. It consisted chiefly of a description of the man's illness, and of the different sayings which had come from the doctors who had attended him. It was marvellous to Lady Augustus, as she sat there listening, that her daughter should condescend to take an interest in such details. What could it be to her now how the fever had taken him, or why or when? On the very next day, the very morning on which she would go and sit,—ah so uselessly,—by the dying man's bedside, her father was to meet Lord Rufford at the ducal mansion in Piccadilly to see if anything could be done in that quarter! It was impossible that she should really care whether John Morton's lease of life was to be computed at a week's purchase or at that of a month! And yet Arabella sat there asking sick-room questions and listening to sick-room replies as though her very nature had been changed. Lady Augustus heard her daughter inquire what food the sick man took, and then Lady Ushant at great length gave the list of his nourishment. What sickening hypocrisy! thought Lady Augustus.

Lady Augustus must have known her daughter well; and yet it was not hypocrisy. The girl's nature, which had become thoroughly evil from the treatment it had received, was not altered. Such sudden changes do not occur more frequently than other miracles. But zealously as she had practised her arts she had not as yet practised them long enough not to be cowed by certain outward circumstances.

There were moments when she still heard in her imagination the sound of that horse's foot as it struck the skull of the unfortunate fallen rider;—and now the prospect of the death of this man whom she had known so intimately and who had behaved so well to her,—to whom her own conduct had been so foully false,—for a time brought her back to humanity. But Lady Augustus had got beyond that and could not at all understand it.

By nine they had all retired for the night. It was necessary that Lady Ushant should again visit her nephew, and the mother and daughter went to their own rooms. "I cannot in the least make out what you are doing," said Lady Augustus in her most severe voice.

"I dare say not, mamma."

"I have been brought here, at a terrible sacrifice——"

"Sacrifice! What sacrifice? You are as well here as anywhere else."

"I say I have been brought here at a terrible sacrifice for no purpose whatever. What use is it to be? And then you pretend to care what this poor man is eating and drinking and what physic he is taking when, the last time you were in his company, you wouldn't so much as look at him for fear you should make another man jealous."

"He was not dying then."

"Psha!"

"Oh yes. I know all that. I do feel a little ashamed of myself when I am almost crying for him."

"As if you loved him!"

"Dear mamma, I do own that it is foolish. Having listened to you on these subjects for a dozen years at least I ought to have got rid of all that. I don't suppose I do love him. Two or three weeks ago I almost thought I loved Lord Rufford, and now I am quite sure that I hate him. But if I heard to-morrow that he had broken his neck out hunting, I ain't sure but what I should feel something. But he would not send for me as this man has done."

"It was very impertinent."

"Perhaps it was ill-bred, as he must have suspected something as to Lord Rufford. However we are here now."

"I will never allow you to drag me anywhere again."

"It will be for yourself to judge of that. If I want to go anywhere, I shall go. What's the good of quarrelling? You know that I mean to have my way."

The next morning neither Lady Augustus nor Miss Trefoil came down to breakfast, but at ten o'clock Arabella was ready, as appointed, to be taken into the sick man's bedroom. She was still dressed in black but had taken some trouble with her face and hair. She followed Lady Ushant in, and silently standing by the bedside put her hand upon that of John Morton which was laying outside on the bed. "I will leave you now, John," said Lady Ushant retiring, "and come again in half an hour."

"When I ring," he said.

"You mustn't let him talk for more than that," said the old lady to Arabella as she went.

It was more than an hour afterwards when Arabella crept into her mother's room, during which time Lady Ushant had twice knocked at her nephew's door and had twice been sent away. "It is all over, mamma!" she said.

Lady Augustus looked into her daughter's eyes and saw that she had really been weeping. "All over!"

"I mean for me,—and you. We have only got to go away."

"Will he—die?"

"It will make no matter though he should live for ever. I have told him everything. I did not mean to do it because I thought that he would be weak; but he has been strong enough for that."

"What have you told him?"

"Just everything—about you and Lord Rufford and myself,—and what an escape he had had not to marry me. He understands it all now."

"It is a great deal more than I do."

"He knows that Lord Rufford has been engaged to me." She clung to this statement so vehemently that she had really taught herself to believe that it was so.

"Well!"

"And he knows also how his lordship is behaving to me. Of course he thinks that I have deserved it. Of course I have deserved it. We have nothing to do now but to go back to London."

"You have brought me here all the way for that."

"Only for that! As the man was dying I thought that I would be honest just for once. Now that I have told him I don't believe that he will die. He does not look to be so very ill."

"And you have thrown away that chance!"

"Altogether. You didn't like Bragton you know, and therefore it can't matter to you."

"Like it!"

"To be sure you would have got rid of me had I gone to Patagonia. But he will not go to Patagonia now even if he gets well; and so there was nothing to be gained. The carriage is to be here at two to take us to the station and you may as well let Judith come and put the things up."

Just before they took their departure Lady Ushant came to Arabella saying that Mr. Morton wanted to speak one other word to her before she went. So she returned to the room and was again left alone at the man's bedside. "Arabella," he said, "I thought that I would tell you that I have forgiven everything."

"How can you have forgiven me? There are things which a man cannot forgive."

"Give me your hand," he said,—and she gave him her hand. "I do forgive it all. Even should I live it would be impossible that we should be man and wife."

"Oh yes."

"But nevertheless I love you. Try,—try to be true to some one."

"There is no truth left in me, Mr. Morton. I should not dishonour my husband if I had one, but

still I should be a curse to him. I shall marry some day I suppose, and I know it will be so. I wish I could change with you,—and die."

"You are unhappy now."

"Indeed I am. I am always unhappy. I do not think you can tell what it is to be so wretched. But I am glad that you have forgiven me." Then she stooped down and kissed his hand. As she did so he touched her brow with his hot lips, and then she left him again. Lady Ushant was waiting outside the door. "He knows it all," said Arabella. "You need not trouble yourself with the message I gave you. The carriage is at the door. Good-bye. You need not come down. Mamma will not expect it." Lady Ushant, hardly knowing how she ought to behave, did not go down. Lady Augustus and her daughter got into Mr. Runciman's carriage without any farewells, and were driven back from the park to the Dillsborough Station. To poor Lady Ushant the whole thing had been very terrible. She sat silent and unoccupied the whole of that evening wondering at the horror of such a history. This girl had absolutely dared to tell the dying man all her own disgrace,—and had travelled down from London to Bragton with the purpose of doing so! When next she crept into the sick-room she almost expected that her nephew would speak to her on the subject;—but he only asked whether that sound of wheels which he heard beneath his window had come from the carriage which had taken them away, and then did not say a further word of either Lady Augustus or her daughter.

"And what do you mean to do now?" said Lady Augustus as the train approached the London terminus.

"Nothing."

"You have given up Lord Rufford?"

"Indeed I have not."

"Your journey to Bragton will hardly help you much with him."

"I don't want it to help me at all. What have I done that Lord Rufford can complain of? I have not abandoned Lord Rufford for the sake of Mr. Morton. Lord Rufford ought only to be too proud if he knew it all."

"Of course he could make use of such an escapade as this?"

"Let him try. I have not done with Lord Rufford yet, and so I can tell him. I shall be at the Duke's in Piccadilly to-morrow morning."

"That will be impossible, Arabella."

"They shall see whether it is impossible. I have got beyond caring very much what people say now. I know the kind of way papa would be thrown over if there is no one there to back him. I shall be there and I will ask Lord Rufford to his face whether we did not become engaged when we were at Mistletoe."

"They won't let you in."

"I'll find a way to make my way in. I shall never be his wife. I don't know that I want it. After all what's the good of living with a man if you hate each other,—or living apart like you and papa?"

"He has income enough for anything!" exclaimed Lady Augustus, shocked at her daughter's apparent blindness.

"It isn't that I'm thinking of, but I'll have my revenge on him. Liar! To write and say that I had made a mistake! He had not the courage to get out of it when we were together; but when he had run away in the night, like a thief, and got into his own house, then he could write and say that I had made a mistake! I have sometimes pitied men when I have seen girls hunting them down, but upon my word they deserve it." This renewal of spirit did something to comfort Lady Augustus. She had begun to fear that her daughter, in her despair, would abandon altogether the one pursuit of her life;—but it now seemed that there was still some courage left for the battle.

That night nothing more was said, but Arabella applied all her mind to the present condition of her circumstances. Should she or should she not go to the House in Piccadilly on the following morning? At last she determined that she would not do so, believing that should her father fail she might make a better opportunity for herself afterwards. At her uncle's house she would hardly have known where or how to wait for the proper moment of her appearance. "So you are not going to Piccadilly," said her mother on the following morning.

"It appears not," said Arabella.

CHAPTER II.

"Now what have you got to say?"

It may be a question whether Lord Augustus Trefoil or Lord Rufford looked forward to the interview which was to take place at the Duke's mansion with the greater dismay. The unfortunate father whose only principle in life had been that of avoiding trouble would have rather that his daughter should have been jilted a score of times than that he should have been called upon to interfere once. There was in this demand upon him a breach of a silent but well-understood compact. His wife and daughter had been allowed to do just what they pleased and to be free of his authority, upon an understanding that they were never to give him any trouble. She might have married Lord Rufford, or Mr. Morton, or any other man she might have succeeded in catching, and he would not have troubled her either before or after her marriage. But it was not fair that he should be called upon to interfere in her failures. And what was he to say to this young lord? Being fat and old and plethoric he could not be expected to use a stick and thrash the young lord. Pistols were gone,—a remembrance of which fact perhaps afforded some consolation. Nobody now need be afraid of anybody, and the young lord

would not be afraid of him. Arabella declared that there had been an engagement. The young lord would of course declare that there had been none. Upon the whole he was inclined to believe it most probable that his daughter was lying. He did not think it likely that Lord Rufford should have been such a fool. As for taking Lord Rufford by the back of his neck and shaking him into matrimony, he knew that that would be altogether out of his power. And then the hour was so wretchedly early. It was that little fool Mistletoe who had named ten o'clock,—a fellow who took Parliamentary papers to bed with him, and had a blue book brought to him every morning at half-past seven with a cup of tea. By ten o'clock Lord Augustus would not have had time to take his first glass of soda and brandy preparatory to the labour of getting into his clothes. But he was afraid of his wife and daughter, and absolutely did get into a cab at the door of his lodgings in Duke Street, St. James', precisely at a quarter past ten. As the Duke's house was close to the corner of Clarges Street the journey he had to make was not long.

Lord Rufford would not have agreed to the interview but that it was forced upon him by his brother-in-law. "What good can it do?" Lord Rufford had asked. But his brother-in-law had held that that was a question to be answered by the other side. In such a position Sir George thought that he was bound to concede as much as this,—in fact to concede almost anything short of marriage. "He can't do the girl any good by talking," Lord Rufford had

said. Sir George assented to this, but nevertheless thought that any friend deputed by her should be allowed to talk, at any rate once. "I don't know what he'll say. Do you think he'll bring a big stick?" Sir George who knew Lord Augustus did not imagine that a stick would be brought. "I couldn't hit him, you know. He's so fat that a blow would kill him." Lord Rufford wanted his brother-in-law to go with him;—but Sir George assured him that this was impossible. It was a great bore. He had to go up to London all alone,—in February, when the weather was quite open and hunting was nearly coming to an end. And for what? Was it likely that such a man as Lord Augustus should succeed in talking him into marrying any girl? Nevertheless he went, prepared to be very civil, full of sorrow at the misunderstanding, but strong in his determination not to yield an inch. He arrived at the mansion precisely at ten o'clock and was at once shown into a back room on the ground floor. He saw no one but a very demure old servant who seemed to look upon him as one who was sinning against the Trefoil family in general, and who shut the door upon him, leaving him as it were in prison. He was so accustomed to be the absolute master of his own minutes and hours that he chafed greatly as he walked up and down the room for what seemed to him the greater part of a day. He looked repeatedly at his watch, and at half-past ten declared to himself that if that fat old fool did not come within two minutes he would make his escape.

"The fat old fool" when he reached the house

asked for his nephew and endeavoured to persuade Lord Mistletoe to go with him to the interview. But Lord Mistletoe was as firm in refusing as had been Sir George Penwether. "You are quite wrong," said the young man with well-informed sententious gravity. "I could do nothing to help you. You are Arabella's father and no one can plead her cause but yourself." Lord Augustus dropped his eyebrows over his eyes as this was said. They who knew him well and had seen the same thing done when his partner would not answer his call at whist or had led up to his discard were aware that the motion was tantamount to a very strong expression of disgust. He did not, however, argue the matter any further, but allowed himself to be led away slowly by the same solemn servant. Lord Rufford had taken up his hat preparatory to his departure when Lord Augustus was announced just five minutes after the half hour.

When the elder man entered the room the younger one put down his hat and bowed. Lord Augustus also bowed and then stood for a few moments silent with his fat hands extended on the round table in the middle of the room. "This is a very disagreeable kind of thing, my Lord," he said.

"Very disagreeable, and one that I lament above all things," answered Lord Rufford.

"That's all very well;—very well indeed;—but, damme, what's the meaning of it all? That's what I want to ask. What's the meaning of it all?" Then he paused as though he had completed the first part of his business,—and might now wait awhile till the necessary explanation had been given.

But Lord Rufford did not seem disposed to give any immediate answer. He shrugged his shoulders, and, taking up his hat, passed his hand once or twice round the nap. Lord Augustus opened his eyes very wide as he waited and looked at the other man; but it seemed that the other man had nothing to say for himself. "You don't mean to tell me, I suppose, that what my daughter says isn't true."

"Some unfortunate mistake, Lord Augustus;—most unfortunate."

"Mistake be——." He stopped himself before the sentence was completed, remembering that such an interview should be conducted on the part of him, as father, with something of dignity. "I don't understand anything about mistakes. Ladies don't make mistakes of that kind. I won't hear of mistakes." Lord Rufford again shrugged his shoulders. "You have engaged my daughter's affections."

"I have the greatest regard for Miss Trefoil."

"Regard be——." Then again he remembered himself. "Lord Rufford, you've got to marry her. That's the long and the short of it."

"I'm sure I ought to be proud."

"So you ought."

"But——"

"I don't know the meaning of but, my Lord. I want to know what you mean to do."

"Marriage isn't in my line at all."

"Then what the d—— business have you to go about and talk to a girl like that? Marriage not in your line! Who cares for your line? I never heard such impudence in all my life. You get yourself

engaged to a young lady of high rank and position and then you say that——marriage isn't in your line." Upon that he opened his eyes still wider, and glared upon the offender wrathfully.

"I can't admit that I was ever engaged to Miss Trefoil."

"Didn't you make love to her?"

The poor victim paused a moment before he answered this question, thereby confessing his guilt before he denied it. "No, my Lord; I don't think I ever did."

"You don't think! You don't know whether you asked my daughter to marry you or not! You don't think you made love to her!"

"I am sure I didn't ask her to marry me."

"I am sure you did. And now what have you got to say?" Here there was another shrug of the shoulders. "I suppose you think because you are a rich man that you may do whatever you please. But you'll have to learn the difference. You must be exposed, Sir."

"I hope for the lady's sake that as little as possible may be said of it."

"D—— the——!" Lord Augustus in his assumed wrath was about to be very severe on his daughter, but he checked himself again. "I'm not going to stop here talking all day," he said. "I want to hear your explanation and then I shall know how to act." Up to this time he had been standing, which was unusual with him. Now he flung himself into an armchair.

"Really, Lord Augustus, I don't know what I've

got to say. I admire your daughter exceedingly. I was very much honoured when she and her mother came to my house at Rufford. I was delighted to be able to show her a little sport. It gave me the greatest satisfaction when I met her again at your brother's house. Coming home from hunting we happened to be thrown together. It's a kind of thing that will occur, you know. The Duchess seemed to think a great deal of it; but what can one do? We could have had two postchaises, of course,—only one doesn't generally send a young lady alone. She was very tired and fainted with the fatigue. That I think is about all."

"But,—damme, Sir, what did you say to her?" Lord Rufford again rubbed the nap of his hat. "What did you say to her first of all, at your own house?"

"A poor fellow was killed out hunting and everybody was talking about that. Your daughter saw it herself."

"Excuse me, Lord Rufford, if I say that that's what we used to call shuffling, at school. Because a man broke his neck out hunting——"

"It was a kick on the head, Lord Augustus."

"I don't care where he was kicked. What has that to do with your asking my daughter to be your wife?"

"But I didn't."

"I say you did,—over and over again." Here Lord Augustus got out of his chair, and made a little attempt to reach the recreant lover;—but he failed and fell back again into his armchair. "It

was first at Rufford, and then you made an appointment to meet her at Mistletoe. How do you explain that?"

"Miss Trefoil is very fond of hunting."

"I don't believe she ever went out hunting in her life before she saw you. You mounted her,—and gave her a horse,—and took her out,—and brought her home. Everybody at Mistletoe knew all about it. My brother and the Duchess were told of it. It was one of those things that are plain to everybody as the nose on your face. What did you say to her when you were coming home in that postchaise?"

"She was fainting."

"What has that to do with it? I don't care whether she fainted or not. I don't believe she fainted at all. When she got into that carriage she was engaged to you, and when she got out of it she was engaged ever so much more. The Duchess knew all about it. Now what have you got to say?" Lord Rufford felt that he had nothing to say. "I insist upon having an answer."

"It's one of the most unfortunate mistakes that ever were made."

"By G——!" exclaimed Lord Augustus, turning his eyes up against the wall, and appealing to some dark ancestor who hung there. "I never heard of such a thing in all my life; never!"

"I suppose I might as well go now," said Lord Rufford after a pause.

"You may go to the D——, Sir,—for the pre-

sent." Then Lord Rufford took his departure leaving the injured parent panting with his exertions.

As Lord Rufford went away he felt that that difficulty had been overcome with much more ease than he had expected. He hardly knew what it was that he had dreaded, but he had feared something much worse than that. Had an appeal been made to his affections he would hardly have known how to answer. He remembered well that he had assured the lady that he loved her, and had a direct question been asked him on that subject he would not have lied. He must have confessed that such a declaration had been made by him. But he had escaped that. He was quite sure that he had never uttered a hint in regard to marriage, and he came away from the Duke's house almost with an assurance that he had done nothing that was worthy of much blame.

Lord Augustus looked at his watch, rang the bell, and ordered a cab. He must now go and see his daughter, and then he would have done with the matter—for ever. But as he was passing through the hall his nephew caught hold of him and took him back into the room. "What does he say for himself?" asked Lord Mistletoe.

"I don't know what he says. Of course he swears that he never spoke a word to her."

"My mother saw him paying her the closest attention."

"How can I help that? What can I do? Why didn't your mother pin him then and there? Women can always do that kind of thing if they choose."

"It is all over, then?"

"I can't make a man marry if he won't. He ought to be thrashed within an inch of his life. But if one does that kind of thing the police are down upon one. All the same, I think the Duchess might have managed it if she had chosen." After that he went to the lodgings in Orchard Street, and there repeated his story. "I have done all I can," he said, "and I don't mean to interfere any further. Arabella should know how to manage her own affairs."

"And you don't mean to punish him?" asked the mother.

"Punish him! How am I to punish him? If I were to throw a decanter at his head, what good would that do?"

"And you mean to say that she must put up with it?" Arabella was sitting by as these questions were asked.

"He says that he never said a word to her. Whom am I to believe?"

"You did believe him, papa?"

"Who said so, Miss? But I don't see why his word isn't as good as yours. There was nobody to hear it, I suppose. Why didn't you get it in writing, or make your uncle fix him at once? If you mismanage your own affairs I can't put them right for you."

"Thank you, papa. I am so much obliged to you. You come back and tell me that every word he says is to be taken for gospel, and that you don't believe a word I have spoken. That is so kind of you! I suppose he and you will be the best friends

in the world now. But I don't mean to let him off in that way. As you won't help me, I must help myself."

"What did you expect me to do?"

"Never to leave him till you had forced him to keep his word. I should have thought that you would have taken him by the throat in such a cause. Any other father would have done so."

"You are an impudent, wicked girl, and I don't believe he was ever engaged to you at all," said Lord Augustus as he took his leave.

"Now you have made your father your enemy," said the mother.

"Everybody is my enemy," said Arabella. "There are no such things as love and friendship. Papa pretends that he does not believe me, just because he wants to shirk the trouble. I suppose you'll say you don't believe me next."

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Morton returns.

A FEW days after that on which Lady Augustus and her daughter left Bragton old Mrs. Morton returned to that place. She had gone away in very bitterness of spirit against her grandson in the early days of his illness. For some period antecedent to that there had been causes for quarrelling. John Morton had told her that he had been to Reginald's house, and she, in her wrath, replied that he had disgraced himself by doing so. When those harsh words had been forgotten, or at any rate forgiven, other causes of anger had sprung up. She had endeavoured to drive him to repudiate Arabella Trefoil, and in order that she might do so effectually had contrived to find out something of Arabella's doings at Rufford and at Mistletoe. Her efforts in this direction had had an effect directly contrary to that which she had intended. There had been moments in which Morton had been willing enough to rid himself of that burden. He had felt the lady's conduct in his own house, and had seen it at Rufford. He, too, had heard something of Mistletoe. But the spirit within him was aroused at the idea of dictation, and he had been prompted to contradict the old woman's accusation against his intended bride, by the very fact that

they were made by her. And then she threatened him. If he did these things,—if he would consort with an outcast from the family such as Reginald Morton, and take to himself such a bride as Arabella Trefoil, he could never more be to her as her child. This of course was tantamount to saying that she would leave her money to some one else,—money which, as he well knew, had all been collected from the Bragton property. He had ever been to her as her son, and yet he was aware of a propensity on her part to enrich her own noble relatives with her hoards,—a desire from gratifying which she had hitherto been restrained by conscience. Morton had been anxious enough for his grandmother's money, but, even in the hope of receiving it, would not bear indignity beyond a certain point. He had therefore declared it to be his purpose to marry Arabella Trefoil, and because he had so declared he had almost brought himself to forgive that young lady's sins against him. Then, as his illness became serious, there arose the question of disposing of the property in the event of his death. Mrs. Morton was herself very old, and was near her grave. She was apt to speak of herself as one who had but a few days left to her in this world. But, to her, property was more important than life or death;—and rank probably more important than either. She was a brave, fierce, evil-minded, but conscientious old woman,—one, we may say, with very bad lights indeed, but who was steadfastly minded to walk by those lights, such as they were. She did not scruple to tell her grandson that it was his duty to leave the property away from

his cousin Reginald, nor to allege as a reason for his doing so that in all probability Reginald Morton was not the legitimate heir of his great-grandfather, Sir Reginald. For such an assertion John Morton knew there was not a shadow of ground. No one but this old woman had ever suspected that the Canadian girl whom Reginald's father had brought with him to Bragton had been other than his honest wife;—and her suspicions had only come from vague assertions, made by herself in blind anger till at last she had learned to believe them. Then, when in addition to this, he asserted his purpose of asking Arabella Trefoil to come to him at Bragton, the cup of her wrath was overflowing, and she withdrew from the house altogether. It might be that he was dying. She did in truth believe that he was dying. But there were things more serious to her than life or death. Should she allow him to trample upon all her feelings because he was on his death-bed,—when perhaps in very truth he might not be on his death-bed at all? She, at any rate, was near her death,—and she would do her duty. So she packed up her things—to the last black skirt of an old gown, so that every one at Bragton might know that it was her purpose to come back no more. And she went away.

Then Lady Ushant came to take her place, and with Lady Ushant came Reginald Morton. The one lived in the house and the other visited it daily. And, as the reader knows, Lady Augustus came with her daughter. Mrs. Morton, though she had gone,—for ever,—took care to know of the comings and goings at Bragton. Mrs. Hopkins was enjoined to

write to her and tell her everything; and though Mrs. Hopkins with all her heart took the side of Lady Ushant and Reginald, she had never been well inclined to Miss Trefoil. Presents too were given and promises were made; and Mrs. Hopkins, not without some little treachery, did from time to time send to the old lady a record of what took place at Bragton. Arabella came and went, and Mrs. Hopkins thought that her coming had not led to much. Lady Ushant was always with Mr. John,—such was the account given by Mrs. Hopkins;—and the general opinion was that the squire's days were numbered.

Then the old woman's jealousy was aroused, and, perhaps, her heart was softened. It was still hard black winter, and she was living alone in lodgings in London. The noble cousin, a man nearly as old as herself whose children she was desirous to enrich, took but little notice of her, nor would she have been happy had she lived with him. Her life had been usually solitary,—with little breaks to its loneliness occasioned by the visits to England of him whom she had called her child. That this child should die before her, should die in his youth, did not shock her much. Her husband had done so, and her own son, and sundry of her noble brothers and sisters. She was hardened against death. Life to her had never been joyous, though the trappings of life were so great in her eyes. But it broke her heart that her child should die in the arms of another old woman who had always been to her as an enemy. Lady Ushant, in days now long gone by but still remembered as though they were yesterday, had

counselled the reception of the Canadian female. And Lady Ushant, when the Canadian female and her husband were dead, had been a mother to the boy whom she, Mrs. Morton, would so fain have repudiated altogether. Lady Ushant had always been "on the other side;" and now Lady Ushant was paramount at Bragton.

And doubtless there was some tenderness, though Mrs. Morton was unwilling to own even to herself that she was moved by any such feeling. If she had done her duty in counselling him to reject both Reginald Morton and Arabella Trefoil,—as to which she admitted no doubt in her own mind;—and if duty had required her to absent herself when her counsel was spurned, then would she be weak and unmindful of duty should she allow any softness of heart to lure her back again. It was so she reasoned. But still some softness was there; and when she heard that Miss Trefoil had gone, and that her visit had not, in Mrs. Hopkins's opinion, "led to much," she wrote to say that she would return. She made no request and clothed her suggestion in no words of tenderness; but simply told her grandson that she would come back—as the Trefoils had left him.

And she did come. When the news were first told to Lady Ushant by the sick man himself, that Lady proposed that she should at once go back to Cheltenham. But when she was asked whether her animosity to Mrs. Morton was so great that she could not consent to remain under the same roof, she at once declared that she had no animosity whatsoever.

The idea of animosity running over nearly half a century was horrible to her; and therefore, though she did in her heart of hearts dread the other old woman, she consented to stay. "And what shall Reginald do?" she asked. John Morton had thought about this too, and expressed a wish that Reginald should come regularly,—as he had come during the last week or two.

It was just a week from the day on which the Trefoils had gone that Mrs. Morton was driven up to the door in Mr. Runciman's fly. This was at four in the afternoon, and had the old woman looked out of the fly window she might have seen Reginald making his way by the little path to the bridge which led back to Dillsborough. It was at this hour that he went daily, and he had not now thought it worth his while to remain to welcome Mrs. Morton. And she might also have seen, had she looked out, that with him was walking a young woman. She would not have known Mary Masters; but had she seen them both, and had she known the young woman, she would have declared in her pride that they were fit associates. But she saw nothing of this, sitting there behind her veil, thinking whether she might still do anything, and if so, what she might do to avert the present evil destination of the Bragton estate. There was an honourable nephew of her own,—or rather a great-nephew,—who might easily take the name, who would so willingly take the name! Or if this were impracticable, there was a distant Morton, very distant, whom she had never seen and certainly did not love, but who was clearly a Morton,

and who would certainly be preferable to that enemy of forty years' standing. Might there not be some bargain made? Would not her dying grandson be alive to the evident duty of enriching the property and leaving behind him a wealthy heir? She could enrich the property and make the heir wealthy by her money.

"How is he?" That of course was the first question when Mrs. Hopkins met her in the hall. Mrs. Hopkins only shook her head and said that perhaps he had taken his food that day a little better than on the last. Then there was a whisper, to which Mrs. Hopkins whispered back her answer. Yes,—Lady Ushant was in the house,—was at this moment in the sick man's room. Mr. Reginald was not staying there,—had never stayed there,—but came every day. He had only just left. "And is he to come still?" asked Mrs. Morton with wrath in her eyes. Mrs. Hopkins did not know but was disposed to think that Mr. Reginald would come every day. Then Mrs. Morton went up to her own room,—and while she prepared herself for her visit to the sick room Lady Ushant retired. She had a cup of tea, refusing all other refreshment, and then, walking erect as though she had been forty instead of seventy-five, she entered her grandson's chamber and took her old place at his bedside.

Nothing was then said about Arabella, nor, indeed, at any future time was her name mentioned between them;—nor was anything then said about the future fate of the estate. She did not dare to bring up the subject at once, though, on the journey

down from London, she had determined that she would do so. But she was awed by his appearance and by the increased appanages of his sick-bed. He spoke, indeed, of the property, and expressed his anxiety that Chowton Farm should be bought, if it came into market. He thought that the old acres should be redeemed, if the opportunity arose,—and if the money could be found. "Chowton Farm!" exclaimed the old woman, who remembered well the agony which had attended the alienation of that portion of the Morton lands.

"It may be that it will be sold."

"Lawrence Twentyman sell Chowton Farm! I thought he was well off." Little as she had been at Bragton she knew all about Chowton Farm,—except that its owner was so wounded by vain love as to be like a hurt deer. Her grandson did not tell her all the story, but explained to her that Lawrence Twentyman, though not poor, had other plans of life and thought of leaving the neighbourhood. She, of course, had the money; and as she believed that land was the one proper possession for an English gentleman of ancient family, she doubtless would have been willing to buy it had she approved of the hands into which it would fall. It seemed to him that it was her duty to do as much for the estate with which all her fortune had been concerned. "Yes," she said; "it should be bought,—if other things suited. We will talk of it to-morrow, John." Then he spoke of his mission to Patagonia and of his regret that it should be abandoned. Even were he ever to be well again his strength

would return to him too late for this purpose. He had already made known to the Foreign Office his inability to undertake that service. But she could perceive that he had not in truth abandoned his hopes of living, for he spoke much of his ambition as to the public service. The more he thought of it, he said, the more certain he became that it would suit him better to go on with his profession than to live the life of a country squire in England. And yet she could see the change which had taken place since she was last there and was aware that he was fading away from day to day.

It was not till they were summoned to dine together that she saw Lady Ushant. Very many years had passed since last they were together, and yet neither seemed to the other to be much changed. Lady Ushant was still soft, retiring, and almost timid; whereas Mrs. Morton showed her inclination to domineer even in the way in which she helped herself to salt. While the servant was with them very little was said on either side. There was a word or two from Mrs. Morton to show that she considered herself the mistress there,—and a word from the other lady proclaiming that she had no pretensions of that kind. But after dinner in the little drawing-room they were more communicative. Something of course was said as to the health of the invalid. Lady Ushant was not the woman to give a pronounced opinion on such a subject. She used doubtful, hesitating words, and would in one minute almost contradict what she had said in the former. But Mrs. Morton was clever enough to per-

ceive that Lady Ushant was almost without hope. Then she made a little speech with a fixed purpose. "It must be a great trouble to you, Lady Ushant, to be so long away from home."

"Not at all," said Lady Ushant in perfect innocence. "I have nothing to bind me anywhere."

"I shall think it my duty to remain here now,—till the end."

"I suppose so. He has always been almost the same to you as your own."

"Quite so; quite the same. He is my own." And yet,—thought Lady Ushant,—she left him in his illness! She, too, had heard something from Mrs. Hopkins of the temper in which Mrs. Morton had last left Bragton. "But you are not bound to him in that way."

"Not in that way certainly."

"In no way, I may say. It was very kind of you to come when business made it imperative on me to go to town, but I do not think we can call upon you for further sacrifice."

"It is no sacrifice, Mrs. Morton." Lady Ushant was as meek as a worm, but a worm will turn. And, though innocent, she was quick enough to perceive that at this, their first meeting, the other old woman was endeavouring to turn her out of the house.

"I mean that it can hardly be necessary to call upon you to give up your time."

"What has an old woman to do with her time, Mrs. Morton?"

Hitherto Mrs. Morton had smiled. The smile

indeed had been grim, but it had been intended to betoken outward civility. Now there came a frown upon her brow which was more grim and by no means civil. "The truth is that at such a time one who is almost a stranger——"

"I am no stranger," said Lady Ushant.

"You had not seen him since he was an infant."

"My name was Morton as is his, and my dear father was the owner of this house. Your husband, Mrs. Morton, was his grandfather and my brother. I will allow no one to tell me that I am a stranger at Bragton. I have lived here many more years than you."

"A stranger to him, I meant. And now that he is ill——"

"I shall stay with him—till he desires me to go away. He asked me to stay and that is quite enough." Then she got up and left the room with more dignity,—as also she had spoken with more earnestness,—than Mrs. Morton had given her credit for possessing. After that the two ladies did not meet again till the next day.

CHAPTER IV.

The two old Ladies.

On the next morning Mrs. Morton did not come down to breakfast, but sat alone upstairs nursing her wrath. During the night she had made up her mind to one or two things. She would never enter her grandson's chambers when Lady Ushant was there. She would not speak to Reginald Morton, and should he come into her presence while she was at Bragton she would leave the room. She would do her best to make the house, in common parlance, "too hot" to hold that other woman. And she would make use of those words which John had spoken concerning Chowton Farm as a peg on which she might hang her discourse in reference to his will. If in doing all this she should receive that dutiful assistance which she thought that he owed her,—then she should stand by his bed-side, and be tender to him, and nurse him to the last as a mother would nurse a child. But if, as she feared, he were headstrong in disobeying, then she would remember that her duty to her family, if done with a firm purpose, would have lasting results, while his life might probably be an affair of a few weeks,—or even days.

At about eleven Lady Ushant was with her

patient when a message was brought by Mrs. Hopkins. Mrs. Morton wished to see her grandson and desired to know whether it would suit him that she should come now. "Why not?" said the sick man, who was sitting up in his bed. Then Lady Ushant collected her knitting and was about to depart. "Must you go because she is coming?" Morton asked. Lady Ushant, shocked at the necessity of explaining to him the ill feeling that existed, said that perhaps it would be best. "Why should it be best?" Lady Ushant shook her head, and smiled, and put her hand upon the counterpane,—and retired. As she passed the door of her rival's room she could see the black silk dress moving behind the partly open door, and as she entered her own she heard Mrs. Morton's steps upon the corridor. The place was already almost "too hot" for her. Anything would be better than scenes like this in the house of a dying man.

"Need my aunt have gone away?" he asked after the first greeting.

"I did not say so."

"She seemed to think that she was not to stay."

"Can I help what she thinks, John? Of course she feels that she is——"

"Is what?"

"An interloper—if I must say it."

"But I have sent for her, and I have begged her to stay."

"Of course she can stay if she wishes. But, dear John, there must be much to be said between you and me which,—which cannot interest her; or

which, at least, she ought not to hear." He did not contradict this in words, feeling himself to be too weak for contest; but within his own mind he declared that it was not so. The things which interested him now were as likely to interest his great-aunt as his grandmother, and to be as fit for the ears of the one as for those of the other.

An hour had passed after this during which she tended him, giving him food and medicine, and he had slept before she ventured to allude to the subject which was nearest to her heart. "John," she said at last, "I have been thinking about Chowton Farm."

"Well."

"It certainly should be bought."

"If the man resolves on selling it."

"Of course; I mean that. How much would it be?" Then he mentioned the sum which Twenty-man had named, saying that he had inquired and had been told that the price was reasonable. "It is a large sum of money, John."

"There might be a mortgage for part of it."

"I don't like mortgages. The property would not be yours at all if it were mortgaged, as soon as bought. You would pay 5 per cent. for the money and only get 3 per cent. from the land." The old lady understood all about it.

"I could pay it off in two years," said the sick man.

"There need be no paying off, and no mortgage, if I did it. I almost believe I have got enough to do it." He knew very well that she had much more

than enough. "I think more of this property than of anything in the world, my dear."

"Chowton Farm could be yours, you know."

"What should I do with Chowton Farm? I shall probably be in my grave before the slow lawyer would have executed the deeds." And I in mine, thought he to himself, before the present owner has quite made up his mind to part with his land. "What would a little place like that do for me? But in my father-in-law's time it was part of the Bragton property. He sold it to pay the debts of a younger son, forgetting, as I thought, what he owed to the estate;"—It had in truth been sold on behalf of the husband of this old woman who was now complaining. "And if it can be recovered it is our duty to get it back again. A property like this should never be lessened. It is in that way that the country is given over to shopkeepers and speculators and is made to be like France or Italy. I quite think that Chowton Farm should be bought. And though I might die before it was done, I would find the money."

"I knew what your feeling would be."

"Yes, John. You could not but know it well. But——" Then she paused a moment, looking into his face. "But I should wish to know what would become of it—eventually."

"If it were yours you could do what you pleased with it."

"But it would be yours."

"Then it would go with the rest of the property."

"To whom would it go? We have all to die, my

dear, and who can say whom it may please the Almighty to take first?"

"In this house, ma'am, every one can give a shrewd guess. I know my own condition. If I die without children of my own every acre I possess will go to the proper heir. Thinking as you do, you ought to agree with me in that."

"But who is the proper heir?"

"My cousin Reginald. Do not let us contest it, ma'am. As certainly as I lie here he will have Bragton when I am gone."

"Will you not listen to me, John?"

"Not about that. How could I die in peace were I to rob him?"

"It is all your own,—to do as you like with."

"It is all my own, but not to do as I like with. With your feelings, with your ideas, how can you urge me to such an injustice?"

"Do I want it for myself? I do not even want it for any one belonging to me. There is your cousin Peter."

"If he were the heir he should have it,—though I know nothing of him and believe him to be but a poor creature and very unfit to have the custody of a family property."

"But he is his father's son."

"I will believe nothing of that," said the sick man raising himself in his bed. "It is a slander;—it is based on no evidence whatsoever. No one even thought of it but you."

"John, is that the way to speak to me?"

"It is the way to speak of an assertion so in-

jurious." Then he fell back again on his pillows and she sat by his bedside for a full half hour speechless, thinking of it all. At the end of that time she had resolved that she would not yet give it up. Should he regain his health and strength,—and she would pray fervently night and day that God would be so good to him,—then everything would be well. Then he would marry and have children, and Bragton would descend in the right line. But were it to be ordained otherwise, should it be God's will that he must die,—then, as he grew weaker, he would become more plastic in her hands, and she might still prevail. At present he was stubborn with the old stubbornness, and would not see with her eyes. She would bide her time and be careful to have a lawyer ready. She turned it all over in her mind, as she sat there watching him in his sleep. She knew of no one but Mr. Masters whom she distrusted as being connected with the other side of the family,—whose father had made that will by which the property in Dillsborough had been dissevered from Bragton. But Mr. Masters would probably obey instructions if they were given to him definitely.

She thought of it all and then went down to lunch. She did not dare to refuse altogether to meet the other woman lest such resolve on her part might teach those in the house to think that Lady Ushant was the mistress. She took her place at the head of the table and interchanged a few words with her grandson's guest,—which of course had reference to his health. Lady Ushant was very ill able to carry

on a battle of any sort and was willing to show her submission in everything,—unless she were desired to leave the house. While they were still sitting at table, Reginald Morton walked into the room. It had been his habit to do so regularly for the last week. A daily visitor does not wait to have himself announced. Reginald had considered the matter and had determined that he would follow his practice just as though Mrs. Morton were not there. If she were civil to him then would he be very courteous to her. It had never occurred to him to expect conduct such as that with which she greeted him. The old woman got up and looked at him sternly. "My nephew, Reginald," said Lady Ushant, supposing that some introduction might be necessary. Mrs. Morton gathered the folds of her dress together and without a word stalked out of the room. And yet she believed,—she could not but believe,—that her grandson was on his deathbed in the room above!

"O Reginald, what are we to do?" said Lady Ushant.

"Is she like that to you?"

"She told me last night that I was a stranger, and that I ought to leave the house."

"And what did you say?"

"I told her I should stay while he wished me to stay. But it is all so terrible, that I think I had better go."

"I would not stir a step—on her account."

"But why should she be so bitter? I have done nothing to offend her. It is more than half of even

my long lifetime since I saw her. She is nothing; but I have to think of his comfort. I suppose she is good to him; and though he may bid me stay such scenes as this in the house must be a trouble to him." Nevertheless Reginald was strong in opinion that Lady Ushant ought not to allow herself to be driven away, and declared his own purpose of coming daily as had of late been his wont.

Soon after this Reginald was summoned to go upstairs and he again met the angry woman in the passage, passing her of course without a word. And then Mary came to see her friend, and she also encountered Mrs. Morton, who was determined that no one should come into that house without her knowledge. "Who is that young woman?" said Mrs. Morton to the old housekeeper.

"That is Miss Masters, my Lady."

"And who is Miss Masters,—and why does she come here at such a time as this?"

"She is the daughter of Attorney Masters, my Lady. It was she as was brought up here by Lady Ushant."

"Oh,—that young person."

"She's come here generally of a day now to see her ladyship."

"And is she taken up to my grandson?"

"Oh dear, no, my Lady. She sits with Lady Ushant for an hour or so and then goes back with Mr. Reginald."

"Oh—that is it, is it? The house is made use of for such purposes as that!"

"I don't think there is any purposes, my Lady,"

said Mrs. Hopkins, almost roused to indignation, although she was talking to the acknowledged mistress of the house whom she always called "my lady."

Lady Ushant told the whole story to her young friend, bitterly bewailing her position. "Reginald tells me not to go, but I do not think that I can stand it. I should not mind the quarrel so much,—only that he is so ill."

"She must be a very evil-minded person."

"She was always arrogant and always hard. I can remember her just the same; but that was so many years ago. She left Bragton then because she could not banish his mother from the house. But to bear it all in her heart so long is not like a human being,—let alone a woman. What did he say to you going home yesterday?"

"Nothing, Lady Ushant."

"Does he know that it will all be his if that poor young man should die? He never speaks to me as if he thought of it."

"He would certainly not speak to me about it. I do not think he thinks of it. He is not like that."

"Men do consider such things. And they are only cousins; and they have never known each other! Oh, Mary!"

"What are you thinking of, Lady Ushant?"

"Men ought not to care for money or position, but they do. If he comes here, all that I have will be yours."

"Oh, Lady Ushant!"

"It is not much but it will be enough."

"I do not want to hear about such things now."

"But you ought to be told. Ah, dear;—if it could be as I wish!" The imprudent, weak-minded, loving old woman longed to hear a tale of mutual love,—longed to do something which should cause such a tale to be true on both sides. And yet she could not quite bring herself to express her wish either to the man or to the woman.

Poor Mary almost understood it, but was not quite sure of her friend's meaning. She was, however, quite sure that if such were the wish of Lady Ushant's heart, Lady Ushant was wishing in vain. She had twice walked back to Dillsborough with Reginald Morton, and he had been more sedate, more middle-aged, less like a lover than ever. She knew now that she might safely walk with him, being sure that he was no more likely to talk of love than would have been old Dr. Nupper had she accepted the offer which he had made her of a cast in his gig. And now that Reginald would probably become Squire of Bragton it was more impossible than ever. As Squire of Bragton he would seek some highly born bride, quite out of her way, whom she could never know. And then she would see neither him—nor Bragton any more. Would it not have been better that she should have married Larry Twentyman and put an end to so many troubles beside her own?

Again she walked back with him to Dillsborough, passing as they always did across the little bridge. He seemed to be very silent as he went, more so

than usual,—and as was her wont with him she only spoke to him when he addressed her. It was only when he got out on the road that he told her what was on his mind. "Mary," he said, "how will it be with me if that poor fellow dies?"

"In what way, Mr. Morton?"

"All that place will be mine. He told me so just now."

"But that would be of course."

"Not at all. He might give it to you if he pleased. He could not have an heir who would care for it less. But it is right that it should be so. Whether it would suit my taste or not to live as Squire of Bragton,—and I do not think it would suit my taste well,—it ought to be so. I am the next, and it will be my duty."

"I am sure you do not want him to die."

"No, indeed. If I could save him by my right hand,—if I could save him by my life, I would do it."

"But of all lives it must surely be the best."

"Do you think so? What is such a one likely to do? But then what do I do, as it is? It is the sort of life you would like,—if you were a man."

"Yes,—if I were a man," said Mary. Then he again relapsed into silence and hardly spoke again till he left her at her father's door.

CHAPTER V.

The last Effort.

When Mary reached her home she was at once met by her stepmother in the passage with tidings of importance. "He is up-stairs in the drawing-room," said Mrs. Masters. Mary whose mind was laden with thoughts of Reginald Morton asked who was the he. "Lawrence Twentyman," said Mrs. Masters. "And now, my dear, do, do think of it before you go to him." There was no anger now in her stepmother's face,—but entreaty and almost love. She had not called Mary "my dear" for many weeks past,—not since that journey to Cheltenham. Now she grasped the girl's hand as she went on with her prayer. "He is so good and so true! And what better can there be for you? With your advantages, and Lady Ushant, and all that, you would be quite the lady at Chowton. Think of your father and sisters;—what a good you could do them! And think of the respect they all have for him, dining with Lord Rufford the other day and all the other gentlemen. It isn't only that he has got plenty to live on, but he knows how to keep it as a man ought. He's sure to hold up his head and be as good a squire as any of 'em." This was a very different tale;—a note altogether changed! It must

not be said that the difference of the tale and the change of the note affected Mary's heart; but her stepmother's manner to her did soften her. And then why should she regard herself or her own feelings? Like others she had thought much of her own happiness, had made herself the centre of her own circle, had, in her imagination, built castles in the air and filled them according to her fancy. But her fancies had been all shattered into fragments; not a stone of her castles was standing; she had told herself unconsciously that there was no longer a circle and no need for a centre. That last half-hour which she had passed with Reginald Morton on the road home had made quite sure that which had been sure enough before. He was not altogether out of her reach, thinking only of the new duties which were coming to him. She would never walk with him again; never put herself in the way of indulging some fragment of an illusory hope. She was nothing now,—nothing even to herself. Why should she not give herself and her services to this young man if the young man chose to take her as she was? It would be well that she should do something in the world. Why should she not look after his house, and mend his shirts, and reign over his poultry yard? In this way she would be useful, and respected by all,—unless perhaps by the man she loved. "Mary, say that you will think of it once more," pleaded Mrs. Masters.

"I may go up-stairs,—to my own room?"

"Certainly; do;—go up and smooth your hair. I will tell him that you are coming to him. He will wait.

But he is so much in earnest now,—and so sad,—that I know he will not come again."

Then Mary went up-stairs, determined to think of it. She began at once, woman-like, to smooth her hair as her stepmother had recommended, and to remove the dust of the road from her face and dress. But not the less was she thinking of it the while. Could she do it, how much pain would be spared even to herself! How much that was now bitter as gall in her mouth would become,—not sweet,—but tasteless. There are times in one's life in which the absence of all savour seems to be sufficient for life in this world. Were she to do this thing she thought that she would have strength to banish that other man from her mind,—and at last from her heart. He would be there, close to her, but of a different kind and leading a different life. Mrs. Masters had told her that Larry would be as good a squire as the best of them; but it should be her care to keep him and herself in their proper position, to teach him the vanity of such aspirations. And the real squire opposite, who would despise her,—for had he not told her that she would be despicable if she married this man,—would not trouble her then. They might meet on the roads, and there would be a cold question or two as to each other's welfare, and a vain shaking of hands,—but they would know nothing and care for nothing as to each other's thoughts. And there would come some stately dame who hearing how things had been many years ago, would perhaps——. But no;—the stately dame should be received with courtesy, but there should be no patronising. Even

in these few minutes up-stairs she thought much of the stately dame and was quite sure that she would endure no patronage from Bragton.

She almost thought that she could do it. There were hideous ideas afflicting her soul dreadfully, but which she strove to banish. Of course she could not love him,—not at first. But all those who wished her to marry him, including himself, knew that;—and still they wished her to marry him. How could that be disgraceful which all her friends desired? Her father, to whom she was, as she knew well, the very apple of his eye, wished her to marry this man;—and yet her father knew that her heart was elsewhere. Had not women done it by hundreds, by thousands, and had afterwards performed their duties well as mothers and wives. In other countries, as she had read, girls took the husbands found for them by their parents as a matter of course. As she left the room, and slowly crept down-stairs, she almost thought she would do it. She almost thought;—but yet, when her hand was on the lock, she could not bring herself to say that it should be so.

He was not dressed as usual. In the first place, there was a round hat on the table, such as men wear in cities. She had never before seen such a hat with him except on a Sunday. And he wore a black cloth coat, and dark brown pantaloons, and a black silk handkerchief. She observed it all, and thought that he had not changed for the better. As she looked into his face, it seemed to her more common,—meaner than before. No doubt he was good-looking,—but his good-looks were almost re-

pulsive to her. He had altogether lost his little swagger;—but he had borne that little swagger well, and in her presence it had never been offensive. Now he seemed as though he had thrown aside all the old habits of his life, and was pining to death from the loss of them. "Mary," he said, "I have come to you,—for the last time. I thought I would give myself one more chance, and your father told me that I might have it." He paused, as though expecting an answer. But she had not yet quite made up her mind. Had she known her mind, she would have answered him frankly. She was quite resolved as to that. If she could once bring herself to give him her hand, she would not coy it for a moment. "I will be your wife, Larry." That was the form on which she had determined, should she find herself able to yield. But she had not brought herself to it as yet. "If you can take me, Mary, you will,—well, —save me from lifelong misery, and make the man who loves you the best-contented and the happiest man in England."

"But, Larry, I do not love you."

"I will make you love me. Good usage will make a wife love her husband. Don't you think you can trust me?"

"I do believe that I can trust you for everything good."

"Is that nothing?"

"It is a great deal, Larry, but not enough;—not enough to bring together a man and woman as husband and wife. I would sooner marry a man I loved, though I knew he would ill-use me."

"Would you?"

"To marry either would be wrong."

"I sometimes think, dearest, that if I could talk better I should be better able to persuade you."

"I sometimes think you talk so well that I ought to be persuaded;—but I can't. It is not lack of talking."

"What is it, then?"

"Just this;—my heart does not turn itself that way. It is the same chance that has made you—— partial to me."

"Partial! Why, I love the very air you breathe. When I am near you, everything smells sweet. There isn't anything that belongs to you but I think I should know it, though I found it a hundred miles away. To have you in the room with me would be like heaven,—if I only knew that you were thinking kindly of me."

"I always think kindly of you, Larry."

"Then say that you will be my wife." She paused, and became red up to the roots of her hair. She seated herself on a chair, and then rose again,—and again sat down. The struggle was going on within her, and he perceived something of the truth. "Say the word once, Mary;—say it but once." And as he prayed to her he came forward and went down upon his knees.

"I cannot do it," she replied at last, speaking very hoarsely, not looking at him, not even addressing herself to him.

"Mary!"

"Larry, I cannot do it. I have tried, but I can-

not do it. O Larry, dear Larry, do not ask me again. Larry, I have no heart to give. Another man has it all."

"Is it so?" She bowed her head in token of assent. "Is it that young parson," exclaimed Larry, in anger.

"It is not. But, Larry, you must ask no questions now. I have told you my secret that all this might be set at rest. But if you are generous, as I know you are, you will keep my secret, and will ask no questions. And, Larry, if you are unhappy, so am I. If your heart is sore, so is mine. He knows nothing of my love, and cares nothing for me."

"Then throw him aside."

She smiled and shook her head. "Do you think I would not if I could? Why do you not throw me aside?"

"Oh, Mary!"

"Cannot I love as well as you? You are a man, and have the liberty to speak of it. Though I cannot return it, I can be proud of your love and feel grateful to you. I cannot tell mine. I cannot think of it without blushing. But I can feel it, and know it, and be as sure that it has trodden me down and got the better of me as you can. But you can go out into the world and teach yourself to forget."

"I must go away from here then."

"You have your business and your pleasures, your horses and your fields and your friends. I have nothing,—but to remain here and know that I have disobliged all those that love me. Do you

think, Larry, I would not go and be your wife if I could? I have told you all, Larry, and now do not ask me again."

"Is it so?"

"Yes;—it is so."

"Then I shall cut it all. I shall sell Chowton and go away. You tell me I have my horses and my pleasures! What pleasures? I know nothing of my horses,—not whether they are lame or sound. I could not tell you of one of them whether he is fit to go to-morrow. Business! The place may farm itself for me, for I can't stay there. Everything sickens me to look at it. Pleasures indeed!"

"Is that manly, Larry?"

"How can a man be manly when the manliness is knocked out of him? A man's courage lies in his heart;—but if his heart is broken where will his courage be then? I couldn't hold my head up here any more,—and I shall go."

"You must not do that," she said, getting up and laying hold of his arm.

"But I must do it."

"For my sake you must stay here, Larry;—so that I may not have to think that I have injured you so deeply. Larry, though I cannot be your wife I think I could die of sorrow if you were always unhappy. What is a poor girl that you should grieve for her in that way? I think if I were a man I would master my love better than that." He shook his head and faintly strove to drag his arm from out of

her grasp. "Promise me that you will take a year to think of it before you go."

"Will you take a year to think of me?" said he, rising again to sudden hope.

"No, Larry, no. I should deceive you were I to say so. I deceived you before when I put it off for two months. But you can promise me without deceit. For my sake, Larry?" And she almost embraced him as she begged for his promise. "I know you would wish to spare me pain. Think what will be my sufferings if I hear that you have really gone from Chowton. You will promise me, Larry?"

"Promise what?"

"That the farm shall not be sold for twelve months."

"Oh yes;—I'll promise. I don't care for the farm."

"And stay there if you can. Don't leave the place to strangers. And go about your business,—and hunt,—and be a man. I shall always be thinking of what you do. I shall always watch you. I shall always love you,—always,—always,—always. I always have loved you;—because you are so good. But it is a different love. And now, Larry, good-bye." So saying, she raised her face to look into his eyes. Then he suddenly put his arm round her waist, kissed her forehead, and left the room without another word.

Mrs. Masters saw him as he went, and must have known from his gait what was the nature of the answer he had received. But yet she went quickly upstairs to inquire. The matter was one of too much

consequence for a mere inference. Mary had gone from the sitting-room, but her stepmother followed her upstairs to her bed-chamber. "Mamma," she said, "I couldn't do it;—I couldn't do it. I did try. Pray do not scold me. I did try, but I could not do it." Then she threw herself into the arms of the unsympathetic woman,—who, however, was now somewhat less unsympathetic than she had hitherto been.

Mrs. Masters did not understand it at all; but she did perceive that there was something which she did not understand. What did the girl mean by saying that she had tried and could not do it? Try to do it! If she tried why could she not tell the man that she would have him? There was surely some shamefacedness in this, some overstrained modesty which she, Mrs. Masters, could not comprehend. How could she have tried to accept a man who was so anxious to marry her, and have failed in the effort? "Scolding I suppose will be no good now," she said.

"Oh no!"

"But——. Well; I suppose we must put up with it. Everything on earth that a girl could possibly wish for! He was that in love that it's my belief he'd have settled it all on you if you'd only asked him."

"Let it go, mamma."

"Let it go! It's gone I suppose. Well;—I ain't going to say any more about it. But as for not sorrowing, how is a woman not to sorrow when so

much has been lost? It's your poor father I'm thinking of, Mary." This was so much better than she had expected that poor Mary almost felt that her heart was lightened.

CHAPTER VI.

Again at Mistletoe.

THE reader will have been aware that Arabella Trefoil was not a favourite at Mistletoe. She was so much disliked by the Duchess that there had almost been words about her between her Grace and the Duke since her departure. The Duchess always submitted, and it was the rule of her life to submit with so good a grace that her husband, never fearing rebellion, should never be driven to assume the tyrant. But on this occasion the Duke had objected to the term "thoroughly bad girl" which had been applied by his wife to his niece. He had said that "thoroughly bad girl" was strong language, and when the Duchess defended the phrase he had expressed his opinion that Arabella was only a bad girl and not a thoroughly bad girl. The Duchess had said that it was the same thing. "Then," said the Duke, "why use a redundant expletive against your own relative?" The Duchess, when she was accused of strong language, had not minded it much; but her feelings were hurt when a redundant expletive was attributed to her. The effect of all this had been that the Duke in a mild way had taken up Arabella's part, and that the Duchess, following her husband at last, had been brought round to own

that Arabella, though bad, had been badly treated. She had disbelieved, and then believed, and had again disbelieved Arabella's own statement as to the offer of marriage. But the girl had certainly been in earnest when she had begged her aunt to ask her uncle to speak to Lord Rufford. Surely when she did she must have thought that an offer had been made to her. Such offer, if made, had no doubt been produced by very hard pressure;—but still an offer of marriage is an offer, and a girl, if she can obtain it, has a right to use such an offer as so much property. Then came Lord Mistletoe's report after his meeting with Arabella up in London. He had been unable to give his cousin any satisfaction, but he was clearly of opinion that she had been ill-used. He did not venture to suggest any steps, but did think that Lord Rufford was bound as a gentleman to marry the young lady. After that Lord Augustus saw her mother up in town and said that it was a d—— shame. He in truth had believed nothing and would have been delighted to allow the matter to drop. But as this was not permitted, he thought it easier to take his daughter's part than to encounter family enmity by entering the lists against her. So it came to pass that down at Mistletoe there grew an opinion that Lord Rufford ought to marry Arabella Trefoil.

But what should be done? The Duke was alive to the feeling that as the girl was certainly his niece and as she was not to be regarded as a thoroughly bad girl, some assistance was due to her from the family. Lord Mistletoe volunteered to write to Lord

Rufford; Lord Augustus thought that his brother should have a personal interview with his young brother peer and bring his strawberry leaves to bear. The Duke himself suggested that the Duchess should see Lady Penwether,—a scheme to which her Grace objected strongly, knowing something of Lady Penwether and being sure that her strawberry leaves would have no effect whatever on the baronet's wife. At last it was decided that a family meeting should be held, and Lord Augustus was absolutely summoned to meet Lord Mistletoe at the paternal mansion.

It was now some years since Lord Augustus had been at Mistletoe. As he had never been separated,—that is formally separated,—from his wife he and she had been always invited there together. Year after year she had accepted the invitation,—and it had been declined on his behalf, because it did not suit him and his wife to meet each other. But now he was obliged to go there,—just at the time of the year when whist at his club was most attractive. To meet the convenience of Lord Mistletoe,—and the House of Commons—a Saturday afternoon was named for the conference, which made it worse for Lord Augustus as he was one of a little party which had private gatherings for whist on Sunday afternoons. But he went to the conference, travelling down by the same train with his nephew; but not in the same compartment, as he solaced with tobacco the time which Lord Mistletoe devoted to parliamentary erudition.

The four met in her Grace's boudoir, and the

Duke began by declaring that all this was very sad. Lord Augustus shook his head and put his hands in his trousers pockets,—which was as much as to say that his feelings as a British parent were almost too strong for him. "Your mother and I think, that something ought to be done," said the Duke turning to his son.

"Something ought to be done," said Lord Mistletoe.

"They won't let a fellow go out with a fellow now," said Lord Augustus.

"Heaven forbid!" said the Duchess, raising both her hands.

"I was thinking, Mistletoe, that your mother might have met Lady Penwether."

"What could I do with Lady Penwether, Duke? Or what could she do with him? A man won't care for what his sister says to him. And I don't suppose she'd undertake to speak to Lord Rufford on the subject."

"Lady Penwether is an honourable and an accomplished woman."

"I dare say;—though she gives herself abominable airs."

"Of course, if you don't like it, my dear, it shan't be pressed."

"I thought, perhaps, you'd see him yourself," said Lord Augustus, turning to his brother. "You'd carry more weight than anybody."

"Of course I will if it be necessary; but it would be disagreeable,—very disagreeable. The appeal should be made to his feelings, and that I think

would better come through female influence. As far as I know the world a man is always more prone to be led in such matters by a woman than by another man."

"If you mean me," said the Duchess, "I don't think I could see him. Of course, Augustus, I don't wish to say anything hard of Arabella. The fact that we have all met here to take her part will prove that, I think. But I didn't quite approve of all that was done here."

Lord Augustus stroked his beard and looked out of the window. "I don't think, my dear, we need go into that just now," said the Duke.

"Not at all," said the Duchess, "and I don't intend to say a word. Only if I were to meet Lord Rufford he might refer to things which,—which,—which——. In point of fact I had rather not."

"I might see him," suggested Lord Mistletoe.

"No doubt that might be done with advantage," said the Duke.

"Only that, as he is my senior in age, what I might say to him would lack that weight which any observations which might be made on such a matter should carry with them."

"He didn't care a straw for me," said Lord Augustus.

"And then," continued Lord Mistletoe, "I so completely agree with what my father says as to the advantage of female influence! With a man of Lord Rufford's temperament female influence is everything. If my aunt were to try it?" Lord Augustus blew the breath out of his mouth and raised his eyebrows.

Knowing what he did of his wife, or thinking that he knew what he did, he did not conceive it possible that a worse messenger should be chosen. He had known himself to be a very bad one, but he did honestly believe her to be even less fitted for the task than he himself. But he said nothing,—simply wishing that he had not left his whist for such a purpose as this.

"Perhaps Lady Augustus had better see him," said the Duke. The Duchess, who did not love hypocrisy, would not actually assent to this, but she said nothing. "I suppose my sister-in-law would not object, Augustus?"

"G—— Almighty only knows," said the younger brother. The Duchess, grievously offended by the impropriety of this language, drew herself up haughtily.

"Perhaps you would not mind suggesting it to her, sir," said Lord Mistletoe.

"I could do that by letter," said the Duke.

"And when she has assented, as of course she will, then perhaps you wouldn't mind writing a line to him to make an appointment. If you were to do so he could not refuse." To this proposition the Duke returned no immediate answer; but looked at it round and round carefully. At last, however, he acceded to this also, and so the matter was arranged. All these influential members of the ducal family met together at the ducal mansion on Arabella's behalf, and settled their difficulty by deputing the work of bearding the lion, of tying the bell on the

cat, to an absent lady whom they all despised and disliked.

That afternoon the Duke, with the assistance of his son, who was a great writer of letters, prepared an epistle to his sister-in-law and another to Lord Rufford, which was to be sent as soon as Lady Augusta had agreed to the arrangement. In the former letter a good deal was said as to a mother's solicitude for her daughter. It had been felt, the letter said, that no one could speak for a daughter so well as a mother;—that no other's words would so surely reach the heart of a man who was not all evil but who was tempted by the surroundings of the world to do evil in this particular case. The letter began "My dear sister-in-law," and ended "Your affectionate brother-in-law, Mayfair," and was in fact the first letter that the Duke had ever written to his brother's wife. The other letter was more difficult, but it was accomplished at last, and confined itself to a request that Lord Rufford would meet Lady Augustus Trefoil at a place and at a time, both of which were for the present left blank.

On the Monday Lord Augustus and Lord Mistletoe were driven to the station in the same carriage, and on this occasion the uncle said a few strong words to his nephew on the subject. Lord Augustus, though perhaps a coward in the presence of his brother, was not so with other members of the family. "It may be very well you know, but it's all d—— nonsense."

"I'm sorry that you should think so, uncle."

"What do you suppose her mother can do?—a

thoroughly vulgar woman. I never could live with her. As far as I can see wherever she goes everybody hates her."

"My dear uncle!"

"Rufford will only laugh at her. If Mayfair would have gone himself, it is just possible that he might have done something."

"My father is so unwilling to mix himself up in these things."

"Of course he is. Everybody knows that. What the deuce was the good then of our going down there? I couldn't do anything, and I knew he wouldn't. The truth is, Mistletoe, a man now-a-days may do just what he pleases. You ain't in that line and it won't do you any good knowing it, but since we did away with pistols everybody may do just what he likes."

"I don't like brute force," said Lord Mistletoe.

"You may call it what you please;—but I don't know that it was so brutal after all." At the station they separated again, as Lord Augustus was panting for tobacco and Lord Mistletoe for parliamentary erudition.

CHAPTER VII.

The Success of Lady Augustus.

LADY AUGUSTUS was still staying with the Connop Greens in Hampshire when she received the Duke's letter and Arabella was with her. The story of Lord Rufford's infidelity had been told to Mrs. Connop Green,—and of course through her to Mr. Connop Green. Both the mother and daughter affected to despise the Connop Greens;—but it is so hard to restrain oneself from confidences when difficulties arise! Arabella had by this time quite persuaded herself that there had been an absolute engagement, and did in truth believe that she had been most cruelly ill-used. She was headstrong, fickle, and beyond measure insolent to her mother. She had, as we know, at one time gone down to the house of her former lover, thereby indicating that she had abandoned all hope of catching Lord Rufford. But still the Connop Greens either felt or pretended to feel great sympathy with her, and she would still declare from time to time that Lord Rufford had not heard the last of her. It was now more than a month since she had seen that perjured lord at Mistletoe, and more than a week since her father had brought him so uselessly up to London. Though determined that Lord Rufford should hear

more of her, she hardly knew how to go to work, and on these days spent most of her time in idle denunciations of her false lover. Then came her uncle's letter, which was of course shown to her.

She was quite of opinion that they must do as the Duke directed. It was so great a thing to have the Duke interesting himself in the matter, that she would have assented to anything proposed by him. The suggestion even inspired some temporary respect, or at any rate observance, towards her mother. Hitherto her mother had been nobody to her in the matter, a person belonging to her whom she had to regard simply as a burden. She could not at all understand how the Duke had been guided in making such a choice of a new emissary;—but there it was under his own hand, and she must now in some measure submit herself to her mother unless she were prepared to repudiate altogether the Duke's assistance. As to Lady Augustus herself, the suggestion gave to her quite a new life. She had no clear conception what she should say to Lord Rufford if the meeting were arranged, but it was gratifying to her to find herself brought back into authority over her daughter. She read the Duke's letter to Mrs. Connop Green, with certain very slight additions,—or innuendos as to additions,—and was pleased to find that the letter was taken by Mrs. Connop Green as positive proof of the existence of the engagement. She wrote begging the Duke to allow her to have the meeting at the family house in Piccadilly, and to this prayer the Duke was obliged to assent. "It would," she said, "give her

so much assistance in speaking to Lord Rufford!" She named a day also, and then spent her time in preparing herself for the interview by counsel with Mrs. Green and by exacting explanations from her daughter.

This was a very bad time for Arabella,—so bad, that had she known to what she would be driven, she would probably have repudiated the Duke and her mother altogether. "Now, my dear," she began, "you must tell me everything that occurred first at Rufford and then at Mistletoe."

"You know very well what occurred, mamma."

"I know nothing about it, and unless everything is told me I will not undertake this mission. Your uncle evidently thinks that by my interference the thing may be arranged. I have had the same idea all through myself, but as you have been so obstinate I have not liked to say so. Now, Arabella, begin from the beginning. When was it that he first suggested to you the idea of marriage?"

"Good heavens, mamma!"

"I must have it from the beginning to the end. Did he speak of marriage at Rufford? I suppose he did because you told me that you were engaged to him when you went to Mistletoe."

"So I was."

"What had he said?"

"What nonsense! How am I to remember what he said? As if a girl ever knows what a man says to her."

"Did he kiss you?"

"Yes."

"At Rufford?"

"I cannot stand this, mamma. If you like to go you may go. My uncle seems to think it is the best thing, and so I suppose it ought to be done. But I won't answer such questions as you are asking for Lord Rufford and all that he possesses."

"What am I to say then? How am I to call back to his recollection the fact that he committed himself, unless you will tell me how and when he did so?"

"Ask him if he did not assure me of his love when we were in the carriage together."

"What carriage?"

"Coming home from hunting."

"Was that at Mistletoe or Rufford?"

"At Mistletoe, mamma," replied Arabella, stamping her foot.

"But you must let me know how it was that you became engaged to him at Rufford."

"Mamma, you mean to drive me mad," exclaimed Arabella as she bounced out of the room.

There was very much more of this, till at last Arabella found herself compelled to invent facts. Lord Rufford, she said, had assured her of his everlasting affection in the little room at Rufford, and had absolutely asked her to be his wife coming home in the carriage with her to Stamford. She told herself that though this was not strictly true, it was as good as true,—as that which was actually done and said by Lord Rufford on those occasions could have had no other meaning. But before her mother had completed her investigation, Arabella had become

so sick of the matter that she shut herself up in her room and declared that nothing on earth should induce her to open her mouth on the subject again.

When Lord Rufford received the letter he was aghast with new disgust. He had begun to flatter himself that his interview with Lord Augustus would be the end of the affair. Looking at it by degrees with coolness he had allowed himself to think that nothing very terrible could be done to him. Some few people, particularly interested in the Mistletoe family, might give him a cold shoulder, or perhaps cut him directly; but such people would not belong to his own peculiar circle, and the annoyance would not be great. But if all the family, one after another, were to demand interviews with him up in London, he did not see when the end of it would be. There would be the Duke himself, and the Duchess, and Mistletoe. And the affair would in this way become gossip for the whole town. He was almost minded to write to the Duke saying that such an interview could do no good; but at last he thought it best to submit the matter to his mentor, Sir George Penwether. Sir George was clearly of opinion that it was Lord Rufford's duty to see Lady Augustus. "Yes, you must have interviews with all of them, if they ask it," said Sir George. "You must show that you are not afraid to hear what her friends have got to say. When a man gets wrong he can't put himself right without some little annoyance."

"Since the world began," said Lord Rufford, "I don't think that there was ever a man born so well

adapted for preaching sermons as you are." Nevertheless he did as he was bid, and consented to meet Lady Augustus in Piccadilly on the day named by her. On that very day the hounds met at Impington and Lord Rufford began to feel his punishment. He assented to the proposal made and went up to London, leaving the members of the U.R.U. to have the run of the season from the Impington coverts.

When Lady Augustus was sitting in the back room of the mansion waiting for Lord Rufford she was very much puzzled to think what she would say to him when he came. With all her investigation she had received no clear idea of the circumstances as they occurred. That her daughter had told her a fib in saying that she was engaged when she went to Mistletoe, she was all but certain. That something had occurred in the carriage which might be taken for an offer she thought possible. She therefore determined to harp upon the carriage as much as possible and to say as little as might be as to the doings at Rufford. Then as she was trying to arrange her countenance and her dress and her voice, so that they might tell on his feelings, Lord Rufford was announced. "Lady Augustus," said he at once, beginning the lesson which he had taught himself, "I hope I see you quite well. I have come here because you have asked me, but I really don't know that I have anything to say."

"Lord Rufford, you must hear me."

"Oh yes; I will hear you certainly, only this

kind of thing is so painful to all parties, and I don't see the use of it."

"Are you aware that you have plunged me and my daughter into a state of misery too deep to be fathomed?"

"I should be sorry to think that."

"How can it be otherwise? When you assure a girl in her position in life that you love her—a lady whose rank is quite as high as your own——"

"Quite so,—quite so."

"And when in return for that assurance you have received vows of love from her,—what is she to think, and what are her friends to think?" Lord Rufford had always kept in his mind a clear remembrance of the transaction in the carriage, and was well aware that the young lady's mother had inverted the circumstances, or, as he expressed it to himself, had put the cart before the horse. He had assured the young lady that he loved her, and he had also been assured of her love; but her assurance had come first. He felt that this made all the difference in the world; so much difference that no one cognisant in such matters would hold that his assurance, obtained after such a fashion, meant anything at all. But how was he to explain this to the lady's mother? "You will admit that such assurances were given?" continued Lady Augustus.

"Upon my word I don't know. There was a little foolish talk, but it meant nothing."

"My lord!"

"What am I to say? I don't want to give offence, and I am heartily sorry that you and your

daughter should be under any misapprehension. But as I sit here there was no engagement between us;—nor, if I must speak out, Lady Augustus, could your daughter have thought that there was an engagement."

"Did you not——embrace her?"

"I did. That's the truth."

"And after that you mean to say——"

"After that I mean to say that nothing more was intended." There was a certain meanness of appearance about the mother which emboldened him.

"What a declaration to make to the mother of a young lady, and that young lady the niece of the Duke of Mayfair!"

"It's not the first time such a thing has been done, Lady Augustus."

"I know nothing about that,—nothing. I don't know whom you may have lived with. It never was done to her before."

"If I understand right she was engaged to marry Mr. Morton when she came to Rufford."

"It was all at an end before that."

"At any rate you both came from his house."

"Where he had been staying with Mrs. Morton."

"And where she has been since,—without Mrs. Morton."

"Lady Ushant was there, Lord Rufford."

"But she has been staying at the house of this gentleman to whom you admit that she was engaged a short time before she came to us."

"He is on his death-bed, and he thought that he had behaved badly to her. She did go to Bragton

the other day, at his request,—merely that she might say that she forgave him."

"I only hope that she will forgive me too. There is really nothing else to be said. If there were anything I could do to atone to her for this—— trouble."

"If you only could know the brightness of the hopes you have shattered,—and the purity of that girl's affection for yourself!"

It was then that an idea—a low-minded idea occurred to Lord Rufford. While all this was going on he had of course made various inquiries about this branch of the Trefoil family and had learned that Arabella was altogether portionless. He was told too that Lady Augustus was much harassed by impecuniosity. Might it be possible to offer a recompense? "If I could do anything else, Lady Augustus;—but really I am not a marrying man." Then Lady Augustus wept bitterly; but while she was weeping, a low-minded idea occurred to her also. It was clear to her that there could be no marriage. She had never expected that there would be a marriage. But if this man who was rolling in wealth should offer some sum of money to her daughter,—something so considerable as to divest the transaction of the meanness which would be attached to a small bribe,—something which might be really useful throughout life, would it not be her duty, on behalf of her dear child, to accept such an offer? But the beginnings of such dealings are always difficult. "Couldn't my lawyer see yours, Lady Augustus?" said Lord Rufford.

"I don't want the family lawyer to know anything about it," said Lady Augustus. Then there was silence between them for a few moments. "You don't know what we have to bear, Lord Rufford. My husband has spent all my fortune,—which was considerable; and the Duke does nothing for us." Then he took a bit of paper and, writing on it the figures "£6,000," pushed it across the table. She gazed at the scrap for a minute, and then, borrowing his pencil without a word, scratched out his Lordship's figures and wrote "£8,000," beneath them; and then added, "No one to know it." After that he held the scrap for two or three minutes in his hands, and then wrote beneath the figures, "Very well. To be settled on your daughter. No one shall know it." She bowed her head, but kept the scrap of paper in her possession. "Shall I ring for your carriage?" he asked. The bell was rung, and Lady Augustus was taken back to the lodgings in Orchard Street in the hired brougham. As she went she told herself that if everything else failed, £400 a year would support her daughter, or that in the event of any further matrimonial attempt such a fortune would be a great assistance. She had been sure that there could be no marriage, and was disposed to think that she had done a good morning's work on behalf of her unnatural child.

CHAPTER VIII.

"We shall kill each other."

LADY AUGUSTUS as she was driven back to Orchard Street and as she remained alone during the rest of that day and the next in London, became a little afraid of what she had done. She began to think how she should communicate her tidings to her daughter, and thinking of it grew to be nervous and ill at ease. How would it be with her should Arabella still cling to the hope of marrying the lord? That any such hope would be altogether illusory Lady Augustus was now sure. She had been quite certain that there was no ground for such hope when she had spoken to the man of her own poverty. She was almost certain that there had never been an offer of marriage made. In the first place Lord Rufford's word went further with her than Arabella's, —and then his story had been consistent and probable, whereas hers had been inconsistent and improbable. At any rate ropes and horses would not bring Lord Rufford to the hymeneal altar. That being so was it not natural that she should then have considered what result would be next best to a marriage? She was very poor, having saved only some few hundreds a year from the wreck of her

own fortune. Independently of her her daughter had nothing. And in spite of this poverty Arabella was very extravagant, running up bills for finery without remorse wherever credit could be found, and excusing herself by saying that on this or that occasion such expenditure was justified by the matrimonial prospects which it opened out to her. And now, of late, Arabella had been talking of living separately from her mother. Lady Augustus, who was thoroughly tired of her daughter's company, was not at all averse to such a scheme;—but any such scheme was impracticable without money. By a happy accident the money would now be forthcoming. There would be £400 a year for ever and nobody would know whence it came. She was confident that they might trust to the lord's honour for secrecy. As far as her own opinion went the result of the transaction would be most happy. But still she feared Arabella. She felt that she would not know how to tell her story when she got back to Marygold Place. "My dear, he won't marry you; but he is to give you £8,000." That was what she would have to say, but she doubted her own courage to put her story into words so curt and explanatory. Even at thirty £400 a year has not the charms which accompany it to eyes which have seen sixty years. She remained in town that night and the next day, and went down by train to Basingstoke on the following morning with her heart not altogether free from trepidation.

Lord Rufford, the very moment that the interview was over, started off to his lawyer. Consider-

ing how very little had been given to him the sum he was to pay was prodigious. In his desire to get rid of the bore of these appeals, he had allowed himself to be foolishly generous. He certainly never would kiss a young lady in a carriage again,—nor even lend a horse to a young lady till he was better acquainted with her ambition and character. But the word had gone from him and he must be as good as his word. The girl must have her £8,000 and must have it instantly. He would put the matter into such a position that if any more interviews were suggested, he might with perfect safety refer the suggester back to Miss Trefoil. There was to be secrecy, and he would be secret as the grave. But in such matters one's lawyer is the grave. He had proposed that two lawyers should arrange it. Objection had been made to this, because Lady Augustus had no lawyer ready;—but on his side some one must be employed. So he went to his own solicitor and begged that the thing might be done quite at once. He was very definite in his instructions, and would listen to no doubts. Would the lawyer write to Miss Trefoil on that very day;—or rather not on that very day but the next. As he suggested this he thought it well that Lady Augustus should have an opportunity of explaining the transaction to her daughter before the lawyer's letter should be received. He had, he said, his own reason for such haste. Consequently the lawyer did prepare the letter to Miss Trefoil at once, drafting it in his noble client's presence. In what way should the money be disposed so as best to suit her

convenience? The letter was very short with an intimation that Lady Augustus would no doubt have explained the details of the arrangement.

When Lady Augustus reached Marygold the family were at lunch, and as strangers were present nothing was said as to the great mission. The mother had already bethought herself how she must tell this and that lie to the Connop Greens, explaining that Lord Rufford had confessed his iniquity but had disclosed that, for certain mysterious reasons, he could not marry Arabella,—though he loved her better than all the world. Arabella asked some questions about her mother's shopping and general business in town, and did not leave the room till she could do so without the slightest appearance of anxiety. Mrs. Connop Green marvelled at her coolness knowing how much must depend on the answer which her mother had brought back from London, and knowing nothing of the contents of the letter which Arabella had received that morning from the lawyer. In a moment or two Lady Augustus followed her daughter upstairs, and on going into her own room found the damsel standing in the middle of it with an open paper in her hand. "Mamma," she said, "shut the door." Then the door was closed. "What is the meaning of this?" and she held out the lawyer's letter.

"The meaning of what?" said Lady Augustus, trembling.

"I have no doubt you know, but you had better read it."

Lady Augustus read the letter and attempted to smile. "He has been very quick," she said. "I thought I should have been the first to tell you."

"What is the meaning of it? Why is the man to give me all that money?"

"Is it not a good escape from so great a trouble? Think what £8,000 will do. It will enable you to live in comfort wherever you may please to go."

"I am to understand then you have sold me,—sold all my hopes and my very name and character, for £8,000!"

"Your name and character will not be touched, my dear. As for his marrying you I soon found that that was absolutely out of the question."

"This is what has come of sending you to see him! Of course I shall tell my uncle everything."

"You will do no such thing. Arabella, do not make a fool of yourself. Do you know what £8,000 will do for you? It is to be your own,—absolutely beyond my reach or your father's."

"I would sooner go into the Thames off Waterloo Bridge than touch a farthing of his money," said Arabella with a spirit which the other woman did not at all understand. Hitherto in all these little dirty ways they had run with equal steps. The pretences, the subterfuges, the lies of the one had always been open to the other. Arabella, earnest in supplying herself with gloves from the pockets of her male acquaintances, had endured her mother's tricks with complacency. She had condescended when living in humble lodgings to date her letters

from a well-known hotel, and had not feared to declare that she had done so in their family conversations. Together they had fished in turbid waters for marital nibbles and had told mutual falsehoods to unbelieving tradesmen. And yet the younger woman, when tempted with a bribe worth lies and tricks as deep and as black as Acheron, now stood on her dignity and her purity and stamped her foot with honest indignation!

"I don't think you can understand it," said Lady Augustus.

"I can understand this,—that you have betrayed me; and that I shall tell him so in the plainest words that I can use. To get his lawyer to write and offer me money!"

"He should not have gone to his lawyer. I do think he was wrong there."

"But you settled it with him;—you, my mother;—a price at which he should buy himself off! Would he have offered me money if he did not know that he had bound himself to me?"

"Nothing on earth would make him marry you. I would not for a moment have allowed him to allude to money if that had not been quite certain."

"Who proposed the money first?"

Lady Augustus considered a moment before she answered. "Upon my word, my dear, I can't say. He wrote the figures on a bit of paper; that was the way." Then she produced the scrap. "He wrote the figures first,—and then I altered them, just as

you see. The proposition came first from him, of course."

"And you did not spit at him!" said Arabella as she tore the scrap into fragments.

"Arabella," said the mother, "it is clear that you do not look into the future. How do you mean to live? You are getting old."

"Old!"

"Yes, my love,—old. Of course I am willing to do everything for you, as I always have done,—for so many years, but there isn't a man in London who does not know how long you have been about it."

"Hold your tongue, mamma," said Arabella jumping up.

"That is all very well, but the truth has to be spoken. You and I cannot go on as we have been doing."

"Certainly not. I would sooner be in a workhouse."

"And here there is provided for you an income on which you can live. Not a soul will know anything about it. Even your own father need not be told. As for the lawyer, that is nothing. They never talk of things. It would make a man comparatively poor quite a fit match. Or, if you do not marry, it would enable you to live where you pleased independently of me. You had better think twice of it before you refuse it."

"I will not think of it at all. As sure as I am

living here I will write to Rufford this very evening and tell him in what light I regard both him and you."

"And what will you do then?"

"Hang myself."

"That is all very well, Arabella, but hanging yourself and jumping off Waterloo Bridge do not mean anything. You must live, and you must pay your debts. I can't pay them for you. You go into your own room, and think of it all, and be thankful for what Providence has sent you."

"You may as well understand that I am in earnest," the daughter said as she left the room. "I shall write to Lord Rufford to-day and tell him what I think of him and his money. You need not trouble yourself as to what shall be done with it, for I certainly shall not take it."

And she did write to Lord Rufford as follows:

"My Lord,

"I have been much astonished by a letter I have received from a gentleman in London, Mr. Shaw, who I presume is your lawyer. When I received it I had not as yet seen mamma. I now understand that you and she between you have determined that I should be compensated by a sum of money for the injury you have done me! I scorn your money. I cannot think where you found the audacity to make such a proposal, or how you have taught yourself to imagine that I should listen to it. As to mamma, she was not commissioned to act for me, and I have

nothing to do with anything she may have said. I can hardly believe that she should have agreed to such a proposal. It was very little like a gentleman in you to offer it.

"Why did you offer it? You would not have proposed to give me a large sum of money like that without some reason. I have been shocked to hear that you have denied that you ever engaged yourself to me. You know that you were engaged to me. It would have been more honest and more manly if you had declared at once that you repented of your engagement. But the truth is that till I see you myself and hear what you have to say out of your own mouth I cannot believe what other people tell me. I must ask you to name some place where we can meet. As for this offer of money, it goes for nothing. You must have known that I would not take it.

"ARABELLA."

It was now just the end of February, and the visit of the Trefoil ladies to the Connop Greens had to come to an end. They had already overstaid the time at first arranged, and Lady Augustus, when she hinted that another week at Marygold,—"just till this painful affair was finally settled,"—would be beneficial to her, was informed that the Connop Greens themselves were about to leave home. Lady Augustus had reported to Mrs. Connop Green that Lord Rufford was behaving very badly, but that the matter was still in a "transition state." Mrs. Connop

Green was very sorry, but——. So Lady Augustus and Arabella betook themselves to Orchard Street, being at that moment unable to enter in upon better quarters.

What a home it was,—and what a journey up to town! Arabella had told her mother that the letter to Lord Rufford had been written and posted, and since that hardly a word had passed between them. When they left Marygold in the Connop Green carriage they smiled, and shook hands, and kissed their friends in unison, and then sank back into silence. At the station they walked up and down the platform together for the sake of appearance, but did not speak. In the train there were others with them and they both feigned to be asleep. Then they were driven to their lodgings in a cab, still speechless. It was the mother who first saw that the horror of this if continued would be too great to be endured. "Arabella," she said in a hoarse voice, "why don't you speak?"

"Because I've got nothing to say."

"That's nonsense. There is always something to say."

"You have ruined me, mamma; just ruined me."

"I did for you the very best I could. If you would have been advised by me, instead of being ruined, you would have had a handsome fortune. I have slaved for you for the last twelve years. No mother ever sacrificed herself for her child more than I have done for you, and now see the return I get. I sometimes think that it will kill me."

"That's nonsense."

"Everything I say is nonsense,—while you tell me one day that you are going to hang yourself, and another day that you will drown yourself."

"So I would if I dared. What is it that you have brought me to? Who will have me in their houses when they hear that you consented to take Lord Rufford's money?"

"Nobody will hear it unless you tell them."

"I shall tell my uncle and my aunt and Mistletoe, in order that they may know how it is that Lord Rufford has been allowed to escape. I say that you have ruined me. If it had not been for your vulgar bargain with him, he must have been brought to keep his word at last. Oh, that he should have ever thought it was possible that I was to be bought off for a sum of money!"

Later on in the evening the mother again implored her daughter to speak to her. "What's the use, mamma, when you know what we think of each other. What's the good of pretending? There is nobody here to hear us." Later on still she herself began. "I don't know how much you've got, mamma; but whatever it is, we'd better divide it. After what you did in Piccadilly we shall never get on together again."

"There is not enough to divide," said Lady Augustus.

"If I had not you to go about with me I could get taken in pretty nearly all the year round."

"Who'd take you?"

"Leave that to me. I would manage it, and you could join with some other old person." "We shall

kill each other if we stay like this," said Arabella as she took up her candle.

"You have pretty nearly killed me as it is," said the old woman as the other shut the door.

CHAPTER IX.

Changes at Bragton.

DAY after day old Mrs. Morton urged her purpose with her grandson at Bragton, not quite directly as she had done at first, but by gradual approaches and little soft attempts made in the midst of all the tenderness which, as a nurse, she was able to display. It soon came to pass that the intruders were banished from the house, or almost banished. Mary's daily visits were discontinued immediately after that last walk home with Reginald Morton which has been described. Twice in the course of the next week she went over, but on both occasions she did so early in the day, and returned alone just as he was reaching the house. And then, before a week was over, early in March, Lady Ushant told the invalid that she would be better away. "Mrs. Morton doesn't like me," she said, "and I had better go. But I shall stay for a while at Hoppet Hall, and come in and see you from time to time till you get better." John Morton replied that he should never get better; but though he said so then, there was at times evidence that he did not yet quite despond as to himself. He could still talk to Mrs. Morton of buying Chowton Farm, and was very anxious that he should not be forgotten at the Foreign Office.

Lady Ushant had herself driven to Hoppet Hall,

and there took up her residence with her nephew. Every other day Mr. Runciman's fly came for her and carried her backwards and forwards to Bragton. On those occasions she would remain an hour with the invalid, and then would go back again, never even seeing Mrs. Morton, though always seen by her. And twice after this banishment Reginald walked over. But on the second occasion there was a scene. Mrs. Morton to whom he had never spoken since he was a boy, met him in the hall and told him that his visits only disturbed his sick cousin. "I certainly will not disturb him," Reginald had said. "In the condition in which he is now he should not see many people," rejoined the lady. "If you will ask Dr. Fanning he will tell you the same." Dr. Fanning was the London doctor who came down once a week, whom it was improbable that Reginald should have an opportunity of consulting. But he remembered or thought that he remembered, that his cousin had been fretful and ill-pleased during his last visit, and so turned himself round and went home without another word.

"I am afraid there may be—I don't know what," said Lady Ushant to him in a whisper the next morning.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know what I mean. Perhaps I ought not to say a word. Only so much does depend on it!"

"If you are thinking about the property, aunt, wipe it out of your mind. Let him do what he pleases and don't think about it. No one should

trouble their minds about such things. It is his, to do what he pleases with it."

"It is not him that I fear, Reginald."

"If he chooses to be guided by her, who shall say that he is wrong? Get it out of your mind. The very thinking about such things is dirtiness!" The poor old lady submitted to the rebuke and did not dare to say another word.

Daily Lady Ushant would send over for Mary Masters, thinking it cruel that her young friend should leave her alone and yet understanding in part the reason why Mary did not come to her constantly at Hoppet Hall. Poor Mary was troubled much by these messages. Of course she went now and again. She had no alternative but to go, and yet, feeling that the house was his house, she was most unwilling to enter it. Then grew within her a feeling, which she could not analyse, that he had ill-used her. Of course she was not entitled to his love. She would acknowledge to herself over and over again that he had never spoken a word to her which could justify her in expecting his love. But why had he not let her alone? Why had he striven by his words and his society to make her other than she would have been had she been left to the atmosphere of her stepmother's home? Why had he spoken so strongly to her as to that young man's love? And then she was almost angry with him because, by a turn in the wheel of fortune, he was about to become, as she thought, Squire of Bragton. Had he remained simply Mr. Morton of Hoppet Hall it would still have been impossible. But this exalta-

tion of her idol altogether out of her reach was an added injustice. She could remember, not the person, but all the recent memories of the old Squire, the veneration with which he was named, the masterdom which was attributed to him, the unequalled nobility of his position in regard to Dillsborough. His successor would be to her as some one crowned, and removed by his crown altogether from her world. Then she pictured to herself the stately dame who would certainly come, and she made fresh resolutions with a sore heart.

"I don't know why you should be so very little with me," said Lady Ushant, almost whining. "When I was at Cheltenham you wanted to come to me."

"There are so many things to be done at home."

"And yet you would have come to Cheltenham."

"We were in great trouble then, Lady Ushant. Of course I would like to be with you. You ought not to scold me, because you know how I love you."

"Has the young man gone away altogether now, Mary?"

"Altogether."

"And Mrs. Masters is satisfied?"

"She knows it can never be, and therefore she is quiet about it."

"I was sorry for that young man, because he was so true."

"You couldn't be more sorry than I was, Lady Ushant. I love him as though he were a brother. But——"

"Mary, dear Mary, I fear you are in trouble."

"I think it is all trouble," said Mary, rushing

forward and hiding her face in her old friend's lap as she knelt on the ground before her. Lady Ushant longed to ask a question, but she did not dare. And Mary Masters longed to have one friend to whom she could confide her secret,—but neither did she dare.

On the next day, very early in the morning, there came a note from Mrs. Morton to Mr. Masters, the attorney. Could Mr. Masters come out on that day to Bragton and see Mrs. Morton. The note was very particular in saying that Mrs. Morton was to be the person seen. The messenger who waited for an answer, brought back word that Mr. Masters would be there at noon. The circumstance was one which agitated him considerably, as he had not been inside the house at Bragton since the days immediately following the death of the old Squire. As it happened, Lady Ushant was going to Bragton on the same day, and at the suggestion of Mr. Runciman, whose horses in the hunting season barely sufficed for his trade, the old lady and the lawyer went together. Not a word was said between them as to the cause which took either of them on their journey, but they spoke much of the days in which they had known each other, when the old Squire was alive, and Mr. Masters thanked Lady Ushant for her kindness to his daughter. "I love her almost as though she were my own," said Lady Ushant. "When I am dead she will have half of what I have got."

"She will have no right to expect that," said the gratified father.

"She will have half or the whole,—just as Regi-

nald may be situated then. I don't know why I shouldn't tell her father what it is I mean to do." The attorney knew to a shilling the amount of Lady Ushant's income and thought that this was the best news he had heard for many a day.

While Lady Ushant was in the sick man's room, Mrs. Morton was closeted with the attorney. She had thought much of this step before she had dared to take it and even now doubted whether it would avail her anything. As she entered the book-room in which Mr. Masters was seated she almost repented. But the man was there and she was compelled to go on with her scheme. "Mr. Masters," she said, "it is I think a long time since you have been employed by this family."

"A very long time, Madam."

"And I have now sent for you under circumstances of great difficulty," she answered; but as he said nothing she was forced to go on. "My grandson made his will the other day up in London, when he thought that he was going out to Patagonia." Mr. Masters bowed. "It was done when he was in sound health, and he is now not satisfied with it." Then there was another bow, but not a word was spoken. "Of course you know that he is very ill."

"We have all been very much grieved to hear it."

"I am sure you would be, for the sake of old days. When Dr. Fanning was last here he thought that my grandson was something better. He held out stronger hopes than before. But still he is very ill. His mind has never wavered for a moment,

Mr. Masters." Again Mr. Masters bowed. "And now he thinks that some changes should be made;—indeed that there should be a new will."

"Does he wish me to see him, Mrs. Morton?"

"Not to-day, I think. He is not quite prepared to-day. But I wanted to ask whether you could come at a moment's notice,—quite at a moment's notice. I thought it better, so that you should know why we sent for you if we did send,—so that you might be prepared. It could be done here, I suppose?"

"It would be possible, Mrs. Morton."

"And you could do it?"

Then there was a long pause. "Altering a will is a very serious thing, Mrs. Morton. And when it is done on what perhaps may be a death-bed, it is a very serious thing indeed. Mr. Morton, I believe, employs a London solicitor. I know the firm and more respectable gentlemen do not exist. A telegram would bring down one of the firm from London by the next train."

A frown, a very heavy frown, came across the old woman's brow. She would have repressed it had it been possible;—but she could not command herself, and the frown was there. "If that had been practicable, Mr. Masters," she said, "we should not have sent for you."

"I was only suggesting, madame, what might be the best course."

"Exactly. And of course I am much obliged. But if we are driven to call upon you for your assistance, we shall find it?"

"Madame," said the attorney very slowly, "it is of course part of my business to make wills, and when called upon to do so, I perform my business to the best of my ability. But in altering a will during illness great care is necessary. A codicil might be added——"

"A new will would be necessary."

A new will, thought the attorney, could only be necessary for altering the disposition of the whole estate. He knew enough of the family circumstances to be aware that the property should go to Reginald Morton whether with or without a will,—and also enough to be aware that this old lady was Reginald's bitter enemy. He did not think that he could bring himself to take instructions from a dying man,—from the Squire of Bragton on his death-bed,—for an instrument which should alienate the property from the proper heir. He too had his strong feelings, perhaps his prejudices, about Bragton. "I would wish that the task were in other hands, Mrs. Morton."

"Why so?"

"It is hard to measure the capacity of an invalid."

"His mind is as clear as yours."

"It might be so,—and yet I might not be able to satisfy myself that it was so. I should have to ask long and tedious questions, which would be offensive. And I should find myself giving advice,—which would not be called for. For instance, were your grandson to wish to leave this estate away from the heir——"

"I am not discussing his wishes, Mr. Masters."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Morton, for making the suggestion;—but as I said before, I should prefer that he should employ—some one else."

"You refuse then?"

"If Mr. Morton were to send for me, I should go to him instantly. But I fear I might be slow in taking his instructions;—and it is possible that I might refuse to act on them." Then she got up from her chair and bowing to him with stately displeasure left the room.

All this she had done without any authority from her grandson, simply encouraged in her object by his saying in his weakness that he would think of her proposition. So intent was she on her business that she was resolved to have everything ready if only he could once be brought to say that Peter Morton should be his heir. Having abandoned all hopes for her noble cousin she could tell her conscience that she was instigated simply by an idea of justice. Peter Morton was at any rate the legitimate son of a well-born father and a well-born mother. What had she or any one belonging to her to gain by it? But forty years since a brat had been born at Bragton in opposition to her wishes,—by whose means she had been expelled from the place; and now it seemed to her to be simple justice that he should on this account be robbed of that which would otherwise be naturally his own. As Mr. Masters would not serve her turn she must write to the London lawyers. The thing would be more difficult; but, nevertheless, if the sick man

could once be got to say that Peter should be his heir she thought that she could keep him to his word. Lady Ushant and Mr. Masters went back to Dillsborough in Runciman's fly, and it need hardly be said that the attorney said nothing of the business which had taken him to Bragton.

This happened on a Wednesday,—Wednesday the 3rd of March. On Friday morning, at 4 o'clock, during the darkness of the night, John Morton was lying dead on his bed, and the old woman was at his bedside. She had done her duty by him as far as she knew how in tending him,—had been assiduous with the diligence of much younger years; but now as she sat there, having had the fact absolutely announced to her by Dr. Nupper, her greatest agony arose from the feeling that the roof which covered her, probably the chair in which she sat, were the property of Reginald Morton—"Bastard!" she said to herself between her teeth; but she so said it that neither Dr. Nupper, who was in the room, nor the woman who was with her should hear it.

Dr. Nupper took the news into Dillsborough, and as the folk sat down to breakfast they all heard that the Squire of Bragton was dead. The man had been too little known, had been too short a time in the neighbourhood, to give occasion for tears. There was certainly more of interest than of grief in the matter. Mr. Masters said to himself that the time had been too short for any change in the will, and therefore felt tolerably certain that Reginald would be the heir. But for some days this opinion was

not general in Dillsborough. Mr. Mainwaring had heard that Reginald had been sent away from Bragton with a flea in his ear, and was pretty certain that when the will was read it would be found that the property was to go to Mrs. Morton's friends. Dr. Nupper was of the same opinion. There were many in Dillsborough with whom Reginald was not popular;—and who thought that some man of a different kind would do better as Squire of Bragton. "He don't know a fox when he sees 'un," said Tony Tuppett to Larry Twentyman, whom he had come across the county to call upon and to console.

CHAPTER X.

The Will.

On that Saturday the club met at Dillsborough,—even though the Squire of Bragton had died on Friday morning. Through the whole of that Saturday the town had been much exercised in its belief and expressions, as to the disposition of the property. The town knew very well that Mr. Masters, the attorney, had been sent for to Bragton on the previous Wednesday,—whence the deduction as to a new will, made of course under the auspices of Mrs. Morton,—would have been quite plain to the town, had not a portion of the town heard that the attorney had not been for a moment with the dying man during his visit. This latter piece of information had come through Lady Ushant, who had been in her nephew's bedroom the whole time;—but Lady Ushant had not much personal communication with the town generally, and would probably have said nothing on this subject had not Mr. Runciman walked up to Hoppet Hall behind the fly, after Mr. Masters had left it; and, while helping her ladyship out, made inquiry as to the condition of things at Bragton generally. "I was sorry to hear of their

sending for any lawyer," said Mr. Runciman. Then Lady Ushant protested that the lawyer had not been sent for by her nephew, and that her nephew had not even seen him. "Oh, indeed," said Mr. Runciman, who immediately took a walk round his own paddock with the object of putting two and two together. Mr. Runciman was a discreet man, and did not allow this piece of information to spread itself generally. He told Dr. Nupper, and Mr. Hampton, and Lord Rufford,—for the hounds went out on Friday, though the Squire of Bragton was lying dead;—but he did not tell Mr. Mainwaring, whom he encountered in the street of the town as he was coming home early, and who was very keen to learn whatever news there was.

Reginald Morton on Friday did not go near Bragton. That of course was palpable to all, and was a great sign that he himself did not regard himself as the heir. He had for awhile been very intimate at the house, visiting it daily—and during a part of that time the grandmother had been altogether absent. Then she had come back, and he had discontinued his visits. And now he did not even go over to seal up the drawers and to make arrangements as to the funeral. He did not at any rate go on the Friday,—nor on the Saturday. And on the Saturday Mr. Wobytrade, the undertaker, had received orders from Mrs. Morton to go at once to Bragton. All this was felt to be strong against Reginald. But when it was discovered that on the Saturday afternoon Mrs. Morton herself had gone up to London, not waiting even for the coming of any

one else to take possession of the house,—and that she had again carried all her own personal luggage with her,—then opinion in Dillsborough again veered. Upon the whole the betting was a point or two in favour of Reginald, when the club met.

Mrs. Masters, who had been much quelled of late, had been urgent with her husband to go over to the Bush; but he was unwilling, he said, to be making jolly while the Squire of Bragton was lying unburied. "He was nothing to you, Gregory," said his wife, who had in vain endeavoured to learn from him why he had been summoned to Bragton—"You will hear something over there, and it will relieve your spirits." So instigated he did go across, and found all the accustomed members of the club congregated in the room. Even Larry Twentyman was present, who of late had kept himself aloof from all such meetings. Both the Botseys were there, and Nupper and Harry Stubbings, and Ribbs the butcher. Runciman himself of course was in the room, and he had introduced on this occasion Captain Glomax, the master of the hunt, who was staying at his house that night,—perhaps with a view to hunting duties on the Monday, perhaps in order that he might hear something as to the Bragton property. It had already been suggested to him that he might possibly hire the house for a year or two at little more than a nominal rent, that the old kennels might be resuscitated, and that such arrangements would be in all respects convenient. He was the master of the hunt, and of course there was no difficulty as to introducing him to the club.

Captain Glomax was speaking in a somewhat dictatorial voice,—as becomes a Master of Hounds when in the field, though perhaps it should be dropped afterwards—when the Attorney entered. There was a sudden rise of voices striving to interrupt the Captain, as it was felt by them all that Mr. Masters must be in possession of information; but the Captain himself went on. "Of course it is the place for the hounds. Nobody can doubt that who knows the country and understands the working of it. The hunt ought to have subscribed and hired the kennels and stables permanently."

"There would have wanted two to that bargain, Captain," said Mr. Runciman.

"Of course there would, but what would you think of a man who would refuse such a proposition when he didn't want the place himself? Do you think if I'd been there foxes would have been poisoned in Dillsborough wood? I'd have had that fellow Goarly under my thumb."

"Then you'd have had an awful blackguard under your thumb, Captain Glomax," said Larry, who could not restrain his wrath when Goarly's name was mentioned.

"What does that matter, if you get foxes?" continued the Master. "But the fact is, gentlemen in a county like this always want to have everything done for them, and never to do anything for themselves. I'm sick of it, I know. Nobody is fonder of hunting a country than I am, and I think I know what I'm about."

"That you do," said Fred Botsey, who, like most men, was always ready to flatter the Master.

"And I don't care how hard I work. From the first of August till the end of May I never have a day to myself, what with cubbing and then the season, and entering the young hounds, and buying and selling horses, by George I'm at it the whole year."

"A Master of Hounds looks for that, Captain," said the innkeeper.

"Looks for it! Yes; he must look for it. But I wouldn't mind that, if I could get gentlemen to pull a little with me. I can't stand being out of pocket as I have been, and so I must let them know. If the country would get the kennels and the stables, and lay out a few pounds so that horses and hounds and men could go into them, I wouldn't mind having a shot for the house. It's killing work where I am now, the other side of Rufford, you may say." Then he stopped;—but no one would undertake to answer him. The meaning of it was that Captain Glomax wanted £500 a year more than he received, and every one there knew that there was not £500 a year more to be got out of the country,—unless Lord Rufford would put his hand into his pocket. Now the present stables and the present kennels had been "made comfortable" by Lord Rufford, and it was not thought probable that he would pay for the move to Bragton.

"When's the funeral to be, Mr. Masters?" asked Runciman,—who knew very well the day fixed, but

who thought it well to get back to the subject of real interest in the town.

"Next Thursday, I'm told."

"There's no hurry with weather like this," said Nupper professionally.

"They can't open the will till the late squire is buried," continued the innkeeper, "and there will be one or two very anxious to know what is in it."

"I suppose it will all go to the man who lives up here at Hoppet Hall," said the Captain,—"a man that was never outside a horse in his life!"

"He's not a bad fellow," said Runciman.

"He is a very good fellow," said the Attorney, "and I trust he may have the property. If it be left away from him, I for one shall think that a great injustice has been done." This was listened to with attention, as every one there thought that Mr. Masters must know.

"I can't understand," said Glomax, "how any man can be considered a good fellow as a country gentleman who does not care for sport. Just look at it all round. Suppose others were like him what would become of us all?"

"Yes indeed, what would become of us?" asked the two Botseys in a breath.

"Ho'd 'ire our 'orses, Runciman?" suggested Harry Stubbings with a laugh.

"Think what England would be!" said the Captain. "When I hear of a country gentleman sticking to books and all that, I feel that the glory is departing from the land. Where are the sinews

of war to come from? That's what I want to know."

"Who will it be, Mr. Masters, if the gent don't get it?" asked Ribbs from his corner on the sofa.

This was felt to be a pushing question. "How am I to know, Mr. Ribbs?" said the Attorney. "I didn't make the late squire's will;—and if I did you don't suppose I should tell you."

"I'm told that the next is Peter Morton," said Fred Botsey. "He's something in a public office up in London."

"It won't go to him," said Fred's brother. "That old lady has relations of her own who have had their mouths open for the last forty years."

"Away from the Mortons altogether!" said Harry. "That would be an awful shame!"

"I don't see what good the Mortons have done this last half century," said the Captain.

"You don't remember the old squire, Captain," said the innkeeper, "and I don't remember him well. Indeed I was only a little chap when they buried him. But there's that feeling left behind him to this day, that not a poor man in the country wouldn't be sorry to think that there wasn't a Morton left among 'em. Of course a hunting gentleman is a good thing."

"About the best thing out," said the Captain.

"But a hunting gentleman isn't everything. I know nothing of the old lady's people,—only this that none of their money ever came into Dillsborough. I'm all for Reginald Morton. He's my landlord as it is, and he's a gentleman."

"I hate foreigners coming," said Ribbs.

"'E ain't too old to take it yet," said Harry. Fred Botsey declared that he didn't believe in men hunting unless they began young. Whereupon Dr. Nupper declared that he had never ridden over a fence till he was forty-five, and that he was ready now to ride Fred across country for a new hat. Larry suggested that a man might be a good friend to sport though he didn't ride much himself;—and Runciman again asserted that hunting wasn't everything. Upon the whole Reginald was the favourite. But the occasion was so special that a little supper was ordered, and I fear the attorney did not get home till after twelve.

Till the news reached Hoppet Hall that Mrs. Morton had taken herself off to London, there was great doubt there as to what ought to be done, and even then the difficulty was not altogether over. Till she was gone neither Lady Ushant nor her nephew would go there, and he could only declare his purpose of attending the funeral whether he were asked or not. When his aunt again spoke of the will he desired her with much emphasis not to allude to the subject. "If the property is to come to me," he said, "anything of good that may be in it cannot be much sweeter by anticipation. And if it is not I shall only encourage disappointment by thinking of it."

"But it would be such a shame."

"That I deny altogether. It was his own to do as he liked with it. Had he married I should not have expected it because I am the heir. But, if you please, aunt, do not say a word more about it."

On the Sunday morning he heard that Mrs. Morton was gone to London, and then he walked over to Bragton. He found that she had locked and sealed up everything with so much precision that she must have worked hard at the task from the hour of his death almost to that of her departure. "She never rested herself all day," said Mrs. Hopkins, "till I thought she would sink from very weariness." She had gone into every room and opened every drawer, and had had every piece of plate through her fingers, and then Mrs. Hopkins told him that just as she was departing she had said that the keys would be given to the lawyer. After that he wandered about the place, thinking what his life would be should he find himself the owner of Bragton. At this moment he almost felt that he disliked the place, though there had been times in which he had thought that he loved it too well. Of one thing he was conscious,—that if Bragton should become his, it would be his duty to live there. He must move his books, and pipes, and other household gods from Hoppet Hall and become an English Squire. Would it be too late for him to learn to ride to hounds? Would it be possible that he should ever succeed in shooting a pheasant, if he were to study the art patiently? Could he interest himself as to the prevalence or decadence of ground game? And what must he do with his neighbours? Of course he would have to entertain Mr. Mainwaring and the other parsons, and perhaps once in the year to ask Lord Rufford to dine with him. If Lord Rufford came, what on earth would he say to him?

And then there arose another question. Would it not be his duty to marry,—and, if so, whom? He had been distinctly told that Mary Morton had given her heart to some one, and he certainly was not the man to ask for the hand of a girl who had not a heart to give. And yet thought that it would be impossible that he should marry any other person. He spent hours in walking about the grounds, looking at the garden and belongings which would so probably be his own within a week, and thinking whether it would be possible that he should bring a mistress to preside over them. Before he reached home he had made up his mind that only one mistress would be possible, and that she was beyond his reach.

On the Tuesday he received a scrawl from Mrs. Hopkins with a letter from the lawyer—addressed to her. The lawyer wrote to say that he would be down on Wednesday evening, would attend the funeral, and read his client's will after they had performed the ceremony. He went on to add that in obedience to Mrs. Morton's directions he had invited Mr. Peter Morton to be present on the occasion. On the Wednesday Reginald again went over, but left before the arrival of the two gentlemen. On the Thursday he was there early, and of course took upon himself the duty of chief mourner. Peter Morton was there and showed, in a bewildered way, that he had been summoned rather to the opening of the will than to the funeral of a man he had never seen.

Then the will was read. There were only two

names mentioned in it. John Morton left £5,000 and his watch and chain and rings to Arabella Trefoil, and everything else of which he was possessed to his cousin Reginald Morton.

"Upon my word I don't know why they sent for me," said the other cousin, Peter.

"Mrs. Morton seemed to think that you would like to pay a tribute of respect," said the lawyer. Peter looked at him and went upstairs and packed his portmanteau. The lawyer handed over the keys to the new squire, and then everything was done.

CHAPTER XI.

The New Minister.

"Poor old Paragon!" exclaimed Archibald Currie, as he stood with his back to the fire among his colleagues at the Foreign Office on the day after John Morton's death.

"Poor young Paragon! that's the pity of it," said Mounser Green. "I don't suppose he was turned thirty, and he was a useful man,—a very useful man. That's the worst of it. He was just one of those men that the country can't afford to lose, and whom it is so very hard to replace." Mounser Green was always eloquent as to the needs of the public service, and did really in his heart of hearts care about his office. "Who is to go to Patagonia, I'm sure I don't know. Platitude was asking me about it, and I told him that I couldn't name a man."

"Old Platitude always thinks that the world is coming to an end," said Currie. "There are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught."

"Who is there? Monsoon won't go, even if they ask him. The Paragon was just the fellow for it. He had his heart in the work. An immense deal depends on what sort of man we have in Patagonia at the present moment. If Paraguay gets the better of the Patagonese all Brazil will be in a ferment,

and you know how that kind of thing spreads among half-caste Spaniards and Portuguese. Nobody can interfere but the British Minister. When I suggested Morton I knew I had the right man if he'd only take it."

"And now he has gone and died!" said Hoffmann.

"And now he has gone and died," continued Mounser Green. "'I never nursed a dear gazelle,' and all the rest of it. Poor Paragon! I fear he was a little cut about Miss Trefoil."

"She was down with him the day before he died," said young Glossop. "I happen to know that."

"It was before he thought of going to Patagonia that she was at Bragton," said Currie.

"That's all you know about it, old fellow," said the indignant young one. "She was there a second time, just before his death. I had it from Lady Penwether who was in the neighbourhood."

"My dear little boy," said Mounser Green, "that was exactly what was likely to happen, and he yet may have broken his heart. I have seen a good deal of the lady lately, and under no circumstances would she have married him. When he accepted the mission that at any rate was all over."

"The Rufford affair had begun before that," said Hoffmann.

"The Rufford affair as you call it," said Glossop, "was no affair at all."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Currie.

"I mean that Rufford was never engaged to her,—not for an instant," said the lad, urgent in spreading

the lesson which he had received from his cousin. "It was all a dead take-in."

"Who was taken in?" asked Mounser Green.

"Well;—nobody was taken in as it happened. But I suppose there can't be a doubt that she tried her best to catch him, and that the Duke and Duchess and Mistletoe, and old Trefoil, all backed her up. It was a regular plant. The only thing is, it didn't come off."

"Look here, young shaver;"—this was Mounser Green again;—"when you speak of a young lady do you be a little more discreet."

"But didn't she do it, Green?"

"That's more than you or I can tell. If you want to know what I think, I believe he paid her a great deal of attention and then behaved very badly to her."

"He didn't behave badly at all," said young Glossop.

"My dear boy, when you are as old as I am, you will have learned how very hard it is to know everything. I only say what I believe, and perhaps I may have better ground for believing than you. He certainly paid her a great deal of attention, and then her friends,—especially the Duchess,—went to work."

"They've wanted to get her off their hands these six or eight years," said Currie.

"That's nonsense again," continued the new advocate, "for there is no doubt she might have married Morton all the time had she pleased."

"Yes;—but Rufford!—a fellow with sixty thousand a year!" said Glossop.

"About a third of that would be nearer the mark, Glossy. Take my word for it, you don't know everything yet, though you have so many advantages." After that Mounser Green retreated to his own room with a look and tone as though he were angry.

"What makes him so ferocious about it?" asked Glossop when the door was shut.

"You are always putting your foot in it," said Currie. "I kept on winking to you but it was no good. He sees her almost every day now. She's staying with old Mrs. Green in Portugal Street. There has been some break up between her and her mother, and old Mrs. Green has taken her in. There's some sort of relationship. Mounser is the old woman's nephew, and she is aunt by marriage to the Connop Greens down in Hampshire, and Mrs. Connop Green is first cousin to Lady Augustus."

"If Dick's sister married Tom's brother what relation would Dick be to Tom's mother? That's the kind of thing, isn't it?" suggested Hoffmann.

"At any rate there she is, and Mounser sees her every day."

"It don't make any difference about Rufford," said young Glossop stoutly.

All this happened before the will had been declared,—when Arabella did not dream that she was an heiress. A day or two afterwards she received a letter from the lawyer, telling her of her good fortune, and informing her that the trinkets would be

given up to her and the money paid,—short of legacy duty,—whenever she would fix a time and place. The news almost stunned her. There was a moment in which she thought that she was bound to reject this money, as she had rejected that tendered to her by the other man. Poor as she was, greedy as she was, alive as she was to the necessity of doing something for herself,—still this legacy was to her at first bitter rather than sweet. She had never treated any man so ill as she had treated this man;—and it was thus that he punished her! She was alive to the feeling that he had always been true to her. In her intercourse with other men there had been generally a battle carried on with some fairness. Diamond had striven to cut diamond. But here the dishonesty had all been on one side, and she was aware that it had been so. In her later affair with Lord Rufford, she really did think that she had been ill used; but she was quite alive to the fact that her treatment of John Morton had been abominable. The one man, in order that he might escape without further trouble, had in the grossest manner, sent to her the offer of a bribe. The other, —in regard to whose end her hard heart was touched, even her conscience seared,—had named her in his will as though his affection was unimpaired. Of course she took the money, but she took it with inward groans. She took the money and the trinkets, and the matter was all arranged for her by Mounser Green.

"So after all the Paragon left her whatever he could leave," said Currie in the same room at the

Foreign Office. A week had passed since the last conversation, and at this moment Mounser Green was not in the room.

"Oh, dear no," said young Glossy. "She doesn't have Bragton. That goes to his cousin."

"That was entailed, Glossy, my boy."

"Not a bit of it. Everybody thought he would leave the place to another Morton, a fellow he'd never seen, in one of those Somerset House Offices. He and this fellow who is to have it, were enemies, —but he wouldn't put it out of the right line. It's all very well for Mounser to be down on me, but I do happen to know what goes on in that country. She gets a pot of money, and no end of family jewels; but he didn't leave her the estate as he might have done."

At that moment Mounser Green came into the room. It was rather later than usual, being past one o'clock;—and he looked as though he were flurried. He didn't speak for a few minutes, but stood before the fire smoking a cigar. And there was a general silence,—there being now a feeling among them that Arabella Trefoil was not to be talked about in the old way before Mounser Green. At last he spoke himself. "I suppose you haven't heard who is to go to Patagonia after all?"

"Is it settled?" asked Currie.

"Anybody we know?" asked Hoffmann.

"I hope it's no d—— outsider," said the too energetic Glossop.

"It is settled;—and it is somebody you know;—and it is not a d—— outsider; unless, indeed, he

may be considered to be an outsider in reference to that branch of the service."

"It's some consul," said Currie. "Backstairs from Panama, I'll bet a crown."

"It isn't Backstairs, it isn't a consul. Gentlemen, get out your pocket-handkerchiefs. Mounser Green has consented to be expatriated for the good of his country."

"You going to Patagonia!" said Currie. "You're chaffing," said Glossop. "I never was so shot in my life," said Hoffmann.

"It's true, my dear boys."

"I never was so sorry for anything in all my born days," said Glossop, almost crying. "Why on earth should you go to Patagonia?"

"Patagonia!" ejaculated Currie. "What will you do in Patagonia?"

"It's an opening, my dear fellow," said Mounser Green leaning affectionately on Glossop's shoulder. "What should I do by remaining here? When Drummond asked me I saw he wanted me to go. They don't forget that kind of thing." At that moment a messenger opened the door, and the Senator Gotobed, almost without being announced, entered the room. He had become so intimate of late at the Foreign Office, and his visits were so frequent, that he was almost able to dispense with the assistance of any messenger. Perhaps Mounser Green and his colleagues were a little tired of him;—but yet, after their fashion, they were always civil to him, and remembered, as they were bound to do, that he was one of the leading politicians of a great nation. "I

have secured the hall," he said at once, as though aware that no news could be so important as the news he thus conveyed.

"Have you indeed?" said Currie.

"Secured it for the fifteenth. Now the question is——"

"What do you think," said Glossop, interrupting him without the slightest hesitation. "Mounser Green is going to Patagonia, in place of the poor Paragon."

"I beg to congratulate Mr. Green with all my heart."

"By George I don't," said the juvenile clerk. "Fancy congratulating a fellow on going to Patagonia! It's what I call an awful sell for everybody."

"But as I was saying I have the hall for the fifteenth."

"You mean to lecture then after all," said Green.

"Certainly I do, I am not going to be deterred from doing my duty because I am told there is a little danger. What I want to know is whether I can depend on having a staff of policemen."

"Of course there will be police," said Green.

"But I mean some extra strength. I don't mind for myself, but I should be so unhappy if there were anything of a commotion." Then he was assured that the officers of the police force would look to that, and was assured also that Mounser Green and the other gentlemen in the room would certainly attend the lecture. "I don't suppose I shall be gone by that time," said Mounser Green in a melancholy tone of voice.

CHAPTER XII.

"I must go."

"Rufford, March 5th.

"MY DEAR MISS TREFOIL,

"I am indeed sorry that I should have offended you by acceding to a suggestion which, I think I may say, originated with your mother. When she told me that her circumstances and yours were not in a pecuniary point of view so comfortable as they might be, I did feel that it was in my power to alleviate that trouble. The sum of money mentioned by my lawyer was certainly named by your mother. At any rate pray believe that I meant to be of service.

"As to naming a place where we might meet, it really could be of no service. It would be painful to both of us and could have no good result. Again apologizing for having inadvertently offended you by adopting the views which Lady Augustus entertained, I beg to assure you that I am,

"Yours faithfully,

"RUFFORD."

This letter came from the peer himself, without assistance. After his interview with Lady Augustus he simply told his Mentor, Sir George, that he had steadfastly denied the existence of any engagement,

not daring to acquaint him with the offer he had made. Neither, therefore, could he tell Sir George of the manner in which the young lady had repudiated the offer. That she should have repudiated it was no doubt to her credit. As he thought of it afterwards he felt that had she accepted it she would have been base indeed. And yet, as he thought of what had taken place at the house in Piccadilly, he was confident that the proposition had in some way come from her mother. No doubt he had first written a sum of money on the fragment of paper which she had preserved;—and the evidence would so far go against him. But Lady Augustus had spoken piteously of their joint poverty,—and had done so in lieu of insisting with a mother's indignation on her daughter's rights. Of course she had intended to ask for money. What other purpose could she have had? It was so he had argued at the moment, and so he had argued since. If it were so he would not admit that he had behaved unlike a gentleman in offering the money. Yet he did not dare to tell Sir George, and therefore was obliged to answer Arabella's letter without assistance.

He was not altogether sorry to have his £8000, being fully as much alive to the value of money as any brother peer in the kingdom, but he would sooner have paid the money than be subject to an additional interview. He had been forced up to London to see first the father and then the mother, and thought that he had paid penalty enough for any offence that he might have committed. An additional interview with the young lady herself would

distress him beyond anything,—would be worse than any other interview. He would sooner leave Rufford and go abroad than encounter it. He promised himself that nothing should induce him to encounter it. Therefore he wrote the above letter.

Arabella, when she received it, had ceased to care very much about the insult of the offer. She had then quarrelled with her mother, and had insisted on some separation even without any arrangement as to funds. Requiring some confidant, she had told a great deal, though not quite all, to Mrs. Connop Green, and that lady had passed her on for a while to her husband's aunt in London. At this time she had heard nothing of John Morton's will, and had perhaps thought with some tender regret of the munificence of her other lover, which she had scorned. But she was still intent on doing something. The fury of her despair was still on her, so that she could not weigh the injury she might do herself against some possible gratification to her wounded spirit. Up to this moment she had formed no future hope. At this epoch she had no string to her bow. John Morton was dead;—and she had absolutely wept for him in solitude, though she had certainly never loved him. Nor did she love Lord Rufford. As far as she knew how to define her feelings, she thought that she hated him. But she told herself hourly that she had not done with him. She was instigated by the true feminine Medea feeling that she would find some way to wring his heart,—even though in the process she might suffer twice as much as he did. She had convinced herself that in this instance he was the

offender. "Painful to both of us!" No doubt! But because it would be painful to him, it should be exacted. Though he was a coward and would fain shirk such pain, she could be brave enough. Even though she should be driven to catch him by the arm in the open street, she would have it out with him. He was a liar and a coward, and she would, at any rate, have the satisfaction of telling him so.

She thought much about it before she could resolve on what she would do. She could not ask old Mrs. Green to help her. Mrs. Green was a kind old woman, who had lived much in the world, and would wish to see much of it still, had age allowed her. Arabella Trefoil was at any rate the niece of a Duke, and the Duke, in this affair with Lord Rufford, had taken his niece's part. She opened her house and as much of her heart as was left to Arabella, and was ready to mourn with her over the wicked lord. She could sympathise with her too, as to the iniquities of her mother, whom none of the Greens loved. But she would have been frightened by any proposition as to Medean vengeance.

In these days,—still winter days, and not open to much feminine gaiety in London, even if, in the present constitution of her circumstances, gaiety would have come in her way,—in these days the hours in her life which interested her most, were those in which Mr. Mounser Green was dutifully respectful to his aunt. Patagonia had not yet presented itself to him. Some four or five hundred a year, which the old lady had at her own disposal, had for years past contributed to Mounser's ideas of duty. And now

Arabella's presence at the small house in Portugal Street certainly added a new zest to those ideas. The niece of the Duke of Mayfair, and the rejected of Lord Rufford, was at the present moment an interesting young woman in Mounser Green's world. There were many who thought that she had been ill-used. Had she succeeded, all the world would have pitied Lord Rufford;—but as he had escaped, there was a strong party for the lady. And gradually Mounser Green, who some weeks ago had not thought very much of her, became one of the party. She had brought her maid with her; and when she found that Mounser Green came to the house every evening, either before or after dinner, she had recourse to her accustomed lures. She would sit quiet, dejected, almost broken-hearted in the corner of a sofa; but when he spoke to her she would come to life and raise her eyes,—not ignoring the recognised dejection of her jilted position, not pretending to this minor stag of six tines that she was a sprightly unwooed young fawn, fresh out of the forest,—almost asking him to weep with her, and playing her accustomed lures, though in a part which she had not hitherto filled.

But still she was resolved that her Jason should not as yet be quit of his Medea. So she made her plot. She would herself go down to Rufford and force her way into her late lover's presence in spite of all obstacles. It was possible that she should do this and get back to London the same day,—but, to do so, she must leave London by an early train at 7 A.M., stay seven or eight hours at Rufford, and

reach the London station at 10 P.M. For such a journey there must be some valid excuse made to Mrs. Green. There must be some necessity shown for such a journey. She would declare that a meeting was necessary with her mother, and that her mother was at any town she chose to name at the requisite distance from London. In this way she might start with her maid before daylight, and get back after dark, and have the meeting with her mother—or with Lord Rufford as the case might be. But Mounser Green knew very well that Lady Augustus was in Orchard Street, and knew also that Arabella was determined not to see her mother. And if she declared her purpose, without a caution to Mounser Green, the old woman would tell her nephew, and the nephew would unwittingly expose the deceit. It was necessary therefore that she should admit Mounser Green to, at any rate, half a confidence. This she did. "Don't ask me any questions," she said. "I know I can trust you. I must be out of town the whole day, and perhaps the next. And your aunt must not know why I am going or where. You will help me?" Of course he said that he would help her; and the lie, with a vast accompaniment of little lies, was told. There must be a meeting on business matters between her and her mother, and her mother was now in the neighbourhood of Birmingham. This was the lie told to Mrs. Green. She would go down, and, if possible, be back on the same day. She would take her maid with her. She thought that in such a matter as that she could trust her maid, and was in truth afraid to travel alone.

"I will come in the morning and take Miss Trefoil to the station," said Mounser, "and will meet her in the evening." And so the matter was arranged.

The journey was not without its drawbacks and almost its perils. Summer or winter Arabella Trefoil was seldom out of bed before nine. It was incumbent on her now to get up on a cold March morning,—when the lion had not as yet made way for the lamb,—at half-past five. That itself seemed to be all but impossible to her. Nevertheless she was ready and had tried to swallow half a cup of tea, when Mounser Green came to the door with a cab a little after six. She had endeavoured to dispense with this new friend's attendance, but he had insisted, assuring her that without some such aid no cab would be forthcoming. She had not told him and did not intend that he should know to what station she was going. "You begged me to ask no questions," he said when he was in the cab with her, the maid having been induced most unwillingly to seat herself with the cabman on the box,—"and I have obeyed you. But I wish I knew how I could help you."

"You have helped me, and you are helping me. But do not ask anything more."

"Will you be angry with me if I say that I fear you are intending something rash?"

"Of course I am. How could it be otherwise with me? Don't you think there are turns in a person's life when she must do something rash. Think of yourself. If everybody crushed you; if you were ill-treated beyond all belief; if the very

people who ought to trust you doubted you, wouldn't you turn upon somebody and rend him?"

"Are you going to rend anybody?"

"I do not know as yet."

"I wish you would let me go down with you."

"No; that you certainly cannot. You must not come even into the station with me. You have been very good to me. You will not now turn against me."

"I certainly will do nothing but what you tell me."

"Then here we are,—and now you must go. Jane can carry my hand-bag and cloak. If you choose to come in the evening at ten it will be an additional favour."

"I certainly will do so. But Miss Trefoil, one word." They were now standing under cover of the portico in front of the railway station, into which he was not to be allowed to enter. "What I fear is this;—that in your first anger you may be tempted to do something which may be injurious to —to your prospects in life."

"I have no prospects in life, Mr. Green."

"Ah;—that is just it. There are for most of us moments of unhappiness in which we are tempted by our misery to think that we are relieved at any rate from the burden of caution, because nothing that can occur to us can make us worse than we are."

"Nothing can make me worse than I am."

"But in a few months or weeks," continued Mounser Green, bringing up in his benevolence all the wisdom of his experience, "we have got a new

footing amidst our troubles, and then we may find how terrible is the injury which our own indiscretion has brought on us. I do not want to ask any questions, but—it might be so much better that you should abandon your intention, and go back with me."

She seemed to be almost undecided for a moment as she thought over his words. But she remembered her pledge to herself that Lord Rufford should find that she had not done with him yet. "I must go," she said in a hoarse voice.

"If you must——"

"I must go. I have no way out of it. Good-bye, Mr. Green; I cannot tell you how much obliged to you I am." Then he turned back and she went into the station and took two first-class tickets for Rufford. At that moment Lord Rufford was turning himself comfortably in his bed. How would he have sprung up, and how would he have fled, had he known the evil that was coming upon him! This happened on a Thursday, a day on which, as Arabella knew, the U.R.U. did not go out;—the very Thursday on which John Morton was buried and the will was read at Bragton.

She was fully determined to speak her mind to the man and to be checked by no feminine squeamishness. She would speak her mind to him if she could force her way into his presence. And in doing this she would be debarred by no etiquette. It might be that she would fail, that he would lack the courage to see her, and would run away, even before all his servants, when he should hear who

was standing in his hall. But if he did so she would try again, even though she should have to ride out into the hunting-field after him. Face to face she would tell him that he was a liar and a slanderer and no gentleman, though she should have to run round the world to catch him. When she reached Rufford she went to the town and ordered breakfast and a carriage. As soon as she had eaten the meal she desired the driver in a clear voice to take her to Rufford Hall. Was her maid to go with her? No. She would be back soon, and her maid would wait there till she had returned.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the Park.

THIS thing that she was doing required an infinite amount of pluck,—of that sort of hardihood which we may not quite call courage, but which in a world well provided with policemen is infinitely more useful than courage. Lord Rufford himself was endowed with all the ordinary bravery of an Englishman, but he could have flown as soon as run into a lion's den as Arabella was doing. She had learned that Lady Penwether and Miss Penge were both at Rufford Hall, and understood well the difficulty there would be in explaining her conduct should she find herself in their presence. And there were all the servants there to stare at her, and the probability that she might be shown to the door and told that no one there would speak to her. She saw it all before her, and knew how bitter it might be;—but her heart was big enough to carry her through it. She was dressed very simply, but still by no means dowdily, in a black silk dress, and though she wore a thick veil when she got out of the fly and rang the door bell, she had been at some pains with her hair before she left the inn. Her purpose was revenge; but still she had an eye

to the possible chance,—the chance barely possible of bringing the man to submit.

When the door was opened she raised her veil and asked for Lord Rufford;—but as she did so she walked on through the broad passage which led from the front door into a wide central space which they called the billiard-room but which really was the hall of the house. This she did as a manifesto that she did not mean to leave the house because she might be told that he was out or could not be seen, or that he was engaged. It was then nearly one o'clock, and no doubt he would be there for luncheon. Of course he might be in truth away from home, but she must do her best to judge of that by the servant's manner. The man knew her well, and not improbably had heard something of his master's danger. He was, however, very respectful and told her that his lordship was out in the grounds;—but that Lady Penwether was in the drawing-room. Then a sudden thought struck her, and she asked the man whether he would show her in what part of the grounds she might find Lord Rufford. Upon that he took her to the front door and pointing across the park to a belt of trees, showed her three or four men standing round some piece of work. He believed, he said, that one of those men was his lordship.

She bowed her thanks and was descending the steps on her way to join the group, when whom should she see but Lady Penwether coming into the house with her garden-hat and gloves. It was unfortunate; but she would not allow herself to be

stopped by Lady Penwether. She bowed stiffly and would have passed on without a word, but that was impossible. "Miss Trefoil!" said Lady Penwether with astonishment.

"Your brother is just across the park. I think I see him and will go to him."

"I had better send and tell him that you are here," said her ladyship.

"I need not trouble you so far. I can be my own messenger. Perhaps you will allow the fly to be sent round to the yard for half-an-hour." As she said this she was still passing down the steps.

But Lady Penwether knew that it behoved her to prevent this if it might be possible. Of late she had had little or no conversation with her brother about Miss Trefoil, but she had heard much from her husband. She would be justified, she thought, in saying or in doing almost anything which would save him from such an encounter. "I really think," she said, "that he had better be told that you are here," and as she spoke she strove to put herself in the visitor's way. "You had better come in, Miss Trefoil, and he shall be informed at once."

"By no means, Lady Penwether. I would not for worlds give him or you so much trouble. I see him and I will go to him." Then Lady Penwether absolutely put out her hand to detain her; but Arabella shook it off angrily and looked into the other woman's face with fierce eyes. "Allow me," she said, "to conduct myself at this moment as I may think best. I shall do so at any rate." Then she stalked on and Lady Penwether saw that any contest

was hopeless. Had she sent the servant on with all his speed, so as to gain three or four moments, her brother could hardly have fled through the trees in face of the enemy.

Lord Rufford, who was busy planning the prolongation of a ha-ha fence, saw nothing of all this; but, after a while he was aware that a woman was coming to him, and then gradually he saw who that woman was. Arabella when she had found herself advancing closer went slowly enough. She was sure of her prey now, and was wisely mindful that it might be well that she should husband her breath. The nearer she drew to him the slower became her pace, and more majestic. Her veil was well thrown back, and her head was raised in the air. She knew these little tricks of deportment and could carry herself like a queen. He had taken a moment or two to consider. Should he fly? It was possible. He might vault over a railed fence in among the trees, at a spot not ten yards from her, and then it would be impossible that she should run him down. He might have done it had not the men been there to see it. As it was he left them in the other direction and came forward to meet her. He tried to smile pleasantly as he spoke to her. "So I see that you would not take my advice," he said.

"Neither your advice nor your money, my lord."

"Ah,—I was so sorry about that! But, indeed, indeed,—the fault was not mine."

"They were your figures that I saw upon the paper, and by your orders, no doubt, that the lawyer

acted. But I have not come to say much of that. You meant I suppose to be gracious."

"I meant to be—goodnatured."

"I daresay. You were willing enough to give away what you did not want. But there must be more between us than any question of money. Lord Rufford you have treated me most shamefully."

"I hope not: I think not."

"And you yourself must be well aware of it,—quite as well aware of it as I am. You have thrown me over and absolutely destroyed me;—and why?" He shrugged his shoulders. "Because you have been afraid of others; because your sister has told you that you were mistaken in your choice. The women around you have been too many for you, and have not allowed you to dispose of your hand, and your name, and your property as you pleased. I defy you to say that this was not your sister's doing." He was too much astounded to contradict her rapidly, and then she passed on, not choosing to give him time for contradiction. "Will you have the hardihood to say that you did not love me?" Then she paused thinking that he would not dare to contradict her then, feeling that in that she was on strong ground. "Were you lying when you told me that you did? What did you mean when I was in your arms up in the house there? What did you intend me to think that you meant?" Then she stopped, standing well in front of him, and looking fixedly into his face.

This was the very thing that he had feared. Lord Augustus had been a trouble. The Duke's

letter had been a trouble. Lady Augustus had been a trouble; and Sir George's sermons had been troublesome. But what were they all when compared to this? How is it possible that a man should tell a girl that he has not loved her, when he has embraced her again and again? He may know it, and she may know it; — and each may know that the other knows it;—but to say that he does not and did not then love her is beyond the scope of his audacity,—unless he be a heartless Nero. "No one can grieve about this so much as I do," he said weakly.

"Cannot I grieve more, do you think,—I who told all my relatives that I was to become your wife, and was justified in so telling them? Was I not justified?"

"I think not."

"You think not! What did you mean then? What were you thinking of when we were coming back in the carriage from Stamford,—when with your arms round me you swore that you loved me better than all the world? Is that true? Did you so swear?" What a question for a man to have to answer! It was becoming clear to him that there was nothing for him but to endure and be silent. Even to this interview the gods would at last give an end. The hour would pass, though, alas, so slowly, and she could not expect that he should stand there to be rated much after the accustomed time for feeding. "You acknowledge that, and do you dare to say that I had no right to tell my friends?"

There was a moment in which he thought it was almost a pity that he had not married her. She was very beautiful in her present form,—more beautiful he thought than ever. She was the niece of a Duke, and certainly a very clever woman. He had not wanted money and why shouldn't he have married her? As for hunting him,—that was a matter of course. He was as much born and bred to be hunted as a fox. He could not do it now as he had put too much power into the hands of the Penwethers, but he almost wished that he had. "I never intended it," he said.

"What did you intend? After what has occurred I suppose I have a right to ask such a question. I have made a somewhat unpleasant journey to-day, all alone, on purpose to ask that question. What did you intend?" In his great annoyance he struck his shovel angrily against the ground. "And I will not leave you till I get an answer to the question. What did you intend, Lord Rufford?" There was nothing for him but silence and a gradual progress back towards the house.

But from the latter resource she cut him off for a time. "You will do me the favour to remain with me here till this conversation is ended. You cannot refuse me so slight a request as that, seeing the trouble to which you have put me. I never saw a man so forgetful of words. You cannot speak. Have you no excuse to offer, not a word to say in explanation of conduct so black that I don't think here in England I ever heard a case to equal it? If your sister had been treated so!"

"It would have been impossible."

"I believe it. Her cautious nature would have trusted no man as I trusted you. Her lips, doubtless, were never unfrozen till the settlements had been signed. With her it was a matter of bargain, not of love. I can well believe that."

"I will not talk about my sister."

"It seems to me, Lord Rufford, that you object to talk about anything. You certainly have been very uncommunicative with reference to yourself. Were you lying when you told me that you loved me?"

"No."

"Did I lie when I told the Duchess that you had promised me your love? Did I lie when I told my mother that in these days a man does not always mention marriage when he asks a girl to be his wife? You said you loved me, and I believed you, and the rest was a thing of course. And you meant it. You know you meant it. When you held me in your arms in the carriage you know you meant me to suppose that it would always be so. Then the fear of your sister came upon you, and of your sister's husband,—and you ran away! I wonder whether you think yourself a man!" And yet she felt that she had not hit him yet. He was wretched enough; and she could see that he was wretched;—but the wretchedness would pass away as soon as she was gone. How could she stab him so that the wound would remain? With what virus could she poison her arrow, so that the agony might be prolonged. "And such a coward too! I began to suspect it

when you started that night from Mistletoe,—though I did not think then that you could be all mean, all cowardly. From that day to this, you have not dared to speak a word of truth. Every word has been a falsehood."

"By heavens, no."

"Every word a falsehood! and I, a lady,—a lady whom you have so deeply injured, whose cruel injury even you have not the face to deny,—am forced by your cowardice to come to you here, because you have not dared to come out to meet me. Is that true!"

"What good can it do?"

"None to me, God knows. You are such a thing that I would not have you now I know you, though you were twice Lord Rufford. But I have chosen to speak my mind to you and to tell you what I think. Did you suppose that when I said I would meet you face to face I was to be deterred by such girl's excuses as you made? I chose to tell you to your face that you are false, a coward, and no gentleman, and though you had hidden yourself under the very earth I would have found you." Then she turned round and saw Sir George Penwether standing close to them.

Lord Rufford had seen him approaching for some time, and had made one or two futile attempts to meet him. Arabella's back had been turned to the house, and she had not heard the steps or observed the direction of her companion's eyes. He came so near before he was seen that he heard her concluding words. Then, Lord Rufford with a ghastly at-

tempt at pleasantry introduced them. "George," he said, "I do not think you know Miss Trefoil. Sir George Penwether;—Miss Trefoil."

The interview had been watched from the house and the husband had been sent down by his wife to mitigate the purgatory which she knew that her brother must be enduring. "My wife," said Sir George, "has sent me to ask Miss Trefoil whether she will not come into lunch."

"I believe it is Lord Rufford's house," said Arabella.

"If Miss Trefoil's frame of mind will allow her to sit at table with me I shall be proud to see her," said Lord Rufford.

"Miss Trefoil's frame of mind will not allow her to eat or to drink with such a dastard," said she turning away in the direction of the park gates. "Perhaps, Sir George, you will be kind enough to direct the man who brought me here to pick me up at the lodge." And so she walked away—a mile across the park,—neither of them caring to follow her.

It seemed to her as she stood at the lodge gate, having obstinately refused to enter the house, to be an eternity before the fly came to her. When it did come she felt as though her strength would barely enable her to climb into it. And when she was there she wept, with bitter throbbing woe, all the way to Rufford. It was over now at any rate. Now there was not a possible chance on which a gleam of hope might be made to settle. And how handsome he was, and how beautiful the place, and

how perfect would have been the triumph could she have achieved it! One more word,—one other pressure of the hand in the post-chaise might have done it! Had he really promised her marriage she did not even now think that he would have gone back from his word. If that heavy stupid duke would have spoken to him that night at Mistletoe, all would have been well! But now,—now there was nothing for her but weeping and gnashing of teeth. He was gone, and poor Morton was gone; and all those others, whose memories rose like ghosts before her;—they were all gone. And she wept as she thought that she might perhaps have made a better use of the gifts which Providence had put in her way.

When Mounser Green met her at the station she was beyond measure weary. Through the whole journey she had been struggling to restrain her sobs so that her maid should neither hear nor see them. "Don't mind me, Mr. Green; I am only tired,—so tired," she said as she got into the carriage which he had brought.

He had with him a long, formal-looking letter addressed to herself. But she was too weary to open it that night. It was the letter conveying the tidings of the legacy which Morton had made in her favour.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lord Rufford's Model Farm.

At this time Senator Gotobed was paying a second visit to Rufford Hall. In the matter of Goarly and Scrobby he had never given way an inch. He was still strongly of opinion that a gentleman's pheasants had no right to eat his neighbour's corn, and that if damage were admitted, the person committing the injury should not take upon himself to assess the damage. He also thought,—and very often declared his thoughts,—that Goarly was justified in shooting not only foxes but hounds also when they came upon his property, and in moments of excitement had gone so far as to say that not even horses should be held sacred. He had, however, lately been driven to admit that Goarly himself was not all that a man should be, and that Mrs. Goarly's goose was an impostor. It was the theory,—the principle for which he combated, declaring that the evil condition of the man himself was due to the evil institutions among which he had been reared. By degrees evidence had been obtained of Scrobby's guilt in the matter of the red herrings, and he was to be tried for the offence of putting down poison. Goarly was to be the principal witness against his

brother conspirator. Lord Rufford, instigated by his brother-in-law, and liking the spirit of the man, had invited the Senator to stay at the Hall while the case was being tried at the Rufford Quarter Sessions. I am afraid the invitation was given in a spirit of triumph over the Senator rather than with genuine hospitality. It was thought well that the American should be made to see in public the degradation of the abject creature with whom he had sympathised. Perhaps there were some who thought that in this way they would get the Senator's neck under their heels. If there were such they were likely to be mistaken, as the Senator was not a man prone to submit himself to such treatment.

He was seated at table with Lady Penwether and Miss Penge when Lord Rufford and his brother-in-law came into the room, after parting with Miss Trefoil in the manner described in the last chapter. Lady Penwether had watched their unwelcome visitor as she took her way across the park and had whispered something to Miss Penge. Miss Penge understood the matter thoroughly, and would not herself have made the slightest allusion to the other young lady. Had the Senator not been there the two gentlemen would have been allowed to take their places without a word on the subject. But the Senator had a marvellous gift of saying awkward things and would never be reticent. He stood for a while at the window in the drawing-room before he went across the hall, and even took up a pair of field-glasses to scrutinise the lady; and when they were all present he asked whether that was not Miss

Trefoil whom he had seen down by the new fence. Lady Penwether, without seeming to look about her, did look about her for a few seconds to see whether the question might be allowed to die away unanswered. She perceived, from the Senator's face, that he intended to have an answer.

"Yes," she said, "that was Miss Trefoil. I am very glad that she is not coming in to disturb us."

"A great blessing," said Miss Penge.

"Where is she staying?" asked the Senator.

"I think she drove over from Rufford," said the elder lady.

"Poor young lady! She was engaged to marry my friend, Mr. John Morton. She must have felt his death very bitterly. He was an excellent young man; rather opinionated and perhaps too much wedded to the traditions of his own country; but, nevertheless, a painstaking, excellent young man. I had hoped to welcome her as Mrs. Morton in America."

"He was to have gone to Patagonia," said Lord Rufford, endeavouring to come to himself after the sufferings of the morning.

"We should have seen him back in Washington, Sir. Whenever you have anything good in diplomacy you generally send him to us. Poor young lady! Was she talking about him?"

"Not particularly," said his lordship.

"She must have remembered that when she was last here he was of the party, and it was but a few weeks ago,—only a little before Christmas. He struck me as being cold in his manner as an af-

fianced lover. Was not that your idea, Lady Penwether?"

"I don't think I observed him especially."

"I have reason to believe that he was much attached to her. She could be sprightly enough; but at times there seemed to come a cold melancholy upon her too. It is I fancy so with most of your English ladies. Miss Trefoil always gave me the idea of being a good type of the English aristocracy." Lady Penwether and Miss Penge drew themselves up very stiffly. "You admired her I think, my Lord."

"Very much indeed," said Lord Rufford, filling his mouth with pigeon-pie as he spoke, and not lifting his eyes from his plate.

"Will she be back to dinner?"

"Oh dear no," said Lady Penwether. There was something in her tone which at last startled the Senator into perceiving that Miss Trefoil was not popular at Rufford Hall.

"She only came for a morning call," said Lord Rufford.

"Poor young woman. She has lost her husband, and, I am afraid, now has lost her friends also. I am told that she is not well off;—and from what I see and hear, I fancy that here in England a young lady without a dowry cannot easily replace a lover. I suppose, too, Miss Trefoil is not quite in her first youth."

"If you have done, Caroline," said Lady Penwether to Miss Penge, "I think we'll go into the other room."

That afternoon Sir George asked the Senator to accompany him for a walk. Sir George was held to be responsible for the Senator's presence, and was told by the ladies that he must do something with him. The next day, which was Friday, would be occupied by the affairs of Scrobby and Goarly, and on the Saturday he was to return to town. The two started about three with the object of walking round the park and the home farm—the Senator intent on his duty of examining the ways of English life to the very bottom. "I hope I did not say anything amiss about Miss Trefoil," he remarked, as they passed through a shrubbery gate into the park.

"No; I think not."

"I thought your good lady looked as though she did not like the subject."

"I am not sure that Miss Trefoil is very popular with the ladies up there."

"She's a handsome young woman and clever, though, as I said before, given to melancholy, and sometimes fastidious. When we were all here I thought that Lord Rufford admired her, and that poor Mr. Morton was a little jealous."

"I wasn't at Rufford then. Here we get out of the park on to the home farm. Rufford does it very well,—very well indeed."

"Looks after it altogether himself?"

"I cannot quite say that. He has a land-bailiff who lives in the house there."

"With a salary?"

"Oh yes; £120 a year I think the man has."

"And that house?" asked the Senator. "Why, the house and garden are worth £50 a year."

"I dare say they are. Of course it costs money. It's near the park and had to be made ornamental."

"And does it pay?"

"Well, no; I should think not. In point of fact I know it does not. He loses about the value of the ground."

The Senator asked a great many more questions and then began his lecture. "A man who goes into trade and loses by it, cannot be doing good to himself or to others. You say, Sir George, that it is a model farm;—but it's a model of ruin. If you want to teach a man any other business, you don't specially select an example in which the proprietors are spending all their capital without any return. And if you would not do this in shoemaking, why in farming?"

"The neighbours are able to see how work should be done."

"Excuse me, Sir George, but it seems to me that they are enabled to see how work should not be done. If his lordship would stick up over his gate a notice to the effect that everything seen there was to be avoided, he might do some service. If he would publish his accounts half-yearly in the village newspaper——"

"There isn't a village newspaper."

"In the *Rufford Gazette*. There is a *Rufford Gazette*, and Rufford isn't much more than a village. If he would publish his accounts half-yearly in the *Rufford Gazette*, honestly showing how much

he had lost by his system, how much capital had been misapplied, and how much labour wasted, he might serve as an example, like the pictures of 'The Idle Apprentice.' I don't see that he can do any other good,—unless it be to the estimable gentleman who is allowed to occupy the pretty house. I don't think you'd see anything like that model farm in our country, Sir."

"Your views, Mr. Gotobed, are utilitarian rather than picturesque."

"Oh!—if you say that it is done for the picturesque, that is another thing. Lord Rufford is a wealthy lord, and can afford to be picturesque. A green sward I should have thought handsomer, as well as less expensive, than a ploughed field, but that is a matter of taste. Only why call a pretty toy a model farm? You might mislead the British rustics."

They had by this time passed through a couple of fields which formed part of the model farm, and had come to a stile leading into a large meadow. "This I take it," said the Senator looking about him, "is beyond the limits of my Lord's plaything."

"This is Shugborough," said Sir George, "and there is John Runce, the occupier, on his pony. He at any rate is a model farmer." As he spoke Mr. Runce slowly trotted up to them touching his hat, and Mr. Gotobed recognized the man who had declined to sit next to him at the hunting breakfast. Runce also thought that he knew the gentleman. "Do you hunt to-morrow, Mr. Runce?" asked Sir George.

"Well, Sir George, no; I think not. I b'lieve I must go to Rufford and hear that fellow Scrobby get it hot and heavy."

"We seem all to be going that way. You think he'll be convicted, Sir."

"If there's a juryman left in the country worth his salt, he'll be convicted," said Mr. Runce, almost enraged at the doubt. "But that other fellow;—he's to get off. That's what kills me, Sir George."

"You're alluding to Mr. Goarly, Sir," said the Senator.

"That's about it, certainly," said Runce, still looking very suspiciously at his companion.

"I almost think he is the bigger rogue of the two," said the Senator.

"Well," said Runce; "well! I don't know as he ain't. Six of one and half a dozen of the other! That's about it." But he was evidently pacified by the opinion.

"Goarly is certainly a rascal all round," continued the Senator. Runce looked at him to make sure whether he was the man who had uttered such fearful blasphemies at the breakfast-table. "I think we had a little discussion about this before, Mr. Runce."

"I am very glad to see you have changed your principles, Sir."

"Not a bit of it. I am too old to change my principles, Mr. Runce. And much as I admire this country I don't think it's the place in which I should be induced to do so." Runce looked at him again

with a scowl on his face and with a falling mouth. "Mr. Goarly is certainly a blackguard."

"Well;—I rather think he is."

"But a blackguard may have a good cause. Put it in your own case, Mr. Runce. If his Lordship's pheasants ate up your wheat——"

"They're welcome;—they're welcome! The more the merrier. But they don't. Pheasants know when they're well off."

"Or if a crowd of horsemen rode over your fences, don't you think——"

"My fences! They'd be welcome in my wife's bedroom if the fox took that way. My fences! It's what I has fences for,—to be ridden over."

"You didn't exactly hear what I have to say, Mr. Runce."

"And I don't want. No offence, sir, if you be a friend of my Lord's;—but if his Lordship was to say hisself that Goarly was right, I wouldn't listen to him. A good cause,—and he going about at dead o' night with his pockets full of p'ison! Hounds and foxes all one!—or little childer either for the matter o' that, if they happened on the herrings!"

"I have not said his cause was good, Mr. Runce."

"I'll wish you good evening, Sir George," said the farmer, reining his pony round. "Good evening to you, sir." And Mr. Runce trotted or rather ambled off, unable to endure another word.

"An honest man, I dare say," said the Senator.

"Certainly;—and not a bad specimen of a British farmer."

"Not a bad specimen of a Briton generally;—but still, perhaps, a little unreasonable." After that Sir George said as little as he could, till he had brought the Senator back to the hall.

"I think it's all over now," said Lady Penwether to Miss Penge, when the gentlemen had left them alone in the afternoon.

"I'm sure I hope so,—for his sake. What a woman to come here by herself, in that way!"

"I don't think he ever cared for her in the least."

"I can't say that I have troubled myself much about that," replied Miss Penge. "For the sake of the family generally, and the property, and all that, I should be very very sorry to think that he was going to make her Lady Rufford. I dare say he has amused himself with her."

"There was very little of that, as far as I can learn;—very little encouragement indeed! What we saw here was the worst of it. He was hardly with her at all at Mistletoe."

"I hope it will make him more cautious;—that's all," said Miss Penge. Miss Penge was now a great heiress, having had her lawsuit respecting certain shares in a Welsh coal-mine settled since we last saw her. As all the world knows she came from one of the oldest Commoner's families in the West of England, and is, moreover, a handsome young woman, only twenty-seven years of age. Lady Penwether thinks that she is the very woman to be mistress of Rufford, and I do not know that Miss

Penge herself is averse to the idea. Lord Rufford has been too lately wounded to rise at the bait quite immediately; but his sister knows that her brother is impressionable and that a little patience will go a long way. They have, however, all agreed at the hall that Arabella's name shall not again be mentioned.

CHAPTER XV.

Scrobby's Trial.

RUFFORD was a good deal moved as to the trial of Mr. Scrobby. Mr. Scrobby was a man who not long since had held his head up in Rufford and had the reputation of a well-to-do tradesman. Enemies had perhaps doubted his probity; but he had gone on and prospered, and, two or three years before the events which are now chronicled, had retired on a competence. He had then taken a house with a few acres of land, lying between Rufford and Rufford Hall,—the property of Lord Rufford, and had commenced genteel life. Many in the neighbourhood had been astonished that such a man should have been accepted as a tenant in such a house; and it was generally understood that Lord Rufford himself had been very angry with his agent. Mr. Scrobby did not prosper greatly in his new career. He became a guardian of the poor and quarrelled with all the Board. He tried to become a municipal counsellor in the borough, but failed. Then he quarrelled with his landlord, insisted on making changes in the grounds which were not authorised by the terms of his holding, would not pay his rent, and was at last ejected,—having caused some considerable amount

of trouble. Then he occupied a portion of his leisure with spreading calumnies as to his Lordship and was generally understood to have made up his mind to be disagreeable. As Lord Rufford was a sportsman rather than anything else Scrobby studied how he might best give annoyance in that direction, and some time before the Goarly affair had succeeded in creating considerable disturbance. When a man will do this pertinaciously, and when his selected enemy is wealthy and of high standing, he will generally succeed in getting a party round him. In Rufford there were not a few who thought that Lord Rufford's pheasants and foxes were a nuisance,—though probably these persons had never suffered in any way themselves. It was a grand thing to fight a lord,—and so Scrobby had a party.

When the action against his Lordship was first threatened by Goarly, and when it was understood that Scrobby had backed him with money, there was a feeling that Scrobby was doing rather a fine thing. He had not, indeed, used his money openly, as the Senator had afterwards done; but that was not Scrobby's way. If Goarly had been ill-used any help was legitimate, and the party as a party was proud of their man. But when it came to pass that poison had been laid down, "wholesale" as the hunting-men said, in Dillsborough Wood, in the close vicinity of Goarly's house, then the party hesitated. Such strategy as that was disgusting;—but was there reason to think that Scrobby had been concerned in the matter? Scrobby still had an income, and ate roast meat or boiled every day for his dinner. Was it

likely that such a man should deal in herrings and strychnine?

Nickem had been at work for the last three months, backed up by funds which had latterly been provided by the Lord's agent, and had in truth run the matter down. Nickem had found out all about it, and in his pride had resigned his stool in Mr. Master's office. But the Scrobby party in Rufford could not bring itself to believe that Nickem was correct. That Goarly's hand had actually placed the herrings no man either at Rufford or Dillsborough had doubted. Such was now Nickem's story. But of what avail would be the evidence of such a man as Goarly against such a man as Scrobby? It would be utterly worthless unless corroborated, and the Scrobby party was not yet aware how clever Nickem had been. Thus all Rufford was interested in the case.

Lord Rufford, Sir George Penwether, his Lordship's agent, and Mr. Gotobed, had been summoned as witnesses,—the expenditure of money by the Senator having by this time become notorious; and on the morning of the trial they all went into the town in his Lordship's drag. The Senator, as the guest, was on the box-seat with his Lordship, and as they passed old Runce trotting into Rufford on his nag, Mr. Gotobed began to tell the story of yesterday's meeting, complaining of the absurdity of the old farmer's anger.

"Penwether told me about it," said the Lord.

"I suppose your tenant is a little crazy."

"By no means. I thought he was right in what he said, if I understood Penwether."

"He couldn't have been right. He turned from me in disgust simply because I tried to explain to him that a rogue has as much right to be defended by the law as an honest man."

"Runce looks upon these men as vermin which ought to be hunted down."

"But they are not vermin. They are men;—and till they have been found guilty they are innocent men."

"If a man had murdered your child, would he be innocent in your eyes till he was convicted?"

"I hope so;—but I should be very anxious to bring home the crime against him. And should he be found guilty even then he should not be made subject to other punishment than that the law awards. Mr. Runce is angry with me because I do not think that Goarly should be crushed under the heels of all his neighbours. Take care, my Lord. Didn't we come round that corner rather sharp?"

Then Lord Rufford emphatically declared that such men as Scrobby and Goarly should be crushed, and the Senator, with an inward sigh declared that between landlord and tenant, between peer and farmer, between legislator and rustic, there was, in capacity for logical inference, no difference whatever. The British heart might be all right; but the British head was,—ah,—hopelessly wooden! It would be his duty to say so in his lecture, and perhaps some good might be done to so gracious but so stolid a people, if only they could be got to listen.

Scrobby had got down a barrister from London,

and therefore the case was allowed to drag itself out through the whole day. Lord Rufford, as a magistrate, went on to the bench himself,—though he explained that he only took his seat there as a spectator. Sir George and Mr. Gotobed were also allowed to sit in the high place,—though the Senator complained even of this. Goarly and Scrobby were not allowed to be there, and Lord Rufford, in his opinion, should also have been debarred from such a privilege. A long time was occupied before even a jury could be sworn, the barrister earning his money by browbeating the provincial bench and putting various obstacles in the way of the trial. As he was used to practice at the assizes of course he was able to domineer. This juror would not do, nor that. The chairman was all wrong in his law. The officers of the Court knew nothing about it. At first there was quite a triumph for the Scrobbyites, and even Nickem himself was frightened. But at last the real case was allowed to begin, and Goarly was soon in the witness-box. Goarly did not seem to enjoy the day, and was with difficulty got to tell his own story even on his own side. But the story when it was told was simple enough. He had met Mr. Scrobby accidentally in Rufford and they two had together discussed the affairs of the young Lord. They came to an agreement that the young Lord was a tyrant and ought to be put down, and Scrobby showed how it was to be done. Scrobby instigated the action about the pheasants, and undertook to pay the expenses if Goarly would act in the other little matter. But, when he found that the Senator's money was forth-

coming, he had been anything but as good as his word. Goarly swore that in hard cash he had never seen more than four shillings of Scrobby's money. As to the poison, Goarly declared that he knew nothing about it; but he certainly had received a parcel of herrings from Scrobby's own hands, and in obedience to Scrobby's directions, had laid them down in Dillsborough Wood the very morning on which the hounds had come there. He owned that he supposed that there might be something in the herrings, something that would probably be deleterious to hounds as well as foxes,—or to children should the herrings happen to fall into children's hands; but he assured the Court that he had no knowledge of poison,—none whatever. Then he was made by the other side to give a complete and a somewhat prolonged account of his own life up to the present time,—this information being of course required by the learned barrister on the other side; in listening to which the Senator did become thoroughly ashamed of the Briton whom he had assisted with his generosity.

But all this would have been nothing had not Nickem secured the old woman who had sold the herrings,—and also the chemist, from whom the strychnine had been purchased as much as three years previously. This latter feat was Nickem's great triumph,—the feeling of the glory of which induced him to throw up his employment in Mr. Masters' office, and thus brought him and his family to absolute ruin within a few months in spite of the liberal answers which were made by Lord Rufford to many

of his numerous appeals. Away in Norrington the poison had been purchased as much as three years ago, and yet Nickem had had the luck to find it out. When the Scrobbyites heard that Scrobby had gone all the way to Norrington to buy strychnine to kill rats they were Scrobbyites no longer. "I hope they'll hang 'un. I do hope they'll hang 'un," said Mr. Runce quite out loud from his crowded seat just behind the attorney's bench.

The barrister of course struggled hard to earn his money. Though he could not save his client he might annoy the other side. He insisted therefore on bringing the whole affair of the pheasants before the Court, and examined the Senator at great length. He asked the Senator whether he had not found himself compelled to sympathise with the wrongs he had witnessed. The Senator declared that he had witnessed no wrongs. Why then had he interfered? Because he had thought that there might be wrong, and because he wished to see what power a poor man in this country would have against a rich one. He was induced still to think that Goarly had been ill-treated about the pheasants;—but he could not take upon himself to say that he had witnessed any wrong done. But he was quite sure that the system on which such things were managed in England was at variance with that even justice which prevailed in his own country! Yes;—by his own country he did mean Mickewa. He could tell that learned gentleman in spite of his sneers, and in spite of his evident ignorance of geography, that nowhere on the earth's surface was justice more purely administered

than in the great Western State of Mickewa. It was felt by everybody that the Senator had the best of it.

Mr. Scrobby was sent into durance for twelve months with hard labour, and Goarly was conveyed away in the custody of the police lest he should be torn to pieces by the rough lovers of hunting who were congregated outside. When the sentence had reached Mr. Runce's ears, and had been twice explained to him, first by one neighbour and then by another, his face assumed the very look which it had worn when he carried away his victuals from the Senator's side at Rufford Hall, and when he had turned his pony round on his own land on the previous evening. The man had killed a fox and might have killed a dozen hounds, and was to be locked up only for twelve months! He indignantly asked his neighbour what had come of Van Diemen's land, and what was the use of Botany Bay.

On their way back to Rufford Hall, Lord Rufford would have been triumphant, had not the Senator checked him. "It's a bad state of things altogether," he said. "Of course the promiscuous use of strychnine is objectionable."

"Rather," said his Lordship.

"But is it odd that an utterly uneducated man, one whom his country has left to grow up in the ignorance of a brute, should have recourse to any measure, however objectionable, when the law will absolutely give him no redress against the trespass made by a couple of hundred horsemen?" Lord Rufford gave it up, feeling the Senator to be a man with whom he could not argue.

CHAPTER XVI.

At Last.

When once Mrs. Morton had taken her departure for London, on the day after her grandson's death, nothing further was heard of her at Bragton. She locked up everything and took all the keys away, as though still hoping,—against hope,—that the will might turn out to be other than she expected. But when the lawyer came down to read the document he brought the keys back with him, and no further tidings reached Dillsborough respecting the old woman. She still drew her income as she had done for half a century, but never even came to look at the stone which Reginald put up on the walls of Bragton church to perpetuate the memory of his cousin. What moans she made she made in silent obscurity, and devoted the remainder of her years to putting together money for members of her own family who took no notice of her.

After the funeral, Lady Ushant returned to the house at the request of her nephew, who declared his purpose of remaining at Hoppet Hall for the present. She expostulated with him and received from him an assurance that he would take up his residence as squire at Bragton as soon as he married a wife,—should he ever do so. In the mean-

time he could, he thought, perform his duties from Hoppet Hall as well as on the spot. As a residence for a bachelor he preferred, he said, Hoppet Hall to the park. Lady Ushant yielded and returned once again to her old home,—the house in which she had been born,—and gave up her lodgings at Cheltenham. The word that he said about his possible marriage set her mind at work, and induced her to put sundry questions to him. "Of course you will marry?" she said.

"Men who have property to leave behind them usually do marry, and as I am not wiser than others, I probably may do so. But I will not admit that it is a matter of course. I may escape yet."

"I do hope you will marry. I hope it may be before I die, so that I may see her."

"And disapprove of her, ten to one."

"Certainly I shall not if you tell me that you love her."

"Then I will tell you so,—to prevent disagreeable results."

"I am quite sure there must be somebody that you like, Reginald," she said after a pause.

"Are you? I don't know that I have shown any very strong preference. I am not disposed to praise myself for many things, but I really do think that I have been as undemonstrative as most men of my age."

"Still I did hope——"

"What did you hope?"

"I won't mention any name. I don't think it is right. I have observed that more harm than good

comes of such talking, and I have determined always to avoid it. But ——." Then there was another pause. "Remember how old I am, Reginald, and when it is to be done give me at any rate the pleasure of knowing it." Of course he knew to whom she alluded, and of course he laughed at her feeble caution. But he would not say a word to encourage her to mention the name of Mary Masters. He thought that he was sure that were the girl free he would now ask her to be his wife. If he loved any one it was her. If he had ever known a woman with whom he thought it would be pleasant to share the joy and labours of life, it was Mary Masters. If he could imagine that any one constant companion would be a joy to him, she would be that person. But he had been distinctly informed that she was in love with some one, and not for worlds would he ask for that which had been given to another. And not for worlds would he hazard the chance of a refusal. He thought that he could understand the delight, that he could thoroughly enjoy the rapture, of hearing her whisper with downcast eyes, that she could love him. He had imagination enough to build castles in the air in which she reigned as princess, in which she would lie with her head upon his bosom and tell him that he was her chosen prince. But he would hardly know how to bear himself should he ask in vain. He believed he could love as well as Lawrence Twentyman, but he was sure that he could not continue his quest as that young man had done.

When Lady Ushant had been a day or two at

the house she asked him whether she might invite Mary there as her guest,—as her perpetual guest.—"I have no objection in life," he said;—"but take care that you don't interfere with her happiness."

"Because of her father and sisters?" suggested the innocent old lady.

"'Has she a father, has she a mother;
Or has she a dearer one still than all other?'"

said Reginald laughing.

"Perhaps she has."

"Then don't interfere with her happiness in that direction. How is she to have a lover come to see her out here?"

"Why not? I don't see why she shouldn't have a lover here as well as in Dillsborough. I don't object to lovers, if they are of the proper sort;—and I am sure Mary wouldn't have anything else." Reginald told her she might do as she pleased and made no further inquiry as to Mary's lovers.

A few days afterwards Mary went with her boxes to Bragton,—Mrs. Masters repeating her objections, but repeating them with but little energy. Just at this time a stroke of good fortune befell the Masters family generally which greatly reduced her power over her husband. Reginald Morton had spent an hour in the attorney's office, and had declared his purpose of restoring Mr. Masters to his old family position in regard to the Bragton estate. When she heard it she felt at once that her dominion was gone. She had based everything on the growing inferiority of her husband's position, and now he was about to have all his glory back again! She had in-

veighed against gentlemen from the day of her marriage,—and here he was, again to be immersed up to his eyes in the affairs of a gentleman. And then she had been so wrong about Goarly, and Lord Rufford had been so much better a client! And ready money had been so much more plentiful of late, owing to poor John Morton's ready-handed honesty! She had very little to say about it when Mary packed her boxes and was taken in Mr. Runciman's fly to Bragton.

Since the old days, the old days of all, since the days to which Reginald had referred when he asked her to pass over the bridge with him, she had never yet walked about the Bragton grounds. She had often been to the house, visiting Lady Ushant; but she had simply gone thither and returned. And indeed, when the house had been empty, the walk from Dillsborough to the bridge and back had been sufficient exercise for herself and her sisters. But now she could go whither she listed and bring her memory to all the old spots. With the tenacity as to household matters which characterised the ladies of the country some years since, Lady Ushant employed all her mornings and those of her young friend in making inventories of everything that was found in the house; but her afternoons were her own, and she wandered about with a freedom she had never known before. At this time Reginald Morton was up in London and had been away nearly a week. He had gone intending to be absent for some undefined time, so that Lady Ushant and Mrs. Hopkins were free from all interruption. It was as

yet only the middle of March and the lion had not altogether disappeared; but still Mary could get out. She did not care much for the wind; and she roamed about among the leafless shrubberies, thinking,—probably not of many things,—meaning always to think of the past, but unable to keep her mind from the future, the future which would so soon be the present. How long would it be before the coming of that stately dame? Was he in quest of her now? Had he perhaps postponed his demand upon her till fortune had made him rich? Of course she had no right to be sorry that he had inherited the property which had been his almost of right;—but yet, had it been otherwise, might she not have had some chance? But, oh, if he had said a word to her, only a word more than he had spoken already,—a word that might have sounded like encouragement to others beside herself, and then have been obliged to draw back because of the duty which he owed to the property,—how much worse would that have been! She did own to herself that the squire of Bragton should not look for his wife in the house of a Dillsborough attorney. As she thought of this a tear ran down her cheek and trickled down on to the wooden rail of the little bridge.

"There's no one to give you an excuse now, and you must come and walk round with me," said a voice, close to her ear.

"Oh, Mr. Morton, how you have startled me!"

"Is there anything the matter, Mary?" said he, looking up into her face.

"Only you have startled me so."

"Has that brought tears into your eyes."

"Well,—I suppose so," she said trying to smile. "You were so very quiet and I thought you were in London."

"So I was this morning, and now I am here. But something else has made you unhappy."

"No; nothing."

"I wish we could be friends, Mary. I wish I could know your secret. You have a secret."

"No," she said boldly.

"Is there nothing?"

"What should there be, Mr. Morton!"

"Tell me why you were crying."

"I was not crying. Just a tear is not crying. Sometimes one does get melancholy. One can't cry when there is any one to look, and so one does it alone. I'd have been laughing if I knew that you were coming."

"Come round by the kennels. You can get over the wall;—can't you?"

"Oh yes."

"And we'll go down the old orchard, and get out by the corner of the park fence." Then he walked and she followed him, hardly keeping close by his side, and thinking as she went how foolish she had been not to have avoided the perils and fresh troubles of such a walk. When he was helping her over the wall he held her hands for a moment and she was aware of unusual pressure. It was the pressure of love,—or of that pretence of love which young men, and perhaps old men, sometimes permit themselves to affect. In an ordinary way Mary

would have thought as little of it as another girl. She might feel dislike to the man, but the affair would be too light for resentment. With this man it was different. He certainly was not justified in making the slightest expression of factitious affection. He at any rate should have felt himself bound to abstain from any touch of peculiar tenderness. She would not say a word. She would not even look at him with angry eyes. But she twitched both her hands away from him as she sprang to the ground. Then there was a passage across the orchard,—not more than a hundred yards, and after that a stile. At the stile she insisted on using her own hand for the custody of her dress. She would not even touch his outstretched arm. "You are very independent," he said.

"I have to be so."

"I cannot make you out, Mary. I wonder whether there is still anything rankling in your bosom against me."

"Oh dear no. What should rankle with me?"

"What indeed;—unless you resent my——regard."

"I am not so rich in friends as to do that, Mr. Morton."

"I don't suppose there can be many people who have the same sort of feeling for you, that I have."

"There are not many who have known me so long, certainly."

"You have some friend, I know," he said.

"More than one I hope."

"Some special friend. Who is he, Mary?"

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Morton." She then thought that he was still alluding to Lawrence Twentyman.

"Tell me, Mary."

"What am I to tell you?"

"Your father says that there is some one."

"Papa!"

"Yes;—your father."

Then she remembered it all;—how she had been driven into a half confession to her father. She could not say there was nobody. She certainly could not say who that some one was. She could not be silent, for by silence she would be confessing a passion for some other man,—a passion which certainly had no existence. "I don't know why papa should talk about me," she said, "and I certainly don't know why you should repeat what he said."

"But there is some one?" She clenched her fist, and hit out at the air with her parasol, and knit her brows as she looked up at him with a glance of fire in her eye which he had never seen there before. "Believe me, Mary," he said;—"if ever a girl had a sincere friend, you have one in me. I would not tease you by impertinence in such a matter. I will be as faithful to you as the sun. Do you love any one?"

"Yes," she said turning round at him with ferocity and shouting out her answer as she pressed on.

"Who is he, Mary?"

"What right have you to ask me? What right

can any one have? Even your aunt would not press me as you are doing."

"My aunt could not have the same interest. Who is he, Mary?"

"I will not tell you."

He paused a few moments and walked on a step or two before he spoke again. "I would it were I," he said.

"What!" she ejaculated.

"I would it were I," he repeated.

One glance of her eye stole itself round into his face, and then her face was turned quickly to the ground. Her parasol which had been raised drooped listless from her hand. All unconsciously she hastened her steps and became aware that the tears were streaming from her eyes. For a moment or two it seemed to her that all was still hopeless. If he had no more to say than that, certainly she had not a word. He had made her no tender of his love. He had not told her that in very truth she was his chosen one. After all she was not sure that she understood the meaning of those words "I would it were I." But the tears were coming so quick that she could see nothing of the things around her, and she did not dare even to put her hand up to her eyes. If he wanted her love,—if it was possible that he really wished for it,—why did he not ask for it? She felt his footsteps close to hers, and she was tempted to walk on quicker even than before. Then there came the fingers of a hand round her waist, stealing gradually on till she felt the pressure of his body on her shoulders. She put her hand up

weakly, to push back the intruding fingers,—only to leave it tight in his grasp. Then,—then was the first moment in which she realized the truth. After all he did love her. Surely he would not hold her there unless he meant her to know that he loved her. "Mary," he said. To speak was impossible, but she turned round and looked at him with imploring eyes. "Mary,—say that you will be my wife."

CHAPTER XVII.

"My own, own Husband."

YES;—it had come at last. As one may imagine to be the certainty of paradise to the doubting, fearful, all but despairing soul when it has passed through the gates of death and found in new worlds a reality of assured bliss, so was the assurance to her, conveyed by that simple request, "Mary, say that you will be my wife." It did not seem to her that any answer was necessary. Will it be required that the spirit shall assent to its entrance into Elysium? Was there room for doubt? He would never go back from his word now. He would not have spoken the word had he not been quite, quite certain. And he had loved her all that time,—when she was so hard to him! It must have been so. He had loved her, this bright one, even when he thought that she was to be given to that clay-bound rustic lover! Perhaps that was the sweetest of it all, though in draining the sweet draught she had to accuse herself of hardness, blindness and injustice. Could it be real? Was it true that she had her foot firmly placed in Paradise? He was there, close to her, with his arm still round her, and her fingers grasped within his. The word wife was still in her ears,—surely the sweetest word in all the language!

What protestation of love could have been so eloquent as that question? "Will you be my wife?" No true man, she thought, ever ought to ask the question in any other form. But her eyes were still full of tears, and as she went she knew not where she was going. She had forgotten all her surroundings, being only aware that he was with her, and that no other eyes were on them.

Then there was another stile on reaching which he withdrew his arm and stood facing her with his back leaning against it. "Why do you weep?" he said;—"and, Mary, why do you not answer my question? If there be anybody else you must tell me now."

"There is nobody else," she said almost angrily. "There never was. There never could be."

"And yet there was somebody!" She pouted her lips at him, glancing up into his face for half a second, and then again hung her head down. "Mary, do not grudge me my delight."

"No;—no;—no!"

"But you do."

"No. If there can be delight to you in so poor a thing, have it all."

"Then you must kiss me, dear." She gently came to him,—oh so gently,—and with her head still hanging, creeping towards his shoulder, thinking perhaps that the motion should have been his, but still obeying him, and then, leaning against him, seemed as though she would stoop with her lips to his hand. But this he did not endure. Seizing her quickly in his arms he drew her up, till her not un-

willing face was close to his, and there he kept her till she was almost frightened by his violence. "And now, Mary, what do you say to my question? It has to be answered."

"You know."

"But that will not do, I will have it in words. I will not be shorn of my delight."

That it should be a delight to him, was the very essence of her heaven. "Tell me what to say," she answered. "How may I say it best?"

"Reginald Morton," he began.

"Reginald," she repeated it after him, but went no farther in naming him.

"Because I love you better than any other being in the world—"

"I do."

"Ah, but say it."

"Because I love you, oh, so much better than all the world besides."

"Therefore, my own, own husband——"

"Therefore, my own, own——" Then she paused.

"Say the word."

"My own, own husband."

"I will be your true wife."

"I will be your own true loving wife." Then he kissed her again.

"That," he said, "is our little marriage ceremony under God's sky, and no other can be more binding. As soon as you, in the plentitude of your maiden power, will fix a day for the other one, and when we can get that over, then we will begin our little journey together."

"But Reginald!"

"Well, dear!"

"You haven't said anything."

"Haven't I? I thought I had said it all."

"But you haven't said it for yourself!"

"You say what you want,—and I'll repeat it quite as well as you did."

"I can't do that. Say it yourself."

"I will be your true husband for the rest of the journey;—by which I mean it to be understood that I take you into partnership on equal terms, but that I am to be allowed to manage the business just as I please."

"Yes;—that you shall," she said, quite in earnest.

"Only as you are practical and I am vague, I don't doubt that everything will fall into your hands before five years are over, and that I shall have to be told whether I can afford to buy a new book, and when I am to ask all the gentry to dinner."

"Now you are laughing at me because I shall know so little about anything."

"Come, dear; let us get over the stile and go on for another field, or we shall never get round the park." Then she jumped over after him, just touching his hand. "I was not laughing at you at all. I don't in the least doubt that in a very little time you will know everything about everything."

"I am so much afraid."

"You needn't be. I know you well enough for that. But suppose I had taken such a one as that young woman who was here with my poor cousin. Oh, heavens!"

"Perhaps you ought to have done so."

"I thank the Lord that hath delivered me."

"You ought,—you ought to have chosen some lady of high standing," said Mary, thinking with ineffable joy of the stately dame who was not to come to Bragton. "Do you know what I was thinking only the other day about it?—that you had gone up to London to look for some proper sort of person."

"And how did you mean to receive her?"

"I shouldn't have received her at all. I should have gone away. You can't do it now."

"Can't I?"

"What were you thanking the Lord for so heartily?"

"For you."

"Were you? That is the sweetest thing you have said yet. My own;—my darling;—my dearest! If only I can so live that you may be able to thank the Lord for me in years to come!"

I will not trouble the reader with all that was said at every stile. No doubt very much of what has been told was repeated again and again so that the walk round the park was abnormally long. At last, however, they reached the house, and as they entered the hall, Mary whispered to him, "Who is to tell your aunt?" she said.

"Come along," he replied striding upstairs to his aunt's bedroom, where he knew she would be at this time. He opened the door without any notice and, having waited till Mary had joined him, led

her forcibly into the middle of the room. "Here she is," he said;—"my wife elect."

"Oh, Reginald!"

"We have managed it all, and there needn't be any more said about it except to settle the day. Mary has been looking about the house and learning her duty already. She'll be able to have every bedstead and every chair by heart, which is an advantage ladies seldom possess. Then Mary rushed forward and was received into the old woman's arms.

When Reginald left them, which he did very soon after the announcement was made, Lady Ushant had a great deal to say. "I have been thinking of it, my dear,—oh,—for years;—ever since he came to Hoppet Hall. But I am sure the best way is never to say anything. If I had interfered there is no knowing how it might have been."

"Then, dear Lady Ushant, I am so glad you didn't," said Mary,—being tolerably sure at the same time within her own bosom that her loving old friend could have done no harm in that direction.

"I wouldn't say a word though I was always thinking of it. But then he is so odd, and no one can know what he means sometimes. That's what made me think when Mr. Twentyman was so very pressing——"

"That couldn't—couldn't have been possible."

"Poor young man!"

"But I always told him it was impossible."

"I wonder whether you cared about Reginald all that time." In answer to this Mary only hid her

face in the old woman's lap. "Dear me! I suppose you did all along. But I am sure it was better not to say anything, and now what will your papa and mamma say?"

"They'll hardly believe it at first."

"I hope they'll be glad."

"Glad! Why what do you suppose they would want me to do? Dear papa! And dear mamma too, because she has really been good to me. I wonder when it must be?" Then that question was discussed at great length, and Lady Ushant had a great deal of very good advice to bestow. She didn't like long engagements, and it was very essential for Reginald's welfare that he should settle himself at Bragton as soon as possible. Mary's pleas for a long day were not very urgent.

That evening at Bragton was rather long and rather dull. It was almost the first that she had ever passed in company with Reginald, and there now seemed to be a necessity of doing something peculiar, whereas there was nothing peculiar to be done. It was his custom to betake himself to his books after dinner; but he could hardly do so with ease in company with the girl who had just promised him to be his wife. Lady Ushant too wished to show her extreme joy, and made flattering but vain attempts to be ecstatic. Mary, to tell the truth, was longing for solitude, feeling that she could not yet realise her happiness.

Not even when she was in bed could she reduce her mind to order. It would have been all but impossible even had he remained the comparative

humble lord of Hoppet Hall;—but that the squire of Bragton should be her promised husband was a marvel so great that from every short slumber, she waked with fear of treacherous dreams. A minute's sleep might rob her of her joy and declare to her in the moment of waking that it was all an hallucination. It was not that he was dearer to her, or that her condition was the happier, because of his position and wealth;—but that the chance of his inheritance had lifted him so infinitely above her! She thought of the little room at home which she generally shared with one of her sisters, of her all too scanty wardrobe, of her daily tasks about the house, of her stepmother's late severity, and of her father's cares. Surely he would not hinder her from being good to them; surely he would let the young girls come to her from time to time! What an added happiness it would be if he would allow her to pass on to them some sparks of the prosperity which he was bestowing on her. And then her thoughts travelled on to poor Larry. Would he not be more contented now;—now, when he would be certain that no further frantic efforts could avail him anything. Poor Larry! Would Reginald permit her to regard him as a friend? And would he submit to friendly treatment? She could look forward and see him happy with his wife, the best loved of their neighbours;—for who was there in the world better than Larry? But she did not know how two men who had both been her lovers, would allow themselves to be brought together. But, oh, what peril had been there! It was but the other day she had

striven so hard to give the lie to her love and to become Larry's wife. She shuddered beneath the bedclothes as she thought of the danger she had run. One word would have changed all her Paradise into a perpetual wail of tears and waste of desolation. When she woke in the morning from her long sleep an effort was wanting to tell her that it was all true. Oh, if it had slipped from her then;—if she had waked after such a dream to find herself loving in despair with a sore bosom and angry heart!

She met him downstairs, early, in the study, having her first request to make to him. Might she go in at once after breakfast and tell them all? "I suppose I ought to go to your father," he said. "Let me go first," she pleaded, hanging on his arm. "I would not think that I was not mindful of them from the very beginning." So she was driven into Dillsborough in the pony carriage which had been provided for old Mrs. Morton's use, and told her own story. "Papa," she said, going to the office door. "Come into the house;—come at once." And then, within her father's arms, while her stepmother listened, she told them of her triumph. "Mr. Reginald Morton wants me to be his wife, and he is coming here to ask you."

"The Lord in heaven be good to us," said Mrs. Masters, holding up both her hands. "Is it true, child?"

"The squire!"

"It is true, papa,—and,—and——"

"And what, my love?"

"When he comes to you, you must say I will be."

There was not much danger on that score. "Was it he that you told me of?" said the attorney. To this she only nodded her assent. "It was Reginald Morton all the time? Well!"

"Why shouldn't it be he?"

"Oh no, my dear! You are a most fortunate girl,—most fortunate! But somehow I never thought of it, that a child of mine should come to live at Bragton and have it, one may say, partly as her own! It is odd after all that has come and gone. God bless you, my dear, and make you happy. You are a very fortunate child."

Mrs. Masters was quite overpowered. She had thrown herself on to the old family sofa, and was fanning herself with her handkerchief. She had been wrong throughout, and was now completely humiliated by the family success; and yet she was delighted, though she did not dare to be triumphant. She had so often asked both father and daughter what good gentlemen would do to either of them; and now the girl was engaged to marry the richest gentleman in the neighbourhood! In any expression of joy she would be driven to confess how wrong she had always been. How often had she asked what would come of Ushanting. This it was that had come of Ushanting. The girl had been made fit to be the companion of such a one as Reginald Morton, and had now fallen into the position which was suited to her. "Of course we shall see nothing of you now," she said in a whimpering voice. It was not a gracious speech, but it was almost justified by disappointments.

"Mamma, you know that I shall never separate myself from you and the girls."

"Poor Larry!" said the woman sobbing. "Of course it is all for the best; but I don't know what he'll do now."

"You must tell him, papa," said Mary; "and give him my love and bid him be a man."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Bid him be a Man."

THE little phaeton remained in Dillsborough to take Mary back to Bragton. As soon as she was gone the attorney went over to the Bush with the purpose of borrowing Runciman's pony, so that he might ride over to Chowton Farm and at once execute his daughter's last request. In the yard of the inn he saw Runciman himself, and was quite unable to keep his good news to himself. "My girl has just been with me," he said, "and what do you think she tells me?"

"That she is going to take poor Larry after all. She might do worse, Mr. Masters."

"Poor Larry! I am sorry for him. I have always liked Larry Twentyman. But that is all over now."

"She's not going to have that tweedledum young parson, surely?"

"Reginald Morton has made her a set offer."

"The squire!" Mr. Masters nodded his head three times. "You don't say so. Well, Mr. Masters, I don't begrudge it you. He might do worse. She has taken her pigs well to market at last!"

"He is to come to me at four this afternoon."

"Well done, Miss Mary! I suppose it's been going on ever so long?"

"We fathers and mothers," said the attorney, "never really know what the young ones are after. Don't mention it just at present, Runciman. You are such an old friend that I couldn't help telling you."

"Poor Larry!"

"I can have the pony, Runciman?"

"Certainly you can, Mr. Masters. Tell him to come in and talk it all over with me. If we don't look to it he'll be taking to drink regular." At that last meeting at the club, when the late squire's will was discussed, at which, as the reader may perhaps remember, a little supper was also discussed in honour of the occasion, poor Larry had not only been present, but had drunk so pottle-deep that the landlord had been obliged to put him to bed at the inn, and he had not been at all as he ought to have been after Lord Rufford's dinner. Such delinquencies were quite outside the young man's accustomed way of his life. It had been one of his recognised virtues that, living as he did a good deal among sporting men and with a full command of means, he had never drank. But now he had twice sinned before the eyes of all Dillsborough, and Runciman thought that he knew how it would be with a young man in his own house who got drunk in public to drown his sorrow. "I wouldn't see Larry go astray and spoil himself with liquor," said the good-natured publican, "for more than I should like

to name." Mr. Masters promised to take the hint, and rode off on his mission.

The entrance to Chowton Farm and Bragton gate were nearly opposite, the latter being perhaps a furlong nearer to Dillsborough. The attorney when he got to the gate stopped a moment and looked up the avenue with pardonable pride. The great calamity of his life, the stunning blow which had almost unmanned him when he was young, and from which he had never quite been able to rouse himself, had been the loss of the management of the Bragton property. His grandfather and his father had been powerful at Bragton, and he had been brought up in the hope of walking in their paths. Then strangers had come in, and he had been dispossessed. But how was it with him now? It had almost made a young man of him again when Reginald Morton, stepping into his office, asked him as a favour to resume his old task. But what was that in comparison with this later triumph? His own child was to be made queen of the place! His grandson should she be fortunate enough to be the mother of a son, would be the squire himself! His visits to the place for the last twenty years had been very rare indeed. He had been sent for lately by old Mrs. Morton,—for a purpose which if carried out would have robbed him of all his good fortune,—but he could not remember when, before that, he had even passed through the gateway. Now it would all become familiar to him again. That pony of Runciman's was pleasant in his paces, and he began to calculate whether the innkeeper would part with

the animal. He stood thus gazing at the place for some minutes till he saw Reginald Morton in the distance turning a corner of the road with Mary at his side. He had taken her from the phaeton and had then insisted on her coming out with him before she took off her hat. Mr. Masters as soon as he saw them trotted off to Chowton Farm.

Finding Larry lounging at the little garden gate Mr. Masters got off the pony and taking the young man's arm, walked off with him towards Dillsborough Wood. He told all his news at once, almost annihilating poor Larry by the suddenness of the blow. "Larry, Mr. Reginald Morton has asked my girl to marry him, and she has accepted him."

"The new squire!" said Larry, stopping himself on the path, and looking as though a gentle wind would suffice to blow him over.

"I suppose it has been that way all along, Larry, though we have not known it."

"It was Mr. Morton then that she told me of?"

"She did tell you?"

"Of course there was no chance for me if he wanted her. But why didn't they speak out, so that I could have gone away? Oh, Mr. Masters!"

"It was only yesterday she knew it herself."

"She must have guessed it."

"No;—she knew nothing till he declared himself. And to-day, this very morning, she has bade me come to you and let you know it. And she sent you her love."

"Her love!" said Larry, chucking the stick which

he held in his hands down to the ground and then stooping to pick it up again.

"Yes;—her love. Those were her words, and I am to tell you from her—to be a man."

"Did she say that?"

"Yes;—I was to come out to you at once, and bring you that as a message from her."

"Be a man! I could have been a man right enough if she would have made me one;—as good a man as Reginald Morton, though he is squire of Bragton. But of course I couldn't have given her a house like that, nor a carriage, nor made her one of the county people. If it was to go in that way, what could I hope for?"

"Don't be unjust to her, Larry."

"Unjust to her! If giving her every blessed thing I had in the world at a moment's notice was unjust, I was ready to be unjust any day of the week or any hour of the day."

"What I mean is that her heart was fixed that way before Reginald Morton was squire of Bragton. What shall I say in answer to her message? You will wish her happiness;—will you not?"

"Wish her happiness! Oh, heavens!" He could not explain what was in his mind. Wish her happiness! yes;—the happiness of the angels. But not him,—nor yet with him! And as there could be no arranging of this, he must leave his wishes unsettled. And yet there was a certain relief to him in the tidings he had heard. There was now no more doubt. He need not now remain at Chowton

thinking it possible that the girl might even yet change her mind.

"And you will bear in mind that she wishes you to be a man."

"Why did she not make me one? But that is all, all over. You tell her from me that I am not the man to whimper because I am hurt. What ought a man to do that I can't do?"

"Let her know that you are going about your old pursuits. And, Larry, would you wish her to know how it was with you at the club last Saturday?"

"Did she hear of that?"

"I am sure she has not heard of it. But if that kind of thing becomes a habit, of course she will hear of it. All Dillsborough would hear of it, if that became common. At any rate it is not manly to drown it in drink."

"Who says I do that? Nothing will drown it."

"I wouldn't speak if I had not known you so long, and loved you so well. What she means is that you should work."

"I do work."

"And hunt. Go out to-morrow and show yourself to everybody."

"If I could break my neck I would."

"Don't let every farmer's son in the county say that Lawrence Twentyman was so mastered by a girl that he couldn't ride on horseback when she said him nay."

"Everybody knows it, Mr. Masters."

"Go among them as if nobody knew it. I'll warrant that nobody will speak of it."

"I don't think any one of 'em would dare to do that," said Larry brandishing his stick.

"Where is it that the hounds are to-morrow, Larry?"

"Here; at the old kennel."

"Go out and let her see that you have taken her advice. She is there at the house, and she will recognise you in the park. Remember that she sends her love to you, and bids you be a man. And, Larry, come in and see us sometimes. The time will come, I don't doubt, when you and the squire will be fast friends."

"Never!"

"You do not know what time can do. I'll just go back now because he is to come to me this afternoon. Try and bear up and remember that it is she who bids you be a man." The attorney got upon his pony and rode back to Dillsborough.

Larry who had come back to the yard to see his friend off, returned by the road into the fields, and went wandering about for a while in Dillsborough Wood. "Bid him be a man!" Wasn't he a man? Was it disgraceful to him as a man to be broken-hearted, because a woman would not love him? If he were provoked he would fight,—perhaps better than ever, because he would be reckless. Would he not be ready to fight Reginald Morton with any weapon which could be thought of for the possession of Mary Masters? If she were in danger would he

not go down into the deep, or through fire to save her? Were not his old instincts of honesty and truth as strong in him as ever? Did manliness require that his heart should be invulnerable? If so he doubted whether he could ever be a man.

But what if she meant that manliness required him to hide the wound? Then there did come upon him a feeling of shame as he remembered how often he had spoken of his love to those who were little better than strangers to him, and thought that perhaps such loquacity was opposed to the manliness which she recommended. And his conscience smote him as it brought to his recollection the condition of his mind as he woke in Runciman's bed at the Bush on last Sunday morning. That at any rate had not been manly. How would it be with him if he made up his mind never to speak again to her, and certainly not to him, and to take care that that should be the only sign left of his suffering? He would hunt, and be keener than ever;—he would work upon the land with increased diligence;—he would give himself not a moment to think of anything. She should see and hear what he could do;—but he would never speak to her again. The hounds would be at the old kennels to-morrow. He would be there. The place no doubt was Morton's property, but on hunting mornings all the lands of the county,—and of the next counties if they can be reached,—are the property of the hunt. Yes; he would be there; and she would see him in his scarlet coat, and smartest cravat, with his boots and breeches neat as those of Lord Rufford;—and she should know that he was

doing as she bade him. But he would never speak to her again!

As he was returning round the wood, whom should he see skulking round the corner of it but Goarly?

"What business have you in here?" he said, feeling half-inclined to take the man by the neck and drag him out of the copse.

"I saw you, Mr. Twentyman, and I wanted just to have a word with you."

"You are the biggest rascal in all Rufford," said Larry. "I wonder the lads have left you with a whole bone in your skin."

"What have I done worse than any other poor man, Mr. Twentyman? When I took them herrings I didn't know there was p'ison; and if I hadn't took 'em, another would. I am going to cut it out of this, Mr. Twentyman."

"May the——go along with you!" said Larry, wishing his neighbour a very unpleasant companion.

"And of course I must sell the place. Think what it would be to you! I shouldn't like it to go into his Lordship's hands. It's all through Bean I know, but his Lordship has had a down on me ever since he came to the property. It's as true as true about my old woman's geese. There's forty acres of it. What would you say to £40 an acre?"

The idea of having the two extra fields made Larry's mouth water, in spite of all his misfortunes. The desire for land among such as Larry Twentyman is almost a disease in England. With these two fields he would be able to walk almost round

Dillsborough Wood without quitting his own property. He had been talking of selling Chowton within the last week or two. He had been thinking of selling it at the moment when Mr. Masters rode up to him. And yet now he was almost tempted to a new purchase by this man. But the man was too utterly a blackguard,—was too odious to him.

"If it comes into the market, I may bid for it as well as another," he said, "but I wouldn't let myself down to have any dealings with you."

"Then, Mr. Larry, you shall never have a sod of it," said Goarly, dropping himself over the fence on to his own field.

A few minutes afterwards Larry met Bean, and told him that Goarly had been in the wood. "If I catch him, Mr. Twentyman, I'll give him sore bones," said Bean. "I wonder how he ever got back to his own place alive that day." Then Bean asked Larry whether he meant to be at the meet to-morrow, and Larry said that he thought he should. "Tony's almost afraid to bring them in even yet," said Bean; "but if there's a herring left in this wood, I'll eat it myself—strychnine and all."

After that Larry went and looked at his horses, and absolutely gave his mare "Bicycle" a gallop round the big grass field himself. Then those who were about the place knew that something had happened, and that he was in a way to be cured. "You'll hunt to-morrow, won't you, Larry?" said his mother affectionately.

"Who told you?"

"Nobody told me;—but you will, Larry; won't you?"

"May be I will." Then, as he was leaving the room, when he was in the door-way, so that she should not see his face, he told her the news. "She's going to marry the squire, yonder."

"Mary Masters!"

"I always hated him from the first moment I saw him. What do you expect from a fellow who never gets a-top of a horse?" Then he turned away, and was not seen again till long after tea-time.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Is it tanti?"

REGINALD MORTON entertained serious thoughts of cleansing himself from the reproach which Larry cast upon him when describing his character to his mother. "I think I shall take to hunting," he said to Mary.

"But you'll tumble off, dear."

"No doubt I shall, and I must try to begin in soft places. I don't see why I shouldn't do it gradually in a small way. I shouldn't ever become a Nimrod, like Lord Rufford or your particular friend Mr. Twenty-man."

"He is my particular friend."

"So I perceive. I couldn't shine as he shines, but I might gradually learn to ride after him at a respectful distance. A man at Rome ought to do as the Romans do."

"Why wasn't Hoppet Hall Rome as much as Bragton?"

"Well;—it wasn't. While fortune enabled me to be happy at Hoppet Hall——"

"That is unkind, Reg."

"While fortune oppressed me with celibate misery at Hoppet Hall, nobody hated me for not hunting;—and as I could not very well afford it, I was not

considered to be entering a protest against the amusement. As it is now I find that unless I consent to risk my neck at any rate five or six times every winter, I shall be regarded in that light."

"I wouldn't be frightened into doing anything I didn't like," said Mary.

"How do you know that I shan't like it? The truth is I have had a letter this morning from a benevolent philosopher which has almost settled the question for me. He wants me to join a society for the suppression of British sports as being barbarous and antipathetic to the intellectual pursuits of an educated man. I would immediately shoot, fish, hunt and go out ratting, if I could hope for the least success. I know I should never shoot anything but the dog and the gamekeepers, and that I should catch every weed in the river; but I think that in the process of seasons I might jump over a hedge."

"Kate will show you the way to do that."

"With Kate and Mr. Twentyman to help me, and a judicious system of liberal tips to Tony Tuppett, I could make my way about on a quiet old nag, and live respected by my neighbours. The fact is I hate with my whole heart the trash of the philanimalist."

"What is a—a—I didn't quite catch the thing you hate?"

"The thing is a small knot of self-anxious people who think that they possess among them all the bowels of the world."

"Possess all the what, Reginald?"

"I said bowels,—using an ordinary but very ill-

expressed metaphor. The ladies and gentlemen to whom I allude, not looking very clearly into the systems of pains and pleasures in accordance with which we have to live, put their splay feet down now upon this ordinary operation and now upon that, and call upon the world to curse the cruelty of those who will not agree with them. A lady whose tippet is made from the skins of twenty animals who have been wired in the snow and then left to die of starvation——"

"Oh, Reginald!"

"That is the way of it. I am not now saying whether it is right or wrong. The lady with the tippet will justify the wires and the starvation because, as she will say, she uses the fur. An honest blanket would keep her just as warm. But the fox who suffers perhaps ten minutes of agony should he not succeed as he usually does in getting away,—is hunted only for amusement! It is true that the one fox gives amusement for hours to perhaps some hundred;—but it is only for amusement. What riles me most is that these would-be philosophers do not or will not see that recreation is as necessary to the world as clothes or food, and the providing of the one is as legitimate a business as the purveying of the other."

"People must eat and wear clothes."

"And practically they must be amused. They ignore the great doctrine of 'tanti.'"

"I never heard of it."

"You shall, dear, some day. It is the doctrine by which you should regulate everything you do and

every word you utter. Now do you and Kate put on your hats and we'll walk to the bridge."

This preaching of a sermon took place after breakfast at Bragton on the morning of Saturday, and the last order had reference to a scheme they had on foot to see the meet at the old kennels. On the previous afternoon Reginald Morton had come into Dillsborough and had very quietly settled everything with the attorney. Having made up his mind to do the thing he was very quick in the doing of it. He hated the idea of secrecy in such an affair, and when Mrs. Masters asked him whether he had any objection to have the marriage talked about, expressed his willingness that she should employ the town crier to make it public if she thought it expedient. "Oh, Mr. Morton, how very funny you are," said the lady. "Quite in earnest, Mrs. Masters," he replied. Then he kissed the two girls who were to be his sisters, and finished the visit by carrying off the younger to spend a day or two with her sister at Bragton. "I know," he said, whispering to Mary as he left the front door, "that I ought not to go out hunting so soon after my poor cousin's death; but as he was a cousin once removed, I believe I may walk as far as the bridge without giving offence."

When they were there they saw all the arrivals just as they were seen on the same spot a few months earlier by a very different party. Mary and Kate stood on the bridge together, while he remained a little behind leaning on the style. She, poor girl, had felt some shame in showing herself,

knowing that some who were present would have heard of her engagement, and that others would be told of it as soon as she was seen. "Are you ashamed of what you are going to do?" he asked.

"Ashamed! I don't suppose that there is a girl in England so proud as I am at this minute."

"I don't know that there is anything to be proud of, but if you are not ashamed, why shouldn't you show yourself? Marriage is an honourable state!" She could only pinch his arm, and do as he bade her.

Glomax in his tandem, and Lord Rufford in his drag, were rather late. First there came one or two hunting men out of the town, Runciman, Dr. Nupper, and the hunting saddler. Then there arrived Henry Stubbings with a string of horses, mounted by little boys, ready for his customers, and full of wailing to his friend Runciman. Here was nearly the end of March and the money he had seen since Christmas was little more, as he declared, than what he could put into his eye and see none the worse. "Charge 'em ten per cent. interest," said Runciman. "Then they thinks they can carry on for another year," said Stubbings despondingly. While this was going on, Larry walked his favourite mare "Bicycle" on to the ground, dressed with the utmost care, but looking very moody, almost fierce, as though he did not wish anybody to speak to him. Tony Tuppett, who had known him since a boy, nodded at him affectionately, and said how glad he was to see him; —but even this was displeasing to Larry. He did not see the girls on the bridge, but took up his

place near them. He was thinking so much of his own unhappiness and of what he believed others would say of him, that he saw almost nothing. There he sat on his mare, carrying out the purpose to which he had been led by Mary's message, but wishing with all his heart that he was back again, hidden within his own house at the other side of the wood.

Mary, as soon as she saw him, blushed up to her eyes, then turning round looked with wistful eyes into the face of the man she was engaged to marry, and with rapid step walked across the bridge up to the side of Larry's horse, and spoke to him with her sweet low voice. "Larry," she said. He turned round to her very quickly, showing how much he was startled. Then she put up her hand to him, and of course he took it. "Larry, I am so glad to see you. Did papa give you a message?"

"Yes, Miss Masters. He told me, I know it all."

"Say a kind word to me, Larry."

"I—I—I—You know very well what's in my mind. Though it were to kill me, I should wish you well."

"I hope you'll have a good hunt, Larry." Then she retired back to the bridge and again looked to her lover to know whether he would approve. There were so few there, and Larry had been so far apart from the others, that she was sure no one had heard the few words which had passed between them; nor could anyone have observed what she had done, unless it were old Nupper, or Mr. Runciman, or Tony Tuppett. But yet she thought that it perhaps was

bold, and that he would be angry. But he came up to her, and placing himself between her and Kate, whispered into her ear, "Bravely done, my girl. After a little I will try to be as brave, but I could never do it as well." Larry in the meantime had moved his mare away, and before the Master had arrived, was walking slowly up his own road to Chowton Farm.

The Captain was soon there, and Lord Rufford with his friends, and Harry Stubbings' string, and Tony were set in motion. But before they stirred there was a consultation,—to which Bean the gamekeeper was called,—as to the safety of Dillsborough Wood. Dillsborough Wood had not been drawn yet since Scrobby's poison had taken effect on the old fox, and there were some few who affected to think that there still might be danger. Among these was the Master himself, who asked Fred Botsey with a sneer whether he thought that such hounds as those were to be picked up at every corner. But Bean again offered to eat any herring that might be there, poison included, and Lord Rufford laughed at the danger. "It's no use my having foxes, Glomax, if you won't draw the cover." This the Lord said with a touch of anger, and the Lord's anger, if really roused, might be injurious. It was therefore decided that the hounds should again be put through the Bragton shrubberies,—just for compliment to the new squire;—and that then they should go off to Dillsborough Wood as rapidly as might be.

Larry walked his beast all the way up home very

slowly, and getting off her, put her into the stable and went into the house.

"Is anything wrong?" asked the mother.

"Everything is wrong." Then he stood with his back to the kitchen fire for nearly half an hour without speaking a word. He was trying to force himself to follow out her idea of manliness, and telling himself that it was impossible. The first tone of her voice, the first glance at her face, had driven him home. Why had she called him Larry again and again, so tenderly, in that short moment, and looked at him with those loving eyes? Then he declared to himself, without uttering a word, that she did not understand anything about it; she did not comprehend the fashion of his love when she thought, as she did think, that a soft word would be compensation. He looked round to see if his mother or the servant were there, and when he found that the coast was clear, he dashed his hands to his eyes and knocked away the tears. He threw up both his arms and groaned, and then he remembered her message, "Bid him be a man."

At that moment he heard the sound of horses, and going near the window, so as to be hidden from curious eyes as they passed, he saw the first whip trot on, with the hounds after him, and Tony Tuppett among them. Then there was a long string of horsemen, all moving up to the wood, and a carriage or two, and after them the stragglers of the field. He let them all go by, and then he repeated the words again, "Bid him be a man."

He took up his hat, jammed it on his head, and went out into the yard, As he crossed to the stables Runciman came up alone. Why, Larry, you'll be late," he said.

"Go on, Mr. Runciman, I'll follow."

"I'll wait till you are mounted. You'll be better for somebody with you. You've got the mare, have you? You'll show some of them your heels if they get away from here. Is she as fast as she was last year, do you think?"

"Upon my word I don't know," said Larry, as he dragged himself into the saddle.

"Shake yourself, old fellow, and don't carry on like that. What is she after all but a girl?" The poor fellow looked at his intending comforter, but couldn't speak a word. "A man shouldn't let hisself be put upon by circumstances so as to be only half hisself. Hang it, man, cheer up, and don't let 'em see you going about like that. It ain't what a fellow of your kidney ought to be. If they haven't found I'm a nigger,—and by the holy he's away. Come along Larry and forget the petticoats for half an hour." So saying, Runciman broke into a gallop, and Larry's mare doing the same, he soon passed the innkeeper and was up at the covert side just as Tony Tuppett with half a score of hounds round him, was forcing his way through the bushes, out of the coverts into the open field. "There ain't no poison this time, Mr. Twentyman," said the huntsman, as, setting his eye on a gap in the further fence, he made his way across the field.

The fox headed away for a couple of miles towards Impington, as was the custom with the Dillsborough foxes, and then turning to the left was soon over the country borders into Ufford. The pace from the first starting was very good. Larry, under such provocation as that of course would ride, and he did ride. Up as far as the country brook, many were well up. The land was no longer deep; and as the field had not been scattered at the starting, all the men who usually rode were fairly well placed as they came to the brook; but it was acknowledged afterwards that Larry was over it the first. Glomax got into it,—as he always does into brooks, and young Runce hurt his horse's shoulder at the opposite bank. Lord Rufford's horse balked it, to the Lord's disgust; but took it afterwards, not losing very much ground. Tony went in and out, the crafty old dog knowing the one bit of hard ground. Then they crossed Purbeck field, as it is still called —which twenty years since was a wide waste of land, but is now divided by new fences, very grievous to half-blown horses. Sir John Purefoy got a nasty fall over some stiff timber, and here many a half-hearted rider turned to the right into the lane. Hampton and his Lordship, and Battersby, with Fred Botsey and Larry, took it all as it came, but through it all not one of them could give Larry a lead. Then there was manœuvring into a wood and out of it again, and that saddest of all sights to the riding man, a cloud of horsemen on the road as well placed as though they had ridden the line throughout. In getting out of the road Hampton's

horse slipped up with him, and, though he saw it all, he was never able again to compete for a place. The fox went through the Hampton Wick coverts without hanging a moment, just throwing the hounds for two minutes off their scent at the gravel pits. The check was very useful to Tony, who had got his second horse and came up sputtering,—begging the field for G—'s sake to be,—in short to be anywhere but where they were. Then they were off again down the hill to the left, through Mappy springs and along the top of Ilveston copse, every yard of which is grass,—till the number began to be select. At last in a turnip field, three yards from the fence, they turned him over, and Tony, as he jumped off his horse among the hounds, acknowledged to himself that Larry might have had his hand first upon the animal had he cared to do so.

"Twentyman, I'll give you two hundred for your mare," said Lord Rufford.

"Ah, my Lord, there are two things that would about kill me."

"What are they, Larry?" asked Harry Stubbings.

"To offend his Lordship, or to part with the mare."

"You shall do neither," said Lord Rufford; "but upon my word I think she's the fastest thing in this county." All of which did not cure poor Larry, but it helped to enable him to be a man.

The fox had been killed close to Norrington, and the run was remembered with intense gratification for many a long day after. "It's that kind of thing

that makes hunting beat everything else," said Lord Rufford, as he went home. That day's sport certainly had been "tanti," and Glomax and the two counties boasted of it for the next three years.

CHAPTER XX.

Benedict.

LADY PENWETHER declared to her husband that she had never seen her brother so much cowed as he had been by Miss Trefoil's visit to Rufford. It was not only that he was unable to assert his usual powers immediately after the attack made upon him, but that on the following day, at Scrobby's trial, on the Saturday when he started to the meet, and on the Sunday following when he allowed himself to be easily persuaded to go to church, he was silent, sheepish, and evidently afraid of himself. "It is a great pity that we shouldn't take the ball at the hop," she said to Sir George.

"What ball;—and what hop?"

"Get him to settle himself. There ought to be an end to this kind of thing now. He has got out of this mess, but every time it becomes worse and worse, and he'll be taken in horribly by some harpy if we don't get him to marry decently. I fancy he was very nearly going in this last affair." Sir George, in this matter, did not quite agree with his wife. It was in his opinion right to avoid Miss Trefoil, but he did not see why his brother-in-law should be precipitated into matrimony with Miss Penge. According to his ideas in such matters a

man should be left alone. Therefore, as was customary with him when he opposed his wife, he held his tongue. "You have been called in three or four times when he has been just on the edge of the cliff."

"I don't know that that is any reason why he should be pushed over."

"There is not a word to be said against Caroline. She has a fine fortune of her own, and some of the best blood in the kingdom."

"But if your brother does not care for her ——"

"That's nonsense, George. As for liking, it's all the same to him. Rufford is good-natured, and easily pleased, and can like any woman. Caroline is very good-looking,—a great deal handsomer than that horrid creature ever was,—and with manners fit for any position. I've no reason to wish to force a wife on him; but of course he'll marry, and unless he's guided, he'll certainly marry badly."

"Is Miss Penge in love with him?" asked Sir George in a tone of voice that was intended to be provoking. His wife looked at him, asking him plainly by her countenance whether he was such a fool as that? Was it likely that any untitled young lady of eight-and-twenty should be wanting in the capacity of being in love with a young lord, handsome and possessed of forty thousand a year without encumbrances? Sir George, though he did not approve, was not eager enough in his disapproval to lay any serious embargo on his wife's proceedings.

The first steps taken were in the direction of the hero's personal comfort. He was flattered and

petted, as his sister knew how to flatter and pet him;—and Miss Penge in a quiet way assisted Lady Penwether in the operation. For a day or two he had not much to say for himself;—but every word he did say was an oracle. His horses were spoken of as demigods, and his projected fishing operations for June and July became matters of most intense interest. Evil things were said of Arabella Trefoil, but in all the evil things said no hint was given that Lord Rufford had behaved badly or had been in danger Lady Penwether, not quite knowing the state of his mind, thought that there might still be some lurking affection for the young lady. "Did you ever see anybody look so vulgar and hideous as she did when she marched across the park?" asked Lady Penwether.

"Thank goodness I did not see her," said Miss Penge.

"I never saw her look so handsome as when she came up to me," said Lord Rufford.

"But such a thing to do!"

"Awful!" said Miss Penge.

"She is the pluckiest girl I ever came across in my life," said Lord Rufford. He knew very well what they were at, and was already almost inclined to think that they might as well be allowed to have their way. Miss Penge was ladylike, quiet, and good, and was like a cool salad in a man's mouth after spiced meat. And the money would enable him to buy the Purefoy property which would probably be soon in the market. But he felt that he might as well give them a little trouble before he

allowed himself to be hooked. It certainly was not by any arrangement of his own that he found himself walking alone with Miss Penge that Sunday afternoon in the park;—nor did it seem to be by hers. He thought of that other Sunday at Mistletoe, when he had been compelled to wander with Arabella, when he met the Duchess, and when, as he often told himself, a little more good-nature or a little more courage on her grace's part would have completed the work entirely. Certainly had the Duke come to him that night, after the jou ney from Stamford, he would have capitulated. As he walked along and allowed himself to be talked to by Miss Penge, he did tell himself that she would be the better angel of the two. She could not hunt with him, as Arabella would have done; but then a man does not want his wife to gallop across the country after him. She might perhaps object to cigars and soda water after eleven o'clock, but then what assurance had he that Arabella would not have objected still more loudly. She had sworn that she would never be opposed to his little pleasures; but he knew what such oaths were worth. Marriage altogether was a bore; but having a name and a large fortune, it was incumbent on him to transmit them to an immediate descendant. And perhaps it was a worse bore to grow old without having specially bound any other human being to his interests. "How well I recollect that spot," said Miss Penge. "It was there that Major Caneback took the fence."

"That was not where he fell."

"Oh no;—I did not see that. It would have

haunted me for ever had I done so. But it was there that I thought he must kill himself. That was a terrible time, Lord Rufford."

"Terrible to poor Caneback certainly."

"Yes, and to all of us. Do you remember that fearful ball? We were all so unhappy,—because you suffered so much."

"It was bad."

"And that woman who persecuted you! We all knew that you felt it."

"I fe't that poor man's death."

"Yes;—and you felt the other nuisance too."

"I remember that you told me that you would cling on to my legs."

"Eleanor said so;—and when it was explained to me, what clinging on to your legs meant, I remember saying that I wished to be understood as being one to help. I love your sister so well that anything which would break her heart would make me unhappy."

"You did not care for my own welfare in the matter?"

"What ought I say, Lord Rufford, in answer to that? Of course I did care. But I knew that it was impossible that you should really set your affections on such a person as Miss Trefoil. I told Eleanor that it would come to nothing. I was sure of it."

"Why should it have come to nothing,—as you call it?"

"Because you are a gentleman and because she —is not a lady. I don't know that we women can

quite understand how it is that you men amuse yourselves with such persons."

"I didn't amuse myself."

"I never thought you did very much. There was something I suppose in her riding, something in her audacity, something perhaps in her vivacity;—but through it all I did not think that you were enjoying yourself. You may be sure of this, Lord Rufford, that when a woman is not specially liked by any other woman, she ought not to be specially liked by any man. I have never heard that Miss Trefoil had a female friend."

From day to day there were little meetings and conversations of this kind till Lord Rufford found himself accustomed to Miss Penge's solicitude for his welfare. In all that passed between them the lady affected a status that was altogether removed from that of making or receiving love. There had come to be a peculiar friendship,—because of Eleanor. A week of this kind of thing had not gone by before Miss Penge found herself able to talk of and absolutely to describe this peculiar feeling, and could almost say how pleasant was such friendship, divested of the burden of all amatory possibilities. But through it all Lord Rufford knew that he would have to marry Miss Penge.

It was not long before he yielded in pure weariness. Who has not felt, as he stood by a stream into which he knew that it was his fate to plunge, the folly of delaying the shock? In his present condition he had no ease. His sister threatened him with a return of Arabella. Miss Penge required

from him sensational conversation. His brother-in-law was laughing at him in his sleeve. His very hunting friends treated him as though the time were come. In all that he did the young lady took an interest which bored him excessively,—to put an end to which he only saw one certain way. He therefore asked her to be Lady Rufford before he got on his drag to go out hunting on the last Saturday in March. "Rufford," she said, looking up into his face with her lustrous eyes, and speaking with a sweet, low, silvery voice,—"are you sure of yourself?"

"Oh, yes."

"Quite sure of yourself?"

"Never so sure in my life."

"Then dearest, dearest Rufford, I will not scruple to say that I also am sure." And so the thing was settled very much to his comfort. He could hardly have done better had he sought through all England for a bride. She will be true to him, and never give him cause for a moment's jealousy. She will like his title, his house, and his property. She will never spend a shilling more than she ought to do. She will look very sharply after him, but will not altogether debar him from his accustomed pleasures. She will grace his table, nurse his children, and never for a moment give him cause to be ashamed of her. He will think that he loves her, and after a lapse of ten or fifteen years will probably really be fond of her. From the moment that she is Lady Rufford, she will love him,—as she loves everything that is her own.

In spite of all his antecedents no one doubted his faith in this engagement;—no one wished to hurry him very much. When the proposition had been made and accepted, and when the hero of it had gone off on his drag, Miss Penge communicated the tidings to her friend. "I think he has behaved very wisely," said Lady Penwether.

"Well;—feeling as I do of course I think he has. I hope he thinks the same of me. I had many doubts about it, but I do believe that I can make him a good wife." Lady Penwether thought that her friend was hardly sufficiently thankful, and strove to tell her so in her own gentle, friendly way. But Miss Penge held her head up and was very stout, and would not acknowledge any cause for gratitude. Lady Penwether, when she saw how it was to be gave way a little. Close friendship with her future sister-in-law would be very necessary to her comfort, and Miss Penge, since the law-suit was settled, had never been given to yielding.

"My dear Rufford," said the sister affectionately, "I congratulate you with all my heart; I do indeed. I am quite sure that you could not have done better."

"I don't know that I could."

"She is a gem of inestimable price, and most warmly attached to you. And if this property is to be bought, of course the money will be a great thing."

"Money is always comfortable."

"Of course it is, and then there is nothing to be desired. If I had named the girl that I would have

wished you to love, it would been Caroline Penge." She need hardly have said this as she had in fact been naming the girl for the last three or four months. The news was soon spread about the country and the fashionable world; and everybody was pleased,—except the Trefoil family.

CHAPTER XXI.

Arabella's Success.

When Arabella Trefoil got back to Portugal Street after her visit to Rufford, she was ill. The effort she had made, the unaccustomed labour, and the necessity of holding herself aloft before the man who had rejected her, were together more than her strength could bear, and she was taken up to bed in a fainting condition. It was not till the next morning that she was able even to open the letter which contained the news of John Morton's legacy. When she had read the letter and realized the contents, she took to weeping in a fashion very unlike her usual habits. She was still in bed, and there she remained for two or three days, during which she had time to think of her past life,—and to think also a little of the future. Old Mrs. Green came to her once or twice a day, but she was necessarily left to the nursing of her own maid. Every evening Mounsèr Green called and sent up tender enquiries; but in all this there was very little to comfort her. There she lay with the letter in her hand, thinking that the only man who had endeavoured to be of service to her was he whom she had treated with unexampled perfidy. Other men had petted her, had amused themselves with her, and then thrown her over, had

lied to her and laughed at her, till she had been taught to think that a man was a heartless, cruel, slippery animal, made indeed to be caught occasionally, but in the catching of which infinite skill was wanted, and in which infinite skill might be thrown away. But this man had been true to her to the last in spite of her treachery!

She knew that she was heartless herself, and that she belonged to a heartless world;—but she knew also that there was a world of women who were not heartless. Such women had looked down upon her as from a great height, but she in return had been able to ridicule them. They had chosen their part, and she had chosen hers,—and had thought that she might climb to the glory of wealth and rank, while they would have to marry hard-working clergymen and briefless barristers. She had often been called upon to vindicate to herself the part she had chosen, and had always done so by magnifying in her own mind the sin of the men with whom she had to deal. At this moment she thought that Lord Rufford had treated her villainously, whereas her conduct to him had been only that which the necessity of the case required. To Lord Rufford she had simply behaved after the manner of her class, heartless of course, but only in the way which the "custom of the trade" justified. Each had tried to circumvent the other, and she as the weaker had gone to the wall. But John Morton had believed in her and loved her. Oh, how she wished that she had deserted her class, and clung to him,—even though she should now have been his widow. The legacy was a burden to her.

Even she had conscience enough to be sorry for a day or two that he had named her in his will.

And what would she do with herself for the future? Her quarrel with her mother had been very serious, each swearing that under no circumstances would she again consent to live with the other. The daughter of course knew that the mother would receive her again should she ask to be received. But in such case she must go back with shortened pinions and blunted beak. Her sojourn with Mrs. Green was to last for one month, and at the end of that time she must seek for a home. If she put John Morton's legacy out to interest, she would now be mistress of a small income;—but she understood money well enough to know to what obduracy of poverty she would thus be subjected. As she looked the matter closer in the face the horrors became more startling and more manifest. Who would have her in their houses? Where should she find society,—where the possibility of lovers? What would be her life, and what her prospects? Must she give up for ever the game for which she had lived, and own that she had been conquered in the fight and beaten even to death? Then she thought over the long list of her past lovers, trying to see whether there might be one of the least desirable at whom she might again cast her javelins. But there was not one.

The tender messages from Mounser Green came to her day by day. Mounser Green, as the nephew of her hostess, had been very kind to her; but hitherto he had never appeared to her in the light

of a possible lover. He was a clerk in the Foreign Office, waiting for his aunt's money;—a man whom she had met in society and whom she knew to be well thought of by those above him in wealth and rank; but she had never regarded him as prey,—or as a man whom any girl would want to marry. He was one of those of the other sex who would most probably look out for prey,—who, if he married at all, would marry an heiress. She, in her time, had been on good terms with many such a one,—had counted them among her intimate friends, had made use of them and been useful to them,—but she had never dreamed of marrying any one of them. They were there in society for altogether a different purpose. She had not hesitated to talk to Mounser Green about Lord Rufford,—and though she had pretended to make a secret of the place to which she was going when he had taken her to the railway, she had not at all objected to his understanding her purpose. Up to that moment there had certainly been no thought on her part of transferring what she was wont to call her affections to Mounser Green as a suitor.

But as she lay in bed, thinking of her future life, tidings were brought to her by Mrs. Green that Mounser had accepted the mission to Patagonia. Could it be that her destiny intended her to go out to Patagonia as the wife, if not of one minister, then of another? There would be a career,—a way of living, if not exactly that which she would have chosen. Of Patagonia, as a place of residence, she had already formed ideas. In some of those moments in which she had foreseen that Lord Ruf-

ford would be lost to her, she had told herself that it would be better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven. Among Patagonian women she would probably be the first. Among English ladies it did not seem that at present she had prospect of a high place. It would be long before Lord Rufford would be forgotten,—and she had not space enough before her for forgettings which would require time for their accomplishment. Mounser Green had declared with energy that Lord Rufford had behaved very badly. There are men who feel it to be their mission to come in for the relief of ladies who have been badly treated. If Mounser Green wished to be one of them on her behalf, and to take her out with him to his very far-away employment, might not this be the best possible solution of her present difficulties?

On the evening of the third day after her return she was able to come down-stairs and the line of thought which has been suggested for her induced her to undertake some trouble with the white and pink robe, or dressing-gown in which she had appeared. "Well, my dear, you are smart," the old lady said.

> "'Odious in woollen;—'twould a saint provoke,
> Were the last words which poor Narcissa spoke.'"

said Arabella, who had long since provided herself with this quotation for such occasions. "I hope I am not exactly dying, Mrs. Green; but I don't see why I should not object to be 'frightful,' as well as the young lady who was."

"I suppose it's all done for Mounser's benefit?"

"Partly for you, partly for Mounser, and a good

deal for myself. What a very odd name. Why did they call him Mounser? I used to think it was because he was in the Foreign Office,—a kind of chaff, as being half a Frenchman."

"My mother's maiden name was Mounser, and it isn't French at all. I don't see why it should not be as good a Christian name as Willoughby or Howard."

"Quite as good, and much more distinctive. There can't be another Mounser Green in the world."

"And very few other young men like him. At my time of life I find it very hard his going away. And what will he do in such a place as that,—all alone and without a wife?"

"Why don't you make him take a wife?"

"There isn't time now. He'll have to start in May."

"Plenty of time. Trousseaus are now got up by steam, and girls are kept ready to marry at the shortest notice. If I were you I should certainly advise him to take out some healthy young woman, capable of bearing the inclemencies of the Patagonian climate."

"As for that the climate is delicious," said Mrs. Green, who certainly was not led by her guest's manner to suspect the nature of her guest's more recent intentions.

Mounser Green on this afternoon came to Portugal Street before he himself went out to dinner, choosing the hour at which his aunt was wont to adorn herself. "And so you are to be the hero of Patagonia?"

said Arabella as she put out her hand to congratulate him on his appointment.

"I don't know about heroism, but it seems that I am to go there," said Mounser with much melancholy in his voice.

"I should have thought you were the last man to leave London willingly."

"Well, yes; I should have said so myself. And I do flatter myself I shall be missed. But what had I before me here? This may lead to something."

"Indeed you will be missed, Mr. Green."

"It's very kind of you to say so."

"Patagonia! It is such a long way off!" Then she began to consider whether he had ever heard of her engagement with the last Minister-elect to that country. That he should know all about Lord Rufford was a matter of course; but what chance could there be for her if he also knew that other affair? "We were intimately acquainted with Mr. Morton in Washington and were surprised that he should have accepted it."

"Poor Morton. He was a friend of mine. We used to call him the Paragon because he never made mistakes. I had heard that you and Lady Augusta were a good deal with him in Washington."

"We were, indeed. You do not know my good news as yet, I suppose. Your Paragon, as you call him, has left me five thousand pounds." Of course it would be necessary that he should know it some day if this new plan of hers were to be carried out;

—and if the plan should fail, his knowing it could do no harm.

"How very nice for you. Poor Morton!"

"It is well that somebody should behave well, when others treat one so badly, Mr. Green. Yes; he has left me five thousand pounds." Then she showed him the lawyer's letter. "Perhaps as I am so separated at present from all my own people by this affair with Lord Rufford, you would not mind seeing the man for me." Of course he promised to see the lawyer and to do everything that was necessary. "The truth is, Mr. Green, Mr. Morton was very warmly attached to me. I was a foolish girl, and could not return it. I thought of it long and was then obliged to tell him that I could not entertain just that sort of feeling for him. You cannot think now how bitter is my regret;—that I should have allowed myself to trust a man so false and treacherous as Lord Rufford, and that I should have perhaps added a pang to the deathbed of one so good as Mr. Morton." And so she told her little story;—not caring very much whether it were believed or not, but finding it to be absolutely essential that some story should be told.

During the next day or two Mounser Green thought a great deal about it. That the story was not exactly true, he knew very well. But it is not to be expected that a girl before her marriage should be exactly true about her old loves. That she had been engaged to Lord Rufford and had been cruelly jilted by him he did believe. That she had at one time been engaged to the Paragon he was almost

sure. The fact that the Paragon had left her money was a strong argument that she had not behaved badly to him. But there was much that was quite certain. The five thousand pounds were quite certain; and the money, though it could not be called a large fortune for a young lady, would pay his debts and send him out a free man to Patagonia. And the family honours were certainly true. She was the undoubted niece of the Duke of Mayfair, and such a connection might in his career be of service to him. Lord Mistletoe was a prig, but would probably be a member of the Government. Mounser Green liked Dukes, and loved a Duchess in his heart of hearts. If he could only be assured that this niece would not be repudiated he thought that the speculation might answer in spite of any ambiguity in the lady's antecedents.

"Have you heard about Arabella's good fortune?" young Glossop asked the next morning at the office.

"You forget, my boy," said Mounser Green, "that the young lady of whom you speak is a friend of mine."

"Oh lord! So I did. I beg your pardon, old fellow." There was no one else in the room at the moment, and Glossop in asking the question had in truth forgotten what he had heard of this new intimacy.

"Don't you learn to be ill-natured, Glossop. And remember that there is no form so bad as that of calling young ladies by their Christian names. I do know that poor Morton has left Miss Trefoil a sum

of money which is at any rate evidence that he thought well of her to the last."

"Of course it is. I didn't mean to offend you. I wouldn't do it for worlds,—as you are going away." That afternoon, when Green's back was turned, Glossop gave it as his opinion that something particular would turn up between Mounser and Miss Trefoil, an opinion which brought down much ridicule upon him from both Hoffmann and Archibald Currie. But before that week was over,—in the early days of April,—they were forced to retract their opinion and to do honour to young Glossop's sagacity. Mounser Green was engaged to Miss Trefoil, and for a day or two the Foreign Office could talk of nothing else.

"A very handsome girl," said Lord Drummond to one of his subordinates. "I met her at Mistletoe. As to that affair with Lord Rufford, he treated her abominably." And when Mounser showed himself at the office, which he did boldly, immediately after the engagement was made known, they all received him with open arms and congratulated him sincerely on his happy fortune. He himself was quite contented with what he had done and thought that he was taking out for himself the very wife for Patagonia.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Wedding.

No sooner did the new two lovers, Mounser Green and Arabella Trefoil, understand each other, than they set their wits to work to make the best of their natural advantages. The latter communicated the fact in a very dry manner to her father and mother. Nothing was to be got from them, and it was only just necessary that they should know what she intended to do with herself. "My dear mamma. I am to be married some time early in May to Mr. Mounser Green of the Foreign Office. I don't think you know him, but I daresay you have heard of him. He goes to Patagonia immediately after the wedding, and I shall go with him. Your affectionate daughter, Arabella Trefoil." That was all she said, and the letter to her father was word for word the same. But how to make use of those friends who were more happily circumstanced was matter for frequent counsel between her and Mr. Green. In these days I do not think that she concealed very much from him. To tell him all the little details of her adventures with Lord Rufford would have been neither useful nor pleasant; but, as to the chief facts, reticence would have been foolish. To the statement that Lord Rufford had

absolutely proposed to her she clung fast, and really did believe it herself. That she had been engaged to John Morton she did not deny; but she threw the blame of that matter on her mother, and explained to him that she had broken off the engagement down at Bragton, because she could not bring herself to regard the man with sufficient personal favour. Mounser was satisfied, but was very strong in urging her to seek, yet once again, the favour of her magnificent uncle and her magnificent aunt.

"What good can they do us?" said Arabella, who was almost afraid to make the appeal.

"It would be everything for you to be married from Mistletoe," he said. "People would know then that you were not blamed about Lord Rufford. And it might serve me very much in my profession. These things do help very much. It would cost us nothing, and the proper kind of notice would then get into the newspapers. If you will write direct to the Duchess I will get at the Duke through Lord Drummond. They know where we are going, and that we are not likely to want anything else for a long time."

"I don't think the Duchess would have mamma if it were ever so."

"Then we must drop your mother for the time;—that's all. When my aunt hears that you are to be married from the Duke's, she will be quite willing that you should remain with her till you go down to Mistletoe."

Arabella, who perhaps knew a little more than her lover, could not bring herself to believe that the

appeal would be successful, but she made it. It was a very difficult letter to write, as she could not but allude to the rapid transference of her affections. "I will not conceal from you," she said, "that I have suffered very much from Lord Rufford's heartless conduct. My misery has been aggravated by the feeling that you and my uncle will hardly believe him to be so false, and will attribute part of the blame to me. I had to undergo an agonizing revulsion of feeling, during which Mr. Green's behaviour to me was at first so considerate and then so kind that it has gone far to cure the wound from which I have been suffering. He is so well known in reference to foreign affairs, that I think my uncle cannot but have heard of him; my cousin Mistletoe is certainly acquainted with him; and I think that you cannot but approve of the match. You know what is the position of my father and my mother, and how little able they are to give us any assistance. If you would be kind enough to let us be married from Mistletoe, you will confer on both of us a very, very great favour." There was more of it, but that was the first of the prayer, and most of the words given above came from the dictation of Mounser himself. She had pleaded against making the direct request, but he had assured her that in the world, as at present arranged, the best way to get a thing is to ask for it. "You make yourself at any rate understood," he said, "and you may be sure that people who receive petitions do not feel the hardihood of them so much as they who make them." Arabella, comforting herself by declaring that the

Duchess at any rate could not eat her, wrote the letter and sent it.

The Duchess at first was most serious in her intention to refuse. She was indeed made very angry by the request. Though it had been agreed at Mistletoe that Lord Rufford had behaved badly, the Duchess was thoroughly well aware that Arabella's conduct had been abominable. Lord Rufford probably had made an offer, but it had been extracted from him by the vilest of manœuvres. The girl had been personally insolent to herself. And this rapid change, this third engagement within a few weeks,—was disgusting to her as a woman. But, unluckily for herself, she would not answer the letter till she had consulted her husband. As it happened the Duke was in town, and while he was there Lord Drummond got hold of him. Lord Drummond had spoken very highly of Mounser Green, and the Duke, who was never dead to the feeling that as the head of the family he should always do what he could for the junior branches, had almost made a promise. "I never take such things upon myself," he said, "but if the Duchess has no objection, we will have them down to Mistletoe."

"Of course if you wish it," said the Duchess,—with more acerbity in her tone than the Duke had often heard there.

"Wish it? What do you mean by wishing it? It will be a great bore."

"Terrible!"

"But she is the only one there is, and then we shall have done with it."

"Done with it! They will be back from Patagonia before you can turn yourself, and then of course we must have them here."

"Drummond tells me that Mr. Green is one of the most useful men they have at the Foreign Office;—just the man that one ought to give a lift to." Of course the Duke had his way. The Duchess could not bring herself to write the letter, but the Duke wrote to his dear niece saying that "they" would be very glad to see her, and that if she would name the day proposed for the wedding, one should be fixed for her visit to Mistletoe.

"You had better tell your mother and your father," Mounser said to her.

"What's the use? The Duchess hates my mother, and my father never goes near the place."

"Nevertheless tell them. People care a great deal for appearances." She did as she was bid, and the result was that Lord Augustus and his wife, on the occasion of their daughter's marriage, met each other at Mistletoe,—for the first time for the last dozen years.

Before the day came round Arabella was quite astonished to find how popular and fashionable her wedding was likely to be, and how the world at large approved of what she was doing. The newspapers had paragraphs about alliances and noble families, and all the relatives sent tribute. There was a gold candlestick from the Duke, a gilt dish from the Duchess,—which came however without a word of personal congratulation,—and a gorgeous set of scent-bottles from cousin Mistletoe. The

Connop Greens were lavish with sapphires, the De Brownes with pearls, and the Smijths with opal. Mrs. Gore sent a huge carbuncle which Arabella strongly suspected to be glass. From her paternal parent there came a pair of silver nut-crackers, and from the maternal a second-hand dressing-case newly done up. Old Mrs. Green gave her a couple of ornamental butter-boats, and salt-cellars innumerable came from distant Greens. But there was a diamond ring—with a single stone,—from a friend, without a name, which she believed to be worth all the rest in money value. Should she send it back to Lord Rufford, or make a gulp and swallow it? How invincible must be the good-nature of the man when he could send her such a present after such a rating as she had given him in the park at Rufford! "Do as you like," Mounser Green said when she consulted him.

She very much wished to keep it. "But what am I to say, and to whom?"

"Write a note to the jewellers saying that you have got it." She did write to the jeweller saying that she had got the ring,—"from a friend;" and the ring with the other tribute went to Patagonia. He had certainly behaved very badly to her, but she was quite sure that he would never tell the story of the ring to any one. Perhaps she thought that as she had spared him in the great matter of eight thousand pounds, she was entitled to take this smaller contribution.

It was late in April when she went down to Mistletoe, the marriage having been fixed for the

3rd of May. After that they were to spend a fortnight in Paris, and leave England for Patagonia at the end of the month. The only thing which Arabella dreaded was the meeting with the Duchess. When that was once over she thought that she could bear with equanimity all that could come after. The week before her marriage could not be a pleasant week, but then she had been accustomed to endure evil hours. Her uncle would be blandly good-natured. Mistletoe, should he be there, would make civil speeches to compensate for his indifference when called upon to attack Lord Rufford. Other guests would tender to her the caressing observance always shown to a bride. But as she got out of the ducal carriage at the front door, her heart was uneasy at the coming meeting.

The Duchess herself almost went to bed when the time came, so much did she dread the same thing. She was quite alone, having felt that she could not bring herself to give the affectionate embrace which the presence of others would require. She stood in the middle of the room and then came forward three steps to meet the bride. "Arabella," she said, "I am very glad that everything has been settled so comfortably for you."

"That is so kind of you, aunt," said Arabella, who was watching the Duchess closely,—ready to jump into her aunt's arms if required to do so, or to stand quite aloof.

Then the Duchess signified her pleasure that her cheek should be touched,—and it was touched. "Mrs. Pepper will show you your room. It is the

same you had when you were here before. Perhaps you know that Mr. Green comes down to Stamford on the first, and that he will dine here on that day and on Sunday."

"That will be very nice. He had told me how it was arranged."

"It seems that he knows one of the clergymen in Stamford, and will stay at his house. Perhaps you will like to go upstairs now."

That was all there was, and that had not been very bad. During the entire week the Duchess hardly spoke to her another word, and certainly did not speak to her a word in private. Arabella now could go where she pleased without any danger of meeting her aunt on her walks. When Sunday came nobody asked her to go to church. She did go twice, Mounser Green accompanying her to the morning service;—but there was no restraint. The Duchess only thought of her as a disagreeable ill-conducted incubus, who luckily was about to be taken away to Patagonia.

It had been settled on all sides that the marriage was to be very quiet. The bride was of course consulted about her bridesmaids, as to whom there was a little difficulty. But a distant Trefoil was found willing to act, in payment for the unaccustomed invitation to Mistletoe, and one Connop Green young lady, with one De Browne young lady, and one Smijth young lady came on the same terms. Arabella herself was surprised at the ease with which it was all done. On the Saturday Lady Augustus came, and on the Sunday Lord Augustus. The

parents of course kissed their child, but there was very little said in the way either of congratulation or farewell. Lord Augustus did have some conversation with Mounser Green, but it all turned on the probability of there being whist in Patagonia. On the Monday morning they were married, and then Arabella was taken off by the happy bridegroom.

When the ceremony was over it was expected that Lady Augustus should take herself away as quickly as possible,—not perhaps on that very afternoon, but at any rate, on the next morning. As soon as the carriage was gone, she went to her own room and wept bitterly. It was all done now. Everything was over. Though she had quarrelled daily with her daughter for the last twelve years,—to such an extent lately that no decently civil word ever passed between them,—still there had been something to interest her. There had been something to fear and something to hope. The girl had always had some prospect before her, more or less brilliant. Her life had had its occupation, and future triumph was possible. Now it was all over. The link by which she had been bound to the world was broken. The Connop Greens and the Smijths would no longer have her,—unless it might be on short and special occasions, as a great favour. She knew that she was an old woman, without money, without blood, and without attraction, whom nobody would ever again desire to see. She had her things packed up, and herself taken off to London, almost without a word of farewell to the Duchess, telling

herself as she went that the world had produced no other people so heartless as the family of the Trefoils.

"I wonder what you will think of Patagonia," said Mounser Green as he took his bride away.

"I don't suppose I shall think much. As far as I can see one place is always like another."

"But then you will have duties."

"Not very heavy I hope."

Then he preached her a sermon, expressing a hope as he went on, that as she was leaving the pleasures of life behind her, she would learn to like the work of life. "I have found the pleasures very hard," she said. He spoke to her of the companion he hoped to find, of the possible children who might be dependent on their mother, of the position which she would hold, and of the manner in which she should fill it. She, as she listened to him, was almost stunned by the change in the world around her. She need never again seem to be gay in order that men might be attracted. She made her promises and made them with an intention of keeping them; but it may, we fear, be doubted whether he was justified in expecting that he could get a wife fit for his purpose out of the school in which Arabella Trefoil had been educated. The two, however, will pass out of our sight, and we can only hope that he may not be disappointed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Senator's Lecture.—No. I.

WEDNESDAY, April 14th, was the day at last fixed for the Senator's lecture. His little proposal to set England right on all those matters in which she had hitherto gone astray had created a considerable amount of attention. The Goarly affair with the subsequent trial of Scrobby had been much talked about, and the Senator's doings in reference to it had been made matter of comment in the newspapers. Some had praised him for courage, benevolence, and a steadfast purpose. Others had ridiculed his inability to understand manners different from those of his own country. He had seen a good deal of society both in London and in the country, and had never hesitated to express his opinions with an audacity which some had called insolence. When he had trodden with his whole weight hard down on individual corns, of course he had given offence, —as on the memorable occasion of the dinner at the parson's house in Dillsborough. But, on the whole, he had produced for himself a general respect among educated men which was not diminished by the fact that he seemed to count quite as little on that as on the ill-will and abuse of others. For some days previous to the delivery of the lecture the hoardings in

London were crowded with sesquipedalian notices of the entertainment, so that Senator Gotobed's great oration on "The irrationality of Englishmen" was looked to with considerable interest.

When an intelligent Japanese travels in Great Britain or an intelligent Briton in Japan, he is struck with no wonder at national differences. He is on the other hand rather startled to find how like his strange brother is to him in many things. Crime is persecuted, wickedness is condoned, and goodness treated with indifference in both countries. Men care more for what they eat than anything else, and combine a closely defined idea of meum with a lax perception as to tuum. Barring a little difference of complexion and feature the Englishman would make a good Japanese, or the Japanese a first-class Englishman. But when an American comes to us or a Briton goes to the States, each speaking the same language, using the same cookery, governed by the same laws, and wearing the same costume, the differences which present themselves are so striking that neither can live six months in the country of the other without a holding up of the hands and a torrent of exclamations. And in nineteen cases out of twenty the surprise and the ejaculations take the place of censure. The intelligence of the American, displayed through the nose, worries the Englishman. The unconscious self-assurance of the Englishman, not always unaccompanied by a sneer, irritates the American. They meet as might a lad from Harrow and another from Mr. Brumby's successful mechanical cramming establishment. The Harrow boy cannot

answer a question, but is sure that he is the proper thing, and is ready to face the world on that assurance. Mr. Brumby's paragon is shocked at the other's inaptitude for examination, but is at the same time tortured by envy of he knows not what. In this spirit we Americans and Englishmen go on writing books about each other, sometimes with bitterness enough, but generally with good final results. But in the meantime there has sprung up a jealousy which makes each inclined to hate the other at first sight. Hate is difficult and expensive, and between individuals soon gives place to love. "I cannot bear Americans as a rule, though I have been very lucky myself with a few friends." Who in England has not heard that form of speech, over and over again? And what Englishman has travelled in the States without hearing abuse of all English institutions uttered amidst the pauses of a free-handed hospitality which has left him nothing to desire?

Mr. Senator Gotobed had expressed his mind openly wheresoever he went, but, being a man of immense energy, was not content with such private utterances. He could not liberate his soul without doing something in public to convince his cousins that in their general practices of life they were not guided by reason. He had no object of making money. To give him his due we must own that he had no object of making fame. He was impelled by that intense desire to express himself which often amounts to passion with us, and sometimes to fury with Americans, and he hardly considered much what reception his words might receive. It was

only when he was told by others that his lecture might give offence which possibly would turn to violence, that he made inquiry as to the attendance of the police. But though they should tear him to pieces he would say what he had to say. It should not be his fault if the absurdities of a people whom he really loved were not exposed to light, so that they might be acknowledged and abandoned.

He had found time to travel to Birmingham, to Manchester, to Liverpool, to Glasgow, and to other places, and really thought that he had mastered his great subject. He had worked very hard, but was probably premature in thinking that he knew England thoroughly. He had, however, undoubtedly dipped into a great many matters, and could probably have told many Englishmen much that they didn't know about their own affairs. He had poked his nose everywhere, and had scrupled to ask no question. He had seen the miseries of a casual ward, the despair of an expiring strike, the amenities of a city slum, and the stolid apathy of a rural labourer's home. He had measured the animal food consumed by the working classes, and knew the exact amount of alcohol swallowed by the average Briton. He had seen also the luxury of baronial halls, the pearl-drinking extravagances of commercial palaces, the unending labours of our pleasure-seekers—as with Lord Rufford, and the dullness of ordinary country life—as experienced by himself at Bragton. And now he was going to tell the English people at large what he thought about it all.

The great room at St. James's Hall had been

secured for the occasion, and Lord Drummond, the Minister of State in foreign affairs, had been induced to take the chair. In these days our governments are very anxious to be civil to foreigners, and there is nothing that a robust Secretary of State will not do for them. On the platform there were many members of both Houses of Parliament, and almost everybody connected with the Foreign Office. Every ticket had been taken for weeks since. The front benches were filled with the wives and daughters of those on the platform, and back behind, into the distant spaces in which seeing was difficult and hearing impossible, the crowd was gathered at 2*s.* 6*d.* a head, all of which was going to some great British charity. From half-past seven to eight Piccadilly and Regent Street were crammed, and when the Senator came himself with his chairman he could hardly make his way in at the doors. A great treat was expected, but there was among the officers of police some who thought that a portion of the audience would not bear quietly the hard things that would be said, and that there was an uncanny gathering of roughs about the street, who were not prepared to be on their best behaviour when they should be told that old England was being abused.

Lord Drummond opened the proceedings by telling the audience, in a voice clearly audible to the reporters and the first half-dozen benches, that they had come there to hear what a well-informed and distinguished foreigner thought of their country. They would not, he was sure, expect to be flattered. Than flattery nothing was more useless or ignoble.

This gentleman, coming from a new country, in which tradition was of no avail, and on which the customs of former centuries had had no opportunities to engraft themselves, had seen many things here which, in his eyes, could not justify themselves by reason. Lord Drummond was a little too prolix for a chairman, and at last concluded by expressing "his conviction that his countrymen would listen to the distinguished Senator with that courtesy which was due to a foreigner and due also to the great and brotherly nation from which he had come."

Then the Senator rose, and the clapping of hands and kicking of heels was most satisfactory. There was at any rate no prejudice at the onset. "English Ladies and Gentlemen," he said, "I am in the unenviable position of having to say hard things to you for about an hour and a half together, if I do not drive you from your seats before my lecture is done. And this is the more the pity because I could talk to you for three hours about your country and not say an unpleasant word. His Lordship has told you that flattery is not my purpose. Neither is praise, which would not be flattery. Why should I collect three or four thousand people here to tell them of virtues the consciousness of which is the inheritance of each of them? You are brave and generous,—and you are lovely to look at, with sweetly polished manners; but you know all that quite well enough without my telling you. But it strikes me that you do not know how little prone you are to admit the light of reason into either your public or private life, and how generally you allow

yourselves to be guided by traditions, prejudices, and customs which should be obsolete. If you will consent to listen to what one foreigner thinks,—though he himself be a man of no account,—you may perchance gather from his words something of the opinion of bystanders in general, and so be able, perhaps a little, to rectify your gait and your costume and the tones of your voice, as we are all apt to do when we come from our private homes, out among the eyes of the public."

This was received very well. The Senator spoke with a clear, sonorous voice, no doubt with a twang, but so audibly as to satisfy the room in general. "I shall not," he said, "dwell much on your form of government. Were I to praise a republic I might seem to belittle your throne and the lady who sits on it,—an offence which would not be endured for a moment by English ears. I will take the monarchy as it is, simply remarking that its recondite forms are very hard to be understood by foreigners, and that they seem to me to be for the most part equally dark to natives. I have hardly as yet met two Englishmen who were agreed as to the political power of the sovereign; and most of those of whom I have enquired have assured me that the matter is one as to which they have not found it worth their while to make inquiry." Here a voice from the end of the hall made some protestation, but the nature of the protest did not reach the platform.

"But," continued the Senator, now rising into energy, "tho' I will not meddle with your form of government, I may, I hope, be allowed to allude to

the political agents by which it is conducted. You are proud of your Parliament."

"We are," said a voice.

"I wonder of which house. I do not ask the question that it may be answered, because it is advisable at the present moment that there should be only one speaker. That labour is, unfortunately for me, at present in my hands, and I am sure you will agree with me that it should not be divided. You mean probably that you are proud of your House of Commons,—and that you are so because it speaks with the voice of the people. The voice of the people, in order that it may be heard without unjust preponderance on this side or on that, requires much manipulation. That manipulation has in latter years been effected by your Reform bills of which during the last half century there have in fact been four or five,—the latter in favour of the ballot having been perhaps the greatest. There have been bills for purity of elections,—very necessary; bills for creating constituencies, bills for abolishing them, bills for dividing them, bills for extending the suffrage, and bills, if I am not mistaken, for curtailing it. And what has been the result? How many men are there in this room who know the respective nature of their votes? And is there a single woman who knows the political worth of her husband's vote? Passing the other day from the Bank of this great metropolis to its suburb called Brentford, journeying as I did the whole way through continuous rows of houses, I found myself at first in a very ancient borough returning four members,—

double the usual number,—not because of its population but because it has always been so. Here I was informed that the residents had little or nothing to do with it. I was told, though I did not quite believe what I heard, that there were no residents. The voters however, at any rate the influential voters, never pass a night there, and combine their city franchise with franchises elsewhere. I then went through two enormous boroughs, one so old as to have a great political history of its own, and the other so new as to have none. It did strike me as odd that there should be a new borough, with new voters, and new franchises, not yet ten years old, in the midst of this city of London. But when I came to Brentford, everything was changed. I was not in a town at all though I was surrounded on all sides by houses. Everything around me was grim and dirty enough, but I am supposed to have reached, politically, the rustic beauties of the country. Those around me, who had votes, voted for the County of Middlesex. On the other side of the invisible border I had just past the poor wretch with 3*s.* a day who lived in a grimy lodging or a half-built hut, but who at any rate possessed the political privilege. Now I had suddenly emerged among the aristocrats, and quite another state of things prevailed. Is that a reasonable manipulation of the votes of the people? Does that arrangement give to any man an equal share in his country? And yet I fancy that the thing is so little thought of that few among you are aware that in this way the largest class of British labour is excluded from

the franchise in a country which boasts of equal representation.

"The chief object of your first Reform Bill was that of realising the very fact of representation. Up to that time your members of the House of Commons were in truth deputies of the Lords or of other rich men. Lord A, or Mr. B, or perhaps Lady C, sent whom she pleased to Parliament to represent this or that town, or occasionally this or that county. That absurdity is supposed to be past, and on evils that have been cured no one should dwell. But how is it now? I have a list,—in my memory, for I would not care to make out so black a catalogue in legible letters,—of forty members who have been returned to the present House of Commons by the single voices of influential persons. What will not forty voices do even in your Parliament? And if I can count forty, how many more must there be of which I have not heard?" Then there was a voice calling upon the Senator to name those men, and other voices denying the fact. "I will name no one," said the Senator. "How could I tell what noble friend I might put on a stool of repentance by doing so." And he looked round on the gentlemen on the platform behind him. "But I defy any member of Parliament here present to get up and say that it is not so." Then he paused a moment. "And if it be so, is that rational? Is that in accordance with the theory of representation as to which you have all been so ardent, and which you profess to be so dear to you? Is the country not over-ridden by the aristocracy when Lord Lambswool not only pos-

sesses his own hereditary seat in the House of Lords, but also has a seat for his eldest son in the House of Commons?"

Then a voice from the back called out, "What the deuce is all that to you?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Senator's Lecture.—No. II.

"If I see a man hungry in the street," said the Senator, instigated by the question asked him at the end of the last chapter, "and give him a bit of bread, I don't do it for my own sake but for his." Up to this time the Britishers around him on the platform and those in the benches near to him, had received what he said with a good grace. The allusion to Lord Lambswool had not been pleasant to them, but it had not been worse than they had expected. But now they were displeased. They did not like being told that they were taking a bit of bread from him in their own political destitution. They did not like that he, an individual, should presume that he had prayer to offer to them as a nation. And yet, had they argued it out in their own minds, they would have seen that the Senator's metaphor was appropriate. His purpose in being there was to give advice, and theirs in coming to listen to it. But it was unfortunate. "When I ventured to come before you here, I made all this my business," continued the Senator. Then he paused and glanced round the hall with a defiant look. "And now about your House of Lords," he went on. "I have not much to say about the House of Lords, because if

I understand rightly the feeling of this country it is already condemned." "No such thing." "Who told you that?" "You know nothing about it." These and other words of curt denial came from the distant corners, and a slight murmur of disapprobation was heard even from the seats on the platform. Then Lord Drummond got up and begged that there might be silence. Mr. Gotobed had come there to tell them his views,—and as they had come there expressly to listen to him, they could not without impropriety interrupt him. "That such will be the feeling of the country before long," continued the Senator, "I think no one can doubt who has learned how to look to the signs of the times in such matters. Is it possible that the theory of an hereditary legislature can be defended with reason? For a legislature you want the best and wisest of your people." "You don't get them in America," said a voice which was beginning to be recognised. "We try at any rate," said the Senator. "Now is it possible that an accident of birth should give you excellence and wisdom? What is the result? Not a tenth of your hereditary legislators assemble in the beautiful hall that you have built for them. And of that tenth the greater half consists of counsellors of state who have been placed there in order that the business of the country may not be brought to a standstill. Your hereditary chamber is a fiction supplemented by the element of election,—the election resting generally in the very bosom of the House of Commons." On this subject, although he had promised to be short, he said much more, which

was received for the most part in silence. But when he ended by telling them that they could have no right to call themselves a free people till every legislator in the country was elected by the votes of the people, another murmur was heard through the hall.

"I told you," said he waxing more and more energetic, as he felt the opposition which he was bound to overcome, "that what I had to say to you would not be pleasant. If you cannot endure to hear me, let us break up and go away. In that case I must tell my friends at home that the tender ears of a British audience cannot bear rough words from American lips. And yet if you think of it we have borne rough words from you and have borne them with good-humour." Again he paused, but as none rose from their seats he went on, "Proceeding from hereditary legislature I come to hereditary property. It is natural that a man should wish to give to his children after his death the property which he has enjoyed during their life. But let me ask any man here who has not been born an eldest son himself, whether it is natural that he should wish to give it all to one son. Would any man think of doing so, by the light of his own reason,—out of his own head as we say? Would any man be so unjust to those who are equal in his love, where he not constrained by law, and by custom more iron-handed even than the law?" The Senator had here made a mistake very common with Americans, and a great many voices were on him at once. "What law?" "There is no law." "You know nothing about it." "Go back and learn."

"What!" cried the Senator coming forward to the extreme verge of the platform and putting down his foot as though there were strength enough in his leg to crush them all; "Will any one have the hardihood to tell me 'that property in this country is not affected by primogeniture?" "Go back and learn the law." "I know the law perhaps better than most of you. Do you mean to assert that my Lord Lambswool can leave his land to whom he pleases? I tell you that he has no more than a life-interest in it, and that his son will only have the same." Then an eager Briton on the platform got up and whispered to the Senator for a few minutes, during which the murmuring was continued. "My friend reminds me," said the Senator, "that the matter is one of custom rather than law; and I am obliged to him. But the custom which is damnable and cruel, is backed by law which is equally so. If I have land I can not only give it all to my eldest son, but I can assure the right of primogeniture to his son, though he be not yet born. No one I think will deny that there must be a special law to enable me to commit an injustice so unnatural as that.

"Hence it comes that you still suffer under an aristocracy almost as dominant, and in its essence as irrational, as that which created feudalism." The gentlemen collected on the platform looked at each other and smiled, perhaps failing to catch the exact meaning of the Senator's words. "A lord here has a power, as a lord, which he cannot himself fathom and of which he daily makes an unconscious but most deleterious use. He is brought up to think it

natural that he should be a tyrant. The proclivities of his order are generous, and as a rule he gives more than he takes. But he is as injurious in the one process as in the other. Your ordinary Briton in his dealing with a lord expects payment in some shape for every repetition of the absurd title;—and payment is made. The titled aristocrat pays dearer for his horse, dearer for his coat, dearer for his servant than other people. But in return he exacts much which no other person can get. Knowing his own magnanimity he expects that his word shall not be questioned. If I may be allowed I will tell a little story as to one of the most generous gentlemen I have had the happiness of meeting in this country, which will explain my meaning."

Then, without mentioning names he told the story of Lord Rufford, Goarly, and Scrobby, in such a way as partly to redeem himself with his audience. He acknowledged how absolutely he had been himself befooled, and how he had been done out of his money by misplaced sympathy. He made Mrs. Goarly's goose immortal, and in imitating the indignation of Runce the farmer and Bean the gamekeeper showed that he was master of considerable humour. But he brought it all round at last to his own purpose, and ended this episode of his lecture by his view of the absurdity and illegality of British hunting. "I can talk about it to you," he said, "and you will know whether I am speaking the truth. But when I get home among my own people, and repeat my lecture there, as I shall do,—with some little additions as to the good things I have found

here from which your ears may be spared,—I shall omit this story as I know it will be impossible to make my countrymen believe that a hundred harum-scarum tomboys may ride at their pleasure over every man's land, destroying crops and trampling down fences, going, if their vermin leads them there, with reckless violence into the sweet domestic garden of your country residences; and that no one can either stop them or punish them! An American will believe much about the wonderful ways of his British cousin, but no American will be got to believe that till he sees it.

"I find," said he, "that this irrationality, as I have ventured to call it, runs through all your professions. We will take the Church as being the highest at any rate in its objects." Then he recapitulated all those arguments against our mode of dispensing church patronage with which the reader is already familiar if he has attended to the Senator's earlier words as given in this chronicle. "In other lines of business there is, even here in England, some attempt made to get the man best suited for the work he has to do. If any one wants a domestic servant he sets about the work of getting a proper person in a very determined manner indeed. But for the care,—or, as you call it, the cure,—of his soul, he has to put up with the man who has bought the right to minister to his wants; or with him whose father wants a means of living for his younger son, —the elder being destined to swallow all the family property; or with him who has become sick of drinking his wine in an Oxford college;—or with him,

again, who has pleaded his cause successfully with a bishop's daughter." It is not often that the British public is angered by abuse of the Church, and this part of the lecture was allowed to pass without strong marks of disapprobation.

"I have been at some trouble," he continued, "to learn the very complex rules by which your army is now regulated, and those by which it was regulated a very short time since. Unhappily for me I have found it in a state of transition, and nothing is so difficult to a stranger's comprehension as a transition state of affairs. But this I can see plainly;—that every improvement which is made is received by those whom it most concerns with a horror which amounts almost to madness. So lovely to the ancient British, well-born, feudal instinct is a state of unreason, that the very absence of any principle endears to it institutions which no one can attempt to support by argument. Had such a thing not existed as the right to purchase military promotion, would any satirist have been listened to who had suggested it as a possible outcome of British irrationality? Think what it carries with it! The man who has proved himself fit to serve his country by serving it in twenty foughten fields, who has bled for his country and perhaps preserved his country, shall rot in obscurity because he has no money to buy promotion, whereas the young dandy who has done no more than glitter along the pavements with his sword and spurs shall have the command of men;—because he has so many thousand dollars in his pocket."

"*Buncombe*," shouted the inimical voice.

"But is it *Buncombe?*" asked the intrepid Senator. "Will any one who knows what he is talking about say that I am describing a state of things which did not exist yesterday? I will acknowledge that this has been rectified,—tho' I see symptoms of relapse. A fault that has been mended is a fault no longer. But what I speak of now is the disruption of all concord in your army caused by the reform which has forced itself upon you. All loyalty has gone; all that love of his profession which should be the breath of a soldier's nostrils. A fine body of fighting heroes is broken-hearted, not because injury has been done to them or to any of them, but because the system had become peculiarly British by reason of its special absurdity, and therefore peculiarly dear."

"Buncombe," again said the voice, and the word was now repeated by a dozen voices.

"Let any one show me that it is Buncombe. If I say what is untrue, do with me what you please. If I am ignorant, set me right and laugh at me. But if what I say is true, then your interruption is surely a sign of imbecility. I say that the change was forced upon you by the feeling of the people, but that its very expediency has demoralized the army, because the army was irrational. And how is it with the navy? What am I to believe when I hear so many conflicting statements among yourselves?" During this last appeal, however, the noise at the back of the hall had become so violent, that the Senator was hardly able to make his voice heard

by those immediately around him. He himself did not quail for a moment, going on with his gestures, and setting down his foot as though he were still confident in his purpose of overcoming all opposition. He had not much above half done yet. There were the lawyers before him, and the Civil Service, and the railways, and the commerce of the country, and the labouring classes. But Lord Drummond and others near him were becoming terrified, thinking that something worse might occur unless an end was put to the proceedings. Then a superintendent of police came in and whispered to his Lordship. A crowd was collecting itself in Piccadilly and St. James' Street, and perhaps the Senator had better be withdrawn. The officer did not think that he could safely answer for the consequences if this were carried on for a quarter of an hour longer. Then Lord Drummond having meditated for a moment, touched the Senator's arm and suggested a withdrawal into a side room for a minute. "Mr. Gotobed," he said, "a little feeling has been excited and we had better put an end to this for the present."

"Put an end to it?"

"I am afraid we must. The police are becoming alarmed."

"Oh, of course; you know best. In our country a man is allowed to express himself unless he utters either blasphemy or calumny. But I am in your hands and of course you must do as you please." Then he sat down in a corner, and wiped his brow. Lord Drummond returned to the hall, and there

endeavoured to explain that the lecture was over for that night. The row was so great that it did not matter much what he said, but the people soon understood that the American Senator was not to appear before them again.

It was not much after nine o'clock when the Senator reached his hotel, Lord Drummond having accompanied him thither in a cab. "Good night, Mr. Gotobed," said his Lordship. "I cannot tell you how much I respect both your purpose and your courage;—but I don't know how far it is wise for a man to tell any other man, much less a nation, of all his faults."

"You English tell us of ours pretty often," said the Senator.

When he found himself alone he thought of it all, giving himself no special credit for what he had done, acknowledging to himself that he had often chosen his words badly and expressed himself imperfectly, but declaring to himself through it all that the want of reason among Britishers was so great, that no one ought to treat them as wholly responsible beings.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Last Days of Mary Masters.

THE triumph of Mary Masters was something more than a nine days' wonder to the people of Dillsborough. They had all known Larry Twentyman's intentions and aspirations, and had generally condemned the young lady's obduracy, thinking, and not being slow to say, that she would live to repent her perversity. Runciman who had a thoroughly warm-hearted friendship for both the attorney and Larry had sometimes been very severe on Mary. "She wants a touch of hardship," he would say, "to bring her to. If Larry would just give her a cold shoulder for six months, she'd be ready to jump into his arms." And Dr. Nupper had been heard to remark that she might go farther and fare worse. "If it were my girl I'd let her know all about it," Ribbs the butcher had said in the bosom of his own family. When it was found that Mr. Surtees the curate was not to be the fortunate man, the matter was more inexplicable than ever. Had it then been declared that the owner of Hoppet Hall had proposed to her, all these tongues would have been silenced, and the refusal even of Larry Twentyman would have been justified. But what was to be said and what was to be thought when it

was known that she was to be the mistress of Bragton? For a day or two the prosperity of the attorney was hardly to be endured by his neighbours. When it was first known that the stewardship of the property was to go back into his hands, his rise in the world was for a time slightly prejudicial to his popularity; but this greater stroke of luck, this latter promotion which would place him so much higher in Dillsborough than even his father or his grandfather had ever been, was a great trial of friendship.

Mrs. Masters felt it all very keenly. All possibility for reproach against either her husband or her step-daughter was of course at an end. Even she did not pretend to say that Mary ought to refuse the squire. Nor, as far as Mary was concerned, could she have further recourse to the evils of Ushanting, and the peril of social intercourse with ladies and gentlemen. It was manifest that Mary was to be a lady with a big house, and many servants, and, no doubt, a carriage and horses. But still Mrs. Masters was not quite silenced. She had daughters of her own, and would solace herself by declaring to them, to her husband, and to her specially intimate friends, that of course they would see no more of Mary. It wasn't for them to expect to be asked to Bragton, and as for herself she would much rather not. She knew her own place and what she was born to, and wasn't going to let her own children spoil themselves and ruin their chances by dining at seven o'clock and being waited upon by servants at every turn. Thank God her girls

could make their own beds, and she hoped they might continue to do so at any rate till they had houses of their own.

And there seemed to Dillsborough to be some justification for all this in the fact that Mary was now living at Bragton, and that she did not apparently intend to return to her father's house. At this time Reginald Morton himself was still at Hoppet Hall, and had declared that he would remain there till after his marriage. Lady Ushant was living at the big house, which was henceforth to be her home. Mary was her visitor, and was to be married from Bragton as though Bragton were her residence rather than the squire's. The plan had originated with Reginald, and when it had been hinted to him that Mary would in this way seem to slight her father's home, he had proposed that all the Masters should come and stay at Bragton previous to the ceremony. Mrs. Masters yielded as to Mary's residence, saying with mock humility that of course she had no room fit to give a marriage feast to the Squire of Bragton; but she was steadfast in saying to her husband, who made the proposition to her, that she would stay at home. Of course she would be present at the wedding; but she would not trouble the like of Lady Ushant by any prolonged visiting.

The wedding was to take place about the beginning of May, and all these things were being considered early in April. At this time one of the girls was always at Bragton, and Mary had done her best, but hitherto in vain, to induce her step-

mother to come to her. When she heard that there was a doubt as to the accomplishment of the plan for the coming of the whole family, she drove herself into Dillsborough in the old phaeton and then pleaded her cause for herself. "Mamma," she said, "won't you come with the girls and papa on the 29th?"

"I think not, my dear. The girls can go,—if they like it. But it will be more fitting for papa and me to come to the church on the morning."

"Why more fitting, mamma?"

"Well, my dear; it will."

"Dear mamma;—why,—why?"

"Of course, my dear, I am very glad that you are going to get such a lift."

"My lift is marrying the man I love."

"That of course is all right. I have nothing on earth to say against it. And I will say that through it all you have behaved as a young woman should. I don't think you meant to throw yourself at him."

"Mamma!"

"But as it has turned up, you have to go one way and me another."

"No!"

"But it must be so. The Squire of Bragton is the Squire, and his wife must act accordingly. Of course you'll be visiting at Rufford and Hampton Wick, and all the places. I know very well who I am, and what I came from. I'm not a bit ashamed of myself, but I'm not going to stick myself up with my betters."

"Then mamma, I shall come and be married from here."

"It's too late for that now, my dear."

"No;—it is not." And then a couple of tears began to roll down from her eyes. "I won't be married without your coming in to see me the night before, and being with me in the morning when I dress. Haven't I been a good child to you, mamma?" Then the step-mother began to cry also. "Haven't I, mamma?"

"Yes, my dear," whimpered the poor woman.

"And won't you be my mamma to the last;—won't you?" And she threw her arms round her step-mother's neck and kissed her. "I won't go one way, and you another. He doesn't wish it. It is quite different from that. I don't care a straw for Hampton Wick and Rufford; but I will never be separated from you and the girls and papa. Say you will come, mamma. I will not let you go till you say you will come." Of course she had her own way, and Mrs. Masters had to feel with a sore heart that she also must go out Ushanting. She knew, that in spite of her domestic powers, she would be stricken dumb in the drawing-room at Bragton and was unhappy.

Mary had another scheme in which she was less fortunate. She took it into her head that Larry Twentyman might possibly be induced to come to her wedding. She had heard how he had ridden and gained honour for himself on the day that the hounds killed their fox at Norrington, and thought that perhaps her own message to him had induced

him so far to return to his old habits. And now she longed to ask him, for her sake, to be happy once again. If any girl ever loved the man she was going to marry with all her heart, this girl loved Reginald Morton. He had been to her, when her love was hopeless, so completely the master of her heart that she could not realise the possibility of affection for another. But yet she was pervaded by a tenderness of feeling in regard to Larry which was love also,—though love altogether of another kind. She thought of him daily. His future well-being was one of the cares of her life. That her husband might be able to call him a friend was among her prayers. Had anybody spoken ill of him in her presence she would have resented it hotly. Had she been told that another girl had consented to be his wife, she would have thought that girl to be happy in her destiny. When she heard that he was leading a wretched, moping, aimless life for her sake, her heart was sad within her. It was necessary to the completion of her happiness that Larry should recover his tone of mind and be her friend. "Reg," she said, leaning on his arm out in the park, "I want you to do me a favour."

"Watch and chain?"

"Don't be an idiot. You know I've got a watch and chain."

"Some girls like two. To have the wooden bridge pulled down and a stone one built."

"If any one touched a morsel of that sacred timber he should be banished from Bragton for ever.

I want you to ask Mr. Twentyman to come to our wedding."

"Who's to do it? Who's to bell the cat?"

"You."

"I would sooner fight a Saracen, or ride such a horse as killed that poor major. Joking apart, I don't see how it is to be done. Why do you wish it?"

"Because I am so fond of him."

"Oh;—indeed!"

"If you're a goose, I'll hit you. I am fond of him. Next to you and my own people, and Lady Ushant, I like him best in all the world."

"What a pity you couldn't have put him up a little higher."

"I used to think so too;—only I couldn't. If anybody loved you as he did me,—offered you everything he had in the world,—thought that you were the best in the world,—would have given his life for you, would not you be grateful?"

"I don't know that I need wish to ask such a person to my wedding."

"Yes, you would, if in that way you could build a bridge to bring him back to happiness. And, Reg, though you used to despise him——"

"I never despised him."

"A little I think—before you knew him. But he is not despicable."

"Not at all, my dear."

"He is honest and good, and has a real heart of his own."

"I am afraid he has parted with that."

"You know what I mean, and if you won't be

serious I shall think there is no seriousness in you. I want you to tell me how it can be done."

Then he was serious, and tried to explain to her that he could not very well do what she wanted. "He is your friend you know rather than mine;—but if you like to write to him you can do so."

This seemed to her to be very difficult, and, as she thought more of it, almost impossible. A written letter remains, and may be taken as evidence of so much more than it means. But a word sometimes may be spoken which, if it be well spoken,—if assurance of its truth be given by the tone and by the eye of the speaker,—shall do so much more than any letter, and shall yet only remain with the hearer as the remembrance of the scent of a flower remains! Nevertheless she did at last write the letter, and brought it to her husband. "Is it necessary that I should see it?" he asked.

"Not absolutely necessary."

"Then send it without."

"But I should like you to see what I have said. You know about things, and if it is too much or too little, you can tell me." Then he read her letter, which ran as follows.

"Dear Mr. Twentyman,

"Perhaps you have heard that we are to be married on Thursday, May 6th. I do so wish that you would come. It would make me so much happier on that day. We shall be very quiet; and if you would come to the house at eleven you could

go across the park with them all to the church. I am to be taken in a carriage because of my finery. Then there will be a little breakfast. Papa and mamma and Dolly and Kate would be so glad;—and so would Mr. Morton. But none of them will be half so glad as your old, old, affectionate friend

"MARY MASTERS."

"If that don't fetch him," said Reginald, "he is a poorer creature than I take him to be."

"But I may send it?"

"Certainly you may send it." And so the letter was sent across to Chowton Farm.

But the letter did not "fetch" him; nor am I prepared to agree with Mr. Morton that he was a poor creature for not being "fetched." There are things which the heart of a man should bear without whimpering, but which it cannot bear in public with that appearance of stoical indifference which the manliness of a man is supposed to require. Were he to go, should he be jovial before the wedding party or should he be sober and saturnine? Should he appear to have forgotten his love, or should he go about lovelorn among the wedding guests? It was impossible,—at any rate impossible as yet,—that he should fall into that state of almost brotherly regard which it was so natural that she should desire. But as he had determined to forgive her, he went across that afternoon to the house and was the bearer of his own answer. He asked Mrs. Hopkins who came to the door whether she were alone, and was then shown into an empty room

where he waited for her. She came to him as quickly as she could, leaving Lady Ushant in the middle of the page she was reading, and feeling as she tripped downstairs that the colour was rushing to her face. "You will come, Larry," she said.

"No, Miss Masters."

"Let me be Mary till I am Mrs. Morton," she said, trying to smile. "I was always Mary." And then she burst into tears. "Why,—why won't you come?"

"I should only stalk about like a ghost. I couldn't be merry as a man should be at a wedding. I don't see how a man is to do such a thing." She looked up into his face imploring him,—not to come, for that she felt now to be impossible,—but imploring him to express in some way forgiveness of the sin she had committed against him. "But I shall think of you and shall wish you well."

"And after that we shall be friends?"

"By and bye,—if he pleases."

"He will please;—he does please. Of course he saw what I wrote to you. And now, Larry, if I have ever treated you badly, say that you pardon me."

"If I had known it——" he said.

"How could I tell you,—till he had spoken? And yet I knew it myself! It has been so,—oh,—ever so long! What could I do? You will say that you will forgive me."

"Yes;—I will say that."

"And you will not go away from Chowton?"

"Oh, no! They tell me I ought to stay here, and I suppose I shall stay. I thought I'd just come

over and say a word. I'm going away to-morrow for a month. There is a fellow has got some fishing in Ireland. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Larry."

"And I thought perhaps you'd take this now." Then he brought out from his pocket at little ruby ring which he had carried often in his pocket to the attorney's house, thinking that perhaps then might come the happy hour in which he could get her to accept it. But the hour had never come as yet, and the ring had remained in the little drawer beneath his looking-glass. It need hardly be said that she now accepted the gift.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Conclusion.

THE Senator for Mickewa,—whose name we have taken for a book which might perhaps have been better called "The Chronicle of a Winter at Dillsborough"—did not stay long in London after the unfortunate close of his lecture. He was a man not very pervious to criticism, nor afraid of it, but he did not like the treatment he had received at St. James's Hall, nor the remarks which his lecture produced in the newspapers. He was angry because people were unreasonable with him, which was surely unreasonable in him who accused Englishmen generally of want of reason. One ought to take it as a matter of course that a bull should use his horns, and a wolf his teeth. The Senator read everything that was said of him, and then wrote numerous letters to the different journals which had condemned him. Had any one accused him of an untruth? Or had his inaccuracies been glaring? Had he not always expressed his readiness to acknowledge his own mistake if convicted of ignorance? But when he was told that he had persistently trodden upon all the corns of his English cousins, he declared that corns were evil things which should be abolished, and that with corns such as these there was no

mode of abolition so efficacious as treading on them.

"I am sorry that you should have encountered anything so unpleasant," Lord Drummond said to him when he went to bid adieu to his friend at the Foreign Office.

"And I am sorry too, my Lord;—for your sake rather than my own. A man is in a bad case who cannot endure to hear of his faults."

"Perhaps you take our national sins a little too much for granted."

"I don't think so, my Lord. If you knew me to be wrong you would not be so sore with me. Nevertheless I am under deep obligation for kind-hearted hospitality. If an American can make up his mind to crack up everything he sees here, there is no part of the world in which he can get along better." He had already written a long letter home to his friend Mr. Josiah Scroome, and had impartially sent to that gentleman not only his own lecture, but also a large collection of the criticisms made on it. A few weeks afterwards he took his departure, and when we last heard of him was thundering in the Senate against certain practices on the part of his own country which he thought to be unjust to other nations. Don Quixote was not more just than the Senator, or more philanthropic,—nor perhaps more apt to wage war against the windmills.

Having in this our last chapter given the place of honour to the Senator, we must now say a parting word as to those countrymen of our own who have figured in our pages. Lord Rufford married Miss

Penge of course, and used the lady's fortune in buying the property of Sir John Purefoy. We may probably be safe in saying that the acquisition added very little to his happiness. What difference can it make to a man whether he has forty or fifty thousand pounds a year,—or at any rate to such a man? Perhaps Miss Penge herself was an acquisition. He did not hunt so often or shoot so much, and was seen in church once at least on every Sunday. In a very short time his friends perceived that a very great change had come over him. He was growing fat, and soon disliked the trouble of getting up early to go to a distant meet;—and, before a year or two had passed away, it had become an understood thing that in country houses he was not one of the men who went down at night into the smoking-room in a short dressing-coat and a picturesque cap. Miss Penge had done all this. He had had his period of pleasure, and no doubt the change was desirable;—but he sometimes thought with regret of the promise Arabella Trefoil had made him, that she would never interfere with his gratification.

At Dillsborough everything during the summer after the Squire's marriage fell back into its usual routine. The greatest change made there was in the residence of the attorney, who with his family went over to live at Hoppet Hall, giving up his old house to a young man from Norrington, who had become his partner, but keeping the old office for his business. Mrs. Masters did, I think, like the honour and glory of the big house, but she would never admit that she did. And when she was con-

strained once or twice in the year to give a dinner to her step-daughter's husband and Lady Ushant, that, I think, was really a period of discomfort to her. When at Bragton she could at any rate be quiet, and Mary's caressing care almost made the place pleasant to her.

Mr. Runciman prospers at the Bush, though he has entirely lost his best customer, Lord Rufford. But the U.R.U. is still strong, in spite of the philosophers, and in the hunting season the boxes of the Bush Inn are full of horses. The club goes on without much change, Mr. Masters being very regular in his attendance, undeterred by the grandeur of his new household. And Larry is always there,—with increased spirit, for he has dined two or three times lately at Hampton Wick, having met young Hampton at the Squire's house at Bragton. On this point Fred Botsey was for a time very jealous;—but he found that Larry's popularity was not to be shaken, and now is very keen in pushing an intimacy with the owner of Chowton Farm. Perhaps the most stirring event in the neighbourhood has been the retirement of Captain Glomax from the post of Master. When the season was over he made an application to Lord Rufford respecting certain stable and kennel expenses, which that nobleman snubbed very bluntly. Thereupon the Captain intimated to the Committee that unless some advances were made he should go. The Committee refused, and thereupon the Captain went;—not altogether to the dissatisfaction of the farmers, with whom an itinerant Master is seldom altogether popular. Then for a

time there was great gloom in the U.R.U. What hunting man or woman does not know the gloom which comes over a hunting county when one Master goes before another is ready to step in his shoes? There had been a hope, a still growing hope, that Lord Rufford would come forward at any such pinch; but since Miss Penge had come to the front that hope had altogether vanished. There was a word said at Rufford on the subject, but Miss Penge, —or Lady Rufford as she was then,—at once put her foot on the project and extinguished it. Then, when despair was imminent, old Mr. Hampton gave way, and young Hampton came forward, acknowledged on all sides as the man for the place. A Master always does appear at last; though for a time it appears that the kingdom must come to an end because no one will consent to sit on the throne.

Perhaps the most loudly triumphant man in Dillsborough was Mr. Mainwaring, the parson, when he heard of the discomfiture of Senator Gotobed. He could hardly restrain his joy, and confided first to Dr. Nupper and then to Mr. Runciman his opinion, that of all the blackguards that had ever put their foot in Dillsborough, that vile Yankee was the worst. Mr. Gotobed was no more a Yankee than was the parson himself;—but of any distinction among the citizens of the United States, Mr. Mainwaring knew very little.

A word or two more must be said of our dear friend Larry Twentyman;—for in finishing this little story we must own that he has in truth been our hero. He went away on his fishing expedition, and

when he came back the girl of his heart had become Mrs. Morton. Hunting had long been over then, but the great hunting difficulty was in course of solution, and Larry took his part in the matter. When there was a suggestion as to a committee of three,—than which nothing for hunting purposes can be much worse,—there was a question whether he should not be one of them. This nearly killed both the Botseys. The evil thing was prevented by the timely pressure put on old Mr. Hampton; but the excitement did our friend Larry much good. "Bicycle" and the other mare were at once summered with the greatest care, and it is generally understood that young Hampton means to depend upon Larry very much in regard to the Rufford side of the country. Larry has bought Goarly's two fields, Goarly having altogether vanished from those parts, and is supposed to have Dillsborough Wood altogether in his charge. He is frequently to be seen at Hoppet Hall, calling there every Saturday to take down the attorney to the Dillsborough club,—as was his habit of old; but it would perhaps be premature to say that there are very valid grounds for the hopes which Mrs. Masters already entertains in reference to Kate. Kate is still too young and childish to justify any prediction in that quarter.

What further need be said as to Reginald and his happy bride? Very little;—except that in the course of her bridal tour she did gradually find words to give him a true and accurate account of all her own feelings from the time at which he first asked her to walk with him across the bridge over

the Dill and look at the old place. They had both passed their childish years there, but could have but little thought that they were destined then to love and grow old together. "I was longing, longing, longing to come," she said.

"And why didn't you come?"

"How little you know about girls? Of course I had to go with the one I—I—I—; well with the one I did not love down to the very soles of his feet." And then there was the journey with the parrot. "I rather liked the bird. I don't know that you said very much, but I think you would have said less if there had been no bird."

"In fact I have been a fool all along."

"You weren't a fool when you took me out through the orchard and caught me when I jumped over the wall. Do you remember when you asked me, all of a sudden, whether I should like to be your wife? You weren't a fool then."

"But you knew what was coming."

"Not a bit of it. I knew it wasn't coming. I had quite made up my mind about that. I was as sure of it;—oh, as sure of it as I am that I've got you now. And then it came;—like a great thunderclap."

"A thunderclap, Mary!"

"Well;—yes. I wasn't quite sure at first. You might have been laughing at me;—mightn't you?"

"Just the kind of joke for me!"

"How was I to understand it all in a moment? And you made me repeat all those words. I believed it then, or I shouldn't have said them. I

knew that must be serious." And so she deified him, and sat at his feet looking up into his eyes, and fooled him for a while into the most perfect happiness that a man ever knows in this world. But she was not altogether happy herself till she had got Larry to come to her at the house at Bragton and swear to her that he would be her friend.

THE END.

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