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BRITISH AUTHORS  
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1363.

LADY ANNA BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# LADY ANNA

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE,  
AUTHOR OF "BARCHESTER TOWERS."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG  
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1873.

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OF VOLUME I.

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# LADY ANNA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *The Early History of Lady Lovel.*

WOMEN have often been hardly used by men, but perhaps no harder usage, no fiercer cruelty was ever experienced by a woman than that which fell to the lot of Josephine Murray from the hands of Earl Lovel, to whom she was married in the parish church of Applethwaite,—a parish without a village lying among the mountains of Cumberland,—on the 1st of June, 181—. That her marriage was valid according to all the forms of the Church, if Lord Lovel were then capable of marrying, no one ever doubted; nor did the Earl ever allege that it was not so. Lovel Grange is a small house, surrounded by a small domain,—small as being the residence of a rich nobleman, lying among the mountains which separate Cumberland from Westmoreland, about ten miles from Keswick, very lovely, from the brightness of its own green sward and the luxuriance of its wild woodland, from the contiguity of overhanging mountains, and from the beauty of Lovel Tarn, a small lake belonging to the property,

studded with little islands, each of which is covered with its own thicket of hollies, birch, and dwarfed oaks. The house itself is poor, ill-built, with straggling passages and low rooms, and is a sombre, ill-omened looking place. When Josephine Murray was brought there as a bride she thought it to be very sombre and ill-omened; but she loved the lakes and mountains, and dreamed of some vague mysterious joy of life which was to come to her from the wildness of her domicile.

I fear that she had no other ground, firmer than this, on which to found her hopes of happiness. She could not have thought Lord Lovel to be a good man when she married him, and it can hardly be said that she loved him. She was then twenty-four years old, and he had counted double as many years. She was very beautiful, dark, with large, bold, blue eyes, with hair almost black, tall, well made, almost robust, a well-born, brave, ambitious woman, of whom it must be acknowledged that she thought it very much to be the wife of a lord. Though our story will be concerned much with her sufferings, the record of her bridal days may be very short. It is with struggles that came to her in after years that we shall be most concerned, and the reader, therefore, need be troubled with no long description of Josephine Murray as she was when she became the Countess Lovel. It is hoped that her wrongs may be thought worthy of sympathy,



—and may be felt in some sort to atone for the ignoble motives of her marriage.

The Earl, when he found his bride, had been living almost in solitude for a twelvemonth. Among the neighbouring gentry in the lake country he kept no friendly relations. His property there was small, and his character was evil. He was an English earl, and as such known in some unfamiliar fashion to those who know all earls; but he was a man never seen in Parliament, who had spent the greater part of his manhood abroad, who had sold estates in other counties, converting unentailed acres into increased wealth, but wealth of a kind much less acceptable to the general English aristocrat than that which comes direct from land. Lovel Grange was his only remaining English property, and when in London he had rooms at an hotel. He never entertained, and he never accepted hospitality. It was known of him that he was very rich, and men said that he was mad. Such was the man whom Josephine Murray had chosen to marry because he was an earl.

He had found her near Keswick, living with her father in a pretty cottage looking down upon Derwentwater,—a thorough gentleman, for Captain Murray had come of the right Murrays;—and thence he had carried her to Lovel Grange. She had brought with her no penny of fortune, and no settlement had been made on her. Her father, who was then an old man, had

mildly expostulated; but the ambition of the daughter had prevailed, and the marriage was accomplished. The beautiful young woman was carried off as a bride. It will be unnecessary to relate what efforts had been made to take her away from her father's house without bridal honours; but it must be told that the Earl was a man who had never yet spared a woman in his lust. It had been the rule, almost the creed of his life, that woman was made to gratify the appetite of man, and that the man is but a poor creature who does not lay hold of the sweetness that is offered to him. He had so lived as to teach himself that those men who devote themselves to their wives, as a wife devotes herself to her husband, are the poor lubberly clods of creation, who had lacked the power to reach the only purpose of living which could make life worth having. Women had been to him a prey, as the fox is a prey to the huntsman and the salmon to the angler. But he had acquired great skill in his sport, and could pursue his game with all the craft which experience will give. He could look at a woman as though he saw all heaven in her eyes, and could listen to her as though the music of the spheres was to be heard in her voice. Then he could whisper words which, to many women, were as the music of the spheres, and he could persevere, abandoning all other pleasures, devoting himself to the one wickedness with a perseverance which almost made success certain. But with Josephine

Murray he could be successful on no other terms than those which enabled her to walk out of the church with him as Countess Lovel.

She had not lived with him six months before he told her that the marriage was no marriage, and that she was—his mistress. There was an audacity about the man which threw aside all fear of the law, and which was impervious to threats and interference. He assured her that he loved her, and that she was welcome to live with him; but that she was not his wife, and that the child which she bore could not be the heir to his title, and could claim no heirship to his property. He did love her,—having found her to be a woman of whose company he had not tired in six months. He was going back to Italy, and he offered to take her with him,—but he could not, he said, permit the farce of her remaining at Lovel Grange and calling herself the Countess Lovel. If she chose to go with him to Palermo, where he had a castle, and to remain with him in his yacht, she might for the present travel under the name of his wife. But she must know that she was not his wife. She was only his mistress.

Of course she told her father. Of course she invoked every Murray in and out of Scotland. Of course there were many threats. A duel was fought up near London, in which Lord Lovel consented to be shot at twice,—declaring that after that he did not think that

the circumstances of the case required that he should be shot at any more. In the midst of this a daughter was born to her and her father died,—during which time she was still allowed to live at Lovel Grange. But what was it expedient that she should do? He declared that he had a former wife when he married her, and that therefore she was not and could not be his wife. Should she institute a prosecution against him for bigamy, thereby acknowledging that she was herself no wife and that her child was illegitimate? From such evidence as she could get, she believed that the Italian woman whom the Earl in former years had married had died before her own marriage. The Earl declared that the Countess, the real Countess, had not paid her debt to nature, till some months after the little ceremony which had taken place in Appleshwaite Church. In a moment of weakness Josephine fell at his feet and asked him to renew the ceremony. He stooped over her, kissed her, and smiled. “My pretty child,” he said, “why should I do that?” He never kissed her again.

What should she do? Before she had decided, he was in his yacht sailing to Palermo;—sailing no doubt not alone. What should she do? He had left her an income,—sufficient for the cast-off mistress of an Earl,—some few hundreds a year, on condition that she would quietly leave Lovel Grange, cease to call herself a Countess, and take herself and her bairn,—

whither she would. Every abode of sin in London was open to her for what he cared. But what should she do? It seemed to her to be incredible that so great a wrong should befall her, and that the man should escape from her and be free from punishment,—unless she chose to own the baseness of her own position by prosecuting him for bigamy. The Murrays were not very generous in their succour, as the old man had been much blamed for giving his daughter to one of whom all the world knew nothing but evil. One Murray had fired two shots on her behalf, in answer to each one of which the Earl had fired into the air; but beyond this the Murrays could do nothing. Josephine herself was haughty and proud, conscious that her rank was greater than that of any of the Murrays with whom she came in contact. But what should she do?

The Earl had been gone five years, sailing about the world she knew not where, when at last she determined to institute a prosecution for bigamy. During these years she was still living at the Grange, with her child, and the Courts of Law had allotted her some sum by way of alimony till her cause should be decided; but upon this alimony she found it very difficult to lay her hands,—quite impossible to lay her hands upon the entirety of it. And then it came to pass that she was eaten up by lawyers and tradesmen, and fell into bad repute as asserting that claims made

against her, should legally be made against the very man whom she was about to prosecute because she was not his wife. And this went on till further life at Lovel Grange became impossible to her.

In those days there was living in Keswick a certain Mr. Thomas Thwaite, a tailor, who by degrees had taken a strong part in denouncing the wrongs to which Lady Lovel had been subjected. He was a powerful, sturdy man, with good means for his position, a well-known Radical in a county in which Radicals have never been popular, and in which fifty years ago they were much rarer than they are now. At this time Keswick and its vicinities were beginning to be known as the abodes of poets, and Thomas Thwaite was acquainted with Southey and Wordsworth. He was an intelligent, up-standing, impulsive man, who thought well of his own position in the world, and who could speak his mind. He was tall, massive, and square; tender-hearted and very generous; and he hated the Earl of Lovel with all his heart. Once the two men had met since the story of the Countess's wrongs had become known, and the tailor had struck the Earl to the ground. This had occurred as the Earl was leaving Lovel Grange, and when he was starting on his long journey. The scene took place after he had parted from his Countess,—whom he never was to see again. He rose to his feet and rushed at the tailor; but the two were separated, and the Earl thought it

best to go on upon his journey. Nothing further was done as to the blow, and many years rolled by before the Earl came back to Cumberland.

It became impossible for the Countess and her daughter, the young Lady Anna as she was usually called, to remain at Lovel Grange, and they were taken to the house of Mr. Thwaite, in Keswick, as a temporary residence. At this time the Countess was in debt, and already there were lawsuits as to the practicability of obtaining payment of those debts from the husband's estate. And as soon as it was determined that the prosecution for bigamy should be instituted, the confusion in this respect was increased. The Countess ceased to call herself a countess, as she certainly would not be a countess should she succeed in proving the Earl to have been guilty. And had he been guilty of bigamy, the decree under which alimony was assigned to her would become void. Should she succeed, she would be a penniless unmarried female with a daughter, her child would be unfathered and base, and he,—as far as she could see,—would be beyond the reach of punishment. But, in truth, she and her friend the tailor were not in quest of success. She and all her friends believed that the Earl had committed no such crime. But if he were acquitted, then would her claim to be called Lady Lovel, and to enjoy the appanages of her rank, be substantiated. Or, at least, something would have been done towards

substantiating those claims. But during this time she called herself Mrs. Murray, and the little Lady Anna was called Anna Murray.

It added much to the hardship of the woman's case that public sympathy in distant parts of the country,—up in London, and in southern counties, and even among a portion of the gentry in Cumberland and Westmoreland,—did not go with her. She had married without due care. Some men said,—and many women repeated the story,—that she had known of the existence of the former wife, when she had married the Earl. She had run into debt, and then repudiated her debts. She was now residing in the house of a low radical tailor, who had assaulted the man she called her husband; and she was living under her maiden name. Tales were told of her which were utterly false,—as when it was said that she drank. Others were reported which had in them some grains of truth,—as that she was violent, stiff-necked, and vindictive. Had they said of her that it had become her one religion to assert her daughter's right,—per fas aut nefas,—to assert it by right or wrong; to do justice to her child let what injustice might be done to herself or others,—then the truth would have been spoken.

The case dragged itself on slowly, and little Anna Murray was a child of nine years old when at last the Earl was acquitted of the criminal charge which had



been brought against him. During all this time he had been absent. Even had there been a wish to bring him personally into court, the law would have been powerless to reach him. But there was no such wish. It had been found impossible to prove the former marriage, which had taken place in Sicily;—or if not impossible, at least no adequate proof was forthcoming. There was no real desire that there should be such proof. The Earl's lawyers abstained, as far as they could abstain, from taking any steps in the matter. They spent what money was necessary, and the Attorney-General of the day defended him. In doing so, the Attorney-General declared that he had nothing to do with the Earl's treatment of the lady who now called herself Mrs. Murray. He knew nothing of the circumstances of that connection, and would not travel beyond his brief. He was there to defend Earl Lovel on a charge of bigamy. This he did successfully, and the Earl was acquitted. Then, in court, the counsel for the wife declared that his client would again call herself Lady Lovel.

But it was not so easy to induce other people to call her Lady Lovel.

And now not only was she much hampered by money difficulties, but so also was the tailor. But Thomas Thwaite never for a moment slackened in his labours to make good the position of the woman whom he had determined to succour; and for another and a

longer period of eight years the battle went on. It went on very slowly, as is the wont with such battles; and very little way was made. The world, as a rule, did not believe that she who now again called herself the Countess Lovel was entitled to that name. The Murrays, her own people,—as far as they were her own people,—had been taught to doubt her claim. If she were a countess why had she thrown herself into the arms of an old tailor? Why did she let her daughter play with the tailor's child,—if, in truth, that daughter was the Lady Anna? Why, above all things, was the name of the Lady Anna allowed to be mentioned, as it was mentioned, in connection with that of Daniel Thwaite, the tailor's son?

During these eight weary years Lady Lovel,—for so she shall be called,—lived in a small cottage about a mile from Keswick, on the road to Grassmere and Ambleside, which she rented from quarter to quarter. She still obtained a certain amount of alimony, which, however, was dribbled out to her through various sieves, and which reached her with protestations as to the impossibility of obtaining anything like the moderate sum which had been awarded to her. And it came at last to be the case that she hardly knew what she was struggling to obtain. It was, of course, her object that all the world should acknowledge her to be the Countess Lovel, and her daughter to be the Lady Anna. But all the world could not be made to do

this by course of law. Nor could the law make her lord come home and live with her, even such a cat and dog life as must in such case have been hers. Her money rights were all that she could demand;—and she found it to be impossible to get anybody to tell her what were her money rights. To be kept out of the poorhouse seemed to be all that she could claim. But the old tailor was true to her,—swearing that she should even yet become Countess Lovel in very truth.

Then, of a sudden, she heard one day,—that Earl Lovel was again at the Grange, living there with a strange woman.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Earl's Will.

NOT a word had been heard in Keswick of the proposed return of the old lord,—for the Earl was now an old man,—past his sixtieth year, and in truth with as many signs of age as some men bear at eighty. The life which he had led no doubt had had its allurements, but it is one which hardly admits of a hale and happy evening. Men who make women a prey, prey also on themselves. But there he was, back at Lovel Grange, and no one knew why he had come, nor whence, nor how. To Lovel Grange in those days, now some forty years ago, there was no road for

wheels but that which ran through Keswick. Through Keswick he had passed in the middle of the night, taking on the post-horses which he had brought with him from Grassmere, so that no one in the town should see him and his companion. But it was soon known that he was there, and known also that he had a companion. For months he resided thus, and no one saw him but the domestics who waited upon him. But rumours got abroad as to his conduct, and people through the county declared that Earl Lovel was a maniac. Still his property was in his own control, and he did what it listed him to do.

As soon as men knew that he was in the land, claim after claim was made upon him for money due on behalf of his wife, and loudest among the claimants was Thomas Thwaite, the tailor. He was loudest and fiercest among the claimants, but was loud and fierce not in enmity to his old friend the Countess, but with a firm resolve to make the lord pay the only price of his wickedness which could be exacted from him. And if the Earl could be made to pay the claims against him which were made by his wife's creditors, then would the law, so far, have decided that the woman was his wife. No answer was made to any letter addressed to the Earl, and no one calling at the Grange could obtain speech or even sight of the noble owner. The lord's steward at the Grange referred all comers to the lord's attorneys in London, and the

lord's attorneys simply repeated the allegation that the lady was not the lord's wife. At last there came tidings that an inquiry was to be made as to the state of the lord's health and the state of the lord's mind, on behalf of Frederic Lovel, the distant heir to the title. Let that question of the lord's marriage with Josephine Murray go as it might, Frederic Lovel, who had never seen his far-away cousin, must be the future earl. Of that there was no doubt;—and new inquiries were to be made. But it might well be that the interest of the young heir would be more deeply involved in the marriage question than in other matters concerning the family. Lovel Grange and the few mountain farms attached to the Cumberland estate must become his, let the frantic Earl do what damage he might to those who bore his name; but the bulk of the property, the wealth of the Lovels, the great riches which had enabled this mighty lord to live as a beast of prey among his kind, were at his own disposal. He had one child certainly, the Lady Anna, who would inherit it all were the father to die intestate, and were the marriage proved. The young heir and those near to him altogether disbelieved the marriage,—as was natural. They had never seen her who now called herself the Countess, but who for some years after her child was born had called herself Mrs. Murray,—who had been discarded by her own relations, and had taken herself to live with a country

tailor. As years had rolled by the memory of what had really occurred in Applethwaite Church had become indistinct; and, though the reader knows that that marriage was capable of easy proof,—that there would have been but little difficulty had the only difficulty consisted in proving that,—the young heir and the distant Lovels were not assured of it. Their interest was adverse, and they were determined to disbelieve. But the Earl might, and probably would, leave all his wealth to a stranger. He had never in any way noticed his heir. He cared for none that bore his name. Those ties in the world which we call love, and deem respectable, and regard as happy, because they have to do with marriage and blood relationship as established by all laws since the days of Moses, were odious to him and ridiculous in his sight, because all obligations were distasteful to him,—and all laws, except those which preserved to him the use of his own money. But now there came up the great question whether he was mad or sane. It was at once rumoured that he was about to leave the country, and fly back to Sicily. Then it was announced that he was dead.

And he was dead. He had died at the age of sixty-seven, in the arms of the woman he had brought there. His evil career was over, and his soul had gone to that future life for which he had made it fit by the life he had led here. His body was buried in

Applethwaite churchyard, in the further corner of which long, straggling valley parish Lovel Grange is situated. At his grave there stood no single mourner;—but the young lord was there, of his right, disdainng even to wear a crape band round his hat. But the woman remained shut up in her own chamber,—a difficulty to the young lord and his lawyer, who could hardly tell the foreigner to pack and begone before the body of her late—lover had been laid in the grave. It had been simply intimated to her that on such a date,—within a week from the funeral,—her presence in the house could not longer be endured. She had flashed round upon the lawyer, who had attempted to make this award known to her in broken French, but had answered simply by some words of scorn, spoken in Italian to her waiting-maid.

Then the will was read in the presence of the young earl;—for there was a will. Everything that the late lord had possessed was left, in one line, to his best-beloved friend, the Signorina Camilla Spondi; and it was stated, and very fully explained, that Camilla Spondi was the Italian lady living at the Grange at the date on which the will was made. Of the old lord's heir, the now existing Earl Lovel, no mention was made whatever. There were, however, two other clauses or parts in the will. There was a schedule giving in detail the particulars of the property left to Camilla Spondi; and there was a rambling

statement that the maker of the will acknowledged Anna Murray to be his illegitimate daughter,—that Anna Murray's mother had never been the testator's legitimate wife, as his real wife, the true Countess Lovel, for whom he had separately made adequate provision, was still alive in Sicily at the date of that will,—and that by a former will now destroyed he had made provision for Anna Murray, which provision he had revoked in consequence of the treatment which he had received from Josephine Murray and her friends. They who believed the statements made in this will afterwards asserted that Anna had been deprived of her inheritance by the blow with which the tailor had felled the Earl to the earth.

To Camilla Spondi intimation was given of the contents of the Earl's will as far as they concerned her; but she was told at the same time that no portion of the dead man's wealth would be placed in her hands till the courts should have decided whether or no the old lord had been sane or insane when he signed the document. A sum of money was, however, given her, on condition that she should take her immediate departure;—and she departed. With her personally we need have no further concern. Of her cause and of her claim some mention must be made; but in a few pages she will drop altogether from our story.

A copy of the will was also sent to the lawyers



who had hitherto taken charge of the interests of the repudiated Countess, and it was intimated that the allowance hitherto made to her must now of necessity cease. If she thought fit to prosecute any further claim, she must do so by proving her marriage;—and it was explained to her, probably without much of legal or precise truth in the explanation, that such proof must include the disproving of the assertion made in the Earl's will. As it was the intention of the heir to set aside that will, such assurance was, to say the least of it, disingenuous. But the whole thing had now become so confused that it could hardly be expected that lawyers should be ingenuous in discussing it.

The young Earl clearly inherited the title and the small estate at Lovel Grange. The Italian woman was *primâ facie* heiress to everything else,—except to such portion of the large personal property as the widow could claim as widow, in the event of her being able to prove that she had been a wife. But in the event of the will being no will, the Italian woman would have nothing. In such case the male heir would have all if the marriage were no marriage;—but would have nothing if the marriage could be made good. If the marriage could be made good, the Lady Anna would have the entire property, except such portion as would be claimed of right by her mother, the widow. Thus the Italian woman and the young lord were

combined in interest against the mother and daughter as regarded the marriage; and the young lord and the mother and daughter were combined against the Italian woman as regarded the will;—but the young lord had to act alone against the Italian woman, and against the mother and daughter whom he and his friends regarded as swindlers and impostors. It was for him to set aside the will in reference to the Italian woman, and then to stand the brunt of the assault made upon him by the soi-disant wife.

In a very short time after the old Earl's death a double compromise was offered on behalf of the young Earl. The money at stake was immense. Would the Italian woman take £10,000, and go her way back to Italy, renouncing all further claim; and would the soi-disant Countess abandon her title, acknowledge her child to be illegitimate, and go her way with another £10,000;—or with £20,000, as was soon hinted by the gentlemen acting on the earl's behalf? The proposition was one somewhat difficult in the making, as the compromise, if made with both, would be excellent, but could not be made to any good effect with one only. The young Earl certainly could not afford to buy off the Italian woman for £10,000, if the effect of such buying off would only be to place the whole of the late lord's wealth in the hands of his daughter and of his daughter's mother.

The Italian woman consented. She declared with

Italian energy that her late loving friend had never been a day insane; but she knew nothing of English laws, and but little of English money. She would take the £10,000,—having had a calculation made for her of the number of lire into which it would run. The number was enormous, and she would take the offer. But when the proposal was mentioned to the Countess, and explained to her by her old friend, Thomas Thwaite, who had now become a poor man in her cause, she repudiated it with bitter scorn,—with a scorn in which she almost included the old man who had made it to her. “Is it for that, that I have been fighting?” she said.

“For that in part,” said the old man.

“No, Mr. Thwaite, not for that at all; but that my girl may have her birth allowed and her name acknowledged.”

“Her name shall be allowed and her birth shall be acknowledged,” said the tailor, in whose heart there was nothing base. “She shall be the Lady Anna, and her mother shall be the Countess Lovel.” The estate of the Countess, if she had an estate, then owed the tailor some five or six thousand pounds, and the compromise offered would have paid the tailor every shilling and have left a comfortable income for the two women.

“For myself I care but little,” said the mother, taking the tailor’s hand in hers and kissing it. “My

child is the Lady Anna, and I do not dare to barter away her rights." This took place down at the cottage in Cumberland, and the tailor at once went up to London to make known the decision of the Countess,—as he invariably called her.

Then the lawyers went to work. As the double compromise could not be effected, the single compromise could not stand. The Italian woman raved and stamped, and swore that she must have her quarter million of lire. But of course no right to such a claim had been made good to her, and the lawyers on behalf of the young Earl went on with their work. Public sympathy as a matter of course went with the young Earl. As against the Italian woman he had with him every English man and woman. It was horrible to the minds of English men and English women that an old English Earldom should be starved in order that an Italian harlot might revel in untold riches. It was felt by most men and protested by all women that any sign of madness, be it what it might,—however insignificant,—should be held to be sufficient against such a claimant. Was not the fact that the man had made such a will in itself sufficient proof of his madness?" There were not a few who protested that no further proof could be necessary. But with us the law is the same for an Italian harlot and an English widow; and it may well be that in its niceties it shall be found kinder to the former than to the latter. But

the Earl had been mad, and the law said that he was mad when he had made his will,—and the Italian woman went away, raging, into obscurity.

The Italian woman was conquered, and now the battle was open and free between the young Earl and the claimant Countess. Applications were made on behalf of the Countess for funds from the estate wherewith to prove the claim, and to a certain limited amount they were granted. Such had been the life of the late Earl that it was held that the cost of all litigation resulting from his misdeeds should be paid from his estate;—but ready money was wanted, immediate ready money, to be at the disposal of the Countess to any amount needed by her agent, and this was hardly to be obtained. By this time public sympathy ran almost entirely with the Earl. Though it was acknowledged that the late lord was mad, and though it had become a cause of rejoicing that the Italian woman had been sent away penniless, howling into obscurity, because of the old man's madness, still it was believed that he had written the truth when he declared that the marriage had been a mock marriage. It would be better for the English world that the young Earl should be a rich man, fit to do honour to his position, fit to marry the daughter of a duke, fit to carry on the glory of the English peerage, than that a woman, ill reputed in the world, should be established as a Countess, with a daughter dowered with tens of thousands, as

to whom it was already said that she was in love with a tailor's son. Nothing could be more touching, more likely to awaken sympathy, than the manner in which Josephine Murray had been carried away in marriage, and then roughly told by the man who should have protected her from every harshly blowing wind of heaven, that he had deceived her and that she was not his wife. No usage to which woman had ever been subjected, as has been said before, was more adapted to elicit compassion and energetic aid. But nineteen years had now passed by since the deed was done, and the facts were forgotten. One energetic friend there still was,—or we may say two, the tailor and his son Daniel. But public belief ran against the Countess, and nobody who was anybody in the world would give her her title. Bets were laid, two and three to one against her; and it was believed that she was an impostor. The Earl had all the glory of success over his first opponent, and the loud boasting of self-confident barristers buoyed up his cause.

But loud-boasting barristers may nevertheless be wise lawyers, and the question of a compromise was again mooted. If the lady would take thirty thousand pounds and vanish, she should have the money clear of deduction, and all expenses should be paid. The amount offered was thought to be very liberal, but it did not amount to the annual income that was at stake. It was rejected with scorn. Had it been

quadrupled, it would have been rejected with equal scorn. The loud-boasting barristers were still confident; but—— Though it was never admitted in words still it was felt that there might be a doubt. What if the contending parties were to join forces, if the Countess-ship of the Countess were to be admitted, and the heiress-ship of the Lady Anna, and if the Earl and the Lady Anna were to be united in holy wedlock? Might there not be a safe solution from further difficulty in that way?

### CHAPTER III.

#### *Lady Anna.*

THE idea of this further compromise, of this something more than compromise, of this half acknowledgment of their own weakness, came from Mr. Flick, of the firm of Norton and Flick, the solicitors who were employed in substantiating the Earl's position. When Mr. Flick mentioned it to Sir William Patterson, the great barrister, who was at that time Solicitor-General and leading counsel on behalf of Lord Lovel, Sir William Patterson stood aghast and was dismayed. Sir William intended to make mince-meat of the Countess. It was said of him that he intended to cross-examine the Countess off her legs, right out of her claim, and almost into her grave. He certainly did believe her to be an impostor, who had not

thought herself to be entitled to her name when she first assumed it.

"I should be sorry, Mr. Flick, to be driven to think that anything of that kind could be expedient."

"It would make sure of the fortune to the family," said Mr. Flick.

"And what about our friend, the Countess?"

"Let her call herself Countess Lovel, Sir William. That will break no bones. As to the formality of her own marriage, there can be no doubt about that."

"We can prove by Grogam that she was told that another wife was living," said Sir William. Grogam was an old butler who had been in the old Earl's service for thirty years.

"I believe we can, Sir William; but——. It is quite clear that we shall never get the other wife to come over and face an English jury. It is of no use blinking it. The gentleman whom we have sent over doubts her altogether. That there was a marriage is certain, but he fears that this woman is not the old Countess. There were two sisters, and it may be that this was the other sister."

Sir William was a good deal dismayed, but he recovered himself. The stakes were so high that it was quite possible that the gentleman who had been sent over might have been induced to open his eyes to the possibility of such personation by overtures from the other side. Sir William was of opinion that



Mr. Flick himself should go to Sicily. He was not sure that he, Sir William, her Majesty's Solicitor-General, would not make the journey in person. He was by no means disposed to give way. "They tell me that the girl is no better than she should be," he said to Mr. Flick.

"I don't think so bad as that of her," said Mr. Flick.

"Is she a lady,—or anything like a lady?"

"I am told she is very beautiful."

"I dare say;—and so was her mother before her. I never saw a handsomer woman of her age than our friend the Countess. But I could not recommend the young lord to marry an underbred, bad girl, and a bastard who claims to be his cousin,—and support my proposition merely on the ground of her looks."

"Thirty-five thousand a year, Sir William!" pleaded the attorney.

"I hope we can get the thirty-five thousand a year for our client without paying so dear for them."

It had been presumed that the real Countess, the original Countess, the Italian lady whom the Earl had married in early life, would be brought over, with properly attested documentary evidence in her pocket, to prove that she was the existing Countess, and that any other Countess must be either an impostor or a deluded dupe. No doubt the old Earl had declared, when first informing Josephine Murray that she was

not his wife, that his real wife had died during the few months which had intervened since his mock marriage; but it was acknowledged on all sides, that the old Earl had been a villain and a liar. It was no part of the duty of the young Earl, or of those who acted for him, to defend the character of the old Earl. To wash that blackamoor white, or even to make him whity-brown, was not necessary to anybody. No one was now concerned to account for his crooked courses. But if it could be shown that he had married the lady in Italy,—as to which there was no doubt,—and that the lady was still alive, or that she had been alive when the second marriage took place, then the Lady Anna could not inherit the property which had been freed from the grasp of the Italian mistress. But it seemed that the lady, if she lived, could not be made to come. Mr. Flick did go to Sicily, and came back renewing his advice to Sir William that Lord Lovel should be advised to marry the Lady Anna.

At this time the Countess, with her daughter, had moved their residence from Keswick up to London, and was living in very humble lodgings in a small street turning out of the New Road, near the Yorkshire Stingo. Old Thomas Thwaite had accompanied them from Cumberland, but the rooms had been taken for them by his son, Daniel Thwaite, who was at this time foreman to a somewhat celebrated tailor who carried on his business in Wigmore Street; and he,

Daniel Thwaite, had a bedroom in the house in which the Countess lodged. The arrangement was not a wise one, as reports had already been spread abroad as to the partiality of the Lady Anna for the young tailor. But how should she not have been partial both to the father and to the son, feeling as she did that they were the only two men who befriended her cause and her mother's? As to the Countess herself, she, perhaps, alone of all those who interested themselves in her daughter's cause, had heard no word of these insinuations against her child. To her both Thomas and Daniel Thwaite were dear friends, to repay whom for their exertions with lavish generosity,—should the means to do so ever come within her reach,—was one of the dreams of her existence. But she was an ambitious woman, thinking much of her rank, thinking much even of the blood of her own ancestors, constantly urgent with her daughter in teaching her the duties and privileges of wealth and rank. For the Countess never doubted that she would at last attain success. That the Lady Anna should throw herself away upon Daniel Thwaite did not occur to her as a possibility. She had not even dreamed that Daniel Thwaite would aspire to her daughter's hand. And yet every shop-boy and every shop-girl in Keswick had been so saying for the last twelvemonth, and rumours which had hitherto been confined to Keswick and its neighbourhood, were now common in London.

For the case was becoming one of the celebrated causes of the age, and all the world was talking of the Countess and her daughter. No momentary suspicion had crossed the mind of the Countess till after their arrival in London; and then when the suspicion did touch her it was not love that she suspected,—but rather an unbecoming familiarity which she attributed to her child's ignorance of the great life which awaited her. "My dear," she said one day when Daniel Thwaite had left them, "you should be less free in your manner with that young man."

"What do you mean, mamma?" said the daughter, blushing.

"You had better call him Mr. Thwaite."

"But I have called him Daniel ever since I was born."

"He always calls you Lady Anna."

"Sometimes he does, mamma."

"I never heard him call you anything else," said the Countess, almost with indignation. "It is all very well for the old man, because he is an old man and has done so much for us."

"So has Daniel;—quite as much, mamma. They have both done everything."

"True; they have both been warm friends; and if ever I forget them may God forget me. I trust that we may both live to show them that they are not

forgotten. But it is not fitting that there should exist between you and him the intimacy of equal positions. You are not and cannot be his equal. He has been born to be a tailor, and you are the daughter and heiress of an Earl."

These last words were spoken in a tone that was almost awful to the Lady Anna. She had heard so much of her father's rank and her father's wealth,—rank and wealth which were always to be hers, but which had never as yet reached her, which had been a perpetual trouble to her, and a crushing weight upon her young life, that she had almost learned to hate the title and the claim. Of course it was a part of the religion of her life that her mother had been duly married to her father. It was beyond a doubt to her that such was the case. But the constant battling for denied rights, the assumption of a position which could not be attained, the use of titles which were simply ridiculous in themselves as connected with the kind of life which she was obliged to lead,—these things had all become odious to her. She lacked the ambition which gave her mother strength, and would gladly have become Anna Murray or Anna Lovel, with a girl's ordinary privilege of loving her lover, had such an easy life been possible to her.

In person she was very lovely, less tall and robust than her mother had been, but with a sweeter, softer face. Her hair was less dark, and her eyes were

neither blue nor bold. But they were bright and soft and very eloquent, and when laden with tears would have softened the heart,—almost of her father. She was as yet less powerful than her mother, both in body and mind, but probably better calculated to make a happy home for a husband and children. She was affectionate, self-denying, and feminine. Had that offer of compromise for thirty, twenty, or for ten thousand pounds been made to her, she would have accepted it willingly,—caring little for her name, little even for fame, so that she might have been happy and quiet, and at liberty to think of a lover as are other girls. In her present condition, how could she have any happy love? She was the Lady Anna Lovel, heir to a ducal fortune,—but she lived in small close lodgings in Wyndham Street, New Road. She did not believe in the good time coming as did her mother. Their enemy was an undoubted Earl, undoubtedly owner of Lovel Grange of which she had heard all her life. Would it not be better to take what the young lord chose to give them and to be at rest? But she did not dare to express such thoughts to her mother. Her mother would have crushed her with a look.

“I have told Mr. Thwaite,” the mother said to her daughter, “what we were saying this morning.”

“About his son?”

“Yes,—about his son.”

"Oh, mamma!"

"I was bound to do so."

"And what did he say, mamma?"

"He did not like it, and told me that he did not like it;—but he admitted that it was true. He admitted that his son was no fitting intimate for Lady Anna Lovel."

"What should we have done without him?"

"Badly indeed; but that cannot change his duty, or ours. He is helping us to struggle for that which is our own; but he would mar his generosity if he put a taint on that which he is endeavouring to restore to us."

"Put a taint, mamma!"

"Yes;—a taint would rest upon your rank if you as Lady Anna Lovel were familiar with Daniel Thwaite as with an equal. His father understands it, and will speak to him."

"Mamma, Daniel will be very angry."

"Then will he be very unreasonable;—but, Anna, I will not have you call him Daniel any more."

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## CHAPTER IV.

*The Tailor of Keswick.*

OLD Thomas Thwaite was at this time up in London about the business of the Countess, but had no intention of residing there. He still kept his shop in Keswick, and still made coats and trousers for Cumberland statesmen. He was by no means in a condition to retire from business, having spent the savings of his life in the cause of the Countess and her daughter. Men had told him that, had he not struck the Earl in the yard of the Crown at Keswick, as horses were being brought out for the lord's travelling carriage, ample provision would have been made by the rich old sinner for his daughter. That might have been so, or might not, but the saying instigated the tailor to further zeal and increased generosity. To oppose an earl, even though it might be on behalf of a Countess, was a joy to him; to set wrong right, and to put down cruelty and to relieve distressed women was the pride of his heart,—especially when his efforts were made in antagonism to one of high rank. And he was a man who would certainly be thorough in his work, though his thoroughness should be ruinous to himself. He had despised the Murrays, who ought to have stuck to their distant cousin, and had exulted in his heart at thinking that the world would say how



much better and truer had been the Keswick tailor than the well-born and comparatively wealthy Scotch relations. And the poets of the lakes, who had not as yet become altogether Tories, had taken him by the hand and praised him. The rights of the Countess and the wrongs of the Countess had become his life. But he still kept on a diminished business in the north, and it was now needful that he should return to Cumberland. He had heard that renewed offers of compromise were to be made,—though no idea of the proposed marriage between the distant cousins had been suggested to him. He had been discussing the question of some compromise with the Countess when she spoke to him respecting his son; and had recommended that certain terms should, if possible, be effected. Let the money be divided, on condition that the marriage were allowed. There could be no difficulty in this if the young lord would accede to such an arrangement, as the marriage must be acknowledged unless an adverse party should bring home proof from Italy to the contrary. The sufficiency of the ceremony in Applethwaite Church was incontestable. Let the money be divided, and the Countess be Countess Lovel, and Lady Anna be the Lady Anna to all the world. Old Thomas Thwaite himself had seemed to think that there would be enough of triumph in such a settlement. “But the woman might afterwards be bribed to come over and renew her

claim," said the Countess. "Unless it be absolutely settled now, they will say when I am dead and gone that my daughter has no right to her name." Then the tailor said that he would make further inquiry how that might be. He was inclined to think that there might be a decision which should be absolute, even though that decision should be reached by compromise between the now contending parties.

Then the Countess had said her word about Daniel Thwaite the son, and Thomas Thwaite the father had heard it with ill-concealed anger. To fight against an Earl on behalf of the Earl's injured wife had been very sweet to him, but to be checked in his fight because he and his were unfit to associate with the child of that injured wife, was very bitter. And yet he had sense to know that what the Countess said to him was true. As far as words went, he admitted the truth; but his face was more eloquent than his words, and his face showed plainly his displeasure.

"It is not of you that I am speaking," said the Countess, laying her hand upon the old man's sleeve.

"Daniel is, at any rate, fitter than I," said the tailor. "He has been educated, and I never was."

"He is as good as gold. It is not of that I speak. You know what I mean."

"I know very well what you mean, Lady Lovel."

"I have no friend like you, Mr. Thwaite;—none whom I love as I do you. And next to you is your

son. For myself, there is nothing that I would not do for him or you;—no service, however menial, that I would not render you with my own hands. There is no limit to the gratitude which I owe you. But my girl is young, and if this burden of rank and wealth is to be hers,—it is proper that she do honour to it.”

“And it is not honourable that she should be seen speaking—to a tailor?”

“Ah,—if you choose to take it so!”

“How should I take it? What I say is true. And what you say is true also. I will speak to Daniel.” But she knew well, as he left her, that his heart was bitter against her.

The old man did speak to his son, sitting with him up in the bedroom over that which the Countess occupied. Old Thomas Thwaite was a strong man, but his son was in some respects stronger. As his father had said of him, he had been educated,—or rather instructed; and instruction leads to the power of thinking. He looked deeper into things than did his father, and was governed by wider and greater motives. His father had been a Radical all his life, guided thereto probably by some early training, and made steadfast in his creed by feelings which induced him to hate the pretensions of an assumed superiority. Old Thwaite could not endure to think that one man should be considered to be worthier than another because he was richer. He would admit the riches, and

even the justice of the riches,—having been himself, during much of his life, a rich man in his own sphere; but would deny the worthiness; and would adduce, in proof of his creed, the unworthiness of certain exalted sinners. The career of the Earl Lovel had been to him a sure proof of the baseness of English aristocracy generally. He had dreams of a republic in which a tailor might be president or senator, or something almost noble. But no rational scheme of governance among mankind had ever entered his mind, and of pure politics he knew no more than the journeyman who sat stitching upon his board.

But Daniel Thwaite was a thoughtful man who had read many books. More's *Utopia* and Harrington's *Oceana*, with many a tale written in the same spirit, had taught him to believe that a perfect form of government, or rather of policy, under which all men might be happy and satisfied, was practicable upon earth, and was to be achieved,—not merely by the slow amelioration of mankind under God's fostering ordinances,—but by the continued efforts of good and wise men who, by their goodness and wisdom, should be able to make the multitude believe in them. To diminish the distances, not only between the rich and the poor, but between the high and the low, was the grand political theory upon which his mind was always running. His father was ever thinking of himself and of Earl Lovel; while Daniel Thwaite was con-

sidering the injustice of the difference between ten thousand aristocrats and thirty million of people, who were for the most part ignorant and hungry. But it was not that he also had not thoughts of himself. Gradually he had come to learn that he need not have been a tailor's foreman in Wigmore Street had not his father spent on behalf of the Countess Lovel the means by which he, the son, might already have become a master tradesman. And yet he had never begrudged it. He had been as keen as his father in the cause. It had been the romance of his life, since his life had been capable of romance;—but with him it had been no respect for the rank to which his father was so anxious to restore the Countess, no value which he attached to the names claimed by the mother and the daughter. He hated the countess-ship of the Countess, and the ladyship of the Lady Anna. He would fain that they should have abandoned them. They were to him odious signs of iniquitous pretensions. But he was keen enough to punish and to remedy the wickedness of the wicked Earl. He revered his father because he assaulted the wicked Earl and struck him to the ground. He was heart and soul in the cause of the injured wife. And then the one thing on earth that was really dear to him was the Lady Anna.

It had been the romance of his life. They had grown up together as playmates in Cumberland. He

had fought scores of battles on her behalf with those who had denied that she was the Lady Anna,—even though he had then hated the title. Boys had jeered him because of his noble little sweetheart, and he had exulted at hearing her so called. His only sister and his mother had died when he was young, and there had been none in the house but his father and himself. As a boy he had ever been at the cottage of the Countess, and he had sworn to Lady Anna a thousand times that he would do and die in her service. Now he was a strong man, and was more devoted to her than ever. It was the great romance of his life. How could it be brought to pass that the acknowledged daughter of an earl, dowered with enormous wealth, should become the wife of a tailor? And yet such was his ambition and such his purpose. It was not that he cared for her dower. It was not, at any rate, the hope of her dower that had induced him to love her. His passion had grown and his purpose had been formed before the old Earl had returned for the last time to Lovel Grange,—when nothing was known of the manner in which his wealth might be distributed. That her prospect of riches now joined itself to his aspirations it would be an affectation to deny. The man who is insensible to the power which money brings with it must be a dolt; and Daniel Thwaite was not a dolt, and was fond of power. But he was proud of heart, and he said to

himself over and over again that should it ever come to pass that the possession of the girl was to depend on the abandonment of the wealth, the wealth should be abandoned without a further thought.

It may be imagined that with such a man the words which his father would speak to him about the Lady Anna, suggesting the respectful distance with which she should be approached by a tailor's foreman, would be very bitter. They were bitter to the speaker and very bitter to him who heard them. "Daniel," said the father, "this is a queer life you are leading with the Countess and Lady Anna just beneath you, in the same house."

"It was a quiet house for them to come to;—and cheap."

"Quiet enough, and as cheap as any, I dare say;—but I don't know whether it is well that you should be thrown so much with them. They are different from us." The son looked at his father, but made no immediate reply. "Our lot has been cast with theirs because of their difficulties," continued the old man, "but the time is coming when we had better stand aloof."

"What do you mean, father?"

"I mean that we are tailors, and these people are born nobles."

"They have taken our help, father."

"Well; yes, they have. But it is not for us to say anything of that. It has been given with a heart."

"Certainly with a heart."

"And shall be given to the end. But the end of it will come soon now. One will be a Countess and the other will be the Lady Anna. Are they fit associates for such as you and me?"

"If you ask me, father, I think they are."

"They don't think so. You may be sure of that."

"Have they said so, father?"

"The Countess has said so. She has complained that you call her daughter simply Anna. In future you must give her a handle to her name." Daniel Thwaite was a dark brown man, with no tinge of rudeness about him, a thin spare man, almost swarthy, whose hands were as brown as a nut, and whose cheeks and forehead were brown. But now he blushed up to his eyes. The hue of the blood as it rushed to his face forced itself through the darkness of his visage, and he blushed, as such men do blush,—with a look of indignation on his face. "Just call her Lady Anna," said the father.

"The Countess has been complaining of me then?"

"She has hinted that her daughter will be injured by your familiarity, and she is right. I suppose that the Lady Anna Lovel ought to be treated with defe-



rence by a tailor,—even though the tailor may have spent his last farthing in her service.”

“Do not let us talk about the money, father.”

“Well; no. I’d as lief not think about the money either. The world is not ripe yet, Daniel.”

“No;—the world is not ripe.”

“There must be earls and countesses.”

“I see no must in it. There are earls and countesses as there used to be mastodons and other senseless, over-grown brutes roaming miserable and hungry through the undrained woods,—cold, comfortless, unwieldy things, which have perished in the general progress. The big things have all to give way to the intellect of those which are more finely made.”

“I hope men and women will not give way to bugs and fleas,” said the tailor, who was wont to ridicule his son’s philosophy.

The son was about to explain his theory of the perfected mean size of intellectual created beings, when his heart was at the present moment full of Anna Lovel. “Father,” he said, “I think that the Countess might have spared her observations.”

“I thought so too;—but as she said it, it was best that I should tell you. You’ll have to marry some day, and it wouldn’t do that you should look there for your sweetheart.” When the matter was thus brought home to him, Daniel Thwaite would argue it

no further. "It will all come to an end soon," continued the old man, "and it may be that they had better not move till it is settled. They'll divide the money, and there will be enough for both in all conscience. The Countess will be the Countess, and the Lady Anna will be the Lady Anna; and then there will be no more need of the old tailor from Keswick. They will go into another world, and we shall hear from them perhaps about Christmas time with a hamper of game, and may be a little wine, as a gift."

"You do not think that of them, father."

"What else can they do? The lawyers will pay the money, and they will be carried away. They cannot come to our house, nor can we go to theirs. I shall leave to-morrow, my boy, at six o'clock; and my advice to you is to trouble them with your presence as little as possible. You may be sure that they do not want it."

Daniel Thwaite was certainly not disposed to take his father's advice, but then he knew much more than did his father. The above scene took place in the evening, when the son's work was done. As he trept down on the following morning by the door in which the two ladies slept, he could not but think of his father's words, "It wouldn't do that you should look there for your sweetheart." Why should it not do? But any such advice as that was now too late. He

had looked there for his sweetheart. He had spoken, and the girl had answered him. He had held her close to his heart, and had pressed her lips to his own, and had called her his Anna, his well-beloved, his pearl, his treasure; and she,—she had only sighed in his arms, and yielded to his embrace. She had wept alone when she thought of it, with a conscious feeling that as she was the Lady Anna there could be no happy love between herself and the only youth whom she had known. But when he had spoken, and had clasped her to his heart, she had never dreamed of rebuking him. She had known nothing better than he, and desired nothing better than to live with him and to be loved by him. She did not think that it could be possible to know any one better. This weary, weary title filled her with dismay. Daniel, as he walked along thinking of her embrace, thinking of those kisses, and thinking also of his father's caution, swore to himself that the difficulties in his way should never stop him in his course.

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## CHAPTER V.

The Solicitor-General makes a Proposition.

WHEN Mr. Flick returned from Sicily he was very strongly in favour of some compromise. He had seen the so-called Italian Countess,—who certainly was now called Contessa by everybody around her,—and he did not believe that she had ever been married to the old Earl. That an Italian lady had been married to the old lord now twenty-five years ago, he did believe,—probably the younger sister of this woman,—and he also believed that this wife had been dead before the marriage at Applethwaite. That was his private opinion. Mr. Flick was, in his way, an honest man,—one who certainly would have taken no conscious part in getting up an unjust claim; but he was now acting as legal agent for the young Earl, and it was not his business to get up evidence for the Earl's opponents. He did think that were he to use all his ingenuity and the funds at his disposal he would be able to reach the real truth in such a manner that it should be made clear and indubitable to an English jury; but if the real truth were adverse to his side, why search for it! He understood that the English Countess would stand her ground on the legality of the Applethwaite marriage, and on the acquittal of the old Earl as to the charge of bigamy. The English

Countess being firm, so far as that ground would make her firm, it would in reality be for the other side—for the young Earl—to prove a former marriage. The burden of the proof would be with him, and not with the English Countess to disprove it. Disingenuous lawyers—Mr. Flick, who though fairly honest could be disingenuous, among the number—had declared the contrary. But such was the case; and, as money was scarce with the Countess and her friends, no attempt had been made on their part to bring home evidence from Sicily. All this Mr. Flick knew, and doubted how far it might be wise for him further to disturb that Sicilian romance. The Italian Countess, who was a hideous, worn-out old woman, professing to be forty-four, probably fifty-five, and looking as though she were seventy-seven, would not stir a step towards England. She would swear and had sworn any number of oaths. Documentary evidence from herself, from various priests, from servants, and from neighbours there was in plenty. Mr. Flick learned through his interpreter that a certain old priest ridiculed the idea of there being a doubt. And there were letters,—letters alleged to have been written by the Earl to the living wife in the old days, which were shown to Mr. Flick. Mr. Flick was an educated man, and knew many things. He knew something of the manufacture of paper, and would not look at the letters after the first touch. It was not for him to get

up evidence for the other side. The hideous old woman was clamorous for money. The priests were clamorous for money. The neighbours were clamorous for money. Had not they all sworn anything that was wanted, and were they not to be paid? Some moderate payment was made to the hideous, screeching, greedy old woman; some trivial payment—as to which Mr. Flick was heartily ashamed of himself—was made to the old priest; and then Mr. Flick hurried home, fully convinced that a compromise should be made as to the money, and that the legality of the titles claimed by the two English ladies should be allowed. It might be that that hideous hag had once been the Countess Lovel. It certainly was the case that the old Earl in latter years had so called her, though he had never once seen her during his last residence in Sicily. It might be that the clumsy fiction of the letters had been perpetrated with the view of bolstering up a true case with false evidence. But Mr. Flick thought that there should be a compromise, and expressed his opinion very plainly to Sir William Patterson. “You mean a marriage,” said the Solicitor-General. At this time Mr. Hardy, Q.C., the second counsel acting on behalf of the Earl, was also present.

“Not necessarily by a marriage, Sir William. They could divide the money.”

“The girl is not of age,” said Mr. Hardy.

“She is barely twenty as yet,” said Sir William.

"I think it might be managed on her behalf," said the attorney.

"Who could be empowered to sacrifice her rights?" said Mr. Hardy, who was a gruff man.

"We might perhaps contrive to tide it over till she is of age," said the Solicitor-General, who was a sweet-mannered, mild man among his friends, though he could cross-examine a witness off his legs,—or hers, if the necessity of the case required him to do so.

"Of course we could do that, Sir William. What is a year in such a case as this?"

"Not much among lawyers, is it, Mr. Flick? You think that we shouldn't bring our case into court."

"It is a good case, Sir William, no doubt. There's the woman,—Countess, we will call her,—ready to swear, and has sworn, that she was the old Earl's wife. All the people round call her the Countess. The Earl undoubtedly used to speak of her as the Countess, and send her little dribbles of money, as being his Countess, during the ten years and more after he left Lovel Grange. There is the old priest who married them."

"The devil's in it if that is not a good case," said Mr. Hardy.

"Go on, Mr. Flick," said the Solicitor-General.

"I've got all the documentary evidence of course, Sir William."

"Go on, Mr. Flick."

Mr. Flick scratched his head. "It's a very heavy interest, Sir William."

"No doubt it is. Go on."

"I don't know that I've anything further to say, except that I'd arrange it if I could. Our client, Sir William, would be in a very pretty position if he got half the income which is at stake."

"Or the whole with the wife," said the Solicitor-General.

"Or the whole with the wife, Sir William. If he were to lose it all, he'd be,—so to say, nowhere."

"Nowhere at all," said the Solicitor-General. "The entailed property isn't worth above a thousand a year."

"I'd make some arrangement," said Mr. Flick, whose mind may perhaps have had a not unnatural bend towards his own very large venture in this concern. That his bill, including the honorarium of the barristers, would sooner or later be paid out of the estate, he did not doubt;—but a compromise would make the settlement easy and pleasant.

Mr. Hardy was in favour of continued fighting. A keener, honester, more enlightened lawyer than Mr. Hardy did not wear silk at that moment, but he had not the gift of seeing through darkness which belonged to the Solicitor-General. When Mr. Flick told them of the strength of their case, as based on various heads of evidence in their favour, Mr. Hardy believed Mr. Flick's words and rejected Mr. Flick's opinion.



He believed in his heart that the English Countess was an impostor, not herself believing in her own claim; and it would be gall and wormwood to him to give to such a one a moiety of the wealth which should go to support the ancient dignity and aristocratic grace of the house of Lovel. He hated compromise and desired justice,—and was a great rather than a successful lawyer. Sir William had at once perceived that there was something in the background on which it was his duty to calculate, which he was bound to consider,—but with which at the same time it was inexpedient that he should form a closer or more accurate acquaintance. He must do the best he could for his client. Earl Lovel with a thousand a year, and that probably already embarrassed, would be a poor, wretched creature, a mock lord, an earl without the very essence of an earldom. But Earl Lovel with fifteen or twenty thousand a year would be as good as most other earls. It would be but the difference between two powdered footmen and four, between four hunters and eight, between Belgrave Square and Eaton Place. Sir William, had he felt confident, would of course have preferred the four footmen for his client, and the eight hunters, and Belgrave Square; even though the poor English Countess should have starved, or been fed by the tailor's bounty. But he was not confident. He began to think that that wicked old Earl had been too

wicked for them all. "They say she's a very nice girl," said Sir William.

"Very handsome indeed, I'm told," said Mr. Flick.

"And in love with the son of the old tailor from Keswick," said Mr. Hardy.

"She'll prefer the lord to the tailor for a guinea," said Sir William.

And thus it was decided, after some indecisive fashion, that their client should be sounded as to the expedience of a compromise. It was certain to them that the poor woman would be glad to accept, for herself and her daughter, half of the wealth at stake, which half would be to her almost unlimited riches, on the condition that their rank was secured to them,—their rank and all the privileges of honest legitimacy. But as to such an arrangement the necessary delay offered no doubt a serious impediment, and it was considered that the wisest course would be to propose the marriage. But who should propose it, and how should it be proposed? Sir William was quite willing to make the suggestion to the young Lord or the young Lord's family, whose consent must of course be first obtained; but who should then break the ice to the Countess? "I suppose we must ask our friend, the Serjeant," said Mr. Flick. Serjeant Bluestone was the leading counsel for our Countess, and was vehemently energetic in this case. He swore everywhere that the Solicitor-General hadn't a leg to stand upon,

and that the Solicitor-General knew that he hadn't a leg. Let them bring that Italian Countess over if they dared. He'd countess her, and dis-countess her too! Since he had first known the English courts of law there had been no case hard as this was hard. Had not the old Earl been acquitted of the charge of bigamy, when the unfortunate woman had done her best to free herself from her position? Serjeant Bluestone, who was a very violent man, taking up all his cases as though the very holding of a brief opposite to him was an insult to himself, had never before been so violent. "The Serjeant will take it as a surrender," said Mr. Flick.

"We must get round the Serjeant," said Sir William. "There are ladies in the Lovel family; we must manage it through them." And so it was arranged by the young Lord's lawyers that an attempt should be made to marry him to the heiress.

The two cousins had never seen each other. Lady Anna had hardly heard of Frederic Lovel before her father's death; but, since that, had been brought up to regard the young Lord as her natural enemy. The young Lord had been taught from his youth upwards to look upon the soi-disant Countess and her daughter as impostors who would some day strive to rob him of his birthright;—and, in these latter days, as impostors who were hard at work upon their project. And he had been told of the intimacy between the Countess and the old tailor,—and also of that between

the so-called Lady Anna and the young tailor. To these distant Lovels,—to Frederic Lovel who had been brought up with the knowledge that he must be the Earl, and to his uncle and aunt by whom he had been brought up,—the women down at Keswick had been represented as vulgar, odious, and desreputable. We all know how firm can be the faith of a family in such matters. The Lovels were not without fear as to the result of the attempt that was being made. They understood quite as well as did Mr. Flick the glory of the position which would attend upon success, and the wretchedness attendant upon a pauper earldom. They were nervous enough, and in some moods frightened. But their trust in the justice of their cause was unbounded. The old Earl, whose memory was horrible to them, had purposely left two enemies in their way. There had been the Italian mistress backed up by the will; and there had been this illegitimate child. The one was vanquished; but the other——! Ah,—it would be bad with them indeed if that enemy could not be vanquished too! They had offered £30,000 to the enemy; but the enemy would not accept the bribe. The idea of ending all their troubles by a marriage had never occurred to them. Had Mrs. Lovel been asked about it, she would have said that Anna Murray—as she always studiously called the Lady Anna—was not fit to be married.

The young Lord, who a few months after his

cousin's death had been old enough to take his seat in the House of Peers, was a gay-hearted, kindly young man, who had been brought home from sea at the age of twenty on the death of an elder brother. Some of the family had wished that he should go on with his profession in spite of the earldom; but it had been thought unfit that he should be an earl and a midshipman at the same time, and his cousin's death while he was still on shore settled the question. He was a fair-haired, well-made young lad, looking like a sailor, and every inch a gentleman. Had he believed that the Lady Anna was the Lady Anna, no earthly consideration would have induced him to meddle with the money. Since the old Lord's death, he had lived chiefly with his uncle Charles Lovel, having passed some two or three months at Lovel Grange with his uncle and aunt. Charles Lovel was a clergyman, with a good living at Yoxham, in Yorkshire, who had married a rich wife, a woman with some two thousand a year of her own, and was therefore well to do in the world. His two sons were at Harrow, and he had one other child, a daughter. With them also lived a Miss Lovel, Aunt Julia,—who was supposed of all the Lovels to be the wisest and most strong-minded. The parson, though a popular man, was not strong-minded. He was passionate, loud, generous, affectionate and indiscreet. He was very proud of his nephew's position as head of the family,—and very full of his

nephew's wrongs arising from the fraud of those Murray women. He was a violent Tory, and had heard much of the Keswick Radical. He never doubted for a moment that both old Thwaite and young Thwaite were busy in concocting an enormous scheme of plunder by which to enrich themselves. To hear that they had both been convicted and transported was the hope of his life. That a Radical should not be worthy of transportation was to him impossible. That a Radical should be honest was to him incredible. But he was a thoroughly humane and charitable man, whose good qualities were as little intelligible to old Thomas Thwaite, as were those of Thomas Thwaite to him.

To whom should the Solicitor-General first break the matter? He had already had some intercourse with the Lovels, and had not been impressed with a sense of the parson's wisdom. He was a Whig Solicitor-General, for there were still Whigs in those days, and Mr. Lovel had not much liked him. Mr. Flick had seen much of the family,—having had many interviews with the young lord, with the parson, and with Aunt Julia. It was at last settled by Sir William's advice that a letter should be written to Aunt Julia by Mr. Flick, suggesting that she should come up to town.

"Mr. Lovel will be very angry," said Mr. Flick.

"We must do the best we can for our client," said Sir William. The letter was written, and Miss Lovel

was informed in Mr. Flick's most discreet style, that as Sir William Patterson was anxious to discuss a matter concerning Lord Lovel's case in which a woman's voice would probably be of more service than that of a man, perhaps Miss Lovel would not object to the trouble of a journey to London. Miss Lovel did come up, and her brother came with her.

The interview took place in Sir William's chambers, and no one was present but Sir William, Miss Lovel, and Mr. Flick. Mr. Flick had been instructed to sit still and say nothing, unless he were asked a question; and he obeyed his instructions. After some apologies, which were perhaps too soft and sweet,—and which were by no means needed, as Miss Lovel herself, though very wise, was neither soft nor sweet,—the great man thus opened his case. "This is a very serious matter, Miss Lovel."

"Very serious indeed."

"You can hardly perhaps conceive how great a load of responsibility lies upon a lawyer's shoulders, when he has to give advice in such a case as this, when perhaps the prosperity of a whole family may turn upon his words."

"He can only do his best."

"Ah yes, Miss Lovel. That is easy to say; but how shall he know what is the best?"

"I suppose the truth will prevail at last. It is impossible to think that a young man such as my nephew

should be swindled out of a noble fortune by the intrigues of two such women as these. I can't believe it, and I won't believe it. Of course I am only a woman, but I always thought it wrong to offer them even a shilling." Sir William smiled and rubbed his head, fixing his eyes on those of the lady. Though he smiled she could see that there was real sadness in his face. "You don't mean to say you doubt?" she said.

"Indeed I do."

"You think that a wicked scheme like this can succeed before an English judge?"

"But if the scheme be not wicked? Let me tell you one or two things, Miss Lovel;—or rather my own private opinion on one or two points. I do not believe that these two ladies are swindlers."

"They are not ladies, and I feel sure that they are swindlers," said Miss Lovel very firmly, turning her face as she spoke to the attorney.

"I am telling you, of course, merely my own opinion, and I will beg you to believe of me that in forming it I have used all the experience and all the caution which a long course of practice in these matters has taught me. Your nephew is entitled to my best services, and at the present moment I can perhaps do my duty to him most thoroughly by asking you to listen to me." The lady closed her lips together, and sat silent. "Whether Mrs. Murray, as we



have hitherto called her, was or was not the legal wife of the late Earl, I will not just now express an opinion; but I am sure that she thinks that she was. The marriage was formal and accurate. The Earl was tried for bigamy, and acquitted. The people with whom we have to do across the water, in Sicily, are not respectable. They cannot be induced to come here to give evidence. An English jury will be naturally averse to them. The question is one simply of facts for a jury, and we cannot go beyond a jury. Had the daughter been a son, it would have been in the House of Lords to decide which young man should be the peer;—but, as it is, it is simply a question of property, and of facts as to the ownership of the property. Should we lose the case, your nephew would be—a very poor man.”

“A very poor man, indeed, Sir William.”

“His position would be distressing. I am bound to say that we should go into court to try the case with very great distrust. Mr. Flick quite agrees with me.”

“Quite so, Sir William,” said Mr. Flick.

Miss Lovel again looked at the attorney, closed her lips tighter than ever, but did not say a word.

“In such cases as this prejudices will arise, Miss Lovel. It is natural that you and your family should be prejudiced against these ladies. For myself, I am

not aware that anything true can be alleged against them."

"The girl has disgraced herself with a tailor's son," almost screamed Miss Lovel.

"You have been told so, but I do not believe it to be true. They were, no doubt, brought up as children together; and Mr. Thwaite has been most kind to both the ladies." It at once occurred to Miss Lovel that Sir William was a Whig, and that there was in truth but little difference between a Whig and a Radical. To be at heart a gentleman, or at heart a lady, it was, to her thinking, necessary to be a Tory. "It would be a thousand pities that so noble a property should pass out of a family which, by its very splendour and ancient nobility, is placed in need of ample means." On hearing this sentiment, which might have become even a Tory, Miss Lovel relaxed somewhat the muscles of her face. "Were the Earl to marry his cousin——"

"She is not his cousin."

"Were the Earl to marry the young lady who, it may be, will be proved to be his cousin, the whole difficulty would be cleared away."

"Marry her!"

"I am told that she is very lovely, and that pains have been taken with her education. Her mother was well born and well bred. If you would get at the truth, Miss Lovel, you must teach yourself to believe

that they are not swindlers. They are no more swindlers than I am a swindler. I will go further,—though perhaps you, and the young Earl, and Mr. Flick, may think me unfit to be intrusted any longer with this case, after such a declaration,—I believe, though it is with a doubting belief, that the elder lady is the Countess Lovel and that her daughter is the legitimate child and the heir of the late Earl.”

Mr. Flick sat with his mouth open as he heard this,—beating his breast almost with despair. His opinion tallied exactly with Sir William’s. Indeed, it was by his opinion, hardly expressed, but perfectly understood, that Sir William had been led. But he had not thought that Sir William would be so bold and candid.

“You believe that Anna Murray is the real heir?” gasped Miss Lovel.

“I do,—with a doubting belief. I am inclined that way,—having to form my opinion on very conflicting evidence.” Mr. Flick was by this time quite sure that Sir William was right, in his opinion,—though perhaps wrong in declaring it,—having been corroborated in his own belief by the reflex of it on a mind more powerful than his own. “Thinking as I do,” continued Sir William,—“with a natural bias towards my own client,—what will a jury think, who will have no such bias? If they are cousins,—distant cousins,—

why should they not marry and be happy, one bringing the title, and the other the wealth? There could be no more rational union, Miss Lovel."

Then there was a long pause before any one spoke a word. Mr. Flick had been forbidden to speak, and Sir William, having made his proposition, was determined to await the lady's reply. The lady was aghast, and for awhile could neither think nor utter a word. At last she opened her mouth. "I must speak to my brother about this."

"Quite right, Miss Lovel."

"Now I may go, Sir William?"

"Good morning, Miss Lovel." And Miss Lovel went.

"You have gone farther than I thought you would, Sir William," said Mr. Flick.

"I hardly went far enough, Mr. Flick. We must go farther yet if we mean to save any part of the property for the young man. What should we gain, even if we succeeded in proving that the Earl was married in early life to the old Sicilian hag that still lives? She would inherit the property then;—not the Earl."

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## CHAPTER VI.

Yoxham Rectory.

MISS LOVEL, wise and strong-minded as she was, did not dare to come to any decision on the proposition made to her without consulting some one. Strong as she was, she found herself at once to be too weak to speak to her nephew on the subject of her late interview with the great lawyer without asking her brother's opinion. The parson had accompanied her up to London, in a state of wrath against Sir William, in that he had not been sent for instead of his sister, and to him she told all that had been said. Her brother was away at his club when she got back to her hotel, and she had some hours in which to think of what had taken place. She could not at once bring herself to believe that all her former beliefs were vain and ill founded.

But if the opinion of the Solicitor-General had not prevailed with her, it prevailed still less when it reached her brother second-hand. She had been shaken, but Mr. Lovel at first was not shaken at all. Sir William was a Whig and a traitor. He had never known a Whig who was not a traitor. Sir William was throwing them over. The Murray people, who were all Whigs, had got hold of him. He, Mr. Lovel, would go at once to Mr. Hardy, and tell Mr. Hardy

what he thought. The case should be immediately taken out of the hands of Messrs. Norton and Flick. Did not all the world know that these impostors were impostors? Sir William should be exposed and degraded,—though, in regard to this threatened degradation, Mr. Lovel was almost of opinion that his party would like their Solicitor-General better for having shown himself to be a traitor, and therefore proved himself to be a good Whig. He stormed and flew about the room, using language which hardly became his cloth. If his nephew married the girl, he would never own his nephew again. If that swindle was to prevail, let his nephew be poor and honest. He would give half of all he had towards supporting the peerage, and was sure that his boys would thank him for what he had done. But they should never call that woman cousin; and as for himself, might his tongue be blistered if ever he spoke of either of those women as Countess Lovel. He was inclined to think that the whole case should immediately be taken out of the hands of Norton and Flick, without further notice, and another solicitor employed. But at last he consented to call on Mr. Norton on the following morning.

Mr. Norton was a heavy, honest old man, who attended to simple conveyancing, and sat amidst the tin boxes of his broad-acred clients. He had no alternative but to send for Mr. Flick, and Mr. Flick came. When Mr. Lovel showed his anger, Mr. Flick became

somewhat indignant. Mr. Flick knew how to assert himself, and Mr. Lovel was not quite the same man in the lawyer's chambers that he had been in his own parlour at the hotel. Mr. Flick was of opinion that no better counsel was to be had in England than the Solicitor-General, and no opinion more worthy of trust than his. If the Earl chose to put his case into other hands, of course he could do so, but it would behove his lordship to be very careful lest he should prejudice most important interests by showing his own weakness to his opponents. Mr. Flick spoke in the interests of his client,—so he said,—and not in his own. Mr. Flick was clearly of opinion that a compromise should be arranged; and having given that opinion, could say nothing more on the present occasion. On the next day the young Earl saw Mr. Flick, and also saw Sir William, and was then told by his aunt of the proposition which had been made. The parson retired to Yoxham, and Miss Lovel remained in London with her nephew. By the end of the week Miss Lovel was brought round to think that some compromise was expedient. All this took place in May. The cause had been fixed for trial in the following November, the long interval having been allowed because of the difficulty expected in producing the evidence necessary for rebutting the claims of the late Earl's daughter.

By the middle of June all the Lovels were again in London,—the parson, his sister, the parson's wife,

and the Earl. "I never saw the young woman in my life," said the Earl to his aunt.

"As for that," said his aunt, "no doubt you could see her if you thought it wise to do so."

"I suppose she might be asked to the rectory?" said Mrs. Lovel.

"That would be giving up altogether," said the rector.

"Sir William said that it would not be against us at all," said Aunt Julia.

"You would have to call her Lady Anna," said Mrs. Lovel.

"I couldn't do it," said the rector. "It would be much better to give her half."

"But why should she take the half if the whole belongs to her?" said the young lord. "And why should I ask even for the half if nothing belongs to me?" At this time the young lord had become almost despondent as to his alleged rights, and now and again had made everybody belonging to him miserable by talking of withdrawing from his claim. He had come to understand that Sir William believed that the daughter was the real heir, and he thought that Sir William must know better than others. He was down-hearted and low in spirits, but not the less determined to be just in all that he did.

"I have made inquiry," said Aunt Julia, "and I do



believe that the stories which we heard against the girl were untrue."

"The tailor and his son have been their most intimate friends," said Mr. Lovel.

"Because they had none others," said Mrs. Lovel.

It had been settled that by the 24th of June the lord was to say whether he would or would not take Sir William's advice. If he would do so, Sir William was to suggest what step should next be taken as to making the necessary overtures to the two ladies. If he would not, then Sir William was to advise how best the case might be carried on. They were all again at Yoxham that day, and the necessary communication was to be made to Mr. Flick by post. The young man had been alone the whole morning thinking of his condition, and undoubtedly the desire for the money had grown on him strongly. Why should it not have done so? Is there a nobleman in Great Britain who can say that he could lose the fortune which he possesses or the fortune which he expects without an agony that would almost break his heart? Young Lord Lovel sighed for the wealth without which his title would only be to him a terrible burden, and yet he was resolved that he would take no part in anything that was unjust. This girl, he heard, was beautiful and soft and pleasant, and now they told him that the evil things which had been reported

against her had been slanders. He was assured that she was neither coarse, nor vulgar, nor unmaidenly. Two or three old men, of equal rank with his own,—men who had been his father's friends and were allied to the Lovels, and had been taken into confidence by Sir William,—told him that the proper way out of the difficulty had been suggested to him. There could be nothing, they said, more fitting than that two cousins so situated should marry. With such an acknowledgment of her rank and birth everybody would visit his wife. There was not a countess or a duchess in London who would not be willing to take her by the hand. His two aunts had gradually given way, and it was clear to him that his uncle would give way,—even his uncle,—if he would but yield himself. It was explained to him that if the girl came to Yoxham, with the privilege of being called Lady Anna by the inhabitants of the rectory, she would of course do so on the understanding that she should accept her cousin's hand. "But she might not like me," said the young Earl to his aunt.

"Not like you!" said Mrs. Lovel, putting her hand up to his brow and pushing away his hair. Was it possible that any girl should not like such a man as that, and he an earl?

"And if I did not like her, Aunt Lovel?"

"Then I would not ask her to be my wife." He

thought that there was an injustice in this, and yet before the day was over he had assented.

"I do not think that I can call her Lady Anna," said the rector. "I don't think I can bring my tongue to do it."

## CHAPTER VII.

*The Solicitor-General perseveres.*

THERE was considerable difficulty in making the overture to the two ladies,—or rather in making it to the elder lady; for the suggestion, if made to the daughter, must of course come to her from her mother. It had been decided at last that the Lady Anna could not be invited to the rectory till it had been positively settled that she should be the Lady Anna without further opposition; and that all opposition to the claim should be withdrawn, at any rate till it was found that the young people were not inclined to be engaged to each other. "How can I call her Lady Anna before I have made up my mind to think that she is Lady Anna?" said the parson, almost in tears. As to the rest of the family, it may be said that they had come silently to think that the Countess was the Countess and that the Lady Anna was the Lady Anna;—silently in reference to each other, for not one of them except the young lord had positively owned to such a conviction. Sir William Patterson

had been too strong for them. It was true that he was a Whig. It was possible that he was a traitor. But he was a man of might, and his opinion had domineered over theirs. To make things as straight as they could be made it would be well that the young people should be married. What would be the Earldom of Lovel without the wealth which the old mad earl had amassed?

Sir William and Mr. Flick were strongly in favour of the marriage, and Mr. Hardy at last assented. The worst of it was that something of all this doubt on the part of the Earl and his friends was sure to reach the opposite party. "They are shaking in their shoes," Serjeant Bluestone said to his junior counsel, Mr. Mainsail. "I do believe they are not going to fight at all," he said to Mr. Goffe, the attorney for the Countess. Mr. Mainsail rubbed his hands. Mr. Goffe shook his head. Mr. Goffe was sure that they would fight. Mr. Mainsail, who had worked like a horse in getting up and arranging all the evidence on behalf of the Countess, and in sifting, as best he might, the Italian documents, was delighted. All this Sir William feared, and he felt that it was quite possible that the Earl's overture might be rejected because the Earl would not be thought to be worth having. "We must count upon his coronet," said Sir William to Mr. Flick. "She could not do better even if the property were undoubtedly her own."

But how was the first suggestion to be made? Mr. Hardy was anxious that everything should be straightforward,—and Sir William assented, with a certain inward peevishness at Mr. Hardy's stiff-necked propriety. Sir William was anxious to settle the thing comfortably for all parties. Mr. Hardy was determined not only that right should be done, but also that it should be done in a righteous manner. The great question now was whether they could approach the widow and her daughter otherwise than through Serjeant Bluestone. "The Serjeant is such a blunderbuss," said the Solicitor-General. But the Serjeant was counsel for these ladies, and it was at last settled that there should be a general conference at Sir William's chambers. A very short note was written by Mr. Flick to Mr. Goffe, stating that the Solicitor-General thought that a meeting might be for the advantage of all parties;—and the meeting was arranged. There were present the two barristers and the one attorney for each side, and many an anxious thought was given to the manner in which the meeting should be conducted. Serjeant Bluestone was fully resolved that he would hold his own against the Solicitor-General, and would speak his mind freely. Mr. Mainsail got up little telling questions. Mr. Goffe and Mr. Flick both felt that it would behove them to hold their peace, unless questioned, but were equally determined to hang fast by their clients. Mr. Hardy in

his heart of hearts thought that his learned friend was about to fling away his case. Sir William had quite made up his mind as to his line of action. He seated them all most courteously, giving them place according to their rank,—a great arm-chair for Serjeant Bluestone, from which the Serjeant would hardly be able to use his arms with his accustomed energy,—and then he began at once. "Gentlemen," said he, "it would be a great pity that this property should be wasted."

"No fear of that, Mr. Solicitor," said the Serjeant.

"It would be a great pity that this property should be wasted," repeated Sir William, bowing to the Serjeant, "and I am disposed to think that the best thing the two young people can do is to marry each other." Then he paused, and the three gentlemen opposite sat erect, the barristers as speechless as the attorneys. But the Solicitor-General had nothing to add. He had made his proposition, and was desirous of seeing what effect it might have before he spoke another word.

"Then you acknowledge the Countess's marriage, of course," said the Serjeant.

"Pardon me, Serjeant, we acknowledge nothing. As a matter of course she is the Countess till it be proved that another wife was living when she was married."

"Quite as a matter of course," said the Serjeant.

"Quite as a matter of course, if that will make the case stronger," continued Sir William. "Her marriage was formal and regular. That she believed her marriage to be a righteous marriage before God, I have never doubted. God forbid that I should have a harsh thought against a poor lady who has suffered so much cruel treatment."

"Why have things been said then?" asked the Serjeant, beginning to throw about his left arm.

"If I am not mistaken," said Mr. Mainsail, "evidence has been prepared to show that the Countess is a party to a contemplated fraud."

"Then you are mistaken, Mr. Mainsail," said Sir William. "I admit at once and clearly that the lady is not suspected of any fraud. Whether she be actually the Countess Lovel or not it may,—I fear it must,—take years to prove, if the law be allowed to take its course."

"We think that we can dispose of any counter-claim in much less time than that," said the Serjeant.

"It may be so. I myself think that it would not be so. Our evidence in favour of the lady, who is now living some two leagues out of Palermo, is very strong. She is a poor creature, old, ignorant,—fairly well off through the bounty of the late Earl, but always craving for some trifle more,—unwilling to come to this country,—childless, and altogether indifferent to the second marriage, except in so far as might in-

terfere with her hopes of getting some further subsidy from the Lovel family. One is not very anxious on her behalf. One is only anxious,—can only be anxious,—that the vast property at stake should not get into improper hands.”

“And that justice should be done,” said Mr. Hardy.

“And that justice should be done of course, as my friend observes. Here is a young man who is undoubtedly Earl of Lovel, and who claims a property as heir to the late Earl. And here is a young lady, I am told very beautiful and highly educated, who is the daughter of the late Earl, and who claims that property believing herself to be his legitimate heiress. The question between them is most intricate.”

“The onus probandi lies with you, Mr. Solicitor,” said the Serjeant.

“We acknowledge that it does, but the case on that account is none the less intricate. With the view of avoiding litigation and expense, and in the certainty that by such an arrangement the enjoyment of the property will fall to the right owner, we propose that steps shall be taken to bring these two young people together. The lady, whom for the occasion I am quite willing to call the Countess, the mother of the lady whom I hope the young Earl will make his own Countess, has not been sounded on this subject.”



"I should hope not," said the Serjeant.

"My excellent friend takes me up a little short," said Sir William, laughing. "You gentlemen will probably consult together on the subject, and whatever may be the advice which you shall consider it to be your duty to give to the mother,—and I am sure that you will feel bound to let her know the proposition that has been made; I do not hesitate to say that we have a right to expect that it shall be made known to her,—I need hardly remark that were the young lady to accept the young lord's hand we should all be in a boat together in reference to the mother's rank, and to the widow's claim upon the personal property left behind him by her late husband."

And so the Solicitor-General had made his proposition, and the conference was broken up with a promise that Mr. Flick should hear from Mr. Goffe upon the subject. But the Serjeant had at once made up his mind against the compromise now proposed. He desired the danger and the dust and the glory of the battle. He was true to his clients' interests, no doubt,—intended to be intensely true; but the personal, doggish love of fighting prevailed in the man, and he was clear as to the necessity of going on. "They know they are beat," he said to Mr. Goffe. "Mr. Solicitor knows as well as I do that he has not an inch of ground under his feet." Therefore Mr.

Goffe wrote the following letter to Messrs. Norton and Flick:—

"Raymond's Buildings, Gray's Inn,  
"1st July, 183—.

"DEAR SIRS,

"In reference to the interview which took place at the chambers of the Solicitor-General on the 27th ult., we are to inform you that we are not disposed, as acting for our clients, the Countess of Lovel and her daughter the Lady Anna Lovel, to listen to the proposition then made. Apart from the very strong feeling we entertain as to the certainty of our clients' success,—which certainly was not weakened by what we heard on that occasion,—we are of opinion that we could not interfere with propriety in suggesting the marriage of two young persons who have not as yet had any opportunity of becoming acquainted with each other. Should the Earl of Lovel seek the hand of his cousin, the Lady Anna Lovel, and marry her with the consent of the Countess, we should be delighted at such a family arrangement; but we do not think that we, as lawyers,—or, if we may be allowed to say so, that you as lawyers,—have anything to do with such a matter.

"We are, dear Sirs,

"Yours very faithfully,

"GOFFE AND GOFFE,

"Messrs. Norton and Flick."

"Balderdash!" said Sir William, when he had read the letter. "We are not going to be done in that way. It was all very well going to the Serjeant as he has the case in hand, though a worse messenger in an affair of love——"

"Not love, as yet, Mr. Solicitor," said Mr. Flick.

"I mean it to be love, and I'm not going to be put off by Serjeant Bluestone. We must get to the lady by some other means. Do you write to that tailor down at Keswick, and say that you want to see him."

"Will that be regular, Sir William?"

"I'll stand the racket, Mr. Flick." Mr. Flick did write to Thomas Thwaite, and Thomas Thwaite came up to London and called at Mr. Flick's chambers.

When Thomas Thwaite received his commission he was much rejoiced. Injustice would be done him unless so much were owned on his behalf. But, nevertheless, some feeling of disappointment which he could not analyze crept across his heart. If once the girl were married to Earl Lovel there would be an end of his services and of his son's. He had never really entertained an idea that his son would marry the girl. As the reader will perhaps remember, he had warned his son that he must seek a sweetheart elsewhere. He had told himself over and over again that when the Countess came to her own there must be an end of this intimacy,—that there could be

nothing in common between him, the radical tailor of Keswick, and a really established Countess. The Countess, while not yet really established, had already begged that his son might be instructed not to call her daughter simply by her Christian name. Old Thwaite on receiving this intimation of the difference of their positions, though he had acknowledged its truth, had felt himself bitterly aggrieved, and now the moment had come. Of course the Countess would grasp at such an offer. Of course it would give her all that she had desired, and much more than she expected. In adjusting his feelings on the occasion the tailor thought but little of the girl herself. Why should she not be satisfied? Of the young Earl he had only heard that he was a handsome, modest, gallant lad, who only wanted a fortune to make him one of the most popular of the golden youth of England. Why should not the girl rejoice at the prospect of winning such a husband? To have a husband must necessarily be in her heart, whether she were the Lady Anna Lovel, or plain Anna Murray. And what espousals could be so auspicious as these? Feeling all this, without much of calculation, the tailor said that he would do as he was bidden. "We have sent for you because we know that you have been so old a friend," said Mr. Flick, who did not quite approve of the emissary whom he had been instructed by Sir William to employ.

"I will do my best, sir," said Mr. Thwaite, making his bow. Thomas Thwaite, as he went along the streets alone, determined that he would perform this new duty imposed upon him without any reference to his son.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Impossible!

"THEY sent for me, Lady Lovel, to bid me come to your ladyship and ask your ladyship whether you would consent to a marriage between the two young people." It was thus that the tailor repeated for the second time the message which had been confided to him, showing the gall and also the pride which were at work about his heart by the repeated titles which he gave to his old friend.

"They desire that Anna should marry the young lord!"

"Yes, my lady. That's the meaning of it."

"And what am I to be?"

"Just the Countess Lovel,—with a third of the property as your own. I suppose it would be a third; but you might trust the lawyers to settle that properly. When once they take your daughter among them they won't scrimp you in your honours. They'll all swear that the marriage was good enough then. They know that already, and have made this offer because they

know it. Your ladyship needn't fear now but what all the world will own you as the Countess Lovel. I don't suppose I'll be troubled to come up to London any more."

"Oh, my friend!" The ejaculation she made feeling the necessity of saying something to soothe the tailor's pride; but her heart was fixed upon the fruition of that for which she had spent so many years in struggling. Was it to come to her at last? Could it be that now, now at once, people throughout the world would call her the Countess Lovel, and would own her daughter to be the Lady Anna,—till she also should become a countess? Of the young man she had heard nothing but good, and it was impossible that she should have fear in that direction, even had she been timorous by nature. But she was bold and eager, hopeful in spite of all that she had suffered, full of ambition, and not prone to feminine scruples. She had been fighting all her life in order that she and her daughter might be acknowledged to be among the aristocrats of her country. She was so far a loving, devoted mother that in all her battles she thought more of her child than of herself. She would have consented to carry on the battle in poverty to the last gasp of her own breath, could she thereby have insured success for her surviving daughter. But she was not a woman likely to be dismayed at the idea of giving her girl in marriage to an absolute

stranger, when that stranger was such a one as the young Earl Lovel. She herself had been a countess, but a wretched, unacknowledged, poverty-stricken countess, for the last half of her eventful life. This marriage would make her daughter a countess, prosperous, accepted by all, and very wealthy. What better end could there be to her long struggles? Of course she would assent.

"I don't know why they should have troubled themselves to send for me," said the tailor.

"Because you are the best friend that I have in the world. Whom else could I have trusted as I do you? Has the Earl agreed to it?"

"They didn't tell me that, my lady."

"They would hardly have sent, unless he had agreed. Don't you think so, Mr. Thwaite?"

"I don't know much about such things, my lady."

"You have told—Daniel?"

"No, my lady."

"Oh, Mr. Thwaite, do not talk to me in that way. It sounds as though you were deserting me."

"There'll be no reason for not deserting now. You'll have friends by the score more fit to see you through this than old Thomas Thwaite. And, to own the truth, now that the matter is coming to an end, I am getting weary of it. I'm not so young as I was, and I'd be better left at home to my business."

"I hope that you may disregard your business now without imprudence, Mr. Thwaite."

"No, my lady;—a man should always stick to his business. I hope that Daniel will do so better than his father before him,—so that his son may never have to go out to be servant to another man."

"You are speaking daggers to me."

"I have not meant it then. I am rough by nature, I know, and perhaps a little low just at present. There is something sad in the parting of old friends."

"Old friends needn't be parted, Mr. Thwaite."

"When your ladyship was good enough to point out to me my boy's improper manner of speech to Lady Anna, I knew how it must be. You were quite right, my lady. There can be no becoming friendship between the future Lady Lovel and a journeyman tailor. I was wrong from the beginning."

"Oh, Mr. Thwaite! without such wrong where should we have been?"

"There can be no holding ground of friendship between such as you and such as we. Lords and ladies, earls and countesses, are our enemies, and we are theirs. We may make their robes and take their money, and deal with them as the Jew dealt with the Christians in the play; but we cannot eat with them or drink with them."

"How often have I eaten and drank at your table, when no other table was spread for me?"



"You were a Jew almost as ourselves then. We cannot now well stand shoulder to shoulder and arm to arm as friends should do."

"How often has my child lain in your arms when she was a baby, and been quieter there than she would be even in her mother's!"

"That has all gone by. Other arms will be open to receive her." As the tailor said this he remembered how his boy used to take the little child out to the mountain side, and how the two would ramble away together through the long summer evenings; and he reflected that the memory of those days was no doubt still strong in the heart of his son. Some shadow of the grief which would surely fall upon the young man now fell upon the father, and caused him almost to repent of the work of his life. "Tailors should consort with tailors," he said, "and lords and ladies should consort together."

Something of the same feeling struck the Countess also. If it were not for the son, the father, after all that he had done for them, might be almost as near and as dear to them as ever. He might have called the Lady Anna by her Christian name, at any rate till she had been carried away as a bride by the Earl. But, though all this was so exquisitely painful, it had been absolutely necessary to check the son. "Ah, well," she said; "it is hardly to be hoped that so many crooked things should be made straight without much

pain. If you knew, Mr. Thwaite, how little it is that I expect for myself!"

"It is because I have known it that I am here."

"It will be well for her,—will it not,—to be the wife of her cousin?"

"If he be a good man. A woman will not always make herself happy by marrying an Earl."

"How many daggers you can use, Mr. Thwaite. But this young man is good. You yourself have said that you have heard so."

"I have heard nothing to the contrary, my lady."

"And what shall I do?"

"Just explain it all to Lady Anna. I think it will be clear then."

"You believe that she will be so easily pleased?"

"Why should she not be pleased? She'll have some maiden scruples, doubtless. What maid would not? But she'll exult at such an end to all her troubles;—and what maid would not? Let them meet as soon as may be and have it over. When he shall have placed the ring on her finger, your battle will have been won."

Then the tailor felt that his commission was done and he might take his leave. It had been arranged that in the event of the Countess consenting to the proposed marriage, he should call upon Mr. Flick to explain that it was so. Had she dissented, a short note would have been sufficient. Had such been the

case, the Solicitor-General would have instigated the young lord to go and try what he himself could do with the Countess and her daughter. The tailor had suggested to the mother that she should at once make the proposition known to Lady Anna, but the Countess felt that one other word was necessary as her old friend left her. "Will you go back at once to Keswick, Mr. Thwaite?"

"To-morrow morning, my lady."

"Perhaps you will not tell your son of this,—yet?"

"No, my lady. I will not tell my son of this,—yet. My son is high-minded and stiff-necked, and of great heart. If he saw aught to object to in this marriage, it might be that he would express himself loudly." Then the tailor took his leave without even shaking hands with the Countess.

The woman sat alone for the next two hours, thinking of what had passed. There had sprung up in these days a sort of friendship between Mrs. Bluestone and the two Miss Bluestones and the Lady Anna, arising rather from the forlorn condition of the young lady than from any positive choice of affection. Mrs. Bluestone was kind and motherly. The girls were girlish and good. The father was the Jupiter Tonans of the household,—as was of course proper,—and was worshipped in everything. To the world at large Serjeant Bluestone was a thundering, blundering, sanguine, energetic lawyer, whom nobody disliked very

much though he was so big and noisy. But at home Serjeant Bluestone was all the judges of the land rolled into one. But he was a kind-hearted man, and he had sent his wife and girls to call upon the disconsolate Countess. The disconsolate Lady Anna having no other friends, had found the companionship of the Bluestone girls to be pleasant to her, and she was now with them at the Serjeant's house in Bedford Square. Mrs. Bluestone talked of the wrongs and coming rights of the Countess Lovel wherever she went, and the Bluestone girls had all the case at their fingers' ends. To doubt that the Serjeant would succeed, or to doubt that the success of the Countess and her daughter would have had any other source than the Serjeant's eloquence and the Serjeant's zeal, would have been heresy in Bedford Square. The grand idea, that young Jack Bluestone, who was up at Brasenose, should marry the Lady Anna, had occurred only to the mother.

Lady Anna was away with her friends as the Countess sat brooding over the new hopes that had been opened to her. At first, she could not tear her mind away from the position which she herself would occupy as soon as her daughter should have been married and taken away from her. The young Earl would not want his mother-in-law,—a mother-in-law who had spent the best years of her life in the society of a tailor. And the daughter, who would still be

young enough to begin a new life in a new sphere, would no longer want her mother to help her. As regarded herself, the Countess was aware that the life she had led so long, and the condition of agonizing struggling to which she had been brought, had unfitted her for smiling, happy, prosperous, aristocratic luxury. There was but one joy left for her, and that was to be the joy of success. When that cup should have been drained, there would be nothing left to her. She would have her rank, of course,—and money enough to support it. She no longer feared that any one would do her material injury. Her daughter's husband no doubt would see that she had a fitting home, with all the appanages and paraphernalia suited to a dowager Countess. But who would share her home with her, and where should she find her friends? Even now the two Miss Bluestones were more to her daughter than she was. When she should be established in her new luxurious home, with servants calling her my lady, with none to contradict her right, she would no longer be enabled to sit late into the night discussing matters with her friend the tailor. As regarded herself, it would have been better for her, perhaps, if the fight had been carried on.

But the fight had been, not for herself, but for her child; and the victory for her girl would have been won by her own perseverance. Her whole life had been devoted to establishing the rights of her daughter,

and it should be so devoted to the end. It had been her great resolve that the world should acknowledge the rank of her girl, and now it would be acknowledged. Not only would she become the Countess Lovel by marriage, but the name which had been assumed for her amidst the ridicule of many, and in opposition to the belief of nearly all, would be proved to have been her just and proper title. And then, at last, it would be known by all men that she herself, the ill-used, suffering mother, had gone to the house of that wicked man, not as his mistress, but as his true wife!

Hardly a thought troubled her, then, as to the acquiescence of her daughter. She had no faintest idea that the girl's heart had been touched by the young tailor. She had so lived that she knew but little of lovers and their love, and in her fear regarding Daniel Thwaite she had not conceived danger such as that. It had to her simply been unfitting that there should be close familiarity between the two. She expected that her daughter would be ambitious, as she was ambitious, and would rejoice greatly at such perfect success. She herself had been preaching ambition and practising ambition all her life. It had been the necessity of her career that she should think more of her right to a noble name than of any other good thing under the sun. It was only natural that she should believe that her daughter shared the feeling.

And then Lady Anna came in. "They wanted me to stay and dine, mamma, but I did not like to think that you should be left alone."

"I must get used to that, my dear."

"Why, mamma? Wherever we have been, we have always been together. Mrs. Bluestone was quite unhappy because you would not come. They are so good-natured! I wish you would go there."

"I am better here, my dear." Then there was a pause for a few moments. "But I am glad that you have come home this evening."

"Of course, I should come home."

"I have something special to say to you."

"To me, mamma! What is it, mamma?"

"I think we will wait till after dinner. The things are here now. Go up-stairs and take off your hat, and I will tell you after dinner."

"Mamma," Lady Anna said, as soon as the maid had left the room, "has old Mr. Thwaite been here?"

"Yes, my dear, he was here."

"I thought so, because you have something to tell me. It is something from him?"

"Not from himself, Anna;—though he was the messenger. Come and sit here, my dear,—close to me. Have you ever thought, Anna, that it would be good for you to be married?"

"No, mamma; why should I?" But that surely was a lie! How often had she thought that it would be

good to be married to Daniel Thwaite and to have done with this weary searching after rank! And now what could her mother mean? Thomas Thwaite had been there, but it was impossible that her mother should think that Daniel Thwaite would be a fit husband for her daughter. "No, mamma;—why should I?"

"It must be thought of, my dearest."

"Why now?" She could understand perfectly that there was some special cause for her mother's manner of speech.

"After all that we have gone through, we are about to succeed at last. They are willing to own everything, to give us all our rights,—on one condition."

"What condition, mamma?"

"Come nearer to me, dearest. It would not make you unhappy to think that you were going to be the wife of a man you could love?"

"No;—not if I really loved him."

"You have heard of your cousin,—the young Earl?"

"Yes, mamma;—I have heard of him."

"They say that he is everything that is good. What should you think of having him for your husband?"

"That would be impossible, mamma."

"Impossible!—why impossible? What could be more fitting? Your rank is equal to his;—higher even in this, that your father was himself the Earl. In for-



tune you will be much more than his equal. In age you are exactly suited. Why should it be impossible?"

"Oh, mamma, it is impossible!"

"What makes you say so, Anna?"

"We have never seen each other."

"Tush! my child. Why should you not see each other?"

"And then we are his enemies."

"We are no longer enemies, dearest. They have sent to say that if we,—you and I,—will consent to this marriage, then will they consent to it also. It is their wish, and it comes from them. There can be no more proper ending to all this weary lawsuit. It is quite right that the title and the name should be supported. It is quite right that the fortune which your father left should, in this way, go to support your father's family. You will be the Countess Lovel; and all will have been conceded to us. There cannot possibly be any fitter way out of our difficulties." Lady Anna sat looking at her mother in dismay, but could say nothing. "You need have no fear about the young man. Every one tells me that he is just the man that a mother would welcome as a husband for her daughter. Will you not be glad to see him?" But the Lady Anna would only say that it was impossible. "Why impossible, my dear;—what do you mean by impossible?"

"Oh, mamma, it is impossible!"

The Countess found that she was obliged to give the subject up for that night, and could only comfort herself by endeavouring to believe that the suddenness of the tidings had confused her child.

## CHAPTER IX.

*It isn't Law.*

ON the next morning Lady Anna was ill, and would not leave her bed. When her mother spoke to her, she declared that her head ached wretchedly, and she could not be persuaded to dress herself.

"Is it what I said to you last night?" asked the Countess.

"Oh, mamma, that is impossible," she said.

It seemed to the mother that the mention of the young lord's name had produced a horror in the daughter's mind which nothing could for the present subdue. Before the day was over, however, the girl had acknowledged that she was bound in duty, at any rate, to meet her cousin; and the Countess, forced to satisfy herself with so much of concession, and acting upon that, fixed herself in her purpose to go on with the project. The lawyers on both sides would assist her. It was for the advantage of them all that there should

be such a marriage. She determined, therefore, that she would at once see Mr. Goffe, her own attorney, and give him to understand in general terms that the case might be proceeded with on this new matrimonial basis.

But there was a grievous doubt on her mind,—a fear, a spark of suspicion, of which she had unintentionally given notice to Thomas Thwaite when she asked him whether he had as yet spoken of the proposed marriage to his son. He had understood what was passing in her mind when she exacted from him a promise that nothing should as yet be said to Daniel Thwaite upon the matter. And yet she assured herself over and over again that her girl could not be so weak, so vain, so foolish, so wicked as that! It could not be that, after all the struggles of her life,—when at last success, perfect success, was within their grasp, when all had been done and all well done, when the great reward was then coming up to their very lips with a full tide,—it could not be that in the very moment of victory all should be lost through the base weakness of a young girl! Was it possible that her daughter,—the daughter of one who had spent the very marrow of her life in fighting for the position that was due to her,—should spoil all by preferring a journeyman tailor to a young nobleman of high rank, of ancient lineage, and one, too, who by his marriage with herself would endow her with wealth sufficient to

make that rank splendid as well as illustrious? But if it were not so, what had the girl meant by saying that it was impossible? That the word should have been used once or twice in maidenly scruple, the Countess could understand; but it had been repeated with a vehemence beyond that which such natural timidity might have produced. And now the girl professed herself to be ill in bed, and when the subject was broached would only weep, and repeat the one word with which she had expressed her repugnance to the match.

Hitherto she had not been like this. She had, in her own quiet way, shared her mother's aspirations, and had always sympathised with her mother's sufferings; and she had been dutiful through it all, carrying herself as one who was bound to special obedience by the peculiarity of her parent's position. She had been keenly alive to the wrongs that her mother endured, and had in every respect been a loving child. But now she protested that she would not do the one thing necessary to complete their triumph, and would give no reason for not doing so. As the Countess thought of all this, she swore to herself that she would prefer to divest her bosom of all soft motherly feeling than be vanquished in this matter by her own child. Her daughter should find that she could be stern and rough enough if she were really thwarted. What would her life be worth to her if her child, Lady Anna Lovel, the

heiress and only legitimate offspring of the late Earl Lovel, were to marry a—tailor?

And then, again, she told herself that there was no sufficient excuse for such alarm. Her daughter's demeanour had ever been modest. She had never been given to easy friendship, or to that propensity to men's acquaintance which the world calls flirting. It might be that the very absence of such propensity,—the very fact that hitherto she had never been thrust into society among her equals,—had produced that feeling almost of horror which she had expressed. But she had been driven, at any rate, to say that she would meet the young man; and the Countess, acting upon that, called on Mr. Goffe in his chambers, and explained to that gentleman that she proposed to settle the whole question in dispute by giving her daughter to the young Earl in marriage. Mr. Goffe, who had been present at the conference among the lawyers, understood it all in a moment. The overture had been made from the other side to his client.

"Indeed, my lady!" said Mr. Goffe.

"Do you not think it will be an excellent arrangement?"

In his heart of hearts Mr. Goffe thought that it would be an excellent arrangement; but he could not commit himself to such an opinion. Serjeant Blue-stone thought that the matter should be fought out,

and Mr. Goffe was not prepared to separate himself from his legal adviser. As Serjeant Bluestone had said after the conference, with much argumentative vehemence,—“If we were to agree to this, how would it be if the marriage should not come off? The court can't agree to a marriage. The court must direct to whom the property belongs. They profess that they can prove that our marriage was no marriage. They must do so, or else they must withdraw the allegation. Suppose the Italian woman were to come forward afterwards with her claim as the widow, where then would be my client's position, and her title as dowager countess, and her claim upon her husband's personal estate? I never heard anything more irregular in my life. It is just like Patterson, who always thinks he can make laws according to the light of his own reason.” So Serjeant Bluestone had said to the lawyers who were acting with him; and Mr. Goffe, though he did himself think that this marriage would be the best thing in the world, could not differ from the Serjeant.

No doubt there might even yet be very great difficulties, even though the young Earl and Lady Anna Lovel should agree to be married. Mr. Goffe on that occasion said very little to the Countess, and she left him with a feeling that a certain quantity of cold water had been thrown upon the scheme. But she would not allow herself to be disturbed by that. The

marriage could go on without any consent on the part of the lawyers, and the Countess was quite satisfied that, should the marriage be once completed, the money and the titles would all go as she desired. She had already begun to have more faith in the Solicitor-General than in Mr. Goffe or in Serjeant Bluestone.

But Serjeant Bluestone was not a man to bear such treatment and be quiet under it. He heard that very day from Mr. Goffe what had been done, and was loud in the expression of his displeasure. It was the most irregular thing that he had ever known. No other man except Patterson in the whole profession would have done it! The counsel on the other side—probably Patterson himself—had been to his client, and given advice to his client, and had done so after her own counsel had decided that no such advice should be given! He would see the Attorney-General, and ask the Attorney-General what he thought about it. Now, it was supposed in legal circles, just at this period, that the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General were not the best friends in the world; and the latter was wont to call the former an old fogey, and the former to say of the latter that he might be a very clever philosopher, but certainly was no lawyer. And so by degrees the thing got much talked about in the profession; and there was perhaps a balance of opinion that the Solicitor-General had done wrong.

But this was certain,—that no one could be put into possession of the property till the court had decided to whom it belonged. If the Earl withdrew from his claim, the widow would simply be called on to prove her own marriage,—which had in truth been proved more than once already,—and the right of her legitimate child would follow as a matter of course. It was by no means probable that the woman over in Italy would make any claim on her own behalf,—and even, should she do so, she could not find the means of supporting it. “They must be asses,” said the Solicitor-General, “not to see that I am fighting their battle for them, and that I am doing so because I can best secure my own client’s interests by securing theirs also.” But even he became nervous after a day or two, and was anxious to learn that the marriage scheme was progressing. He told his client, Lord Lovel, that it would be well that the marriage should take place before the court sat in November. “In that case settlements will, of course, have been made, and we shall simply withdraw. We shall state the fact of this new marriage, and assert ourselves to be convinced that the old marriage was good and valid. But you should lose no time in the wooing, my lord.” At this time the Earl had not seen his cousin, and it had not yet been decided when they should meet.

“It is my duty to explain to you, Lady Lovel, as my client,” said Serjeant Bluestone to the Countess,



"that this arrangement cannot afford a satisfactory mode to you of establishing your own position."

"It would be so happy for the whole family!"

"As to that I can know nothing, Lady Lovel. If your daughter and the Earl are attached to each other, there can be no reason on earth why they should not be married. But it should be a separate thing. Your position should not be made to depend upon hers."

"But they will withdraw, Serjeant Bluestone."

"How do you know that they will withdraw? Supposing at the last moment Lady Anna were to decline the alliance, would they withdraw then? Not a bit of it. The matter would be further delayed, and referred over to next year. You and your daughter would be kept out of your money, and there would still be danger."

"I should not care for that;—if they were married."

"And they have set up this Italian countess,—who never was a countess,—any more than I am. Now they have put her up, they are bound to dispose of her. If she came forward afterwards, on her own behalf, where would you all be then?"

"My daughter would, at any rate, be safe."

The Serjeant did not like it at all. He felt that he was being thrown over, not only by his client the Countess,—as to which he might have been indifferent, knowing that the world at large, the laity as dis-

tinguished from the lawyers, the children of the world as all who were not lawyers seemed to him to be, will do and must be expected to do, foolish things continually. They cannot be persuaded to subject themselves to lawyers in all their doings, and, of course, go wrong when they do not do so. The infinite simplicity and silliness of mankind and womankind at large were too well known to the Serjeant to cause him dismay, let them be shown in ever so egregious a fashion. But in this case the fault came from another lawyer, who had tampered with his clients, and who seemed to be himself as ignorant as though he belonged to the outside world. And this man had been made Solicitor-General,—over the heads of half the profession,—simply because he could make a speech in Parliament!

But the Solicitor-General was himself becoming uneasy when at the end of a fortnight he learned that the young people,—as he had come to call them on all occasions,—had not as yet seen each other. He would not like to have it said of him that he had thrown over his client. And there were some who still believed that the Italian marriage had been a real marriage, and the Italian wife alive at the time of the Cumberland marriage,—though the Italian woman now living had never been the countess. Mr. Hardy so believed, and, in his private opinion, thought that the Solicitor-General had been very indiscreet.

"I don't think that we could ever dare to face a jury," said Sir William to Mr. Hardy when they discussed the matter, about a fortnight after the proposition had been made.

"Why did the Earl always say that the Italian woman was his wife?"

"Because the Earl was a very devil."

"Mr. Flick does not think so."

"Yes, he does; but Mr. Flick, like all attorneys with a bad case, does not choose to say quite what he thinks, even to his own counsel. Mr. Flick does not like to throw his client over, nor do I, nor do you. But with such a case we have no right to create increased expenses, and all the agony of prolonged fallacious hope. The girl is her father's heir. Do you suppose I would not stick to my brief if I did not feel sure that it is so?"

"Then let the Earl be told, and let the girl have her rights."

"Ah! there you have me. It may be that such would be the juster course; but then, Hardy, cannot you understand that though I am sure, I am not quite sure; that though the case is a bad one, it may not be quite bad enough to be thrown up? It is just the case in which a compromise is expedient. If but a quarter, or but an eighth of a probability be with you, take your proportion of the thing at stake. But here is a compromise that gives all to

each. Who would wish to rob the girl of her noble name and great inheritance if she be the heiress? Not I, though the Earl be my client. And yet how sad would it be to have to tell that young man that there was nothing for him but to submit to lose all the wealth belonging to the family of which he has been born the head! If we can bring them together there will be nothing to make sore the hearts of any of us."

Mr. Hardy acknowledged to himself that the Solicitor-General pleaded his own case very well; but yet he felt that it wasn't law.

## CHAPTER X.

### *The first Interview.*

FOR some days after the intimation of her mother's purpose, Lady Anna kept her bed. She begged that she might not see a doctor. She had a headache,—nothing but a headache. But it was quite impossible that she should ever marry Earl Lovel. This she said whenever her mother would revert to that subject,—“I have not seen him, mamma; I do not know him. I am sure it would be impossible.” Then, when at last she was induced to dress herself, she was still unwilling to be forced to undergo the interview to which she had acknowledged that she must be subjected. At last she consented to spend a day in

Bedford Square; to dine there, and to be brought home in the evening. The Countess was at this time not very full of trust in the Serjeant, having learned that he was opposed to the marriage scheme, but she was glad that her daughter should be induced to go out, even to the Serjeant's house, as after that visit the girl could have no ground on which to oppose the meeting which was to be arranged. She could hardly plead that she was too ill to see her cousin when she had dined with Mrs. Bluestone.

During this time many plans had been proposed for the meeting. The Solicitor-General, discussing the matter with the young lord, had thought it best that Lady Anna should at once be asked down to Yoxham,—as the Lady Anna; and the young lord would have been quite satisfied with such an arrangement. He could have gone about his obligatory wooing among his own friends, in the house to which he had been accustomed, with much more ease than in a London lodging. But his uncle, who had corresponded on the subject with Mr. Hardy, still objected. "We should be giving up everything," he said, "if we were once to call her Lady Anna. Where should we be then if they didn't hit it off together? I don't believe, and I never shall believe, that she is really Lady Anna Lovel." The Solicitor-General, when he heard of this objection, shook his head, finding himself almost provoked to anger. What asses were these people not to understand that he

could see further into the matter than they could do, and that their best way out of their difficulty would be frankly to open their arms to the heiress! Should they continue to be pig-headed and prejudiced, everything would soon be gone.

Then he had a scheme for inviting the girl to his own house, and to that scheme he obtained his wife's consent. But here his courage failed him; or, it might be fairer to say, that his prudence prevailed. He was very anxious, intensely eager, so to arrange this great family dispute that all should be benefited,—believing, nay feeling positively certain that all concerned in the matter were honest; but he must not go so far as to do himself an absolute and grievous damage, should it at last turn out that he was wrong in any of his surmises. So that plan was abandoned.

There was nothing left for it but that the young Earl should himself face the difficulty, and be introduced to the girl at the lodging in Wyndham Street. But, as a prelude to this, a meeting was arranged at Mr. Flick's chambers between the Countess and her proposed son-in-law. That the Earl should go to his own attorney's chambers was all in rule. While he was there the Countess came,—which was not in rule, and almost induced the Serjeant to declare, when he heard it, that he would have nothing more to do with the case. "My lord," said the Countess, "I am glad to meet you, and I hope that we may be friends." The

young man was less collected, and stammered out a few words that were intended to be civil.

"It is a pity that you should have conflicting interests," said the attorney.

"I hope it need not continue to be so," said the Countess. "My heart, Lord Lovel, is all in the welfare of our joint family. We will begrudge you nothing if you will not begrudge us the names which are our own, and without which we cannot live honourably before the world." Then some other few words were muttered, and the Earl promised to come to Wyndham Street at a certain hour. Not a word was then said about the marriage. Even the Countess, with all her resolution and all her courage, did not find herself able in set terms to ask the young man to marry her daughter.

"She is a very handsome woman," said the lord to the attorney, when the Countess had left them.

"Yes, indeed."

"And like a lady."

"Quite like a lady. She herself was of a good family."

"I suppose she certainly was the late Earl's wife, Mr. Flick?"

"Who can say, my lord? That is just the question. The Solicitor-General thinks that she would prove her right, and I do not know that I have ever found him to be wrong when he has had a steadfast opinion."

"Why should we not give it up to her at once?"

"I couldn't recommend that, my lord. Why should we give it up? The interests at stake are very great. I couldn't for a moment think of suggesting to you to give it up."

"I want nothing, Mr. Flick, that does not belong to me."

"Just so. But then perhaps it does belong to you. We can never be sure. No doubt the safest way will be for you to contract an alliance with this lady. Of course we should give it up then, but the settlements would make the property all right." The young Earl did not quite like it. He would rather have commenced his wooing after the girl had been established in her own right, and when she would have had no obligation on her to accept him. But he had consented, and it was too late for him now to recede. It had been already arranged that he should call in Wyndham Street at noon on the following day, in order that he might be introduced to his cousin.

On that evening the Countess sat late with her daughter, purposing that on the morrow nothing should be said before the interview calculated to disturb the girl's mind. But as they sat together through the twilight and into the darkness of night, close by the open window, through which the heavily laden air of the metropolis came to them, hot with all the heat of a London July day, very many words were spoken by



the Countess. "It will be for you, to-morrow, to make or to mar all that I have been doing since the day on which you were born."

"Oh! mamma, that is so terrible a thing to say!"

"But terrible things must be said if they are true. It is so. It is for you to decide whether we shall triumph, or be utterly and for ever crushed."

"I cannot understand it. Why should we be crushed? He would not wish to marry me if this fortune were not mine. He is not coming, mamma, because he loves me."

"You say that because you do not understand. Do you suppose that my name will be allowed to me if you should refuse your cousin's suit? If so, you are very much mistaken. The fight will go on, and as we have not money, we shall certainly go to the wall at last. Why should you not love him? There is no one else that you care for."

"No, mamma," she said slowly.

"Then, what more can you want?"

"I do not know him, mamma."

"But you will know him. According to that, no girl would ever get married. Is it not a great thing that you should be asked to assume and to enjoy the rank which has belonged to your mother, but which she has never been able to enjoy?"

"I do not think, mamma, that I care much about rank."

"Anna!" The mother's mind as she heard this flew off to the young tailor. Had misery so great as this overtaken her after all?

"I mean that I don't care so much about it. It has never done us any good."

"But if it is a thing that is your own, that you are born to, you must bear it, whether it be in sorrow or in joy; whether it be a blessing or a curse. If it be yours, you cannot fling it away from you. You may disgrace it, but you must still have it. Though you were to throw yourself away upon a chimney-sweeper, you must still be Lady Anna, the daughter of Earl Lovel."

"I needn't call myself so."

"Others must call you so. It is your name, and you cannot be rid of it. It is yours of right, as my name has been mine of right; and not to assert it, not to live up to it, not to be proud of it, would argue incredible baseness. 'Noblesse oblige.' You have heard that motto, and know what it means. And then would you throw away from you in some childish phantasy all that I have been struggling to win for you during my whole life? Have you ever thought of what my life has been, Anna?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Would you have the heart to disappoint me, now that the victory is won;—now that it may be made our own by your help? And what is it that I am ask-

ing you to do? If this man were bad,—if he were such a one as your father, if he were drunken, cruel, ill-conditioned, or even heavy, foolish, or deformed, had you been told stories to set you against him, as that he had been false with other women, I could understand it. In that case we would at any rate find out the truth before we went on. But of this man we hear that he is good, and pleasant; an excellent young man, who has endeared himself to all who know him. Such a one that all the girls of his own standing in the world would give their eyes to win him."

"Let some girl win him then who cares for him."

"But he wishes to win you, dearest."

"Not because he loves me. How can he love me when he never saw me? How can I love him when I never saw him?"

"He wishes to win you because he has heard what you are, and because he knows that by doing so he can set things right which for many years have been wrong."

"It is because he would get all this money."

"You would both get it. He desires nothing unfair. Whatever he takes from you, so much he will give. And it is not only for this generation. Is it nothing to you that the chiefs of your own family who shall come after you shall be able to hold their heads up among other British peers? Would you not wish

that your own son should come to be Earl Lovel, with wealth sufficient to support the dignity?"

"I don't think it would make him happy, mamma."

"There is something more in this, Anna, than I can understand. You used not to be so. When we talked of these things in past years you used not to be indifferent."

"I was not asked then to—to—marry a man I did not care for."

"There is something else, Anna."

"No, mamma."

"If there be nothing else you will learn to care for him. You will see him to-morrow, and will be left alone with him. I will sit with you for a time, and then I will leave you. All that I ask of you is to receive him to-morrow without any prejudice against him. You must remember how much depends on you, and that you are not as other girls are." After that Lady Anna was allowed to go to her bed, and to weep in solitude over the wretchedness of her condition. It was not only that she loved Daniel Thwaite with all her heart,—loved him with a love that had grown with every year of her growth;—but that she feared him also. The man had become her master; and even could she have brought herself to be false, she would have lacked the courage to declare her falsehood to the man to whom she had vowed her love.

On the following morning Lady Anna did not come down to breakfast, and the Countess began to fear that she would be unable to induce her girl to rise in time to receive their visitor. But the poor child had resolved to receive the man's visit, and contemplated no such escape as that. At eleven o'clock she slowly dressed herself, and before twelve crept down into the one sitting-room which they occupied. The Countess glanced round at her, anxious to see that she was looking her best. Certain instructions had been given as to her dress, and the garniture of her hair, and the disposal of her ribbons. All these had been fairly well obeyed; but there was a fixed, determined hardness in her face which made her mother fear that the Earl might be dismayed. The mother knew that her child had never looked like that before.

Punctually at twelve the Earl was announced. The Countess received him very pleasantly, and with great composure. She shook hands with him as though they had known each other all their lives, and then introduced him to her daughter with a sweet smile. "I hope you will acknowledge her as your far-away cousin, my lord. Blood, they say, is thicker than water; and, if so, you two ought to be friends."

"I am sure I hope we may be," said the Earl.

"I hope so too,—my lord," said the girl, as she left her hand quite motionless in his.

"We heard of you down in Cumberland," said the Countess. "It is long since I have seen the old place, but I shall never forget it. There is not a bush among the mountains there that I shall not remember,—ay, into the next world, if aught of our memories are left to us."

"I love the mountains; but the house is very gloomy."

"Gloomy indeed. If you found it sad, what must it have been to me? I hope that I may tell you some day of all that I suffered there. There are things to tell of which I have never yet spoken to human being. She, poor child, has been too young and too tender to be troubled by such a tale. I sometimes think that no tragedy ever written, no story of horrors ever told, can have exceeded in description the things which I endured in that one year of my married life." Then she went on at length, not telling the details of that terrible year, but speaking generally of the hardships of her life. "I have never wondered, Lord Lovel, that you and your nearest relations should have questioned my position. A bad man had surrounded me with such art in his wickedness, that it has been almost beyond my strength to rid myself of his toils." All this she had planned beforehand, having resolved that she would rush into the midst of things at once, and if possible enlist his sympathies on her side.

"I hope it may be over now," he said.

"Yes," she replied, rising slowly from her seat, "I hope it may be over now." The moment had come in which she had to play the most difficult stroke of her whole game, and much might depend on the way in which she played it. She could not leave them together, walking abruptly out of the room, without giving some excuse for so unusual a proceeding. "Indeed, I hope it may be over now, both for us and for you, Lord Lovel. That wicked man, in leaving behind such cause of quarrel, has injured you almost as deeply as us. I pray God that you and that dear girl there may so look into each other's hearts and trust each other's purposes, that you may be able to set right the ill which your predecessor did. If so the family of Lovel for centuries to come may be able to bless your names." Then with slow steps she left the room.

Lady Anna had spoken one word, and that was all. It certainly was not for her now to speak. She sat leaning on the table, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, not daring to look at the man who had been brought to her as her future husband. A single glance she had taken as he entered the room, and she had seen at once that he was fair and handsome, that he still had that sweet winsome boyishness of face which makes a girl feel that she need not fear a man,—that the man has something of her own weak-

ness, and need not be treated as one who is wise, grand, or heroic. And she saw too in one glance how different he was from Daniel Thwaite, the man to whom she had absolutely given herself;—and she understood at the moment something of the charm of luxurious softness and aristocratic luxury. Daniel Thwaite was swarthy, hardhanded, blackbearded,—with a noble fire in his eyes, but with an innate coarseness about his mouth which betokened roughness as well as strength. Had it been otherwise with her than it was, she might, she thought, have found it easy enough to love this young earl. As it was, there was nothing for her to do but to wait and answer him as best she might.

“Lady Anna,” he said.

“My lord!”

“Will it not be well that we should be friends?”

“Oh,—friends;—yes, my lord.”

“I will tell you all and everything;—that is, about myself. I was brought up to believe that you and your mother were just—impostors.”

“My lord, we are not impostors.”

“No;—I believe it. I am sure you are not. Mistakes have been made, but it has not been of my doing. As a boy, what could I believe but what I was told? I know now that you are and always have been as you have called yourself. If nothing else comes of it, I will at any rate say so much. The estate which your



father left is no doubt yours. If I could hinder it, there should be no more law."

"Thank you, my lord."

"Your mother says that she has suffered much. I am sure she has suffered. I trust that all that is over now. I have come here to-day more to say that on my own behalf than anything else." A shadow of a shade of disappointment, the slightest semblance of a cloud, passed across her heart as she heard this. But it was well. She could not have married him, even if he had wished it, and now, as it seemed, that difficulty was over. Her mother and those lawyers had been mistaken, and it was well that he should tell her so at once.

"It is very good of you, my lord."

"I would not have you think of me that I could come to you hoping that you would promise me your love before I had shown you whether I had loved you or not."

"No, my lord." She hardly understood him now, —whether he intended to propose himself as a suitor for her hand or not.

"You, Lady Anna, are your father's heir. I am your cousin, Earl Lovel, as poor a peer as there is in England. They tell me that we should marry because you are rich and I am an earl."

"So they tell me;—but that will not make it right."

"I would not have it so, even if I dared to think that you would agree to it."

"Oh, no, my lord; nor would I."

"But if you could learn to love me——"

"No, my lord;—no."

"Do not answer me yet, my cousin. If I swore that I loved you,—loved you so soon after seeing you,—and loved you, too, knowing you to be so wealthy an heiress——"

"Ah, do not talk of that."

"Well;—not of that. But if I said that I loved you, you would not believe me."

"It would not be true, my lord."

"But I know that I shall love you. You will let me try? You are very lovely, and they tell me you are sweet-humoured. I can believe well that you are sweet and pleasant. You will let me try to love you, Anna?"

"No, my lord."

"Must it be so, so soon?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Why that? Is it because we are strangers to each other? That may be cured;—if not quickly, as I would have it cured, slowly and by degrees; slowly as you can wish, if only I may come where you shall be. You have said that we may be friends."

"Oh yes,—friends, I hope."

"Friends at least. We are born cousins."

"Yes, my lord."

"Cannot you call me by my name? Cousins, you know, do so. And remember this, you will have and can have no nearer cousin than I am. I am bound at least to be a brother to you."

"Oh, be my brother!"

"That,—or more than that. I would fain be more than that. But I will be that, at least. As I came to you, before I saw you, I felt that whenever we knew each other I could not be less to you than that. If I am your friend, I must be your best friend,—as being, though poor, the head of your family. The Lovels should at least love each other; and cousins may love, even though they should not love enough to be man and wife."

"I will love you so always."

"Enough to be my wife?"

"Enough to be your dear cousin,—your loving sister."

"So it shall be,—unless it can be more. I would not ask you for more now. I would not wish you to give more now. But think of me, and ask yourself whether you can dare to give yourself to me altogether."

"I cannot dare, my lord."

"You would not call your brother, lord. My name is Frederic. But Anna, dear Anna."—and then he took her unresisting hand,—“you shall not be asked for more now. But cousins, new-found cousins, who

love each other, and will stand by each other for help and aid against the world, may surely kiss,—as would a brother and a sister. You will not grudge me a kiss." Then she put up her cheek innocently, and he kissed it gently,—hardly with a lover's kiss. "I will leave you now," he said, still holding her hand. "But tell your mother thus:—that she shall no longer be troubled by lawyers at the suit of her cousin Frederic. She is to me the Countess Lovel, and she shall be treated by me with the honour suited to her rank." And so he left the house without seeing the Countess again.

## CHAPTER XI.

It is too late.

THE Countess had resolved that she would let their visitor depart without saying a word to him. Whatever might be the result of the interview, she was aware that she could not improve it by asking any question from the young lord, or by hearing any account of it from him. The ice had been broken, and it would now be her object to have her daughter invited down to Yoxham as soon as possible. If once the Earl's friends could be brought to be eager for the match on his account, as was she on her daughter's behalf, then probably the thing might be done. For herself, she expected no invitation, no immediate comfort, no tender treatment, no intimate familiar cousin-

ship. She had endured hitherto, and would be contented to endure, so that triumph might come at last. Nor did she question her daughter very closely, anxious as she was to learn the truth.

Could she have heard every word that had been spoken she would have been sure of success. Could Daniel Thwaite have heard every word he would have been sure that the girl was about to be false to him. But the girl herself believed herself to have been true. The man had been so soft with her, so tender, so pleasant,—so loving with his sweet cousinly offers of affection, that she could not turn herself against him. He had been to her eyes beautiful, noble,—almost divine. She knew of herself that she could not be his wife,—that she was not fit to be his wife,—because she had given her troth to the tailor's son. When her cousin touched her cheek with his lips she remembered that she had submitted to be kissed by one with whom her noble relative could hold no fellowship whatever. A feeling of degradation came upon her, as though by contact with this young man she was suddenly awakened to a sense of what her own rank demanded from her. When her mother had spoken to her of what she owed to her family, she had thought only of all the friendship that she and her mother had received from her lover and his father. But when Lord Lovel told her what she was,—how she should ever be regarded by him as a dear cousin,

—how her mother should be accounted a countess, and receive from him the respect due to her rank,—then she could understand how unfitting were a union between the Lady Anna Lovel and Daniel Thwaite, the journeyman tailor. Hitherto Daniel's face had been noble in her eyes,—the face of a man who was manly, generous, and strong. But after looking into the eyes of the young Earl, seeing how soft was the down upon his lips, how ruddy the colour of his cheek, how beautiful was his mouth with its pearl-white teeth, how noble the curve of his nostrils, after feeling the softness of his hand, and catching the sweetness of his breath, she came to know what it might have been to be wooed by such a one as he.

But not on that account did she meditate falseness. It was settled firm as fate. The dominion of the tailor over her spirit had lasted in truth for years. The sweet, perfumed graces of the young nobleman had touched her senses but for a moment. Had she been false-minded she had not courage to be false. But in truth she was not false-minded. It was to her, as that sunny moment passed across her, as to some hard-toiling youth who, while roaming listlessly among the houses of the wealthy, hears, as he lingers on the pavement of a summer night, the melodies which float upon the air from the open balconies above him. A vague sense of unknown sweetness comes upon him, mingled with an irritating feeling of envy that some

favoured son of Fortune should be able to stand over the shoulders of that singing syren, while he can only listen with intrusive ears from the street below. And so he lingers and is envious, and for a moment curses his fate,—not knowing how weary may be the youth who stands, how false the girl who sings. But he does not dream that his life is to be altered for him, because he has chanced to hear the daughter of a duchess warble through a window. And so it was with this girl. The youth was very sweet to her, intensely sweet when he told her that he would be a brother, perilously sweet when he bade her not to grudge him one kiss. But she knew that she was not as he was. That she had lost the right, could she ever have had the right, to live his life, to drink of his cup, and to lie on his breast. So she passed on, as the young man does in the street, and consoled herself with the consciousness that strength after all may be preferable to sweetness.

And she was an honest girl from her heart, and prone to truth, with a strong glimmer of common sense in her character, of which her mother hitherto had been altogether unaware. What right had her mother to think that she could be fit to be this young lord's wife, having brought her up in the companionship of small traders in Cumberland? She never blamed her mother. She knew well that her mother had done all that was possible on her behalf. But

for that small trader they would not even have had a roof to shelter them. But still there was the fact, and she understood it. She was as her bringing up had made her, and it was too late now to effect a change. Ah yes;—it was indeed too late. It was all very well that lawyers should look upon her as an instrument, as a piece of goods that might now, from the accident of her ascertained birth, be made of great service to the Lovel family. Let her be the lord's wife, and everything would be right for everybody. It had been very easy to say that! But she had a heart of her own,—a heart to be touched, and won, and given away,—and lost. The man who had been so good to them had sought for his reward, and had got it, and could not now be defrauded. Had she been dishonest she would not have dared to defraud him; had she dared, she would not have been so dishonest.

“Did you like him?” asked the mother, not immediately after the interview, but when the evening came.

“Oh yes,—how should one not like him?”

“How indeed! He is the finest, noblest youth that ever my eyes rested on. And so like the Lovels!”

“Was my father like that?”

“Yes indeed, in the shape of his face, and the tone of his voice, and the movement of his eyes; though the sweetness of the countenance was all gone in the Devil's training to which he had submitted himself;



And you too are like him, though darker, and with something of the Murrays' greater breadth of face. But I can remember portraits at Lovel Grange,—every one of them,—and all of them were alike. There never was a Lovel but had that natural grace of appearance. You will gaze at those portraits, dear, oftener even than I have done; and you will be happy where I was,—oh—so miserable!”

“I shall never see them, mamma.”

“Why not?”

“I do not want to see them.”

“You say you like him?”

“Yes; I like him.”

“And why should you not love him well enough to make him your husband?”

“I am not fit to be his wife.”

“You are fit;—none could be fitter; none others so fit. You are as well born as he, and you have the wealth which he wants. You must have it, if, as you tell me, he says that he will cease to claim it as his own. There can be no question of fitness.”

“Money will not make a girl fit, mamma.”

“You have been brought up as a lady,—and are a lady. I swear I do not know what you mean. If he thinks you fit, and you can like him,—as you say you do,—what more can be wanted? Does he not wish it?”

"I do not know. He said he did not, and then,— I think he said he did."

"Is that it?"

"No, mamma. It is not that; not that only. It is too late!"

"Too late! How too late! Anna, you must tell me what you mean. I insist upon it that you tell me what you mean. Why is it too late?" But Lady Anna was not prepared to tell her meaning. She had certainly not intended to say anything to her mother of her solemn promise to Daniel Thwaite. It had been arranged between him and her that nothing was to be said of it till this law business should be all over. He had sworn to her that to him it made no difference, whether she should be proclaimed to be the Lady Anna, the undoubted owner of thousands a year, or Anna Murray, the illegitimate daughter of the late Earl's mistress, a girl without a penny, and a nobody in the world's esteem. No doubt they must shape their life very differently in this event or in that. How he might demean himself should this fortune be adjudged to the Earl, as he thought would be the case when he first made the girl promise to be his wife, he knew well enough. He would do as his father had done before him, and, he did not doubt,—with better result. What might be his fate should the wealth of the Lovels become the wealth of his intended wife,

he did not yet quite foreshadow to himself. How he should face and fight the world when he came to be accused of having plotted to get all this wealth for himself he did not know. He had dreams of distributing the greater part among the Lovels and the Countess, and taking himself and his wife with one-third of it to some new country in which they would not in derision call his wife the Lady Anna, and in which he would be as good a man as any earl. But let all that be as it might, the girl was to keep her secret till the thing should be settled. Now, in these latter days, it had come to be believed by him, as by nearly everybody else, that the thing was well-nigh settled. The Solicitor-General had thrown up the sponge. So said the bystanders. And now there was beginning to be a rumour that everything was to be set right by a family marriage. The Solicitor-General would not have thrown up the sponge,—so said they who knew him best,—without seeing a reason for doing so. Serjeant Bluestone was still indignant, and Mr. Hardy was silent and moody. But the world at large were beginning to observe that in this, as in all difficult cases, the Solicitor-General tempered the innocence of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent. In the meantime Lady Anna by no means intended to allow the secret to pass her lips. Whether she ever could tell her mother, she doubted; but she certainly would not do so an hour too soon. "Why is

it too late?" demanded the Countess, repeating her question with stern severity of voice.

"I mean that I have not lived all my life as his wife should live."

"Trash! It is trash. What has there been in your life to disgrace you. We have been poor and we have lived as poor people do live. We have not been disgraced."

"No, mamma."

"I will not hear such nonsense. It is a reproach to me."

"Oh, mamma, do not say that. I know how good you have been,—how you have thought of me in every thing. Pray do not say that I reproach you!" And she came and knelt at her mother's lap.

"I will not, darling; but do not vex me by saying that you are unfit. There is nothing else, dearest?"

"No, mamma," she said in a low tone, pausing before she told the falsehood.

"I think it will be arranged that you shall go down to Yoxham. The people there even are beginning to know that we are right, and are willing to acknowledge us. The Earl, whom I cannot but love already for his gracious goodness, has himself declared that he will not carry on the suit. Mr. Goffe has told me that they are anxious to see you there. Of course you must go,—and will go as Lady Anna Lovel. Mr. Goffe says that some money can now be allowed from

the estate, and you shall go as becomes the daughter of Earl Lovel when visiting among her cousins. You will see this young man there. If he means to love you and to be true to you, he will be much there. I do not doubt but that you will continue to like him. And remember this, Anna;—that even though your name be acknowledged,—even though all the wealth be adjudged to be your own,—even though some judge on the bench shall say that I am the widowed Countess Lovel, it may be all undone some day,—unless you become this young man's wife. That woman in Italy may be bolstered up at last, if you refuse him. But when you are once the wife of young Lord Lovel, no one then can harm us. There can be no going back after that." This the Countess said rather to promote the marriage, than from any fear of the consequences which she described. Daniel Thwaite was the enemy that now she dreaded, and not the Italian woman, or the Lovel family.

Lady Anna could only say that she would go to Yoxham, if she were invited there by Mrs. Lovel.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *Have they surrendered?*

As all the world heard of what was going on, so did Daniel Thwaite hear it among others. He was a hard-working, conscientious, moody man, given much

to silence among his fellow workmen;—one to whom life was serious enough; not a happy man, though he had before him a prospect of prosperity which would make most men happy. But he was essentially a tender-hearted, affectionate man, who could make a sacrifice of himself if he thought it needed for the happiness of one he loved. When he heard of this proposed marriage, he asked himself many questions as to his duty and as to the welfare of the girl. He did love her with all his heart, and he believed thoroughly in her affection for himself. He had, as yet, no sufficient reason to doubt that she would be true to him;—but he knew well that an earl's coronet must be tempting to a girl so circumstanced as was Lady Anna. There were moments in which he thought that it was almost his duty to give her up, and bid her go and live among those of her own rank. But then he did not believe in rank. He utterly disbelieved in it; and in his heart of hearts he felt that he would make a better and a fitter husband to this girl than would an earl, with all an earl's temptation to vice. He was ever thinking of some better world to which he might take her, which had not been contaminated by empty names and an impudent assumption of hereditary, and therefore false, dignity. As regarded the money, it would be hers whether she married him or the Earl. And if she loved him, as she had sworn that she did, why should he be false

to her? Or why, as yet, should he think that she would prefer an empty, gilded lordling to the friend who had been her friend as far back as her memory could carry her? If she asked to be released, then indeed he would release her,—but not without explaining to her, with such eloquence as he might be able to use,—what it was she proposed to abandon, and what to take in place of that which she lost. He was a man, silent and under self-control, but self-confident also; and he did believe himself to be a better man than young Earl Lovel.

In making this resolution,—that he would give her back her troth if she asked for it, but not without expressing to her his thoughts as he did so,—he ignored the masterfulness of his own character. There are men who exercise dominion, from the nature of their disposition, and who do so from their youth upwards, without knowing, till advanced life comes upon them, that any power of dominion belongs to them. Men are persuasive, and imperious withal, who are unconscious that they use burning words to others, whose words to them are never even warm. So it was with this man when he spoke to himself in his solitude of his purpose of resigning the titled heiress. To the arguments, the entreaties, or the threats of others he would pay no heed. The Countess might bluster about her rank, and he would heed her not at all. He cared nothing for the whole tribe of

Lovels. If Lady Anna asked for release, she should be released. But not till she had heard his words. How scolding these words might be, how powerful to prevent the girl from really choosing her own fate, he did not know himself.

Though he lived in the same house with her he seldom saw her,—unless when he would knock at the door of an evening, and say a few words to her mother rather than to her. Since Thomas Thwaite had left London for the last time the Countess had become almost cold to the young man. She would not have been so if she could have helped it; but she had begun to fear him, and she could not bring herself to be cordial to him either in word or manner. He perceived it at once, and became, himself, cold and constrained.

Once, and once only, he met Lady Anna alone, after his father's departure, and before her interview with Lord Lovel. Then he met her on the stairs of the house while her mother was absent at the lawyer's chambers.

"Are you here, Daniel, at this hour?" she asked, going back to the sitting-room, whither he followed her.

"I wanted to see you, and I knew that your mother would be out. It is not often that I do a thing in secret, even though it be to see the girl that I love."

"No, indeed. I do not see you often now."



"Does that matter much to you, Lady Anna?"

"Lady Anna!"

"I have been instructed, you know, that I am to call you so."

"Not by me, Daniel."

"No;—not by you; not as yet. Your mother's manners are much altered to me. Is it not so?"

"How can I tell? Mine are not."

"It is no question of manners, sweetheart, between you and me. It has not come to that, I hope. Do you wish for any change,—as regards me?"

"Oh, no."

"As to my love, there can be no change in that. If it suits your mother to be disdainful to me, I can bear it. I always thought that it would come to be so some day."

There was but little more said then. He asked her no further question;—none at least that it was difficult for her to answer,—and he soon took his leave. He was a passionate rather than a tender lover, and having once held her in his arms, and kissed her lips, and demanded from her a return of his caress, he was patient now to wait till he could claim them as his own. But, two days after the interview between Lord Lovel and his love, he a second time contrived to find her alone.

"I have come again," he said, "because I knew your mother is out. I would not trouble you with secret

meetings but that just now I have much to say to you. And then, you may be gone from hence before I had even heard that you were going."

"I am always glad to see you, Daniel."

"Are you, my sweetheart? Is that true?"

"Indeed, indeed it is."

"I should be a traitor to doubt you,—and I do not doubt. I will never doubt you if you tell me that you love me."

"You know I love you."

"Tell me, Anna—; or shall I say Lady Anna?"

"Lady Anna,—if you wish to scorn me."

"Then never will I call you so, till it shall come to pass that I do wish to scorn you. But tell me. Is it true that Earl Lovel was with you the other day?"

"He was here the day before yesterday."

"And why did he come?"

"Why?"

"Why did he come? you know that as far as I have yet heard he is still your mother's enemy and yours, and is persecuting you to rob you of your name and of your property. Did he come as a friend?"

"Oh, yes! certainly as a friend."

"But he still makes his claim."

"No;—he says that he will make it no longer, that he acknowledges mamma as my father's widow, and me as my father's heir."

"That is generous,—if that is all."

"Very generous."

"And he does this without condition? There is nothing to be given to him to pay him for this surrender."

"There is nothing to give," she said, in that low, sweet, melancholy voice which was common to her always when she spoke of herself.

"You do not mean to deceive me, dear, I know; but there is a something to be given; and I am told that he has asked for it, or certainly will ask. And, indeed, I do not think that an earl, noble, but poverty-stricken, would surrender everything without making some counter claim which would lead him by another path to all that he has been seeking. Anna, you know what I mean."

"Yes; I know."

"Has he made no such claim?"

"I cannot tell."

"You cannot tell whether or no he has asked you to be his wife?"

"No; I cannot tell. Do not look at me like that, Daniel. He came here, and mamma left us together, and he was kind to me. Oh! so kind. He said that he would be a cousin to me, and a brother."

"A brother!"

"That was what he said."

"And he meant nothing more than that,—simply to be your brother?"

"I think he did mean more. I think he meant that he would try to love me so that he might be my husband."

"And what said you to that?"

"I told him that it could not be so."

"And then?"

"Why then again he said that we were cousins; that I had no nearer cousin anywhere, and that he would be good to me and help me, and that the law-suit should not go on. Oh, Daniel, he was so good!"

"Was that all?"

"He kissed me, saying that cousins might kiss?"

"No, Anna;—cousins such as you and he may not kiss. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, I hear you."

"If you mean to be true to me, there must be no more of that. Do you not know that all this means that he is to win you to be his wife? Did he not come to you with that object?"

"I think he did, Daniel."

"I think so too, my dear. Surrender! I'll tell you what that surrender means. They perceive at last that they have not a shadow of justice, or even a shadow of a chance of unjust success in their claim. That with all their command of money, which is to be spent, however, out of your property, they can do

nothing; that their false witnesses will not come to aid them; that they have not another inch of ground on which to stand. Their great lawyer, Sir William Patterson, dares not show himself in court with a case so false and fraudulent. At last your mother's rights and yours are to be owned. Then they turn themselves about, and think in what other way the prize may be won. It is not likely that such a prize should be surrendered by a noble lord. The young man is made to understand that he cannot have it all without a burden, and that he must combine his wealth with you. That is it, and at once he comes to you, asking you to be his wife, so that in that way he may lay his hands on the wealth of which he has striven to rob you."

"Daniel, I do not think that he is like that!"

"I tell you he is not only like it,—but that itself. Is it not clear as noon-day? He comes here to talk of love who had never seen you before. Is it thus that men love?"

"But, Daniel, he did not talk so."

"I wonder that he was so crafty, believing him as I do to be a fool. He talked of cousinship and brotherhood, and yet gave you to know that he meant you to be his wife. Was it not so?"

"I think it was so, in very truth."

"Of course it was so. Do brothers marry their sisters? Were it not for the money, which must be

yours, and which he is kind enough to surrender, would he come to you then with his brotherhood, and his cousinship, and his mock love? Tell me that, my lady! Can it be real love,—to which there has been no forerunning acquaintance?"

"I think not, indeed."

"And must it not be lust of wealth? That may come by hearsay well enough. It is a love which requires no great foreknowledge to burn with real strength. He is a gay looking lad, no doubt."

"I do not know as to gay, but he is beautiful."

"Like enough, my girl; with soft hands, and curled hair, and a sweet smell, and a bright colour, and a false heart. I have never seen the lad; but for the false heart I can answer."

"I do not think that he is false."

"Not false! and yet he comes to you asking you to be his wife, just at that nick of time in which he finds that you,—the right owner,—are to have the fortune of which he has vainly endeavoured to defraud you! Is it not so?"

"He cannot be wrong to wish to keep up the glory of the family."

"The glory of the family;—yes, the fame of the late lord, who lived as though he were a fiend let loose from hell to devastate mankind. The glory of the family! And how will he maintain it? At racecourses,

in betting-clubs, among loose women, with luscious wines, never doing one stroke of work for man or God, consuming and never producing, either idle altogether or working the work of the devil. That will be the glory of the family. Anna Lovel, you shall give him his choice." Then he took her hand in his. "Ask him whether he will have that empty, or take all the wealth of the Lovels. You have my leave."

"And if he took the empty hand what should I do?" she asked.

"My brave girl, no; though the chance be but one in a thousand against me, I would not run the risk. But I am putting it to yourself, to your reason, to judge of his motives. Can it be that his mind in this matter is not sordid and dishonest? As to you, the choice is open to you."

"No, Daniel; it is open no longer."

"The choice is open to you. If you will tell me that your heart is so set upon being the bride of a lord, that truth and honesty and love, and all decent feeling from woman to man can be thrown to the wind, to make way for such an ambition,—I will say not a word against it. You are free."

"Have I asked for freedom?"

"No, indeed! Had you done so, I should have made all this much shorter."

"Then why do you harass me by saying it?"

"Because it is my duty. Can I know that he comes here seeking you for his wife; can I hear it said on all sides that this family feud is to be settled by a happy family marriage; can I find that you yourself are willing to love him as a cousin or a brother,—without finding myself compelled to speak? There are two men seeking you as their wife. One can make you a countess; the other simply an honest man's wife, and, so far as that can be low, lower than that title of your own which they will not allow you to put before your name. If I am still your choice, give me your hand." Of course she gave it him. "So be it; and now I shall fear nothing." Then she told him that it was intended that she should go to Yoxham as a visitor; but still he declared that he would fear nothing.

Early on the next morning he called on Mr. Goffe, the attorney, with the object of making some inquiry as to the condition of the lawsuit. Mr. Goffe did not much love the elder tailor, but he specially disliked the younger. He was not able to be altogether uncivil to them, because he knew all that they had done to succour his client; but he avoided them when it was possible, and was chary of giving them information. On this occasion Daniel asked whether it was true that the other side had abandoned their claim.

"Really Mr. Thwaite, I cannot say that they have," said Mr. Goffe.

"Can you say that they have not?"



"No; nor that either."

"Had anything of that kind been decided, I suppose you would have known it, Mr. Goffe?"

"Really, sir, I cannot say. There are questions, Mr. Thwaite, which a professional gentleman cannot answer, even to such friends as you and your father have been. When any real settlement is to be made, the Countess Lovel will, as a matter of course, be informed."

"She should be informed at once," said Daniel Thwaite sternly: "and so should they who have been concerned with her in this matter."

"You, I know, have heavy claims on the Countess."

"My father has claims, which will never vex her, whether paid or not paid; but it is right that he should know the truth. I do not believe that the Countess herself knows, though she has been led to think that the claim has been surrendered."

Mr. Goffe was very sorry, but really he had nothing further to tell.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *New Friends.*

THE introduction to Yoxham followed quickly upon the Earl's visit to Wyndham Street. There was a great consultation at the rectory before a decision could be made as to the manner in which the invitation should

be given. The Earl thought that it should be sent to the mother. The rector combated this view very strongly, still hoping that though he might be driven to call the girl Lady Anna, he might postpone the necessity of acknowledging the countess-ship of the mother till the marriage should have been definitely acknowledged. Mrs. Lovel thought that if the girl were Lady Anna, then the mother must be the Countess Lovel, and that it would be as well to be hung for a sheep as a lamb. But the wisdom of Aunt Julia sided with her brother, though she did not share her brother's feelings of animosity to the two women. "It is understood that the girl is to be invited, and not the mother," said Miss Lovel; "and as it is quite possible that the thing should fail,—in which case the lawsuit might possibly go on,—the less we acknowledge the better." The Earl declared that the lawsuit couldn't go on—that he would not carry it on. "My dear Frederic, you are not the only person concerned. The lady in Italy, who still calls herself Countess Lovel, may renew the suit on her own behalf as soon as you have abandoned it. Should she succeed, you would have to make what best compromise you could with her respecting the property. That is the way I understand it." This exposition of the case by Miss Lovel was so clear that it carried the day, and accordingly a letter was written by Mrs. Lovel, addressed to Lady Anna Lovel, asking her to come and spend a few days at

Yoxham. She could bring her maid with her or not as she liked; but she could have the service of Mrs. Lovel's lady's-maid if she chose to come unattended. The letter sounded cold when it was read, but the writer signed herself, "Yours affectionately, Jane Lovel." It was addressed to "The Lady Anna Lovel, to the care of Messrs. Goffe and Goffe, solicitors, Raymond's Buildings, Gray's Inn."

Lady Anna was allowed to read it first; but she read it in the presence of her mother, to whom she handed it at once, as a matter of course. A black frown came across the Countess's brow, and a look of displeasure, almost of anger, rested on her countenance. "Is it wrong, mamma?" asked the girl.

"It is a part of the whole;—but, my dear, it shall not signify. Conquerors cannot be conquerors all at once, nor can the vanquished be expected to submit themselves with a grace. But it will come. And though they should ignore me utterly, that will be as nothing. I have not clung to this for years past to win their loves."

"I will not go, mamma, if they are unkind to you."

"You must go, my dear. It is only that they are weak enough to think that they can acknowledge you, and yet continue to deny to me my rights. But it matters nothing. Of course you shall go,—and you shall go as the daughter of the Countess Lovel."

That mention of the lady's-maid had been unfortunate. Mrs. Lovel had simply desired to make it easy for the young lady to come without a servant to wait upon her, and had treated her husband's far-away cousin as elder ladies often do treat those who are younger when the question of the maid may become a difficulty. But the Countess, who would hardly herself have thought of it, now declared that her girl should go attended as her rank demanded. Lady Anna, therefore, under her mother's dictation, wrote the following reply:—

“Wyndham Street, 3rd August, 183—

“DEAR MRS. LOVEL,

“I shall be happy to accept your kind invitation to Yoxham, but can hardly do so before the 10th. On that day I will leave London for York inside the mail-coach. Perhaps you can be kind enough to have me met where the coach stops. As you are so good as to say you can take her in, I will bring my own maid.

“Yours affectionately,

“ANNA LOVEL.”

“But, mamma, I don't want a maid,” said the girl, who had never been waited on in her life, and who had more often than not made her mother's bed and her own till they had come up to London.

"Nevertheless you shall take one. You will have to make other changes besides that; and the sooner that you begin to make them, the easier they will be to you."

Then at once the Countess made a pilgrimage to Mr. Goffe in search of funds wherewith to equip her girl properly for her new associations. She was to go, as Lady Anna Lovel, to stay with Mrs. Lovel and Miss Lovel and the little Lovels. And she was to go as one who was to be the chosen bride of Earl Lovel. Of course she must be duly caparisoned. Mr. Goffe made difficulties,—as lawyers always do,—but the needful money was at last forthcoming. Representations had been made in high legal quarters,—to the custodians for the moment of the property which was to go to the established heir of the late Earl. They had been made conjointly by Goffe and Goffe, and Norton and Flick, and the money was forthcoming. Mr. Goffe suggested that a great deal could not be wanted all at once for the young lady's dress. The Countess smiled as she answered, "You hardly know, Mr. Goffe, the straits to which we have been reduced. If I tell you that this dress which I have on is the only one in which I can fitly appear even in your chambers, perhaps you will think that I demean myself." Mr. Goffe was touched, and signed a sufficient cheque. They were going to succeed, and then everything would be easy. Even if they did not succeed,

he could get it passed in the accounts. And if not that—well, he had run greater risks than this for clients whose causes were of much less interest than this of the Countess and her daughter.

The Countess had mentioned her own gown, and had spoken strict truth in what she had said of it;—but not a shilling of Mr. Goffe's money went to the establishment of a wardrobe for herself. That her daughter should go down to Yoxham Rectory in a manner befitting the daughter of Earl Lovel was at this moment her chief object. Things were purchased by which the poor girl, unaccustomed to such finery, was astounded and almost stupefied. Two needlewomen were taken in at the lodgings in Wyndham Street; parcels from Swan and Edgar's,—Marshall and Snellgrove were not then, or at least had not loomed to the grandeur of an entire block of houses,—addressed to Lady Anna Lovel, were frequent at the door, somewhat to the disgust of the shopmen, who did not like to send goods to Lady Anna Lovel in Wyndham Street. But ready money was paid, and the parcels came home. Lady Anna, poor girl, was dismayed much by the parcels, but she was at her wits' end when the lady's-maid came,—a young lady, herself so sweetly attired that Lady Anna would have envied her in the old Cumberland days. "I shall not know what to say to her, mamma," said Lady Anna.

"It will all come in two days, if you will only be

equal to the occasion," said the Countess, who in providing her child with this expensive adjunct, had made some calculation that the more her daughter was made to feel the luxuries of aristocratic life, the less prone would she be to adapt herself to the roughnesses of Daniel Thwaite the tailor.

The Countess put her daughter into the mail-coach, and gave her much parting advice. "Hold up your head when you are with them. That is all that you have to do. Among them all your blood will be the best." This theory of blood was one of which Lady Anna had never been able even to realise the meaning. "And remember this too;—that you are in truth the most wealthy. It is they that should honour you. Of course you will be courteous and gentle with them—it is your nature; but do not for a moment allow yourself to be conscious that you are their inferior." Lady Anna,—who could think but little of her birth,—to whom it had been throughout her life a thing plaguesome rather than profitable,—could remember only what she had been in Cumberland, and her binding obligation to the tailor's son. She could remember but that and the unutterable sweetness of the young man who had once appeared before her,—to whom she knew that she must be inferior. "Hold up your head among them, and claim your own always," said the Countess.

The rectory carriage was waiting for her at the inn

yard in York, and in it was Miss Lovel. When the hour had come it was thought better that the wise woman of the family should go than any other. For the ladies of Yoxham were quite as anxious as to the Lady Anna as was she in respect of them. What sort of a girl was this that they were to welcome among them as the Lady Anna,—who had lived all her life with tailors, and with a mother of whom up to quite a late date they had thought all manner of evil? The young lord had reported well of her, saying that she was not only beautiful, but feminine, of soft modest manners, and in all respects like a lady. The Earl, however, was but a young man, likely to be taken by mere beauty; and it might be that the girl had been clever enough to hoodwink him. So much evil had been believed that a report stating that all was good could not be accepted at once as true. Miss Lovel would be sure to find out, even in the space of an hour's drive, and Miss Lovel went to meet her. She did not leave the carriage, but sent the footman to help Lady Anna Lovel from the coach. "My dear," said Miss Lovel, "I am very glad to see you. Oh, you have brought a maid! We didn't think you would. There is a seat behind which she can occupy."

"Mamma thought it best. I hope it is not wrong, Mrs. Lovel."

"I ought to have introduced myself. I am Miss Lovel, and the rector of Yoxham is my brother. It



does not signify about the maid in the least. We can do very well with her. I suppose she has been with you a long time."

"No, indeed;—she only came the day before yesterday." And so Miss Lovel learned the whole story of the lady's-maid.

Lady Anna said very little, but Miss Lovel explained a good many things during the journey. The young lord was not at Yoxham. He was with a friend in Scotland, but would be home about the 20th. The two boys were at home for the holidays, but would go back to school in a fortnight. Minnie Lovel, the daughter, had a governess. The rectory, for a parsonage, was a tolerably large house, and convenient. It had been Lord Lovel's early home, but at present he was not much there. "He thinks it right to go to Lovel Grange during a part of the autumn. I suppose you have seen Lovel Grange."

"Never."

"Oh, indeed. But you lived near it;—did you not?"

"No, not near;—about fifteen miles, I think. I was born there, but have never been there since I was a baby."

"Oh!—you were born there. Of course you know that it is Lord Lovel's seat now. I do not know that he likes it, though the scenery is magnificent. But a

landlord has to live, at least for some period of the year, upon his property. You saw my nephew."

"Yes; he came to us once."

"I hope you liked him. We think him very nice. But then he is almost the same as a son here. Do you care about visiting the poor?"

"I have never tried," said Lady Anna.

"Oh dear!"

"We have been so poor ourselves;—we were just one of them." Then Miss Lovel perceived that she had made a mistake. But she was generous enough to recognize the unaffected simplicity of the girl, and almost began to think well of her.

"I hope you will come round the parish with us. We shall be very glad. Yoxham is a large parish, with scattered hamlets, and there is plenty to do. The manufactories are creeping up to us, and we have already a large mill at Yoxham Lock. My brother has to keep two curates now. Here we are, my dear, and I hope we shall be able to make you happy."

Mrs. Lovel did not like the maid, and Mr. Lovel did not like it at all. "And yet we heard when we were up in town that they literally had not anything to live on," said the parson. "I hope that, after all, we may not be making fools of ourselves." But there was no help for it, and the maid was of course taken in.

The children had been instructed to call their

cousin Lady Anna,—unless they heard their mother drop the title, and then they were to drop it also. They were not so young but what they had all heard the indiscreet vigour with which their father had ridiculed the claim to the title, and had been something at a loss to know whence the change had come. “Perhaps they are as they call themselves,” the rector had said, “and, if so, heaven forbid that we should not give them their due.” After this the three young ones, discussing the matter among themselves, had made up their minds that Lady Anna was no cousin of theirs,—but “a humbug.” When, however, they saw her their hearts relented, and the girl became soft, and the boys became civil. “Papa,” said Minnie Lovel, on the second day, “I hope she is our cousin.”

“I hope so too, my dear.”

“I think she is. She looks as if she ought to be because she is so pretty.”

“Being pretty, my dear, is not enough. You should love people because they are good.”

“But I would not like all the good people to be my cousins;—would you, papa? Old widow Grimes is a very good old woman; but I don’t want to have her for a cousin.”

“My dear, you are talking about what you don’t understand.”

But Minnie did in truth understand the matter better than her father. Before three or four days had

passed she knew that their guest was lovable,—whether cousin or no cousin; and she knew also that the newcomer was of such nature and breeding as made her fit to be a cousin. All the family had as yet called her Lady Anna, but Minnie thought that the time had come in which she might break through the law. “I think I should like to call you just Anna; if you will let me,” she said. They two were in the guest’s bedroom, and Minnie was leaning against her new friend’s shoulder.

“Oh, I do so wish you would. I do so hate to be called Lady.”

“But you are Lady Anna,—aren’t you?”

“And you are Miss Mary Lovel, but you wouldn’t like everybody in the house to call you so. And then there has been so much said about it all my life, that it makes me quite unhappy. I do so wish your mamma wouldn’t call me Lady Anna.” Whereupon Minnie very demurely explained that she could not answer for her mamma, but that she would always call her friend Anna,—when papa wasn’t by.

But Minnie was better than her promise. “Mamma,” she said the next day, “do you know that she hates to be called Lady Anna.”

“What makes you think so?”

“I am sure of it. She told me so. Everybody has always been talking about it ever since she was born, and she says she is so sick of it.”

"But, my dear, people must be called by their names. If it is her proper name she ought not to hate it. I can understand that people should hate an assumed name."

"I am Miss Mary Lovel, but I should not at all like it if everybody called me Miss Mary. The servants call me Miss Mary, but if papa and aunt Julia did so, I should think they were scolding me."

"But Lady Anna is not papa's daughter."

"She is his cousin. Isn't she his cousin, mamma? I don't think people ought to call their cousins Lady Anna. I have promised that I won't. Cousin Frederic said that she was his cousin. What will he call her?"

"I cannot tell, my dear. We shall all know her better by that time." Mrs. Lovel, however, followed her daughter's lead, and from that time the poor girl was Anna to all of them,—except to the rector. He listened, and thought that he would try it; but his heart failed him. He would have preferred that she should be an impostor, were that still possible. He would so much have preferred that she should not exist at all! He did not care for her beauty. He did not feel the charm of her simplicity. It was one of the hardships of the world that he should be forced to have her there in his rectory. The Lovel wealth was indispensable to the true heir of the Lovels, and on behalf of his nephew and his family he had been induced to consent; but he could not love the inter-

loper. He still dreamed of coming surprises that would set the matter right in a manner that would be much preferable to a marriage. The girl might be innocent,—as his wife and sister told him; but he was sure that the mother was an intriguing woman. It would be such a pity that they should have entertained the girl, if,—after all,—the woman should at last be but a pseudo-countess! As others had ceased to call her Lady Anna, he could not continue to do so; but he managed to live on with her without calling her by any name.

In the meantime Cousin Anna went about among the poor with Minnie and Aunt Julia, and won golden opinions. She was soft, feminine, almost humble,—but still with a dash of humour in her, when she was sufficiently at her ease with them to be happy. There was very much in the life which she thoroughly enjoyed. The green fields, and the air which was so pleasant to her after the close heat of the narrow London streets, and the bright parsonage garden, and the pleasant services of the country church,—and doubtless also the luxuries of a rich, well-ordered household. Those calculations of her mother had not been made without a true basis. The softness, the niceness, the ease, the grace of the people around her, won upon her day by day, and hour by hour. The pleasant idleness of the drawing-room, with its books and music, and unstrained chatter of family voices, grew upon her as

so many new charms. To come down with bright ribbons and clean unruffled muslin to breakfast, with nothing to do which need ruffle them unbecomingly, and then to dress for dinner with silk and gauds, before ten days were over, had made life beautiful to her. She seemed to live among roses and perfumes. There was no stern hardness in the life, as there had of necessity been in that which she had ever lived with her mother. The caresses of Minnie Lovel soothed and warmed her heart;—and every now and again, when the eyes of Aunt Julia were not upon her, she was tempted to romp with the boys. Oh! that they had really been her brothers!

But in the midst of all there was ever present to her the prospect of some coming wretchedness. The life which she was leading could not be her life. That Earl was coming,—that young Apollo,—and he would again ask her to be his wife. She knew that she could not be his wife. She was there, as she understood well, that she might give all this wealth that was to be hers to the Lovel family; and when she refused to give herself,—as the only way in which that wealth could be conveyed,—they would turn her out from their pleasant home. Then she must go back to the other life, and be the wife of Daniel Thwaite; and soft things must be at an end with her.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

*The Earl arrives.*

AT the end of a fortnight the boys had gone back to school, and Lord Lovel was to reach the rectory in time for dinner that evening. There was a little stir throughout the rectory, as an earl is an earl though he be in his uncle's house, and rank will sway even aunts and cousins. The parson at present was a much richer man than the peer;—but the peer was at the head of all the Lovels, and then it was expected that his poverty would quickly be made to disappear. All that Lovel money which had been invested in bank shares, Indian railways, Russian funds, Devon consols, and coal mines, was to become his,—if not in one way, then in another. The Earl was to be a topping man, and the rectory cook was ordered to do her best. The big bedroom had been made ready, and the parson looked at his '99 port and his '16 Margaux. In those days men drank port, and champagne at country houses was not yet a necessity. To give the rector of Yoxham his due it must be said of him that he would have done his very best for the head of his family had there been no large fortune within the young lord's grasp. The Lovels had ever been true to the Lovels with the exception of that late wretched Earl,—the Lady Anna's father.



But if the rector and his wife were alive to the importance of the expected arrival, what must have been the state of Lady Anna! They had met but once before, and during that meeting they had been alone together. There had grown up, she knew not how, during those few minutes, a heavenly sweetness between them. He had talked to her with a voice that had been to her ears as the voice of a god,—it had been so sweet and full of music! He had caressed her,—but with a caress so gentle and pure that it had been to her void of all taint of evil. It had perplexed her for a moment,—but had left no sense of wrong behind it. He had told her that he loved her,—that he would love her dearly; but had not scared her in so telling her, though she knew she could never give him back such love as that of which he spoke to her. There had been a charm in it, of which she delighted to dream,—fancying that she could remember it for ever, as a green island in her life; but could so best remember it if she were assured that she should never see him more. But now she was to see him again, and the charm must be renewed,—or else the dream dispelled for ever. Alas! it must be the latter. She knew that the charm must be dispelled.

But there was a doubt on her own mind whether it would not be dispelled without any effort on her part. It would vanish at once if he were to greet her as the Lovels had greeted her on her first coming. She

could partly understand that the manner of their meeting in London had thrust upon him a necessity for flattering tenderness with which he might well dispense when he met her among his family. Had he really loved her,—had he meant to love her,—he would hardly have been absent so long after her coming. She had been glad that he had been absent,—so she assured herself,—because there could never be any love between them. Daniel Thwaite had told her that the brotherly love which had been offered was false love,—must be false,—was no love at all. Do brothers marry sisters; and had not this man already told her that he wished to make her his wife? And then there must never be another kiss. Daniel Thwaite had told her that; and he was, not only her lover, but her master also. This was the rule by which she would certainly hold. She would be true to Daniel Thwaite. And yet she looked for the lord's coming, as one looks for the rising of the sun of an early morning,—watching for that which shall make all the day beautiful.

And he came. The rector and his wife, and Aunt Julia and Minnie, all went out into the hall to meet him, and Anna was left alone in the library, where they were wont to congregate before dinner. It was already past seven, and every one was dressed. A quarter of an hour was to be allowed to the lord, and he was to be hurried up at once to his bedroom. She

would not see him till he came down ready, and all hurried, to lead his aunt to the dining-room. She heard the scuffle in the hall. There were kisses;—and a big kiss from Minnie to her much-prized Cousin Fred; and a loud welcome from the full-mouthed rector. “And where is Anna?”—the lord asked. They were the first words he spoke, and she heard them, ah! so plainly. It was the same voice,—sweet, genial, and manly; ‘sweet to her beyond all sweetness that she could conceive.

“You shall see her when you come down from dressing,” said Mrs. Lovel,—in a low voice, but still audible to the solitary girl.

“I will see her before I go up to dress,” said the lord, walking through them, and in through the open door to the library. “So, here you are. I am so glad to see you! I had sworn to go into Scotland before the time was fixed for your coming,—before I had met you,—and I could not escape. Have you thought ill of me because I have not been here to welcome you sooner?”

“No,—my lord.”

“There are horrible penalties for anybody who calls me lord in this house;—are there not, aunt Jane? But I see my uncle wants his dinner.”

“I’ll take you up-stairs, Fred,” said Minnie, who was still holding her cousin’s hand.

"I am coming. I will only say that I would sooner see you here than in any house in England."

Then he went, and during the few minutes that he spent in dressing little or nothing was spoken in the library. The parson in his heart was not pleased by the enthusiasm with which the young man greeted this new cousin; and yet, why should he not be enthusiastic if it was intended that they should be man and wife?

"Now, Lady Anna," said the rector, as he offered her his arm to lead her out to dinner. It was but a mild corrective to the warmth of his nephew. The lord lingered a moment with his aunt in the library.

"Have you not got beyond that with her yet?" he asked.

"Your uncle is more old fashioned than you are, Fred. Things did not go so quick when he was young."

In the evening he came and lounged on a double-seated ortoman behind her, and she soon found herself answering a string of questions. Had she been happy at Yoxham? Did she like the place? What had she been doing? "Then you know Mrs. Grimes already?" She laughed as she said that she did know Mrs. Grimes. "The lion of Yoxham is Mrs. Grimes. She is supposed to have all the misfortunes and all the virtues to which humanity is subject. And how

do you and Minnie get on? Minnie is my prime minister. The boys, I suppose, teased you out of your life?"

"I did like them so much! I never knew a boy till I saw them, Lord Lovel."

"They take care to make themselves known, at any rate. But they are nice, good-humoured lads,—taking after their mother. Don't tell their father I said so. Do you think it pretty about here?"

"Beautifully pretty."

"Just about Yoxham,—because there is so much wood. But this is not the beautiful part of Yorkshire, you know. I wonder whether we could make an expedition to Wharfedale and Bolton Abbey. You would say that the Wharfe was pretty. We'll try and plan it. We should have to sleep out one night; but that would make it all the jollier. There isn't a better inn in England than the Devonshire arms;—and I don't think a pleasanter spot. Aunt Jane,—couldn't we go for one night to Bolton Abbey?"

"It is very far, Frederic."

"Thirty miles or so;—that ought to be nothing in Yorkshire. We'll manage it. We could get post-horses from York, and the carriage would take us all. My uncle, you must know, is very chary about the carriage horses, thinking that the corn of idleness,—which is destructive to young men and women,—is

very good for cattle. But we'll manage it, and you shall jump over the Stryd." Then he told her the story how the youth was drowned—and how the monks moaned; and he got away to other legends, to the white doe of Rylston, and Landseer's picture of the abbey in olden times. She had heard nothing before of these things,—or indeed of such things, and the hearing them was very sweet to her. The parson, who was still displeased, went to sleep. Minnie had been sent to bed, and Aunt Julia and Aunt Jane every now and again put in a word. It was resolved before the evening was over that the visit should be made to Bolton Abbey. Of course, their nephew ought to have opportunities of making love to the girl he was doomed to marry. "Good night, dearest," he said when she went to bed. She was sure that the last word had been so spoken, and that no ear but her own had heard it. She could not tell him that such word should not be spoken; and yet she felt that the word would be almost as offensive as the kiss to Daniel Thwaite. She must contrive some means of telling him that she could not, would not, must not be his dearest.

She had now received two letters from her mother since she had been at Yoxham, and in each of them there were laid down for her plain instructions as to her conduct. It was now the middle of August, and it was incumbent upon her to allow matters so to

arrange themselves, that the marriage might be declared to be a settled thing when the case should come on in November. Mr. Goffe and Mr. Flick had met each other, and everything was now understood by the two parties of lawyers. If the Earl and Lady Anna were then engaged with the mutual consent of all interested,—and so engaged that a day could be fixed for the wedding,—then, when the case was opened in court, would the Solicitor-General declare that it was the intention of Lord Lovel to make no further opposition to the claims of the Countess and her daughter, and it would only remain for Serjeant Bluestone to put in the necessary proofs of the Cumberland marriage and of the baptism of Lady Anna. The Solicitor-General would at the same time state to the court that an alliance had been arranged between these distant cousins, and that in that way everything would be settled. But,—and in this clause of her instructions the Countess was most urgent, —this could not be done unless the marriage were positively settled. Mr. Flick had been very urgent in pointing out to Mr. Goffe that in truth their evidence was very strong to prove that when the Earl married the now so-called Countess, his first wife was still living, though they gave no credit to the woman who now called herself the Countess. But, in either case,—whether the Italian countess were now alive or now dead,—the daughter would be illegitimate, and the second marriage void,

if their surmise on this head should prove to be well founded. But the Italian party could of itself do nothing, and the proposed marriage would set everything right. But the evidence must be brought into court and further sifted, unless the marriage were a settled thing by November. All this the Countess explained at great length in her letters, calling upon her daughter to save herself, her mother, and the family.

Lady Anna answered the first epistle,—or rather, wrote another in return to it;—but she said nothing of her noble lover, except that Lord Lovel had not as yet come to Yoxham. She confined herself to simple details of her daily life, and a prayer that her dear mother might be happy. The second letter from the Countess was severe in its tone,—asking why no promise had been made, no assurance given,—no allusion made to the only subject that could now be of interest. She implored her child to tell her that she was disposed to listen to the Earl's suit. This letter was in her pocket when the Earl arrived, and she took it out and read it again after the Earl had whispered in her ear that word so painfully sweet.

She proposed to answer it before breakfast on the following morning. At Yoxham rectory they breakfasted at ten, and she was always up at least before eight. She determined as she laid herself down that she would think of it all night. It might be best, she believed, to tell her mother the whole truth,—that she



had already promised everything to Daniel Thwaite, and that she could not go back from her word. Then she began to build castles in the air,—castles which she declared to herself must ever be in the air,—of which Lord Lovel, and not Daniel Thwaite, was the hero, owner, and master. She assured herself that she was not picturing to herself any prospect of a really possible life, but was simply dreaming of an impossible Elysium. How many people would she make happy, were she able to let that young Phœbus know in one half-uttered word,—or with a single silent glance,—that she would in truth be his dearest. It could not be so. She was well aware of that. But surely she might dream of it. All the cares of that careful, careworn mother would then be at an end. How delightful would it be to her to welcome that sorrowful one to her own bright home, and to give joy where joy had never yet been known! How all the lawyers would praise her, and tell her that she had saved a noble family from ruin. She already began to have feelings about the family to which she had been a stranger before she had come among the Lovels. And if it really would make him happy, this Phœbus, how glorious would that be! How fit he was to be made happy! Daniel had said that he was sordid, false, fraudulent, and a fool;—but Daniel did not, could not, understand the nature of the Lovels. And then she herself;—how would it be with her? She had

given her heart to Daniel Thwaite, and she had but one heart to give. Had it not been for that, it would have been very sweet to love that young curled darling. There were two sorts of life, and now she had had an insight into each. Daniel had told her that this soft, luxurious life was thoroughly bad. He could not have known when saying so, how much was done for their poor neighbours by such as even these Lovels. It could not be wrong to be soft, and peaceful, and pretty, to enjoy sweet smells, to sit softly, and eat off delicately painted china plates,—as long as no one was defrauded, and many were comforted. Daniel Thwaite, she believed, never went to church. Here at Yoxham there were always morning prayers, and they went to church twice every Sunday. She had found it very pleasant to go to church, and to be led along in the easy path of self-indulgent piety on which they all walked at Yoxham. The church seats at Yoxham were broad, with soft cushions, and the hassocks were well stuffed. Surely, Daniel Thwaite did not know everything. As she thus built her castles in the air,—castles so impossible to be inhabited,—she fell asleep before she had resolved what letter she should write.

But in the morning she did write her letter. It must be written,—and when the family were about the house, she would be too disturbed for so great an effort. It ran as follows:—

"Yoxham, Friday.

"DEAREST MAMMA,

"I am much obliged for your letter, which I got the day before yesterday. Lord Lovel came here yesterday, or perhaps I might have answered it then. Everybody here seems to worship him almost, and he is so good to everybody! We are all to go on a visit to Bolton Abbey, and sleep at an inn somewhere, and I am sure I shall like it very much, for they say it is most beautiful. If you look at the map, it is nearly in a straight line between here and Kendal but only much nearer to York. The day is not fixed yet, but I believe it will be very soon.

"I shall be so glad if the lawsuit can be got over, for your sake, dearest mamma. I wish they could let you have your title and your share of the money, and let Lord Lovel have the rest, because he is head of the family. That would be fairest, and I can't see why it should not be so. Your share would be quite enough for you and me. I can't say anything about what you speak of. He has said nothing, and I'm sure I hope he won't. I don't think I could do it; and I don't think the lawyers ought to want me to. I think it is very wrong of them to say so. We are strangers, and I feel almost sure that I could never be what he would want. I don't think people ought to marry for money.

"Dearest mamma, pray do not be angry with me.

If you are, you will kill me. I am very happy here, and nobody has said anything about my going away. Couldn't you ask Serjeant Bluestone whether something couldn't be done to divide the money, so that there might be no more law? I am sure he could if he liked, with Mr. Goffe and the other men.

"Dearest mamma, I am,

"Your most affectionate Daughter,

"ANNA LOVEL."

When the moment came, and the pen was in her hand, she had not the courage to mention the name of Daniel Thwaite. She knew that the fearful story must be told, but at this moment she comforted herself,—or tried to comfort herself,—by remembering that Daniel himself had enjoined that their engagement must yet for a while be kept secret.

## CHAPTER XV.

### Wharfedale.

THE visit to Wharfedale was fixed for Monday and Tuesday, and on the Monday morning they started, after an early breakfast. The party consisted of Aunt Jane, Aunt Julia, Lady Anna, Minnie, and Mr. Cross, one of the rector's curates. The rector would not accompany them, excusing himself to the others generally

on the ground that he could not be absent from his parish on those two days. To his wife and sister he explained that he was not able, as yet, to take pleasure in such a party as this with Lady Anna. There was no knowing, he said, what might happen. It was evident that he did not mean to open his heart to Lady Anna, at any rate till the marriage should be settled.

An open carriage, which would take them all, was ordered,—with four post horses, and two antiquated postboys, with white hats and blue jackets, and yellow breeches. Minnie and the curate sat on the box, and there was a servant in the rumble. Rooms at the inn had been ordered, and everything was done in proper lordly manner. The sun shone brightly above their heads, and Anna, having as yet received no further letter from her mother, was determined to be happy. Four horses took them to Bolton Bridge, and then, having eaten lunch and ordered dinner, they started for their ramble in the woods.

The first thing to be seen at Bolton Abbey is, of course, the Abbey. The Abbey itself, as a ruin,—a ruin not so ruinous but that a part of it is used for a modern church,—is very well; but the glory of Bolton Abbey is in the river which runs round it and in the wooded banks which overhang it. No more luxuriant pasture, no richer foliage, no brighter water, no more picturesque arrangement of the freaks of nature, aided

by the art and taste of man, is to be found, perhaps, in England. Lady Anna, who had been used to wilder scenery in her native county, was delighted. Nothing had ever been so beautiful as the Abbey;—nothing so lovely as the running Wharfe! Might they not climb up among those woods on the opposite bank? Lord Lovel declared that, of course they would climb up among the woods,—it was for that purpose they had come. That was the way to the Stryd,—over which he was determined that Lady Anna should be made to jump.

But the river below the Abbey is to be traversed by stepping-stones, which, to the female uninitiated foot, appear to be full of danger. The Wharfe here is no insignificant brook, to be overcome by a long stride and a jump. There is a causeway, of perhaps forty stones, across it, each some eighteen inches distant from the other, which, flat and excellent though they be, are perilous from their number. Mrs. Lovel, who knew the place of old, had begun by declaring that no consideration should induce her to cross the water. Aunt Julia had proposed that they should go along the other bank, on the Abbey side of the river, and thence cross by the bridge half a mile up. But the Earl was resolved that he would take his cousin over the stepping-stones; and Minnie and the curate were equally determined. Minnie, indeed, had crossed the river, and was back again, while the matter was

still being discussed. Aunt Julia, who was strong-limbed, as well as strong-minded, at last assented, the curate having promised all necessary aid. Mrs. Lovel seated herself at a distance to see the exploit; and then Lord Lovel started, with Lady Anna, turning at every stone to give a hand to his cousin.

"Oh, they are very dreadful!" said Lady Anna, when about a dozen had been passed.

The black water was flowing fast, fast beneath her feet; the stones became smaller and smaller to her imagination, and the apertures between them broader and broader.

"Don't look at the water, dear," said the lord, "but come on quick."

"I can't come on quick. I shall never get over. Oh, Frederic!" That morning she had promised that she would call him Frederic. Even Daniel could not think it wrong that she should call her cousin by his Christian name. "It's no good, I can't do that one,—it's crooked. Mayn't I go back again?"

"You can't go back, dear. It is only up to your knees, if you do go in. But take my hand. There,—all the others are straight,—you must come on, or Aunt Julia will catch us. After two or three times, you'll hop over like a milkmaid. There are only half-a-dozen more. Here we are. Isn't that pretty?"

"I thought I never should have got over. I wouldn't go back for anything. But it is lovely; and I am so

much obliged to you for bringing me here. We can go back another way?"

"Oh, yes;—but now we'll get up the bank. Give me your hand." Then he took her along the narrow, twisting, steep paths, to the top of the wooded bank, and they were soon beyond the reach of Aunt Julia, Minnie, and the curate.

It was very pleasant, very lovely, and very joyous; but there was still present to her mind some great fear. The man was there with her as an acknowledged lover,—a lover, acknowledged to be so by all but herself; but she could not lawfully have any lover but him who was now slaving at his trade in London. She must tell this gallant lord that he must not be her lover; and, as they went along, she was always meditating how she might best tell him, when the moment for telling him should come. But on that morning, during the entire walk, he said no word to her which seemed quite to justify the telling. He called her by sweet, petting names,—Anna, my girl, pretty coz, and such like. He would hold her hand twice longer than he would have held that of either aunt in helping her over this or that little difficulty,—and would help her when no help was needed. He talked to her, of small things, as though he and she must needs have kindred interests. He spoke to her of his uncle as though, near as his uncle was, the connection were not nigh so close as that between him and her. She under-



stood it with a half understanding,—feeling that in all this he was in truth making love to her, and yet telling herself that he said no more than cousinship might warrant. But the autumn colours were bright, and the river rippled, and the light breeze came down from the mountains, and the last of the wild flowers were still sweet in the woods. After a while she was able to forget her difficulties, to cease to think of Daniel, and to find in her cousin, not a lover, but simply the pleasantest friend that fortune had ever sent her.

And so they came, all alone,—for Aunt Julia, though both limbs and mind were strong, had not been able to keep up with them,—all alone to the Stryd. The Stryd is a narrow gully or passage, which the waters have cut for themselves in the rocks, perhaps five or six feet broad, where the river passes, but narrowed at the top by an overhanging mass which in old days withstood the wearing of the stream, till the softer stone below was cut away, and then was left bridging over a part of the chasm below. There goes a story that a mountain chieftain's son, hunting the stag across the valley when the floods were out, in leaping the stream, from rock to rock, failed to make good his footing, was carried down by the rushing waters, and dashed to pieces among the rocks. Lord Lovel told her the tale, as they sat looking at the now innocent brook, and then bade her follow him as he leaped from edge to edge.

"I couldn't do it;—indeed, I couldn't," said the shivering girl.

"It is barely a step," said the Earl, jumping over, and back again. "Going from this side, you couldn't miss to do it, if you tried."

"I'm sure I should tumble in. It makes me sick to look at you while you are leaping."

"You'd jump - over twice the distance on dry ground."

"Then let me jump on dry ground."

"I've set my heart upon it. Do you think I'd ask you if I wasn't sure?"

"You want to make another legend of me."

"I want to leave Aunt Julia behind, which we shall certainly do."

"Oh, but I can't afford to drown myself just that you may run away from Aunt Julia. You can run by yourself, and I will wait for Aunt Julia."

"That is not exactly my plan. Be a brave girl, now, and stand up, and do as I bid you."

Then she stood up on the edge of the rock, holding tight by his arm. How pleasant it was to be thus frightened, with such a protector near her to insure her safety. And yet the chasm yawned, and the water ran rapid and was very black. But if he asked her to make the spring, of course she must make it. What would she not have done at his bidding?

"I can almost touch you, you see," he said, as he

stood opposite, with his arm out ready to catch her hand.

"Oh, Frederic, I don't think I can."

"You can very well, if you will only jump."

"It is ever so many yards."

"It is three feet. I'll back Aunt Julia to do it for a promise of ten shillings to the infirmary."

"I'll give the ten shillings, if you'll only let me off."

"I won't let you off,—so you might as well come at once."

Then she stood and shuddered for a moment, looking with beseeching eyes up into his face. Of course she meant to jump. Of course she would have been disappointed had Aunt Julia come and interrupted her jumping. Yes,—she would jump into his arms. She knew that he would catch her. At that moment her memory of Daniel Thwaite had become faint as the last shaded glimmer of twilight. She shut her eyes for half a moment, then opened them, looked into his face, and made her spring. As she did so, she struck her foot against a rising ledge of the rock, and, though she covered more than the distance in her leap, she stumbled as she came to the ground, and fell into his arms. She had sprained her ankle, in her effort to recover herself.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, holding her close to his side.

"No;—I think not;—only a little, that is. I was so awkward."

"I shall never forgive myself if you are hurt."

"There is nothing to forgive. I'll sit down for a moment. It was my own fault because I was so stupid,—and it does not in the least signify. I know what it is now; I've sprained my ankle."

"There is nothing so painful as that."

"It hurts a little, but it will go off. It wasn't the jump, but I twisted my foot somehow. If you look so unhappy, I'll get up and jump back again."

"I am unhappy, dearest."

"Oh, but you mustn't." The prohibition might be taken as applying to the epithet of endearment, and thereby her conscience be satisfied. Then he bent over her, looking anxiously into her face as she winced with the pain, and he took her hand and kissed it. "Oh, no," she said, gently struggling to withdraw the hand which he held. "Here is Aunt Julia. You had better just move." Not that she would have cared a straw for the eyes of Aunt Julia, had it not been that the image of Daniel Thwaite again rose strong before her mind. Then Aunt Julia, and the curate, and Minnie were standing on the rock within a few paces of them, but on the other side of the stream.

"Is there anything the matter?" asked Miss Lovel.

"She has sprained her ankle in jumping over the Stryd, and she cannot walk. Perhaps Mr. Cross would

not mind going back to the inn and getting a carriage. The road is only a quarter of a mile above us, and we could carry her up."

"How could you be so foolish, Frederic, as to let her jump it?" said the aunt.

"Don't mind about my folly now. The thing is to get a carriage for 'Anna." The curate immediately hurried back, jumping over the Stryd as the nearest way to the inn; and Minnie also sprung across the stream so that she might sit down beside her cousin and offer consolation. Aunt Julia was left alone and after a while was forced to walk back by herself to the bridge.

"Is she much hurt?" asked Minnie.

"I am afraid she is hurt," said the lord.

"Dear, dear Minnie, it does not signify a bit," said Anna, lavishing on her younger cousin the caresses which fate forbade her to give to the elder. "I know I could walk home in a few minutes. I am better now. It is one of those things which go away almost immediately. I'll try and stand, Frederic, if you'll let me." Then she raised herself, leaning upon him, and declared that she was nearly well,—and then was reseated, still leaning on him.

"Shall we attempt to get her up to the road, Minnie, or wait till Mr. Cross comes to help us?" Lady Anna declared that she did not want any help,—certainly not Mr. Cross's help, and that she could

do very well, just with Minnie's arm. They waited there sitting on the rocks for half an hour, saying but little to each other, throwing into the stream the dry bits of stick which the last flood had left upon the stones, and each thinking how pleasant it was to sit there and dream, listening to the running waters. Then Lady Anna hobbled up to the carriage road, helped by a stronger arm than that of her cousin Minnie.

Of course there was some concern and dismay at the inn. Embrocations were used, and doctors were talked of, and heads were shaken, and a couch in the sitting-room was prepared, so that the poor injured one might eat her dinner without being driven to the solitude of her own bedroom.

## CHAPTER XVI.

For ever.

ON the next morning the poor injured one was quite well,—but she was still held to be subject to piteous concern. The two aunts shook their heads when she said that she would walk down to the stepping-stones that morning, before starting for Yoxham; but she was quite sure that the sprain was gone, and the distance was not above half a mile. They were not to start till two o'clock. Would Minnie

come down with her, and ramble about among the ruins!

"Minnie come out on the lawn," said the lord. "Don't you come with me and Anna;—you can go where you like about the place by yourself."

"Why mayn't I come?"

"Never mind, but do as you're bid."

"I know. You are going to make love to cousin Anna."

"You are an impertinent little imp."

"I am so glad, Frederic, because I do like her. I was sure she was a real cousin. Don't you think she is very,—very nice?"

"Pretty well."

"Is that all?"

"You go away and don't tease,—or else I'll never bring you to the Stryd again." So it happened that Lord Lovel and Lady Anna went across the meadow together, down to the river, and sauntered along the margin till they came to the stepping-stones. He passed over, and she followed him, almost without a word. Her heart was so full, that she did not think now of the water running at her feet. It had hardly seemed to her to make any difficulty as to the passage. She must follow him whither he would lead her, but her mind misgave her,—that they would not return sweet loving friends as they went out. "We won't climb," said he, "because it might try your ankle too

much. But we will go in here by the meadow. I always think this is one of the prettiest views there is," he said, throwing himself upon the grass.

"It is all prettiest. It is like fairy land. Does the Duke let people come here always?"

"Yes, I fancy so."

"He must be very good-natured. Do you know the Duke?"

"I never saw him in my life."

"A duke sounds so awful to me."

"You'll get used to them some day. Won't you sit down?" Then she glided down to the ground at a little distance from him, and he at once shifted his place so as to be almost close to her. "Your foot is quite well?"

"Quite well."

"I thought for a few minutes that there was going to be some dreadful accident, and I was so mad with myself for having made you jump it. If you had broken your leg, how would you have borne it?"

"Like other people, I suppose."

"Would you have been angry with me?"

"I hope not. I am sure not. You were doing the best you could to give me pleasure. I don't think I should have been angry at all. I don't think we are ever angry with the people we really like."

"Do you really like me?"

"Yes;—I like you."



"Is that all?"

"Is not that enough?"

She answered the question as she might have answered it had it been allowed to her, as to any girl that was free, to toy with his love, knowing that she meant to accept it. It was easier so, than in any other way. But her heart within her was sad, and could she have stopped his further speech by any word rough and somewhat rude, she would have done so. In truth, she did not know how to answer him roughly. He deserved from her that all her words should be soft, and sweet and pleasant. She believed him to be good and generous and kind and loving. The hard things which Daniel Thwaite had said of him had all vanished from her mind. To her thinking, it was no sin in him that he should want her wealth,—he, the Earl, to whom by right the wealth of the Lovels should belong. The sin was rather hers,—in that she kept it from him. And then, if she could receive all that he was willing to give, his heart, his name, his house and home, and sweet belongings of natural gifts and personal advantages, how much more would she take than what she gave! She could not speak to him roughly, though,—alas!—the time had come in which she must speak to him truly. It was not fitting that a girl should have two lovers.

"No, dear,—not enough," he said.

It can hardly be accounted a fault in him that at

this time he felt sure of her love. She had been so soft in her ways with him, so gracious, yielding, and pretty in her manners, so manifestly pleased by his company, so prone to lean upon him, that it could hardly be that he should think otherwise. She had told him, when he spoke to her more plainly up in London than he had yet done since they had been together in the country, that she could never, never be his wife. But what else could a girl say at a first meeting with a proposed lover? Would he have wished that she should at once have given herself up without one maidenly scruple, one word of feminine recusancy? If love's course be made to run too smooth it loses all its poetry, and half its sweetness. But now they knew each other;—at least, he thought they did. The scruple might now be put away. The feminine recusancy had done its work. For himself,—he felt that he loved her in very truth. She was not harsh or loud,—vulgar, or given to coarse manners, as might have been expected, and as he had been warned by his friends that he would find her. That she was very beautiful, all her enemies had acknowledged,—and he was quite assured that her enemies had been right. She was the Lady Anna Lovel, and he felt that he could make her his own without one shade of regret to mar his triumph. Of the tailor's son,—though he had been warned of him too,—he made no account whatever. That had been a slander,

which only endeared the girl to him the more;—a slander against Lady Anna Lovel which had been an insult to his family. Among all the ladies he knew, daughters of peers and high-bred commoners, there were none,—there was not one less likely so to disgrace herself than Lady Anna Lovel, his sweet cousin.

“Do not think me too hurried, dear, if I speak to you again so soon, of that of which I spoke once before.” He had turned himself round upon his arm, so as to be very close to her,—so that he would look full into her face, and, if chance favoured him, could take her hand. He paused, as though for an answer; but she did not speak to him a word. “It is not long yet since we first met.”

“Oh, no;—not long.”

“And I know not what your feelings are. But, in very truth, I can say that I love you dearly. Had nothing else come in the way to bring us together, I am sure that I should have loved you.” She, poor child, believed him as though he were speaking to her the sweetest gospel. And he, too, believed himself. He was easy of heart perhaps, but not deceitful; anxious enough for his position in the world, but not meanly covetous. Had she been distasteful to him as a woman, he would have refused to make himself rich by the means that had been suggested to him. As it was, he desired her as much as her money, and had she given herself to him then would

never have remembered,—would never have known that the match had been sordid. “Do you believe me?” he asked.

“Oh, yes.”

“And shall it be so?”

Her face had been turned away, but now she slowly moved her neck so that she could look at him. Should she be false to all her vows, and try whether happiness might not be gained in that way? The manner of doing it passed through her mind in that moment. She would write to Daniel, and remind him of his promise to set her free if she so willed it. She would never see him again. She would tell him that she had striven to see things as he would have taught her, and had failed. She would abuse herself, and ask for his pardon;—but having thus judged for herself, she would never go back from such judgment. It might be done,—if only she could persuade herself that it were good to do it! But, as she thought of it, there came upon her a prick of conscience so sharp, that she could not welcome the devil by leaving it unheeded. How could she be foresworn to one who had been so absolutely good,—whose all had been spent for her and for her mother,—whose whole life had been one long struggle of friendship on her behalf,—who had been the only playfellow of her youth, the only man she had ever ventured to kiss,—the man whom she truly loved? He had warned her

against these gauds which were captivating her spirit, and now, in the moment of her peril, she would remember his warnings.

"Shall it be so?" Lord Lovel asked again, just stretching out his hand, so that he could touch the fold of her garment.

"It cannot be so," she said.

"Cannot be!"

"It cannot be so, Lord Lovel."

"It cannot now;—or do you mean the word to be for ever!"

"For ever!" she replied.

"I know that I have been hurried and sudden," he said,—purposely passing by her last assurance; "and I do feel that you have a right to resent the seeming assurance of such haste. But in our case, dearest, the interests of so many are concerned, the doubts and fears, the well-being, and even the future conduct of all our friends are so bound up by the result, that I had hoped you would have pardoned that which would otherwise have been unpardonable." Oh heavens;—had it not been for Daniel Thwaite, how full of grace, how becoming, how laden with flattering courtesy would have been every word that he had uttered to her! "But," he continued, "if it really be that you cannot love me——"

"Oh, Lord Lovel, pray ask of me no further question."

"I am bound to ask and to know,—for all our sakes."

Then she rose quickly to her feet, and with altered gait and changed countenance stood over him. "I am engaged," she said, "to be married—to Mr. Daniel Thwaite." She had told it all, and felt that she had told her own disgrace. He rose also, but stood mute before her. This was the very thing of which they had all warned him, but as to which he had been so sure that it was not so! She saw it all in his eyes, reading much more there than he could read in hers. She was degraded in his estimation, and felt that evil worse almost than the loss of his love. For the last three weeks she had been a real Lovel among the Lovels. That was all over now. Let this lawsuit go as it might, let them give to her all the money, and make the title which she hated ever so sure, she never again could be the equal friend of her gentle relative, Earl Lovel. Minnie would never again spring into her arms, swearing that she would do as she pleased with her own cousin. She might be Lady Anna, but never Anna again to the two ladies at the rectory. The perfume of his rank had been just scented, to be dashed away from her for ever. "It is a secret at present," she said, "or I should have told you sooner. If it is right that you should repeat it, of course you must."

"Oh, Anna!"

"It is true."

"Oh, Anna, for your sake as well as mine this makes me wretched indeed!"

"As for the money, Lord Lovel, if it be mine to give, you shall have it."

"You think then it is that which I have wanted?"

"It is that which the family wants, and I can understand that it should be wanted. As for myself,—for mamma and me,—you can hardly understand how it has been with us when we were young. You despise Mr. Thwaite,—because he is a tailor."

"I am sure he is not fit to be the husband of Lady Anna Lovel."

"When Lady Anna Lovel had no other friend in the world, he sheltered her and gave her a house to live in, and spent his earnings in her defence, and would not yield when all those who might have been her friends strove to wrong her. Where would mamma have been,—and I,—had there been no Mr. Thwaite to comfort us? He was our only friend,—he and his father. They were all we had. In my childhood I had never a kind word from another child,—but only from him. Would it have been right that he should have asked for anything, and that I should have refused it?"

"He should not have asked for this," said Lord Lovel hoarsely.

"Why not he, as well as you? He is as much a

man. If I could believe in your love after two days, Lord Lovel, could I not trust his after twenty years of friendship?"

"You knew that he was beneath you."

"He was not beneath me. He was above me. We were poor,—while he and his father had money, which we took. He could give, while we received. He was strong while we were weak,—and was strong to comfort us. And then, Lord Lovel, what knew I of rank, living under his father's wing? They told me I was the Lady Anna, and the children scouted me. My mother was a countess. So she swore, and I at least believed her. But if ever rank and title were a profitless burden, they were to her. Do you think that I had learned then to love my rank?"

"You have learned better now."

"I have learned,—but whether better I may doubt. There are lessons which are quickly learned;—and there are they who say that such are the devil's lessons. I have not been strong enough not to learn. But I must forget again, Lord Lovel. And you must forget also." He hardly knew how to speak to her now;—whether it would be fit for him even to wish to persuade her to be his, after she had told him that she had given her troth to a tailor. His uneasy thoughts prompted him with ideas which dismayed him. Could he take to his heart one who had been pressed close in so vile a grasp? Could he accept a



heart that had once been promised to a tailor's workman! Would not all the world know and say that he had done it solely for the money,—even should he succeed in doing it! And yet to fail in this enterprise,—to abandon all,—to give up so enticing a road to wealth! Then he remembered what he had said,—how he had pledged himself to abandon the lawsuit,—how convinced he had been that this girl was heiress to the Lovel wealth, who now told him that she had engaged herself to marry a tailor.

There was nothing more that either of them could say to the other at the moment, and they went back in silence to the inn.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### *The Journey Home.*

IN absolute silence Lord Lovel and Lady Anna walked back to the inn. He had been dumbfounded,—nearly so by her first abrupt statement, and then altogether by the arguments with which she had defended herself. She had nothing further to say. She had, indeed, said all, and had marvelled at her own eloquence while she was speaking. Nor was there absent from her a certain pride in that she had done the thing that was right, and had dared to defend herself. She was full of regrets,—almost of remorse;

but, nevertheless, she was proud. He knew it all now, and one of her great difficulties had been overcome.

And she was fully resolved that as she had dared to tell him, and to face his anger, his reproaches, his scorn, she would not falter before the scorn and the reproaches, or the anger, of the other Lovels,—of any of the Lovels of Yoxham. Her mother's reproaches would be dreadful to her; her mother's anger would well-nigh kill her; her mother's scorn would scorch her very soul. But sufficient for the day was the evil thereof. At the present moment she could be strong with the strength she had assumed. So she walked in at the sitting-room window with a bold front, and the Earl followed her. The two aunts were there, and it was plain to them both that something was astray between the lovers. They had said among themselves that Lady Anna would accept the offer the moment that it was in form made to her. To their eyes the manner of their guest had been the manner of a girl eager to be wooed; but they had both imagined that their delicately nurtured and fastidious nephew might too probably be offended by some solecism in conduct, some falling away from feminine grace, such as might too readily be shown by one whose early life had been subjected to rough associates. Even now it occurred to each of them that it had been so. The Earl seated himself in a chair, and took up a book,

which they had brought with them. Lady Anna stood at the open window, looking across at the broad field and the river bank beyond; but neither of them spoke a word. There had certainly been some quarrel. Then aunt Julia, in the cause of wisdom, asked a question;—

“Where is Minnie? Did not Minnie go with you?”

“No,” said the Earl. “She went in some other direction at my bidding. Mr. Cross is with her, I suppose.” It was evident from the tone of his voice that the displeasure of the head of all the Lovels was very great.

“We start soon, I suppose?” said Lady Anna.

“After lunch, my dear; it is hardly one yet.”

“I will go up all the same, and see about my things.”

“Shall I help you, my dear?” asked Mrs. Lovel.

“Oh, no! I would sooner do it alone.” Then she hurried into her room and burst into a flood of tears, as soon as the door was closed behind her.

“Frederic, what ails her?” asked aunt Julia.

“If anything ails her she must tell you herself,” said the lord.

“Something is amiss. You cannot wonder that we should be anxious, knowing that we know how great is the importance of all this.”

“I cannot help your anxiety just at present, aunt

Julia; but you should always remember that there will be slips between the cup and the lip."

"Then there has been a slip? I knew it would be so. I always said so, and so did my brother."

"I wish you would all remember that about such an affair as this, the less said the better." So saying, the lord walked out through the window and sauntered down to the river side.

"It's all over," said aunt Julia.

"I don't see why we should suppose that at present," said aunt Jane.

"It's all over. I knew it as soon as I saw her face when she came in. She has said something, or done something, and it's all off. It will be a matter of over twenty thousand pounds a year!"

"He'll be sure to marry somebody with money," said aunt Jane. "What with his title and his being so handsome, he is certain to do well, you know."

"Nothing like that will come in his way. I heard Mr. Flick say that it was equal to half a million of money. And then it would have been at once. If he goes up to London, and about, just as he is, he'll be head over ears in debt before anybody knows what he is doing. I wonder what it is. He likes pretty girls, and there's no denying that she's handsome."

"Perhaps she wouldn't have him."

"That's impossible, Jane. She came down here on purpose to have him. She went out with him this

morning to be made love to. They were together three times longer yesterday, and he came home as sweet as sugar to her. I wonder whether she can have wanted to make some condition about the money."

"What condition?"

"That she and her mother should have it in their own keeping."

"She doesn't seem to be that sort of a young woman," said aunt Jane.

"There's no knowing what that Mr. Goffe, Serjeant Bluestone, and her mother may have put her up to. Frederic wouldn't stand that kind of thing for a minute, and he would be quite right. Better anything than that a man shouldn't be his own master. I think you'd better go up to her, Jane. She'll be more comfortable with you than with me." Then aunt Jane, obedient as usual, went up to her young cousin's bedroom.

In the meantime the young lord was standing on the river's brink, thinking what he would do. He had, in truth, very much of which to think, and points of most vital importance as to which he must resolve what should be his action. Must this announcement which he had heard from his cousin dissolve for ever the prospect of his marriage with her; or was it open to him still, as a nobleman, a gentleman, and a man of honour, to make use of all those influences which he

might command with the view of getting rid of that impediment of a previous engagement? Being very ignorant of the world at large, and altogether ignorant of this man in particular, he did not doubt that the tailor might be bought off. Then he was sure that all who would have access to Lady Anna would help him in such a cause, and that her own mother would be the most forward to do so. The girl would hardly hold to such a purpose if all the world,—all her own world, were against her. She certainly would be beaten from it if a bribe sufficient were offered to the tailor. That this must be done for the sake of the Lovel family, so that Lady Anna Lovel might not be known to have married a tailor, was beyond a doubt; but it was not so clear to him that he could take to himself as his Countess her who with her own lips had told him that she intended to be the bride of a working artisan. As he thought of this, as his imagination went to work on all the abominable circumstances of such a betrothal, he threw from his hand into the stream with all the vehemence of passion a little twig which he held. It was too, too frightful, too disgusting; and then so absolutely unexpected, so unlike her personal demeanour, so contrary to the look of her eyes, to the tone of her voice, to every motion of her body! She had been sweet, and gentle, and gracious, till he had almost come to think that her natural feminine gifts of ladyship were more even than

her wealth, of better savour than her rank, were equal even to her beauty, which he had sworn to himself during the past night to be unsurpassed. And this sweet one had told him,—this one so soft and gracious,—not that she was doomed by some hard fate to undergo the degrading thralldom, but that she herself had willingly given herself to a working tailor from love, and gratitude, and free selection! It was a marvel to him that a thing so delicate should have so little sense of her own delicacy! He did not think that he could condescend to take the tailor's place.

But if not,—if he would not take it, or if, as might still be possible, the tailor's place could not be made vacant for him,—what then? He had pledged his belief in the justice of his cousin's claim; and had told her that, believing his own claim to be unjust, in no case would he prosecute it. Was he now bound by that assurance,—bound to it even to the making of the tailor's fortune; or might he absent himself from any further action in the matter, leaving it entirely in the hands of the lawyers? Might it not be best for her happiness that he should do so? He had been told that even though he should not succeed, there might arise almost interminable delay. The tailor would want his money before he married, and thus she might be rescued from her degradation till she should be old enough to understand it. And yet how

could he claim that of which he had said, now a score of times, that he knew that it was not his own? Could he cease to call this girl by the name which all his people had acknowledged as her own, because she had refused to be his wife; and declare his conviction that she was base-born only because she had preferred to his own the addresses of a low-born man, reeking with the sweat of a tailor's board? No, he could not do that. Let her marry but the sweeper of a crossing, and he must still call her Lady Anna,—if he called her anything.

Something must be done, however. He had been told by the lawyers how the matter might be made to right itself, if he and the young lady could at once agree to be man and wife; but he had not been told what would follow, should she decline to accept his offer. Mr. Flick and the Solicitor-General must know how to shape their course before November came round,—and would no doubt want all the time to shape it that he could give them. What was he to say to Mr. Flick and to the Solicitor-General? Was he at liberty to tell to them the secret which the girl had told to him? That he was at liberty to say that she had rejected his offer must be a matter of course; but might he go beyond that, and tell them the whole story? It would be most expedient for many reasons that they should know it. On her behalf even it might be most salutary,—with that view of liberating



her from the grasp of her humiliating lover. But she had told it him, against her own interests, at her own peril, to her own infinite sorrow,—in order that she might thus allay hopes in which he would otherwise have persevered. He knew enough of the little schemes and by-ways of love, of the generosity and self-sacrifice of lovers, to feel that he was bound to confidence. She had told him that if needs were he might repeat her tale;—but she had told him at the same time that her tale was a secret. He could not go with her secret to a lawyer's chambers, and there divulge in the course of business that which had been extracted from her by the necessity to which she had submitted of setting him free. He could write to Mr. Flick,—if that at last was his resolve,—that a marriage was altogether out of the question, but he could not tell him why it was so.

He wandered slowly on along the river, having decided only on this,—only on this as a certainty,—that he must tell her secret neither to the lawyers, nor to his own people. Then, as he walked, a little hand touched his behind, and when he turned Minnie Lovel took him by the arm. "Why are you all alone, Fred?"

"I am meditating how wicked the world is,—and girls in particular."

"Where is cousin Anna?"

"Up at the house, I suppose."

"Is she wicked?"

"Don't you know that everybody is wicked, because Eve ate the apple?"

"Adam ate it too."

"Who bade him?"

"The devil," said the child whispering.

"But he spoke by a woman's mouth. Why don't you go in and get ready to go?"

"So I will. Tell me one thing, Fred. May I be a bridesmaid when you are married?"

"I don't think you can."

"I have set my heart upon it. Why not?"

"Because you'll be married first."

"That's nonsense, Fred; and you know it's nonsense. Isn't cousin Anna to be your wife?"

"Look here, my darling. I'm awfully fond of you, and think you the prettiest little girl in the world. But if you ask impertinent questions I'll never speak to you again. Do you understand?" She looked up into his face, and did understand that he was in earnest, and, leaving him, walked slowly across the meadow back to the house alone. "Tell them not to wait lunch for me," he hollowed after her;—and she told her aunt Julia that cousin Frederic was very sulky down by the river, and that they were not to wait for him.

When Mrs. Lovel went up-stairs into Lady Anna's room not a word was said about the occurrence of

the morning. The elder lady was afraid to ask a question, and the younger was fully determined to tell nothing even had a question been asked her. Lord Lovel might say what he pleased. Her secret was with him, and he could tell it if he chose. She had given him permission to do so, of which no doubt he would avail himself. But, on her own account, she would say nothing; and when questioned she would merely admit the fact. She would neither defend her engagement, nor would she submit to have it censured. If they pleased she would return to her mother in London at any shortest possible notice.

The party lunched almost in silence, and when the horses were ready Lord Lovel came in to help them into the carriage. When he had placed the three ladies he desired Minnie to take the fourth seat, saying that he would sit with Mr. Cross on the box. Minnie looked at his face, but there was still the frown there, and she obeyed him without any remonstrance. During the whole of the long journey home there was hardly a word spoken. Lady Anna knew that she was in disgrace, and was ignorant how much of her story had been told to the two elder ladies. She sat almost motionless looking out upon the fields, and accepting her position as one that was no longer thought worthy of notice. Of course she must go back to London. She could not continue to live at Yoxham, neither spoken to nor speaking. Minnie

went to sleep, and Minnie's mother and aunt now and then addressed a few words to each other. Anna felt sure that to the latest day of her existence she would remember that journey. On their arrival at the Rectory door Mr. Cross helped the ladies out of the carriage, while the lord affected to make himself busy with the shawls and luggage. Then he vanished, and was seen no more till he appeared at dinner.

"What sort of a trip have you had?" asked the rector, addressing himself to the three ladies indifferently.

For a moment nobody answered him, and then aunt Julia spoke. "It was very pretty, as it always is at Bolton in summer. We were told that the duke has not been there this year at all. The inn was comfortable, and I think that the young people enjoyed themselves yesterday very much." The subject was too important, too solemn, too great, to allow of even a word to be said about it without proper consideration.

"Did Frederic like it?"

"I think he did yesterday," said Mrs. Lovel. "I think we were all a little tired coming home to-day."

"Anna sprained her ankle, jumping over the Stryd," said Minnie.

"Not seriously, I hope."

"Oh dear no;—nothing at all to signify." It was

the only word which Anna spoke till it was suggested that she should go up to her room. The girl obeyed, as a child might have done, and went upstairs, followed by Mrs. Lovel. "My dear," she said, "we cannot go on like this. What is the matter?"

"You must ask Lord Lovel."

"Have you quarrelled with him?"

"I have not quarrelled, Mrs. Lovel. If he has quarrelled with me, I cannot help it."

"You know what we have all wished."

"It can never be so."

"Have you said so to Frederic?"

"I have."

"Have you given him any reason, Anna?"

"I have," she said after a pause.

"What reason, dear?"

She thought for a moment before she replied. "I was obliged to tell him the reason, Mrs. Lovel; but I don't think that I need tell anybody else. Of course I must tell mamma."

"Does your mamma know it?"

"Not yet."

"And is it a reason that must last for ever?"

"Yes;—for ever. But I do not know why everybody is to be angry with me. Other girls may do as they please. If you are angry with me I had better go back to London at once."

"I do not know that anybody has been angry with

you. We may be disappointed without being angry." That was all that was said, and then Lady Anna was left to dress for dinner. At dinner Lord Lovel had so far composed himself as to be able to speak to his cousin, and an effort at courtesy was made by them all,—except by the rector. But the evening passed away in a manner very different from any that had gone before it.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Too Heavy for Secrets.

DURING that night the young lord was still thinking of his future conduct,—of what duty and honour demanded of him, and of the manner in which he might best make duty and honour consort with his interests. In all the emergencies of his short life he had hitherto had some one to advise him,—some elder friend whose counsel he might take even though he would seem to make little use of it when it was offered to him. He had always somewhat disdained aunt Julia, but nevertheless aunt Julia had been very useful to him. In latter days, since the late Earl's death, when there came upon him, as the first of his troubles, the necessity of setting aside that madman's will, Mr. Flick had been his chief counsellor; and yet in all his communications with Mr. Flick he

had assumed to be his own guide and master. Now it seemed that he must in truth guide himself, but he knew not how to do it. Of one thing he felt certain. He must get away from Yoxham and hurry up to London.

It behoved him to keep his cousin's secret; but would he not be keeping it with a sanctity sufficiently strict if he imparted it to one sworn friend,—a friend who should be bound not to divulge it further without his consent? If so, the Solicitor-General should be his friend. An intimacy had grown up between the great lawyer and his noble client, not social in its nature, but still sufficiently close, as Lord Lovel thought, to admit of such confidence. He had begun to be aware that without assistance of this nature he would not know how to guide himself. Undoubtedly the wealth of the presumed heiress had become dearer to him,—had become at least more important to him,—since he had learned that it must probably be lost. Sir William Patterson was a gentleman as well as a lawyer;—one who had not simply risen to legal rank by diligence and intellect, but a gentleman born and bred, who had been at a public school, and had lived all his days with people of the right sort. Sir William was his legal adviser, and he would commit Lady Anna's secret to the keeping of Sir William.

There was a coach which started in those days from York at noon, reaching London early on the fol-

lowing day. He would go up by this coach, and would thus avoid the necessity of much further association with his family before he had decided what should be his conduct. But he must see his cousin before he went. He therefore sent a note to her before she had left her room on the following morning:—

“DEAR ANNA,

“I purpose starting for London in an hour or so, and wish to say one word to you before I go. Will you meet me at nine in the drawing-room? Do not mention my going to my uncle or aunts, as it will be better that I should tell them myself.

“Yours, L.”

At ten minutes before nine Lady Anna was in the drawing-room waiting for him, and at ten minutes past nine he joined her.

“I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting.” She gave him her hand, and said that it did not signify in the least. She was always early. “I find that I must go up to London at once,” he said. To this she made no answer, though he seemed to expect some reply. “In the first place, I could not remain here in comfort after what you told me yesterday.”

“I shall be sorry to drive you away. It is your



home; and as I must go soon, had I not better go at once?"

"No;—that is, I think not. I shall go at any rate. I have told none of them what you told me yesterday."

"I am glad of that, Lord Lovel."

"It is for you to tell it,—if it must be told."

"I did tell your aunt Jane,—that you and I never can be as—you said you wished."

"I did wish it most heartily. You did not tell it—all."

"No;—not all."

"You astounded me so, that I could hardly speak to you as I should have spoken. I did not mean to be uncourteous."

"I did not think you uncourteous, Lord Lovel. I am sure you would not be uncourteous to me."

"But you astounded me. It is not that I think much of myself, or of my rank as belonging to me. I know that I have but little to be proud of. I am very poor,—and not clever like some young men who have not large fortunes, but who can become statesmen and all that. But I do think much of my order; I think much of being a gentleman,—and much of ladies being ladies. Do you understand me?"

"Oh, yes;—I understand you."

"If you are Lady Anna Lovel——"

"I am Lady Anna Lovel."

"I believe you are with all my heart. You speak like it, and look like it. You are fit for any position. Everything is in your favour. I do believe it. But if so——"

"Well, Lord Lovel;—if so!"

"Surely you would not choose to—to—to degrade your rank. That is the truth. If I be your cousin, and the head of your family, I have a right to speak as such. What you told me would be degradation."

She thought a moment, and then she replied to him,—*"It would be no disgrace."*

He too found himself compelled to think before he could speak again. *"Do you think that you could like your associates if you were to be married to Mr. Thwaite?"*

*"I do not know who they would be. He would be my companion, and I like him. I love him dearly. There! you need not tell me, Lord Lovel. I know it all. He is not like you;—and I, when I had become his wife, should not be like your aunt Jane. I should never see people of that sort any more, I suppose. We should not live here in England at all,—so that I should escape the scorn of all my cousins. I know what I am doing, and why I am doing it;—and I do not think you ought to tempt me."*

She knew at least that she was open to temptation. He could perceive that, and was thankful for it. *"I do not wish to tempt you, but I would save you from*

unhappiness if I could. Such a marriage would be unnatural. I have not seen Mr. Thwaite."

"Then, my lord, you have not seen a most excellent man, who, next to my mother, is my best friend."

"But he cannot be a gentleman."

"I do not know;—but I do know that I can be his wife. Is that all, Lord Lovell?"

"Not quite all. I fear that this weary lawsuit will come back upon us in some shape. I cannot say whether I have the power to stop it if I would. I must in part be guided by others."

"I cannot do anything. If I could, I would not even ask for the money for myself."

"No, Lady Anna. You and I cannot decide it. I must again see my lawyer. I do not mean the attorney,—but Sir William Patterson, the Solicitor-General. May I tell him what you told me yesterday?"

"I cannot hinder you."

"But you can give me your permission. If he will promise me that it shall go no farther,—then may I tell him? I shall hardly know what to do unless he knows all that I know."

"Everybody will know soon."

"Nobody shall know from me,—but only he. Will you say that I may tell him?"

"Oh, yes."

"I am much indebted to you even for that. I

cannot tell you now how much I hoped when I got up yesterday morning at Bolton Bridge that I should have to be indebted to you for making me the happiest man, in England. You must forgive me if I say that I still hope at heart that this infatuation may be made to cease. And now, good-bye, Lady Anna."

"Good-bye, Lord Lovel."

She at once went to her room, and sent down her maid to say that she would not appear at prayers or at breakfast. She would not see him again before he went. How probable it was that her eyes had rested on his form for the last time. How beautiful he was, how full of grace, how like a god! How pleasant she had found it to be near him; how full of ineffable sweetness had been everything that he had touched, all things of which he had spoken to her! He had almost overcome her, as though she had eaten of the lotus. And she knew not whether the charm was of God or devil. But she did know that she had struggled against it,—because of her word, and because she owed a debt which falsehood and ingratitude would ill repay. Lord Lovel had called her Lady Anna now. Ah, yes; how good he was. When it became significant to her that he should recognise her rank, he did so at once. He had only dropped the title when, having been recognised, it had become a stumbling-block to her. Now he was gone from her,

and, if it was possible, she would cease even to dream of him.

"I suppose, Frederic, that the marriage is not to be?" the rector said to him as he got into the dog-cart at the rectory door.

"I cannot tell. I do not know. I think not. But, uncle, would you oblige me by not speaking of it just at present? You will know all very soon."

The rector stood on the gravel, watching the dog-cart as it disappeared, with his hands in the pockets of his clerical trowsers, and with heavy signs of displeasure on his face. It was very well to be uncle to an earl, and out of his wealth to do what he cou'd to assist, and, if possible, to dispel his noble nephew's poverty. But surely something was due to him! It was not for his pleasure that this girl,—whom he was forced to call Lady Anna, though he could never believe her to be so, whom his wife and sister called cousin Anna, though he still thought that she was not, and could not be, cousin to anybody,—it was not for anything that he could get, that he was entertaining her as an honoured guest at his rectory. And now his nephew was gone, and the girl was left behind. And he was not to be told whether there was to be a marriage or not! "I cannot tell. I do not know. I think not." And then he was curtly requested to ask no more questions. What was he to do with the girl? While the young Earl and the lawyers were still

pondering the question of her legitimacy, the girl, whether a Lady Anna and a cousin,—or a mere nobody, who was trying to rob the family,—was to be left on his hands! Why,—oh, why had he allowed himself to be talked out of his own opinion? Why had he ever permitted her to be invited to his rectory? Ah, how the title stuck in his throat as he asked her to take the customary glass of wine with him at dinner-time that evening.

On reaching London, towards the end of August, Lord Lovel found that the Solicitor-General was out of town. Sir William had gone down to Somersetshire with the intention of saying some comforting words to his constituents. Mr. Flick knew nothing of his movements; but his clerk was found, and his clerk did not expect him back in London till October. But, in answer to Lord Lovel's letter, Sir William undertook to come up for one day. Sir William was a man who quite recognised the importance of the case he had in hand.

"Engaged to the tailor,—is she?" he said; not, however, with any look of surprise.

"But, Sir William,—you will not repeat this, even to Mr. Flick, or to Mr. Hardy. I have promised Lady Anna that it shall not go beyond you."

"If she sticks to her bargain, it cannot be kept secret very long;—nor would she wish it. It's just what we might have expected, you know."

"You wouldn't say so if you knew her."

"H—m. I'm older than you, Lord Lovel. You see, she had nobody else near her. A girl must cotton to somebody, and who was there? We ought not to be angry with her."

"But it shocks me so."

"Well, yes. As far as I can learn his father and he have stood by them very closely;—and did so, too, when there seemed to be but little hope. But they might be paid for all they did at a less rate than that. If she sticks to him nobody can beat him out of it. What I mean is, that it was all fair game. He ran his chance, and did it in a manly fashion." The Earl did not quite understand Sir William, who seemed to take almost a favourable view of these monstrous betrothals. "What I mean is, that nobody can touch him, or find fault with him. He has not carried her away, and got up a marriage before she was of age. He hasn't kept her from going out among her friends. He hasn't—wronged her, I suppose?"

"I think he has wronged her frightfully."

"Ah,—well. We mean different things. I am obliged to look at it as the world will look at it."

"Think of the disgrace of such a marriage;—to a tailor."

"Whose father had advanced her mother some five or six thousand pounds to help her to win back her

position. That's about the truth of it. We must look at it all round, you know."

"You think, then, that nothing should be done?"

"I think that everything should be done that can be done. We have the mother on our side. Very probably we may have old Thwaite on our side. From what you say, it is quite possible that at this very moment the girl herself may be on our side. Let her remain at Yoxham as long as you can get her to stay, and let everything be done to flatter and amuse her. Go down again yourself, and play the lover as well, as I do not doubt you know how to do it." It was clear then that the great legal pundit did not think that an Earl should be ashamed to carry on his suit to a lady who had confessed her attachment to a journeyman tailor. "It will be a trouble to us all, of course, because we must change our plan when the case comes on in November."

"But you still think that she is the heiress?"

"So strongly, that I feel all but sure of it. We shouldn't, in truth, have had a leg to stand on, and we couldn't fight it. I may as well tell you at once, my lord, that we couldn't do it with any chance of success. And what should we have gained had we done so? Nothing! Unless we could prove that the real wife were dead, we should have been fighting for that Italian woman, whom I most thoroughly believe to be an impostor."



"Then there is nothing to be done!"

"Very little in that way. But if the young lady be determined to marry the tailor, I think we should simply give notice that we withdraw our opposition to the English ladies, and state that we had so informed the woman who asserts her own claim and calls herself a Countess in Sicily; and we should let the Italian woman know that we had done so. In such case, for aught anybody can say here, she might come forward with her own case. She would find men here who would take it up on speculation readily enough. There would be a variety of complications, and no doubt very great delay. In such an event we should question very closely the nature of the property; as, for aught I have seen as yet, a portion of it might revert to you as real estate. It is very various,—and it is not always easy to declare at once what is real and what personal. Hitherto you have appeared as contesting the right of the English widow to her rank, and not necessarily as a claimant of the estate. The Italian widow, if a widow, would be the heir, and not your lordship. For that, among other reasons, the marriage would be most expedient. If the Italian Countess were to succeed in proving that the Earl had a wife living when he married Miss Murray,—which I feel sure he had not,—then we should come forward again with our endeavours to show that that first wife had died since,—as the Earl himself undoubtedly declared more

than once. It would be a long time before the tailor got his money with his wife. The feeling of the court would be against him."

"Could we buy the tailor, Sir William?"

The Solicitor-General nursed his leg before he answered.

"Mr. Flick could answer that question better than I can do. In fact, Mr. Flick should know it all. The matter is too heavy for secrets, Lord Lovel."

## CHAPTER XIX.

*Lady Anna returns to London.*

AFTER the Earl was gone Lady Anna had but a bad time of it at Yoxham. She herself could not so far regain her composure as to live on as though no disruption had taken place. She knew that she was in disgrace, and the feeling was dreadful to her. The two ladies were civil, and tried to make the house pleasant, but they were not cordial as they had been hitherto. For one happy halcyon week,—for a day or two before the Earl had come, and for those bright days during which he had been with them,—she had found herself to be really admitted into the inner circle as one of the family. Mrs. Lovel had been altogether gracious with her. Minnie had been her darling little friend. Aunt Julia had been so far won as to be quite alive to the necessity of winning. The rector himself had never quite given way,—had never

been so sure of his footing as to feel himself safe in abandoning all power of receding; but the effect of this had been to put the rector himself, rather than his guest, into the back ground. The servants had believed in her, and even Mrs. Grimes had spoken in her praise,—expressing an opinion that she was almost good enough for the young Earl. All Yoxham had known that the two young people were to be married, and all Yoxham had been satisfied. But now everything was wrong. The Earl had fled, and all Yoxham knew that everything was wrong. It was impossible that her position should be as it had been.

There were consultations behind her back as to what should be done, of which,—though she heard no word of them,—she was aware. She went out daily in the carriage with Mrs. Lovel, but aunt Julia did not go with them. Aunt Julia on these occasions remained at home discussing the momentous affair with her brother. What should be done? There was a great dinner-party, specially convened to do honour to the Earl's return, and not among them a single guest who had not heard that there was to be a marriage. The guests came to see, not only the Earl, but the Earl's bride. When they arrived the Earl had flown. Mrs. Lovel expressed her deep sorrow that business of great importance had made it necessary that the Earl should go to London. Lady Anna was, of course, introduced to the strangers; but it was

evident to the merest tyro in such matters, that she was not introduced as would have been a bride expectant. They had heard how charming she was, how all the Lovels had accepted her, how deeply was the Earl in love; and, lo, she sat in the house silent and almost unregarded. Of course, the story of the lawsuit, with such variations as rumour might give it, was known to them all. A twelvemonth ago,—nay, at a period less remote than that,—the two female claimants in Cumberland had always been spoken of in those parts as wretched, wicked, vulgar impostors. Then came the reaction. Lady Anna was the heiress, and Lady Anna was to be the Countess. It had flown about the country during the last ten days that there was no one like the Lady Anna. Now they came to see her, and another reaction had set in. She was the Lady Anna they must suppose. All the Lovels, even the rector, so called her. Mrs. Lovel introduced her as Lady Anna Lovel, and the rector,—hating himself as he did so,—led her out to dinner though there was a baronet's wife in the room,—the wife of a baronet who dated back from James I. She was the Lady Anna, and therefore the heiress;—but it was clear to them all that there was to be no marriage.

“Then poor Lord Lovel will absolutely not have enough to starve upon,” said the baronet's wife to the baronet, as soon as the carriage door had been shut upon them.

What were they to do with her? The dinner party had taken place on a Wednesday,—the day after the Earl's departure; and on the Thursday aunt Julia wrote to her nephew thus:—

“Yoxham Rectory, 3rd September.

“MY DEAR FREDERIC,

“My brother wishes me to write to you and say that we are all here very uneasy about Lady Anna. We have only heard from her that the match which was contemplated is not to take place. Whether that be so from unwillingness on her part or yours we have never yet been told;—but both to your aunt Jane and myself she speaks of it as though the decision were irrevocable. What had we better do? Of course, it is our most anxious desire,—as it is our pleasure and our duty,—to arrange everything according to your wishes and welfare. Nothing can be of so much importance to any of us in this world as your position in it. If it is your wish that Lady Anna should remain here, of course she shall remain. But if, in truth, there is no longer any prospect of a marriage, will not her longer sojourn beneath your uncle's roof be a trouble to all of us,—and especially to her?

“Your aunt Jane thinks that it may be only a lover's quarrel. For myself, I feel sure that you would not have left us as you did, had it not been more than that. I think that you owe it to your uncle to write

to me,—or to him, if you like it better,—and to give us some clue to the state of things.

“I must not conceal from you the fact that my brother has never felt convinced, as you do, that Lady Anna’s mother was, in truth, the Countess Lovel. At your request, and in compliance with the advice of the Solicitor-General, he has been willing to receive her here; and, as she has been here, he has given her the rank which she claims. He took her out to dinner yesterday before Lady Fitzwarren,—which will never be forgiven should it turn out ultimately that the first wife was alive when the Earl married Anna’s mother. Of course, while here she must be treated as Lady Anna Lovel; but my brother does not wish to be forced so to do, if it be intended that any further doubt should be raised. In such case he desires to be free to hold his former opinion. Therefore pray write to us, and tell us what you wish to have done. I can assure you that we are at present very uncomfortable.

“Believe me to be,

“My dear Frederic,

“Your most affectionate aunt,

“JULIA LOVEL.”

The Earl received this before his interview with Sir William, but left it unanswered till after he had seen that gentleman. Then he wrote as follows:—

"Carlton Club, 5th September, 183—

"MY DEAR AUNT JULIA,

"Will you tell my uncle that I think you had better get Lady Anna to stay at the rectory as long as possible. I'll let you know all about it very soon. Best love to aunt Jane.

"I am,

"Your affectionate nephew,

"LOVEL."

This very short epistle was most unsatisfactory to the rector, but it was felt by them all that nothing could be done. With such an injunction before them, they could not give the girl a hint that they wished her to go. What uncle or what aunt, with such a nephew as Lord Lovel, so noble and so poor, could turn out an heiress with twenty thousand a year, as long as there was the slightest chance of a marriage? Not a doubt would have rankled in their minds had they been quite sure that she was the heiress. But, as it was, the Earl ought to have said more than he did say.

"I cannot keep myself from feeling sometimes that Frederic does take liberties with me," the rector said to his sister. But he submitted. It was a part of the religion of the family,—and no little part,—that they should cling to their head and chief. What would the world have been to them if they could not talk

with comfortable ease and grace of their nephew Frederic!

During this time Anna spoke more than once to Mrs. Lovel as to her going, "I have been a long time here," she said, "and I'm sure that I am in Mr. Lovel's way."

"Not in the least, my dear. If you are happy, pray stay with us."

This was before the arrival of the brief epistle,—when they were waiting to know whether they were to dismiss their guest from Yoxham, or to retain her.

"As for being happy, nobody can be happy, I think, till all this is settled. I will write to mamma, and tell her that I had better return to her. Mamma is all alone."

"I don't know that I can advise, my dear; but as far as we are concerned, we shall be very glad if you can stay."

The brief epistle had not then arrived, and they were, in truth, anxious that she should go;—but one cannot tell one's visitor to depart from one's house without a downright rupture. Not even the rector himself dared to make such rupture, without express sanction from the Earl.

Then Lady Anna, feeling that she must ask advice, wrote to her mother. The Countess had answered her last letter with great severity,—that letter in which the daughter had declared that people ought not to be



asked to marry for money. The Countess, whose whole life had made her stern and unbending, said very hard things to her child; had told her that she was ungrateful and disobedient, unmindful of her family, neglectful of her duty, and willing to sacrifice the prosperity and happiness of all belonging to her, for some girlish feeling of mere romance. The Countess was sure that her daughter would never forgive herself in after years, if she now allowed to pass by this golden opportunity of remedying all the evil that her father had done. "You are simply asked to do that which every well-bred girl in England would be delighted to do," wrote the Countess.

"Ah! she does not know," said Lady Anna.

But there had come upon her now a fear heavier and more awful than that which she entertained for her mother. Earl Lovel knew her secret, and Earl Lovel was to tell it to the Solicitor-General. She hardly doubted that it might as well be told to all the judges on the bench at once. Would it not be better that she should be married to Daniel Thwaite out of hand, and so be freed from the burden of any secret? The young lord had been thoroughly ashamed of her when she told it. Those aunts at Yoxham would hardly speak to her if they knew it. That lady before whom she had been made to walk out to dinner, would disdain to sit in the same room with her if she knew it.

It must be known,—must be known to them all. But she need not remain there, beneath their eyes, while they learned it. Her mother must know it, and it would be better that she should tell her mother. She would tell her mother,—and request that she might have permission to return at once to the lodgings in Wyndham Street. So she wrote the following letter,—in which, as the reader will perceive, she could not even yet bring herself to tell her secret:—

“Yoxham Rectory, Monday.

“MY DEAR MAMMA,

“I want you to let me come home, because I think I have been here long enough. Lord Lovel has gone away, and though you are so very angry, it is better I should tell you that we are not any longer friends. Dear, dear, dearest mamma; I am so very unhappy that you should not be pleased with me. I would die to-morrow if I could make you happy. But it is all over now, and he would not do it even if I could say that it should be so. He has gone away, and is in London, and would tell you so himself if you would ask him. He despises me, as I always knew he would,—and so he has gone away. I don't think anything of myself, because I knew it must be so; but I am so very unhappy because you will be unhappy.

“I don't think they want to have me here any longer, and of course there is no reason why they

should. They were very nice to me before all this happened, and they never say anything ill-natured to me now. But it is very different, and there cannot be any good in remaining. You are all alone, and I think you would be glad to see your poor Anna, even though you are so angry with her. Pray let me come home. I could start very well on Friday, and I think I will do so, unless I hear from you to the contrary. I can take my place by the coach, and go away at twelve o'clock from York, and be at that place in London on Saturday at eleven. I must take my place on Thursday. I have plenty of money, as I have not spent any since I have been here. Of course Sarah will come with me. She is not nearly so nice since she knew that Lord Lovel was to go away.

"Dear mamma, I do love you so much.

"Your most affectionate daughter,

"ANNA."

It was not wilfully that the poor girl gave her mother no opportunity of answering her before she had taken her place by the coach. On Thursday morning the place had to be taken, and on Thursday evening she got her mother's letter. By the same post came the Earl's letter to his aunt, desiring that Lady Anna might, if possible, be kept at Yoxham. The places were taken, and it was impossible. "I don't see why you should go," said aunt Julia, who clearly perceived

that her nephew had been instigated to pursue the marriage scheme since he had been in town. Lady Anna urged that the money had been paid for two places by the coach. "My brother could arrange that, I do not doubt," said aunt Julia. But the Countess now expected her daughter, and Lady Anna stuck to her resolve. Her mother's letter had not been propitious to the movement. If the places were taken, of course she must come. So said the Countess. It was not simply that the money should not be lost, but that the people at Yoxham must not be allowed to think that her daughter was over anxious to stay. "Does your mamma want to have you back?" asked aunt Julia. Lady Anna would not say that her mother wanted her back, but simply pleaded again that the places had been taken.

When the morning came for her departure, the carriage was ordered to take her into York, and the question arose as to who should go with her. It was incumbent on the rector, who held an honorary stall in the cathedral, to be with the dean and his brother prebendaries on that day, and the use of his own carriage would be convenient to him.

"I think I'll have the gig," said the rector,

"My dear Charles," pleaded his sister, "surely that will be foolish. She can't hurt you."

"I don't know that," said the rector. "I think she

has hurt me very much already. I shouldn't know how to talk to her."

"You may be sure that Frederic means to go on with it," said Mrs. Lovel.

"It would have been better for Frederic if he had never seen her," said the rector; "and I'm sure it would have been better for me."

But he consented at last, and he himself handed Lady Anna into the carriage. Mrs. Lovel accompanied them, but aunt Julia made her farewells in the rectory drawing-room. She managed to get the girl to herself for a moment or two, and thus she spoke to her: "I need not tell you that, for yourself, my dear, I like you very much."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Lovel."

"I have heartily wished that you might be our Frederic's wife."

"It can never be," said Lady Anna.

"I won't give up all hope. I don't pretend to understand what there is amiss between you and Frederic, but I won't give it up. If it is to be so, I hope that you and I may be loving friends till I die. Give me a kiss, my dear." Lady Anna, whose eyes were suffused with tears, threw herself into the arms of the elder lady and embraced her.

Mrs. Lovel also kissed her, and bade God bless her as she parted from her at the coach door; but the

rector was less demonstrative. "I hope you will have a pleasant journey," he said, taking off his clerical hat.

"Let it go as it may," said Mrs. Lovel, as she walked into the close with her husband, "you may take my word, she's a good girl."

"I'm afraid she's sly," said the rector.

"She's no more sly than I am," said Mrs. Lovel, who herself was by no means sly.

## CHAPTER XX.

### *Lady Anna's Reception.*

THE Countess went into the City to meet her daughter at the Saracen's Head, whither the York coach used to run, and received her almost in silence. "Oh, mamma, dear mamma," said Lady Anna, "I am so glad to be back with you again." Sarah, the lady's-maid, was there, useless, officious, and long-eared. The Countess said almost nothing; she submitted to be kissed, and she asked after the luggage. At that time she had heard the whole story about Daniel Thwaite.

The Solicitor-General had disregarded altogether his client's injunctions as to secrecy. He had felt that in a matter of so great importance it behoved him to look to his client's interests, rather than his client's instructions. This promise of a marriage with the

tailor's son must be annihilated. On behalf of the whole Lovel family it was his duty, as he thought, to see that this should be effected, if possible,—and as quickly as possible. This was his duty, not only as a lawyer employed in a particular case, but as a man who would be bound to prevent any great evil which he saw looming in the future. In his view of the case the marriage of Lady Anna Lovel, with a colossal fortune, to Daniel Thwaite the tailor, would be a grievous injury to the social world of his country,—and it was one of those evils which may probably be intercepted by due and discreet precautions. No doubt the tailor wanted money. The man was entitled to some considerable reward for all that he had done and all that he had suffered in the cause. But Sir William could not himself propose the reward. He could not chaffer for terms with the tailor. He could not be seen in that matter. But having heard the secret from the Earl, he thought that he could get the work done. So he sent for Mr. Flick, the attorney, and told Mr. Flick all that he knew. “Gone and engaged herself to the tailor!” said Mr. Flick, holding up both his hands. Then Sir William took Lady Anna's part. After all, such an engagement was not,—as he thought,—unnatural. It had been made while she was very young, when she knew no other man of her own age in life, when she was greatly indebted to this man, when she had had no opportunity of measuring

a young tailor against a young lord. She had done it probably in gratitude;—so said Sir William;—and now clung to it from good faith rather than affectation. Neither was he severe upon the tailor. He was a man especially given to make excuses for poor weak, erring, unlearned mortals, ignorant of the law,—unless when a witness attempted to be impervious;—and now he made excuses for Daniel Thwaite. The man might have done so much worse than he was doing. There seemed already to be a noble reliance on himself in his conduct. Lord Lovel thought that there had been no correspondence while the young lady had been at Yoxham. There might have been, but had not been, a clandestine marriage. Other reasons he gave why Daniel Thwaite should not be regarded as altogether villanous. But, nevertheless, the tailor must not be allowed to carry off the prize. The prize was too great for him. What must be done? Sir William condescended to ask Mr. Flick what he thought ought to be done. “No doubt we should be very much guided by you, Mr. Solicitor,” said Mr. Flick.

“One thing is, I think, plain, Mr. Flick. You must see the Countess and tell her, or get Mr. Goffe to do so. It is clear that she has been kept in the dark between them. At present they are all living together in the same house. She had better leave the place and go elsewhere. They should be kept apart, and the girl, if necessary, should be carried abroad.”



"I take it there is a difficulty about money, Mr. Solicitor."

"There ought to be none,—and I will take it upon myself to say that there need be none. It is a case in which the court will willingly allow money out of the income of the property. The thing is so large that there should be no grudging of money for needful purposes. Seeing what *prima facie* claims these ladies have, they are bound to allow them to live decently, in accordance with their alleged rank, till the case is settled. No doubt she is the heiress."

"You feel quite sure, Sir William?"

"I do;—though, as I have said before, it is a case of feeling sure, and not being sure. Had that Italian woman been really the widow, somebody would have brought her case forward more loudly."

"But if the other Italian woman who died was the wife?"

"You would have found it out when you were there. Somebody from the country would have come to us with evidence, knowing how much we could afford to pay for it. Mind you, the matter has been tried before, in another shape. The old Earl was indicted for bigamy and acquitted. We are bound to regard that young woman as Lady Anna Lovel, and we are bound to regard her and her mother conjointly as co-heiresses, in different degrees, to all the personal property which the old Earl left behind him. We can't

with safety take any other view. There will still be difficulties in their way;—and very serious difficulties, were she to marry this tailor; but, between you and me, he would eventually get the money. Perhaps, Mr. Flick, you had better see him. You would know how to get at his views without compromising anybody. But, in the first place, let the Countess know everything. After what has been done, you won't have any difficulty in meeting Mr. Goffe."

Mr. Flick had no difficulty in seeing Mr. Goffe,—though he felt that there would be very much difficulty in seeing Mr. Daniel Thwaite. He did tell Mr. Goffe the story of the wicked tailor,—by no means making those excuses which the Solicitor-General had made for the man's presumptuous covetousness. "I knew the trouble we should have with that man," said Mr. Goffe, who had always disliked the Thwaites. Then Mr. Flick went on to say that Mr. Goffe had better tell the Countess,—and Mr. Goffe on this point agreed with his adversary. Two or three days after that, but subsequently to the date of the last letter which the mother had written to her daughter, Lady Lovel was told that Lady Anna was engaged to marry Mr. Daniel Thwaite.

She had suspected how it might be; her heart had for the last month been heavy with the dread of this great calamity; she had made her plans with the view of keeping the two apart; she had asked her daughter

questions founded on this very fear;—and yet she could not for a while be brought to believe it. How did Mr. Goffe know? Mr. Goffe had heard it from Mr. Flick, who had heard it from Sir William Patterson; to whom the tale had been told by Lord Lovel. “And who told Lord Lovel?” said the Countess flashing up in anger.

“No doubt Lady Anna did so,” said the attorney. But in spite of her indignation she could retain her doubts. The attorney, however, was certain. “There could be no hope but that it was so.” She still pretended not to believe it, though fully intending to take all due precautions in the matter. Since Mr. Goffe thought that it would be prudent, she would remove to other lodgings. She would think of that plan of going abroad. She would be on her guard, she said. But she would not admit it to be possible that Lady Anna Lovel, the daughter of Earl Lovel, her daughter, should have so far disgraced herself.

But she did believe it. Her heart had in truth told her that it was true at the first word the lawyer had spoken to her. How blind she must have been not to have known it! How grossly stupid not to have understood those asseverations from the girl, that the marriage with her cousin was impossible. Her child had not only deceived her, but had possessed cunning enough to maintain her deception. It must have been going on for at least the last twelvemonth, and she,

the while, had been kept in the dark by the manœuvres of a simple girl! And then she thought of the depth of the degradation which was prepared for her. Had she passed twenty years of unintermittent combat for this,—that when all had been done, when at last success was won, when the rank and wealth of her child had been made positively secure before the world, when she was about to see the unquestioned coronet of a Countess placed upon her child's brow,—all should be destroyed through a passion so mean as this! Would it not have been better to have died in poverty and obscurity,—while there were yet doubts,—before any assured disgrace had rested on her? But, oh! to have proved that she was a Countess, and her child the heiress of an Earl, in order that the Lady Anna Lovel might become the wife of Daniel Thwaite, the tailor!

She made many resolutions; but the first was this, that she would never smile upon the girl again till this baseness should have been abandoned. She loved her girl as only mothers do love. More devoted than the pelican, she would have given her heart's blood,—had given all her life,—not only to nurture, but to aggrandize her child. The establishment of her own position, her own honour, her own name, was to her but the incidental result of her daughter's emblazonment in the world. The child which she had borne to Earl Lovel, and which the father had stigmatised as a bastard, should by her means be known as the Lady

Anna, the heiress of that father's wealth,—the wealthiest, the fairest, the most noble of England's daughters. Then there had come the sweet idea that this high-born heiress of the Lovels, should herself become Countess Lovel, and the mother had risen higher in her delighted pride. It had all been for her child! Had she not loved as a mother, and with all a mother's tenderness! And for what!

She would love still, but she would never again be tender till her daughter should have repudiated her base,—her monstrous engagement. She bound up all her faculties to harshness, and a stern resolution. Her daughter had been deceitful, and she would now be ruthless. There might be suffering, but had not she suffered! There might be sorrow, but had not she sorrowed! There might be a contest, but had not she ever been contesting! Sooner than that the tailor should reap the fruit of her labours,—labours which had been commenced when she first gave herself in marriage to that dark, dreadful man,—sooner than that her child should make ignoble the blood which it had cost her so much to ennoble, she would do deeds which should make even the wickedness of her husband child's play in the world's esteem. It was in this mood of mind that she went to meet her daughter at the Saracen's Head.

She had taken fresh lodgings very suddenly,—in Keppel Street, near Russell Square, a long way from

Wyndham Street. She had asked Mr. Goffe to recommend her a place, and he had sent her to an old lady with whom he himself had lodged in his bachelor's days. Keppel Street cannot be called fashionable, and Russell Square is not much affected by the nobility. Nevertheless the house was superior in all qualifications to that which she was now leaving, and the rent was considerably higher. But the affairs of the Countess in regard to money were in the ascendant; and Mr. Goffe did not scruple to take for her a "genteel" suite of drawing-rooms,—two rooms with folding-doors, that is,—with the bedrooms above, first-class lodging-house attendance, and a garret for the lady's-maid. "And then it will be quite close to Mrs. Bluestone," said Mr. Goffe, who knew of that intimacy.

The drive in a glass coach home from the coach-yard to Keppel Street was horrible to Lady Anna. Not a word was spoken, as Sarah, the lady's-maid, sat with them in the carriage. Once or twice the poor girl tried to get hold of her mother's hand, in order that she might entice something of a caress. But the Countess would admit of no such softness, and at last withdrew her hand roughly. "Oh mamma!" said Lady Anna, unable to suppress her dismay. But the Countess said never a word. Sarah, the lady's-maid, began to think that there must be a second lover. "Is this Wyndham Street?" said Lady Anna when the coach stopped.

"No, my dear;—this is not Wyndham Street. I have taken another abode. This is where we are to live. If you will get out I will follow you, and Sarah will look to the luggage." Then the daughter entered the house, and met the old woman curtseying to her. She at once felt that she had been removed from contact with Daniel Thwaite, and was sure that her mother knew her story. "That is your room," said her mother. "You had better get your things off. Are you tired?"

"Oh! so tired!" and Lady Anna burst into tears.

"What will you have?"

"Oh, nothing! I think I will go to bed, mamma. Why are you unkind to me? Do tell me. Anything is better than that you should be unkind."

"Anna,—have not you been unkind to me?"

"Never, mamma;—never. I have never meant to be unkind. I love you better than all the world. I have never been unkind. But, you;—Oh, mamma, if you look at me like that, I shall die."

"Is it true that you have promised that you would be the wife of Mr. Daniel Thwaite?"

"Mamma!"

"Is it true? I will be open with you. Mr. Goffe tells me that you have refused Lord Lovel, telling him that you must do so because you were engaged to Mr. Daniel Thwaite. Is that true?"

"Yes, mamma;—it is true."

"And you have given your word to that man?"

"I have, mamma."

"And yet you told me that there was no one else when I spoke to you of Lord Lovel? You lied to me!" The girl sat confounded, astounded, without power of utterance. She had travelled from York to London, inside one of those awful vehicles of which we used to be so proud when we talked of our stage coaches. She was thoroughly weary and worn out. She had not breakfasted that morning, and was sick and ill at ease, not only in heart, but in body also. Of course it was so. Her mother knew that it was so. But this was no time for fond compassion. It would be better, far better that she should die than that she should not be compelled to abandon this grovelling abasement. "Then you lied to me!" repeated the Countess still standing over her.

"Oh, mamma, you mean to kill me."

"I would sooner die here, at your feet, this moment, and know that you must follow me within an hour, than see you married to such a one as that. You shall never marry him. Though I went into court myself and swore that I was that lord's mistress,—that I knew it when I went to him,—that you were born a brat beyond the law, that I had lived a life of perjury, I would prevent such greater disgrace as this. It shall never be. I will take you away where he shall never hear of you. As to the money, it shall go to the



winds, so that he shall never touch it. Do you think that it is you that he cares for? He has heard of all this wealth,—and you are but the bait upon his hook to catch it.”

“You do not know him, mamma.”

“Will you tell me of him, that I do not know him; impudent slut! Did I not know him before you were born? Have I not known him all through? Will you give me your word of honour that you will never see him again?” Lady Anna tried to think, but her mind would not act for her. Everything was turning round, and she became giddy and threw herself on the bed. “Answer me, Anna. Will you give me your word of honour that you will never see him again?”

She might still have said yes. She felt that enough of speech was left to her for so small an effort,—and she knew that if she did so the agony of the moment would pass away from her. With that one word spoken her mother would be kind to her, and would wait upon her; would bring her tea, and would sit by her bedside, and caress her. But she too was a Lovel, and she was, moreover, the daughter of her who once had been Josephine Murray.

“I cannot say that, mamma,” she said, “because I have promised.”

Her mother dashed from the room, and she was left alone upon the bed.

## CHAPTER XXI.

*Daniel and the Lawyer.*

It has been said that the Countess, when she sent her daughter down to Yoxham, laid her plans with the conviction that the associations to which the girl would be subjected among the Lovels would fill her heart and mind with a new-born craving for the kind of life which she would find in the rector's family;—and she had been right. Daniel Thwaite also had known that it would be so. He had been quite alive to the fact that he and his conversation would be abased, and that his power, both of pleasing and of governing, would be lessened, by this new contact. But, had he been able to hinder her going, he would not have done so. None of those who were now interested in his conduct knew aught of the character of this man. Sir William Patterson had given him credit for some honesty, but even he had not perceived,—had had no opportunity of perceiving,—the staunch uprightness which was as it were a backbone to the man in all his doings. He was ambitious, discontented, sullen, and tyrannical. He hated the domination of others, but was prone to domineer himself. He suspected evil of all above him in rank, and the millennium to which he looked forward was to be produced by the gradual extirpation of all social dis-

tinctions. Gentlemen, so called, were to him as savages, which had to be cleared away in order that that perfection might come at last which the course of nature was to produce in obedience to the ordinances of the Creator. But he was a man who revered all laws,—and a law, if recognised as a law, was a law to him whether enforced by a penalty, or simply exigent of obedience from his conscience. This girl had been thrown in his way, and he had first pitied and then loved her from his childhood. She had been injured by the fiendish malice of her own father,—and that father had been an Earl. He had been strong in fighting for the rights of the mother,—not because it had been the mother's right to be a Countess,—but in opposition to the Earl. At first,—indeed throughout all these years of conflict, except the last year,—there had been a question, not of money, but of right. The wife was entitled to due support,—to what measure of support Daniel had never known or inquired; but the daughter had been entitled to nothing. The Earl, had he made his will before he was mad,—or, more probably, had he not destroyed, when mad, the will which he had before made,—might and would have left the girl without a shilling. In those days, when Daniel's love was slowly growing, when he wandered about with the child among the rocks, when the growing girl had first learned to swear to him that he should always be her friend of friends,

when the love of the boy had first become the passion of the man, there had been no thought of money in it. Money! Had he not been well aware from his earliest understanding of the need of money for all noble purposes, that the earnings of his father, which should have made the world to him a world of promise, were being lavished in the service of these forlorn women? He had never complained. They were welcome to it all. That young girl was all the world to him; and it was right that all should be spent; as though she had been a sister, as though she had already been his wife. There had been no plot then by which he was to become rich on the Earl's wealth. Then had come the will, and the young Earl's claims, and the general belief of men in all quarters that the young Earl was to win everything. What was left of the tailor's savings was still being spent on behalf of the Countess. The first fee that ever found its way into the pocket of Serjeant Bluestone had come from the diminished hoard of old Thomas Thwaite. Then the will had been set aside; and gradually the cause of the Countess had grown to be in the ascendant. Was he to drop his love, to confess himself unworthy, and to slink away out of her sight, because the girl would become an heiress? Was he even to conceive so badly of her as to think that she would drop her love because she was an heiress? There was no such humility about him,—nor such absence of self-esteem.

But, as regarded her, he told himself at once that she should have the chance of being base and noble,—all base, and all noble as far as title and social standing could make her so,—if such were her desire. He had come to her and offered her her freedom;—had done so, indeed, with such hot language of indignant protest against the gilded gingerbread of her interested suitor, as would have frightened her from the acceptance of his offer had she been minded to accept it;—but his words had been hot, not from a premeditated purpose to thwart his own seeming liberality, but because his nature was hot and his temper imperious. This lordling was ready to wed his bride,—the girl he had known and succoured throughout their joint lives,—simply because she was rich and the lordling was a pauper. From the bottom of his heart he despised the lordling. He had said to himself a score of times that he could be well content to see the lord take the money, waste it among thieves and prostitutes, and again become a pauper, while he had the girl to sit with him at his board, and share with him the earnings of his honest labour. Of course he had spoken out. But the girl should be at liberty to do as she pleased.

He wrote no line to her before she went, or while she was at Yoxham, nor did he speak a word concerning her during her absence. But as he sat at his work, or walked to and fro between his home and the

shop, or lay sleepless in bed, all his thoughts were of her. Twice or thrice a week he would knock at the door of the Countess's room, and say a word or two, as was rendered natural by their long previous intercourse. But there had been no real intercourse between them. The Countess told him nothing of her plans; nor did he ever speak to her of his. Each suspected the other; and each was grimly civil. Once or twice the Countess expressed a hope that the money advanced by Thomas Thwaite might soon be repaid to him with much interest. Daniel would always treat the subject with a noble indifference. His father, he said, had never felt an hour's regret at having parted with his money. Should it, perchance, come back to him, he would take it, no doubt, with thanks.

Then he heard one evening, as he returned from his work, that the Countess was about to remove herself on the morrow to another home. The woman of the house, who told him, did not know where the Countess had fixed her future abode. He passed on up to his bedroom, washed his hands, and immediately went down to his fellow-lodger. After the first ordinary greeting, which was cold and almost unkind, he at once asked his question. "They tell me that you go from this to-morrow, Lady Lovel." She paused a moment, and then bowed her head. "Where is it that you are going to live?" She paused again, and paused long, for she had to think what answer she

would make him. "Do you object to let me know?" he asked.

"Mr. Thwaite, I must object."

Then at that moment there came upon him the memory of all that he and his father had done, and not the thought of that which he intended to do. This was the gratitude of a Countess! "In that case of course I shall not ask again. I had hoped that we were friends."

"Of course we are friends. Your father has been the best friend I ever had. I shall write to your father and let him know. I am bound to let your father know all that I do. But at present my case is in the hands of my lawyers, and they have advised that I should tell no one in London where I live."

"Then good evening, Lady Lovel. I beg your pardon for having intruded." He left the room without another word, throwing off the dust from his feet as he went with violent indignation. He and she must now be enemies. She had told him that she would separate herself from him,—and they must be separated. Could he have expected better things from a declared Countess? But how would it be with Lady Anna? She also had a title. She also would have wealth. She might become a Countess if she wished it. Let him only know by one sign from her that she did wish it, and he would take himself off at

once to the farther side of the globe, and live in a world contaminated by no noble lords and titled ladies. As it happened the Countess might as well have given him the address, as the woman at the lodgings informed him on the next morning that the Countess had removed herself to No. — Keppel Street.

He did not doubt that Lady Anna was about to return to London. That quick removal would not otherwise have been made. But what mattered it to him whether she were at Yoxham or in Keppel Street? He could do nothing. There would come a time,—but it had not come as yet,—when he must go to the girl boldly, let her be guarded as she might, and demand her hand. But the demand must be made to herself and herself only. When that time came there should be no question of money. Whether she were the undisturbed owner of hundreds of thousands, or a rejected claimant to her father's name, the demand should be made in the same tone and with the same assurance. He knew well the whole history of her life. She had been twenty years old last May, and it was now September. When the next spring should come round she would be her own mistress, free to take herself from her mother's hands, and free to give herself to whom she would. He did not say that nothing should be done during those eight months; but, according to his lights, he could not



make his demand with full force till she was a woman, as free from all legal control, as was he as a man.

The chances were much against him. He knew what were the allurements of luxury. There were moments in which he told himself that of course she would fall into the nets that were spread for her. But then again there would grow within his bosom a belief in truth and honesty which would buoy him up. How grand would be his victory, how great the triumph of a human soul's nobility, if, after all these dangers, if after all the enticements of wealth and rank, the girl should come to him, and lying on his bosom, should tell him that she had never wavered from him through it all. Of this, at any rate, he assured himself,—that he would not go prying, with clandestine manœuvres, about that house in Keppel Street. The Countess might have told him where she intended to live without increasing her danger.

While things were in this state with him he received a letter from Messrs. Norton and Flick, the attorneys, asking him to call on Mr. Flick at their chambers in Lincoln's Inn. The Solicitor-General had suggested to the attorney that he should see the man, and Mr. Flick had found himself bound to obey; but in truth he hardly knew what to say to Daniel Thwaite. It must be his object of course to buy off the tailor; but such arrangements are difficult, and require great caution. And then Mr. Flick was em-

ployed by Earl Lovel, and this man was the friend of the Earl's opponents in the case. Mr. Flick did feel that the Solicitor-General was moving into great irregularities in this cause. The cause itself was no doubt peculiar,—unlike any other cause with which Mr. Flick had become acquainted in his experience; there was no saying at the present moment who had opposed interests, and who combined interests in the case; but still etiquette is etiquette, and Mr. Flick was aware that such a house as that of Messrs. Norton and Flick should not be irregular. Nevertheless he sent for Daniel Thwaite.

After having explained who he was, which Daniel knew very well, without being told, Mr. Flick began his work. "You are aware, Mr. Thwaite, that the friends on both sides are endeavouring to arrange this question amicably without any further litigation."

"I am aware that the friends of Lord Lovel, finding that they have no ground to stand on at law, are endeavouring to gain their object by other means."

"No, Mr. Thwaite. I cannot admit that for a moment. That would be altogether an erroneous view of the proceeding."

"Is Lady Anna Lovel the legitimate daughter of the late Earl?"

"That is what we do not know. That is what nobody knows. You are not a lawyer, Mr. Thwaite,

or you would be aware that there is nothing more difficult to decide than questions of legitimacy. It has sometimes taken all the Courts a century to decide whether a marriage is a marriage or not. You have heard of the great MacFarlane case. To find out who was the MacFarlane they had to go back a hundred and twenty years, and at last decide on the memory of a man whose grandmother had told him that she had seen a woman wearing a wedding-ring. The case cost over forty thousand pounds, and took nineteen years. As far as I can see this is more complicated even than that. We should in all probability have to depend on the proceedings of the courts in Sicily, and you and I would never live to see the end of it."

"You would live on it, Mr. Flick, which is more than I could do."

"Mr. Thwaite, that I think is a very improper observation; but, however——. My object is to explain to you that all these difficulties may be got over by a very proper and natural alliance between Earl Lovel and the lady who is at present called by courtesy Lady Anna Lovel."

"By the Crown's courtesy, Mr. Flick," said the tailor, who understood the nature of the titles which he hated.

"We allow the name, I grant you, at present; and are anxious to promote the marriage. We are all

most anxious to bring to a close this ruinous litigation. Now, I am told that the young lady feels herself hampered by some childish promise that has been made——to you."

Daniel Thwaite had expected no such announcement as this. He did not conceive that the girl would tell the story of her engagement, and was unprepared at the moment for any reply. But he was not a man to remain unready long. "Do you call it childish?" he said.

"I do certainly."

"Then what would her engagement be if now made with the Earl? The engagement with me, as an engagement, is not yet twelve months old, and has been repeated within the last month. She is an infant, Mr. Flick, according to your language, and therefore, perhaps, a child in the eye of the law. If Lord Lovel wishes to marry her, why doesn't he do so? He is not hindered, I suppose, by her being a child."

"Any marriage with you, you know, would in fact be impossible."

"A marriage with me, Mr. Flick, would be quite as possible as one with the Lord Lovel. When the lady is of age, no clergyman in England dare refuse to marry us, if the rules prescribed by law have been obeyed."

"Well, well, Mr. Thwaite; I do not want to argue with you about the law and about possibilities. The

marriage would not be fitting, and you know that it would not be fitting."

"It would be most unfitting,—unless the lady wished it as well as I. Just as much may be said of her marriage with Earl Lovel. To which of us has she given her promise? which of us has she known and loved? which of us has won her by long friendship and steady regard? and which of us, Mr. Flick, is attracted to the marriage by the lately assured wealth of the young woman? I never understood that Lord Lovel was my rival when Lady Anna was regarded as the base-born child of the deceased madman."

"I suppose, Mr. Thwaite, you are not indifferent to her money?"

"Then you suppose wrongly,—as lawyers mostly do when they take upon themselves to attribute motives."

"You are not civil, Mr. Thwaite."

"You did not send for me here, sir, in order that there should be civilities between us. But I will at least be true. In regard to Lady Anna's money, should it become mine by reason of her marriage with me, I will guard it for her sake, and for that of the children she may bear, with all my power. I will assert her right to it as a man should do. But my purpose in seeking her hand will neither be strengthened nor weakened by her money. I believe that it is hers. Nay, —I know that the law will give it to her. On her be-

half, as being betrothed to her, I defy Lord Lovel and all other claimants. But her money and her hand are two things apart, and I will never be governed as to the one by any regard as to the other. Perhaps, Mr. Flick, I have said enough,—and so, good morning." Then he went away.

The lawyer had never dared to suggest the compromise which had been his object in sending for the man. He had not dared to ask the tailor how much ready money he would take down to abandon the lady, and thus to relieve them all from that difficulty. No doubt he exercised a wise discretion, as had he done so, Daniel Thwaite might have become even more uncivil than before.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*There is a Gulf fixed.*

"Do you think that you could be happier as the wife of such a one as Daniel Thwaite, a creature infinitely beneath you, separated as you would be from all your kith and kin, from all whose blood you share, from me and from your family, than you would be as the bearer of a proud name, the daughter and the wife of an Earl Lovel,—the mother of the earl to come? I will not speak now of duty, or of fitness, or of the happiness of others which must depend upon you. It is natural that a girl should look to her own joys in

marriage. Do you think that your joy can consist in calling that man your husband?"

It was thus that the Countess spoke to her daughter, who was then lying worn out and ill on her bed in Keppel Street. For three days she had been subject to such addresses as this, and during those three days no word of tenderness had been spoken to her. The Countess had been obdurate in her hardness,—still believing that she might thus break her daughter's spirit, and force her to abandon her engagement. But as yet she had not succeeded. The girl had been meek and, in all other things, submissive. She had not defended her conduct. She had not attempted to say that she had done well in promising to be the tailor's bride. She had shown herself willing by her silence to have her engagement regarded as a great calamity, as a dreadful evil that had come upon the whole Lovel family. She had not boldness to speak to her mother as she had spoken on the subject to the Earl. She threw herself entirely upon her promise, and spoke of her coming destiny as though it had been made irrevocable by her own word. "I have promised him, mamma, and have sworn that it should be so." That was the answer which she now made from her bed;—the answer which she had made a dozen times during the last three days.

"Is everybody belonging to you to be ruined because you once spoke a foolish word?"

"Mamma, it was often spoken,—very often, and he does not wish that anybody should be ruined. He told me that Lord Lovel might have the money."

"Foolish, ungrateful girl! It is not for Lord Lovel that I am pleading to you. It is for the name, and for your own honour. Do you not constantly pray to God to keep you in that state of life to which it has pleased Him to call you;—and are you not departing from it wilfully and sinfully by such an act as this?" But still Lady Anna continued to say that she was bound by the obligation which was upon her.

On the following day the Countess was frightened, believing that the girl was really ill. In truth she was ill,—so that the doctor who visited her declared that she must be treated with great care. She was harassed in spirit,—so the doctor said,—and must be taken away, so that she might be amused. The Countess was frightened, but still was resolute. She not only loved her daughter,—but loved no other human being on the face of the earth. Her daughter was all that she had to bind her to the world around her. But she declared to herself again and again that it would be better that her daughter should die than live and be married to the tailor. It was a case in which persecution even to the very gate of the grave would be wise and warrantable,—if by such persecution this odious, monstrous marriage might be avoided. And she did believe that persecution would avail at last.



If she were only steady in her resolve, the girl would never dare to demand the right to leave her mother's house and walk off to the church to be married to Daniel Thwaite, without the countenance of a single friend. The girl's strength was not of that nature. But were she, the Countess, to yield an inch, then this evil might come upon them. She had heard that young people can always beat their parents if they be sufficiently obdurate. Parents are soft-hearted to their children, and are prone to yield. And so would she have been soft-hearted, if the interests concerned had been less important, if the deviation from duty had been less startling, or the union proposed less monstrous and disgraceful. But in this case it behoved her to be obdurate,—even though it should be to the very gates of the grave. "I swear to you," she said, "that the day of your marriage to Daniel Thwaite shall be the day of my death."

In her straits she went to Serjeant Bluestone for advice. Now, the Serjeant had hitherto been opposed to all compromise, feeling certain that everything might be gained without the sacrifice of a single right. He had not a word to say against a marriage between the two cousins, but let the cousin who was the heiress be first placed in possession of her rights. Let her be empowered, when she consented to become Lady Lovel, to demand such a settlement of the property as would be made on her behalf if she were the undisputed

owner of the property. Let her marry the lord if she would, but not do so in order that she might obtain the partial enjoyment of that which was all her own. And then, so the Serjeant had argued, the widowed Countess would never be held to have established absolutely her own right to her name, should any compromise be known to have been effected. People might call her Countess Lovel; but, behind her back, they would say that she was no countess. The Serjeant had been very hot about it, especially disliking the interference of Sir William. But now, when he heard this new story, his heat gave way. Anything must be done that could be done;—everything must be done to prevent such a termination to the career of the two ladies as would come from a marriage with the tailor.

But he was somewhat dismayed when he came to understand the condition of affairs in Keppel Street. "How can I not be severe?" said the Countess, when he remonstrated with her. "If I were tender with her she would think that I was yielding. Is not everything at stake,—everything for which my life has been devoted?" The Serjeant called his wife into council, and then suggested that Lady Anna should spend a week or two in Bedford Square. He assured the Countess that she might be quite sure that Daniel Thwaite should find no entrance within his doors.

"But if Lord Lovel would do us the honour to

visit us, we should be most happy to see him," said the Serjeant.

Lady Anna was removed to Bedford Square, and there became subject to treatment that was milder, but not less persistent. Mrs. Bluestone lectured her daily, treating her with the utmost respect, paying to her rank a deference, which was not indeed natural to the good lady, but which was assumed, so that Lady Anna might the better comprehend the difference between her own position and that of the tailor. The girls were told nothing of the tailor,—lest the disgrace of so unnatural a partiality might shock their young minds; but they were instructed that there was danger, and that they were always, in speaking to their guest, to take it for granted that she was to become Countess Lovel. Her maid, Sarah, went with her to the Serjeant's, and was taken into a half-confidence. Lady Anna was never to be left a moment alone. She was to be a prisoner with gilded chains,—for whom a splendid, a glorious future was in prospect, if only she would accept it.

"I really think that she likes the lord the best," said Mrs. Bluestone to her husband.

"Then why the mischief won't she have him?" This was in October, and that November term was fast approaching in which the cause was set down for trial.

"I almost think she would if he'd come and ask her again. Of course, I have never mentioned the

other man; but when I speak to her of Earl Lovel, she always answers me as though she were almost in love with him. I was inquiring yesterday what sort of a man he was, and she said he was quite perfect. 'It is a thousand pities,' she said, 'that he should not have this money. He ought to have it, as he is the Earl.'

"Why doesn't she give it to him?"

"I asked her that; but she shook her head and said, that it could never be. I think that man has made her swear some sort of awful oath, and has frightened her."

"No doubt he has made her swear an oath, but we all know how the gods regard the perjuries of lovers," said the Serjeant. "We must get the young lord here when he comes back to town."

"Is he handsome?" asked Alice Bluestone, the younger daughter, who had become Lady Anna's special friend in the family. Of course they were talking of Lord Lovel.

"Everybody says he is."

"But what do you say?"

"I don't think it matters much about a man being handsome,—but he is beautiful. Not dark, like all the other Lovels; nor yet what you call fair. I don't think that fair men ever look manly."

"Oh no," said Alice, who was contemplating an engagement with a black-haired young barrister.

"Lord Lovel is brown,—with blue eyes; but it is the shape of his face that is so perfect,—an oval, you know, that is not too long. But it isn't that makes him look as he does. He looks as though everybody in the world ought to do exactly what he tells them."

"And why don't you, dear, do exactly what he tells you?"

"Ah,—that is another question. I should do many things if he told me. He is the head of our family. I think he ought to have all this money, and be a rich great man, as the Earl Lovel should be."

"And yet you won't be his wife?"

"Would you,—if you had promised another man?"

"Have you promised another man?"

"Yes;—I have."

"Who is he, Lady Anna?"

"They have not told you, then?"

"No;—nobody has told me. I know they all want you to marry Lord Lovel,—and I know he wants it. I know he is quite in love with you."

"Ah;—I do not think that. But if he were, it could make no difference. If you had once given your word to another man, would you go back because a lord asked you?"

"I don't think I would ever give my word without asking mamma."

"If he had been good to you, and you had loved

him always, and he had been your best friend,—what would you do then?"

"Who is he, Lady Anna?"

"Do not call me Lady Anna, or I shall not like you. I will tell you, but you must not say that I told you. Only I thought everybody knew. I told Lord Lovel, and he, I think, has told all the world. It is Mr. Daniel Thwaite."

"Mr. Daniel Thwaite!" said Alice, who had heard enough of the case to know who the Thwaites were. "He is a tailor!"

"Yes," said Lady Anna proudly; "he is a tailor."

"Surely that cannot be good," said Alice, who, having long since felt what it was to be the daughter of a serjeant, had made up her mind that she would marry nothing lower than a barrister.

"It is what you call bad, I dare say."

"I don't think a tailor can be a gentleman."

"I don't know. Perhaps I wasn't a lady when I promised him. But I did promise. You can never know what he and his father did for us. I think we should have died only for them. You don't know how we lived;—in a little cottage, with hardly any money, with nobody to come near us but they. Everybody else thought that we were vile and wicked. It is true. But they always were good to us. Would not you have loved him?"

"I should have loved him in a kind of way."

"When one takes so much, one must give in return what one has to give," said Lady Anna.

"Do you love him still?"

"Of course I love him."

"And you wish to be his wife?"

"Sometimes I think I don't. It is not that I am ashamed for myself. What would it have signified if I had gone away with him straight from Cumberland, before I had ever seen my cousins? Supposing that mamma hadn't been the Countess——"

"But she is."

"So they say now;—but if they had said that she was not, nobody would have thought it wrong then for me to marry Mr. Thwaite."

"Don't you think it wrong yourself?"

"It would be best for me to say that I would never marry any one at all. He would be very angry with me."

"Lord Lovel?"

"Oh no;—not Lord Lovel. Daniel would be very angry, because he really loves me. But it would not be so bad to him as though I became Lord Lovel's wife. I will tell you the truth, dear. I am ashamed to marry Mr. Thwaite,—not for myself, but because I am Lord Lovel's cousin and mamma's daughter. And I should be ashamed to marry Lord Lovel."

"Why, dear?"

"Because I should be false and ungratefull I should

be afraid to stand before him if he looked at me. You do not know how he can look. He, too, can command. He, too, is noble. They believe it is the money he wants, and when they call him a tailor, they think that he must be mean. He is not mean. He is clever, and can talk about things better than my cousin. He can work hard and give away all that he earns. And so could his father. They gave all they had to us, and have never asked it again. I kissed him once,—and then he said I had paid all my mother's debt." Alice Bluestone shrank within herself when she was told by this daughter of a countess of such a deed. It was horrid to her mind that a tailor should be kissed by a Lady Anna Lovel. But she herself had perhaps been as generous to the black-browed young barrister, and had thought no harm. "They think I do not understand,—but I do. They all want this money, and then they accuse him, and say he does it that he may become rich. He would give up all the money,—just for me. How would you feel if it were like that with you?"

"I think that a girl who is a lady, should never marry a man who is not a gentleman. You know the story of the rich man who could not get to Abraham's bosom because there was a gulf fixed. That is how it should be;—just as there is with royal people as to marrying royalty. Otherwise everything would get mingled, and there would soon be no



difference. If there are to be differences, there should be differences. That is the meaning of being a gentleman,—or a lady." So spoke the young female Conservative with wisdom beyond her years;—nor did she speak quite in vain.

"I believe what I had better do would be to die," said Lady Anna. "Everything would come right then."

Some day or two after this Serjeant Bluestone sent a message up to Lady Anna, on his return home from the courts, with a request that she would have the great kindness to come down to him in his study. The Serjeant had treated her with more than all the deference due to her rank since she had been in his house, striving to teach her what it was to be the daughter of an Earl and probable owner of twenty thousand a year. The Serjeant, to give him his due, cared as little as most men for the peerage. He veiled his bonnet to no one but a judge,—and not always that with much ceremonious observance. But now his conduct was a part of his duty to a client whom he was determined to see established in her rights. He would have handed her her cup of tea on his knees every morning, if by doing so he could have made clear to her eyes how deep would be her degradation were she to marry the tailor. The message was now brought to her by Mrs. Bluestone, who almost apologized for asking her to trouble herself to walk

down-stairs to the back parlour. "My dear Lady Anna," said the Serjeant, "may I ask you to sit down for a moment or two while I speak to you? I have just left your mother."

"How is dear mamma?" The Serjeant assured her that the Countess was well in health. At this time Lady Anna had not visited her mother since she had left Keppel Street, and had been told that Lady Lovel had refused to see her till she had pledged herself never to marry Daniel Thwaite. "I do so wish I might go to mamma!"

"With all my heart I wish you could, Lady Anna. Nothing makes such heart-burning sorrow as a family quarrel. But what can I say? You know what your mother thinks?"

"Couldn't you manage that she should let me go there just once?"

"I hope that we can manage it;—but I want you to listen to me first. Lord Lovel is back in London." She pressed her lips together and fastened one hand firmly on the other. If the assurance that was required from her was ever to be exacted, it should not be exacted by Serjeant Bluestone. "I have seen his lordship to-day," continued the Serjeant, "and he has done me the honour to promise that he will dine here to-morrow."

"Lord Lovel?"

"Yes;—your cousin, Earl Lovel. There is no reason,

I suppose, why you should not meet him? He has not offended you?"

"Oh no.—But I have offended him."

"I think not, Lady Anna. He does not speak of you as though there were offence."

"When we parted he would hardly look at me, because I told him——. You know what I told him."

"A gentleman is not necessarily offended because a lady does not accept his first offer. Many gentlemen would be offended if that were so;—and very many happy marriages would never have a chance of being made. At any rate he is coming, and I thought that perhaps you would excuse me if I endeavoured to explain how very much may depend on the manner in which you may receive him. You must feel that things are not going on quite happily now."

"I am so unhappy, Serjeant Bluestone!"

"Yes, indeed. It must be so. You are likely to be placed,—I think I may say you certainly will be placed,—in such a position that the whole prosperity of a noble and ancient family must depend on what you may do. With one word you can make once more bright a fair name that has long been beneath a cloud. Here in England the welfare of the State depends on the conduct of our aristocracy!" Oh, Serjeant Bluestone, Serjeant Bluestone! how could you so far belie your opinion as to give expression to a

sentiment utterly opposed to your own convictions! But what is there that a counsel will not do for a client? "If they whom Fate and Fortune have exalted, forget what the country has a right to demand from them, farewell, alas, to the glory of old England!" He had found this kind of thing very effective with twelve men, and surely it might prevail with one poor girl. "It is not for me, Lady Anna, to dictate to you the choice of a husband. But it has become my duty to point out to you the importance of your own choice, and to explain to you, if it may be possible, that you are not like other young ladies. You have in your hands the marring or the making of the whole family of Lovel. As for that suggestion of a marriage to which you were induced to give ear by feelings of gratitude, it would, if carried out, spread desolation in the bosom of every relative to whom you are bound by the close ties of noble blood." He finished his speech, and Lady Anna retired without a word.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

Bedford Square.

THE Earl, without asking any question on the subject, had found that the Solicitor-General thought nothing of that objection which had weighed so heavily on his own mind, as to carrying on his suit with a girl who had been wooed successfully by a tailor. His

own spirit rebelled for a while against such condescension. When Lady Anna had first told him that she had pledged her word to a lover low in the scale of men, the thing had seemed to him to be over. What struggle might be made to prevent the accomplishment of so base a marriage must be effected for the sake of the family, and not on his own special behoof. Not even for twenty thousand a year, not even for Lady Anna Lovel, not for all the Lovels, would he take to his bosom as his bride, the girl who had leaned with loving fondness on the shoulders of Daniel Thwaite. But when he found that others did not feel it as he felt it, he turned the matter over again in his mind,—and by degrees relented. There had doubtless been much in the whole affair which had placed it outside the pale of things which are subject to the ordinary judgment of men. Lady Anna's position in the world had been very singular. A debt of gratitude was due by her to the tailor, which had seemed to exact from her some great payment. As she had said herself, she had given the only thing which she had to give. Now there would be much to give. The man doubtless deserved his reward and should have it, but that reward must not be the hand of the heiress of the Lovels. He, the Earl, would once again claim that as his own.

He had hurried out of town after seeing Sir William, but had not returned to Yoxham. He went

again to Scotland, and wrote no further letter to the rectory after those three lines which the reader has seen. Then he heard from Mr. Flick that Lady Anna was staying with the Serjeant in Bedford Square, and he returned to London at the lawyer's instance. It was so expedient that if possible something should be settled before November!

The only guests asked to meet the Earl at Serjeant Bluestone's, were Sir William and Lady Patterson, and the black-browed young barrister. The whole proceeding was very irregular,—as Mr. Flick, who knew what was going on, said more than once to his old partner, Mr. Norton. That the Solicitor-General should dine with the Serjeant might be all very well,—though, as school boys say, they had never known each other at home before. But that they should meet in this way the then two opposing clients,—the two claimants to the vast property as to which a cause was to come on for trial in a few weeks,—did bewilder Mr. Flick. “I suppose the Solicitor-General sees his way, but he may be in a mess yet,” said Mr. Flick. Mr. Norton only scratched his head. It was no work of his.

Sir William, who arrived before the Earl, was introduced for the first time to the young lady. “Lady Anna,” he said, “for some months past I have heard much of you. And now I have great pleasure in meeting you.” She smiled, and strove to look pleased,

but she had not a word to say to him. "You know I ought to be your enemy," he continued, laughing, "but I hope that is well nigh over. I should not like to have to fight so fair a foe." Then the young lord arrived, and the lawyers of course gave way to the lover.

Lady Anna, from the moment in which she was told that he was to come, had thought of nothing but the manner of their greeting. It was not that she was uneasy as to her own fashion of receiving him. She could smile and be silent, and give him her hand or leave it ungiven, as he might demand. But in what manner would he accost her? She had felt sure that he had despised her from the moment in which she had told him of her engagement. Of course he had despised her. Those fine sentiments about ladies and gentlemen, and the gulf which had been fixed, had occurred to her before she heard them from the mouth of Miss Alice Bluestone. She understood, as well as did her young friend, what was the difference between her cousin the Earl, and her lover, the tailor. Of course it would be sweet to be able to love such a one as her cousin. They all talked to her as though she was simply obstinate and a fool, not perceiving, as she did herself, that the untowardness of her fortune had prescribed this destiny for her. Good as Daniel Thwaite might be,—as she knew that he was,—she felt herself to be degraded in having promised to be his wife. The

lessons they had taught her had not been in vain. And she had been specially degraded in the eyes of him, who was to her imagination the brightest of human beings. They told her that she might still be his wife if only she would consent to hold out her hand when he should ask for it. She did not believe it. Were it true, it could make no difference,—but she did not believe it. He had scorned her when she told him the tale at Bolton Abbey. He had scorned her when he hurried away from Yoxham. Now he was coming to the Serjeant's house, with the express intention of meeting her again. Why should he come? Alas, alas! She was sure that he would never speak to her again in that bright sunny manner, with those dulcet honey words, which he had used when first they saw each other in Wyndham Street.

Nor was he less uneasy as to this meeting. He had not intended to scorn her when he parted from her, but he had intended that she should understand that there was an end of his suit. He had loved her dearly, but there are obstacles to which love must yield. Had she already married this tailor, how would it have been with him then? That which had appeared to him to be most fit for him to do, had suddenly become altogether unfit,—and he had told himself at the moment that he must take back his love to himself as best he might. He could not sue for that which had once been given to a tailor. But now all



that was changed, and he did intend to sue again. She was very beautiful,—to his thinking the very pink of feminine grace, and replete with charms;—soft in voice, soft in manner, with just enough of spirit to give her character. What a happy chance it had been what marvellous fortune, that he should have been able to love this girl whom it was so necessary that he should marry;—what a happy chance, had it not been for this wretched tailor! But now, in spite of the tailor, he would try his fate with her once again. He had not intended to scorn her when he left her, but he knew that his manner to her must have told her that his suit was over. How should he renew it again in the presence of Serjeant and Mrs. Bluestone and of Sir William and Lady Patterson?

He was first introduced to the wives of the two lawyers while Lady Anna was sitting silent on the corner of a sofa. Mrs. Bluestone, foreseeing how it would be, had endeavoured with much prudence to establish her young friend at some distance from the other guests, in order that the Earl might have the power of saying some word; but the young barrister had taken this opportunity of making himself agreeable, and stood opposite to her talking nothings about the emptiness of London, and the glories of the season when it should come. Lady Anna did not hear a word that the young barrister said. Lady Anna's ear was straining itself to hear what Lord Lovel might

say, and her eye, though not quite turned towards him, was watching his every motion. Of course he must speak to her. "Lady Anna is on the sofa," said Mrs. Bluestone. Of course he knew that she was there. He had seen her dear face the moment that he entered the room. He walked up to her and gave her his hand, and smiled upon her.

She had made up her little speech. "I hope they are quite well at Yoxham," she said, in that low, soft, silver voice which he had told himself would so well befit the future Countess Lovel.

"Oh yes;—I believe so. I am a truant there, for I do not answer aunt Julia's letters as punctually as I ought to do. I shall be down there for the hunting I suppose next month." Then dinner was announced; and as it was necessary that the Earl should take down Mrs. Bluestone and the Serjeant Lady Anna,—so that the young barrister absolutely went down to dinner with the wife of the Solicitor-General,—the conversation was brought to an end. Nor was it possible that they should be made to sit next each other at dinner. And then, when at last the late evening came and they were all together in the drawing-room, other things intervened and the half hour so passed that hardly a word was spoken between them. But there was just one word as he went away. "I shall call and see you," he said.

"I don't think he means it," the Serjeant said to his wife that evening, almost in anger.

"Why not, my dear?"

"He did not speak to her."

"People can't speak at dinner-parties when there is anything particular to say. If he didn't mean it, he wouldn't have come. And if you'll all have a little patience she'll mean it too. I can't forgive her mother for being so hard to her. She's one of the sweetest creatures I ever came across."

A little patience, and here was November coming! The Earl who had now been dining in his house, meeting his own client there, must again become the Serjeant's enemy in November, unless this matter were settled. The Serjeant at present could see no other way of proceeding. The Earl might no doubt retire from the suit, but a jury must then decide whether the Italian woman had any just claim. And against the claim of the Italian woman the Earl would again come forward. The Serjeant as he thought of it, was almost sorry that he had asked the Earl and the Solicitor-General to his house.

On the very next morning,—early in the day,—the Earl was announced in Bedford Square. The Serjeant was of course away at his chambers. Lady Anna was in her room and Mrs. Bluestone was sitting with her daughter. "I have come to see my cousin," said the Earl boldly.

"I am so glad that you have come, Lord Lovel."

"Thank you,—well; yes. I know you will not mind my saying so outright. Though the papers say that we are enemies, we have many things in common between us."

"I will send her to you. My dear, we will go into the dining-room. You will find lunch ready when you come down, Lord Lovel." Then she left him, and he stood looking for a while at the books that were laid about the table.

It seemed to him to be an age, but at last the door was opened and his cousin crept into the room. When he had parted from her at Yoxham he had called her Lady Anna; but he was determined that she should at any rate be again his cousin. "I could hardly speak to you yesterday," he said, while he held her hand.

"No;—Lord Lovel."

"People never can, I think, at small parties like that. Dear Anna, you surprised me so much by what you told me on the banks of the Wharfe!" She did not know how to answer him even a word. "I know that I was unkind to you."

"I did not think so, my lord."

"I will tell you just the plain truth. Even though it may be bitter, the truth will be best between us, dearest. When first I heard what you said, I believed that all must be over between you and me."

"Oh, yes," she said.

"But I have thought about it since, and I will not have it so. I have not come to reproach you."

"You may if you will."

"I have no right to do so, and would not if I had. I can understand your feelings of deep gratitude and can respect them."

"But I love him, my lord," said Lady Anna, holding her head on high and speaking with much dignity. She could hardly herself understand the feeling which induced her so to address him. When she was alone thinking of him and of her other lover, her heart was inclined to regret in that she had not known her cousin in her early days,—as she had known Daniel Thwaite. She could tell herself, though she could not tell any other human being, that when she had thought that she was giving her heart to the young tailor, she had not quite known what it was to have a heart to give. The young lord was as a god to her; whereas Daniel was but a man,—to whom she owed so deep a debt of gratitude that she must sacrifice herself, if needs be, on his behalf. And yet when the Earl spoke to her of her gratitude to this man,—praising it, and professing that he also understood those very feelings which had governed her conduct,—she blazed up almost in wrath, and swore that she loved the tailor.

The Earl's task was certainly difficult. It was his

first impulse to rush away again, as he had rushed away before. To rush away and leave the country, and let the lawyers settle it all as they would. Could it be possible that such a girl as this should love a journeyman tailor, and should be proud of her love! He turned from her and walked to the door and back again, during which time she had almost repented of her audacity.

"It is right that you should love him—as a friend," he said.

"But I have sworn to be his wife."

"And must you keep your oath?" As she did not answer him he pressed on with his suit. "If he loves you I am sure he cannot wish to hurt you, and you know that such a marriage as that would be very hurtful. Can it be right that you should descend from your position to pay a debt of gratitude, and that you should do it at the expense of all those who belong to you? Would you break your mother's heart, and mine, and bring disgrace upon your family merely because he was good to you?"

"He was good to my mother as well as me."

"Will it not break her heart? Has she not told you so? But perhaps you do not believe in my love."

"I do not know," she said.

"Ah, dearest, you may believe. To my eyes you

are the sweetest of all God's creatures. Perhaps you think I say so only for the money's sake."

"No, my lord, I do not think that."

"Of course much is due to him."

"He wants nothing but that I should be his wife. He has said so, and he is never false. I can trust him at any rate, even though I should betray him. But I will not betray him. I will go away with him and they shall not hear of me, and nobody will remember that I was my father's daughter."

"You are doubting even now, dear."

"But I ought not to doubt. If I doubt it is because I am weak."

"Then still be weak. Surely such weakness will be good when it will please all those who must be dearest to you."

"It will not please him, Lord Lovel."

"Will you do this, dearest;—will you take one week to consider and then write to me? You cannot refuse me that, knowing that the happiness and the honour and the welfare of every Lovel depends upon your answer."

She felt that she could not refuse, and she gave him the promise. On that day week she would write to him, and tell him then to what resolve she should have brought herself. He came up close to her,

meaning to kiss her if she would let him; but she stood aloof, and merely touched his hand. She would obey her betrothed,—at any rate till she should have made up her mind that she would be untrue to him. Lord Lovel could not press his wish, and left the house unmindful of Mrs. Bluestone's luncheon.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

*The Dog in the Manger.*

DURING all this time Daniel Thwaite had been living alone, working day after day and hour after hour among the men in Wigmore Street, trusted by his employer, disliked by those over whom he was set in some sort of authority, and befriended by none. He had too heavy a weight on his spirits to be light of heart, even had his nature been given to lightness. How could he even hope that the girl would resist all the temptation that would be thrown in her way, all the arguments that would be used to her, the natural entreaties that would be showered upon her from all her friends? Nor did he so think of himself, as to believe that his own personal gifts would bind her to him when opposed by those other personal gifts which he knew belonged to the lord. Measuring himself by his own standard, regarding that man to be most manly who could be most useful in the world, he did think himself to be infinitely superior to the Earl. He was the work-

ing bee, whereas the earl was the drone. And he was one who used to the best of his abilities the mental faculties which had been given to him; whereas the Earl,—so he believed,—was himself hardly conscious of having had mental faculties bestowed upon him. The Earl was, to his thinking, as were all earls, an excrescence upon society, which had been produced by the evil habits and tendencies of mankind; a thing to be got rid of before any near approach could be made to that social perfection in the future coming of which he fully believed. But, though useless, the Earl was beautiful to the eye. Though purposeless, as regarded any true purpose of speech, his voice was of silver and sweet to the ears. His hands, which could never help him to a morsel of bread, were soft to the touch. He was sweet with perfumes and idleness, and never reeked of the sweat of labour. Was it possible that such a girl as Anna Lovel should resist the popinjay, backed as he would be by her own instincts and by the prayers of every one of her race? And then from time to time another thought would strike him. Using his judgment as best he might on her behalf, ought he to wish that she should do so? The idleness of an earl might be bad, and equally bad the idleness of a countess. To be the busy wife of a busy man, to be the mother of many children who should be all taught to be busy

on behalf of mankind, was, to his thinking, the highest lot of woman. But there was a question with him whether the accidents of her birth and fortune had not removed her from the possibility of such joy as that. How would it be with her, and him too, if, in after life, she should rebuke him because he had not allowed her to be the wife of a nobleman? And how would it be with him if hereafter men said of him that he held her to an oath extracted from her in her childhood because of her wealth? He had been able to answer Mr. Flick on that head, but he had more difficulty in answering himself.

He had written to his father after the Countess had left the house in which he lodged, and his father had answered him. The old man was not much given to the writing of letters. "About Lady Lovel and her daughter," said he, "I won't take no more trouble, nor shouldn't you. She and you is different, and must be." And that was all he said. Yes;—he and Lady Anna were different, and must remain so. Of a morning, when he went fresh to his work, he would resolve that he would send her word that she was entirely free from him, and would bid her do according to the nature of the Lovels. But in the evening, as he would wander back, slowly, all alone, tired of his work, tired of the black solitude of the life he was leading, longing for

some softness to break the harsh monotony of his labour, he would remember all her prettinesses, and would, above all, remember the pretty oaths with which she had sworn that she, Anna Lovel, loved him, Daniel Thwaite, with all the woman's love which a woman could give. He would remember the warm kiss which had seemed to make fresh for hours his dry lips, and would try to believe that the bliss of which he had thought so much might still be his own. Had she abandoned him, had she assented to a marriage with the Earl, he would assuredly have heard of it. He also knew well the day fixed for the trial, and understood the importance which would be attached to an early marriage, should that be possible,—or at least to a public declaration of an engagement. At any rate she had not as yet been false to him.

One day he received at his place of work the following note:—

“DEAR MR. THWAITE,

“I wish to speak to you on most important business. Could you call on me to-morrow at eight o'clock in the evening,—here?

“Yours very faithfully and always grateful,

“J. LOVEL.”

And then the Countess had added her address in Keppel Street;—the very address which, about a month back, she had refused to give him. Of course he went to the Countess,—fully believing that Lady Anna would also be at the house, though believing also that he would not be allowed to see her. But at this time Lady Anna was still staying with Mrs. Bluestone in Bedford Square.

It was no doubt natural that every advantage should be taken of the strong position which Lord Lovel held. When he had extracted a promise from Lady Anna that she would write to him at the end of a week, he told Sir William, Sir William told his wife, Lady Patterson told Mrs. Bluestone, and Mrs. Bluestone told the Countess. They were all now in league against the tailor. If they could only get a promise from the girl before the cause came on,—anything that they could even call a promise,—then the thing might be easy. United together they would not be afraid of what the Italian woman might do. And this undertaking to write to Lord Lovel was almost as good as a promise. When a girl once hesitates with a lover, she has as good as surrendered. To say even that she will think of it, is to accept the man. Then Mrs. Bluestone and the Countess, putting their heads together, determined that an appeal should be made to the tailor. Had Sir William or the Serjeant been

consulted, either would have been probably strong against the measure. But the ladies acted on their own judgment, and Daniel Thwaite presented himself in Keppel Street. "It is very kind of you to come," said the Countess.

"There is no great kindness in that," said Daniel, thinking perhaps of those twenty years of service which had been given by him and by his father.

"I know you think that I have been ungrateful for all that you have done-for me." He did think so, and was silent. "But you would hardly wish me to repay you for helping me in my struggle by giving up all for which I have struggled."

"I have asked for nothing, Lady Lovel."

"Have you not?"

"I have asked you for nothing."

"But my daughter is all that I have in the world. Have you asked nothing of her?"

"Yes, Lady Lovel. I have asked much from her, and she has given me all that I have asked. But I have asked nothing, and now claim nothing, as payment for service done. If Lady Anna thinks she is in my debt after such fashion as that, I will soon make her free."

"She does think so, Mr. Thwaite."

"Let her tell me so with her own lips."

"You will not think that I am lying to you."

"And yet men do lie, and women too, without remorse, when the stakes are high. I will believe no one but herself in this. Let her come down and stand before me and look me in the face and tell me that it is so,—and I promise you that there shall be no further difficulty. I will not even ask to be alone with her. I will speak but a dozen words to her, and you shall hear them."

"She is not here, Mr. Thwaite. She is not living in this house."

"Where is she then?"

"She is staying with friends."

"With the Lovels,—in Yorkshire?"

"I do not think that good can be done by my telling you where she is."

"Do you mean me to understand that she is engaged to the Earl?"

"I tell you this,—that she acknowledges herself to be bound to you, but bound to you simply by gratitude. It seems that there was a promise."

"Oh yes,—there was a promise, Lady Lovel; a promise as firmly spoken as when you told the late lord that you would be his wife."

"I know that there was a promise,—though I, her mother, living with her at the time, had no dream of such wickedness. There was a promise; and by that she feels herself to be in some measure bound."

"She should do so,—if words can ever mean anything."

"I say she does,—but it is only by a feeling of gratitude. What;—is it probable that she should wish to mate so much below her degree, if she were now left to her own choice? Does it seem natural to you? She loves the young Earl,—as why should she not? She has been thrown into his company on purpose that she might learn to love him,—when no one knew of this horrid promise which had been exacted from her before she had seen any in the world from whom to choose."

"She has seen two now, him and me, and she can choose as she pleases. Let us both agree to take her at her word, and let us both be present when that word is spoken. If she goes to him and offers him her hand in my presence, I would not take it then though she were a princess, in lieu of being Lady Anna Lovel. Will he treat me as fairly? Will he be as bold to abide by her choice?"

"You can never marry her, Mr. Thwaite."

"Why can I never marry her? Would not my ring



be as binding on her finger as his? Would not the parson's word make me and her one flesh and one bone as irretrievably as though I were ten times an earl? I am a man and she a woman. What law of God, or of man,—what law of nature can prevent us from being man and wife? I say that I can marry her,—and with her consent, I will."

"Never! You shall never live to call yourself the husband of my daughter. I have striven and suffered,—as never woman strove and suffered before, to give to my child the name and the rank which belong to her. I did not do so that she might throw them away on such a one as you. If you will deal honestly by us——"

"I have dealt by you more than honestly."

"If you will at once free her from this thralldom in which you hold her, and allow her to act in accordance with the dictates of her own heart——"

"That she shall do."

"If you will not hinder us in building up again the honour of the family, which was nigh ruined by the iniquities of my husband, we will bless you."

"I want but one blessing, Lady Lovel."

"And in regard to her money——"

"I do not expect you to believe me, Countess; but

her money counts as nothing with me. If it becomes hers and she becomes my wife, as her husband I will protect it for her. But there shall be no dealing between you and me in regard to money."

"There is money due to your father, Mr. Thwaite."

"If so, that can be paid when you come by your own. It was not lent for the sake of a reward."

"And you will not liberate that poor girl from her thralldom."

"She can liberate herself if she will. I have told you what I will do. Let her tell me to my face what she wishes."

"That she shall never do, Mr. Thwaite;—no, by heavens. It is not necessary that she should have your consent to make such an alliance as her friends think proper for her. You have entangled her by a promise, foolish on her part, and very wicked on yours, and you may work us much trouble. You may delay the settlement of all this question,—perhaps for years; and half ruin the estate by prolonged lawsuits; you may make it impossible for me to pay your father what I owe him till he, and I also, shall be no more; but you cannot, and shall not, have access to my daughter."

Daniel Thwaite, as he returned home, tried to think it all over dispassionately. Was it as the Countess

had represented? Was he acting the part of the dog in the manger, robbing others of happiness without the power of achieving his own? He loved the girl, and was he making her miserable by his love? He was almost inclined to think that the Countess had spoken truth in this respect.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

*Daniel Thwaite's Letter.*

ON the day following that on which Daniel Thwaite had visited Lady Lovel in Keppel Street, the Countess received from him a packet containing a short note to herself, and the following letter addressed to Lady Anna. The enclosure was open, and in the letter addressed to the Countess the tailor simply asked her to read and to send on to her daughter that which he had written, adding that if she would do so he would promise to abide by any answer which might come to him in Lady Anna's own handwriting. Daniel Thwaite when he made this offer felt that he was giving up everything. Even though the words might be written by the girl, they would be dictated by the girl's mother, or by those lawyers who were now leagued together to force her into a marriage with the Earl. But it was right, he thought,—and upon the whole best for

all parties,—that he should give up everything. He could not bring himself to say so to the Countess or to any of those lawyers, when he was sent for and told that because of the lowliness of his position a marriage between him and the highly-born heiress was impossible. On such occasions he revolted from the authority of those who endeavoured to extinguish him. But, when alone, he could see at any rate as clearly as they did, the difficulties which lay in his way. He also knew that there was a great gulf fixed, as Miss Alice Bluestone had said,—though he differed from the young lady as to the side of the gulf on which lay heaven, and on which heaven's opposite. The letter to Lady Anna was as follows:—

“MY DEAREST,

“This letter if it reaches you at all will be given to you by your mother, who will have read it. It is sent to her open that she may see what I say to you. She sent for me and I went to her this evening, and she told me that it was impossible that I should ever be your husband. I was so bold as to tell her ladyship that there could be no impossibility. When you are of age you can walk out from your mother's house

and marry me, as can I you; and no one can hinder us. There is nothing in the law, either of God or man, that can prevent you from becoming my wife,—if it be your wish to be so. But your mother also said that it was not your wish, and she went on to say that were you not bound to me by ties of gratitude you would willingly marry your cousin, Lord Lovel. Then I offered to meet you in the presence of your mother,—and in the presence too of Lord Lovel,—and to ask you then before all of us to which of us two your heart was given. And I promised that if in my presence you would stretch out your right hand to the Earl neither you nor your mother should be troubled further by Daniel Thwaite. But her ladyship swore to me, with an oath, that I should never be allowed to see you again.

“I therefore write to you, and bid you think much of what I say to you before you answer me. You know well that I love you. You do not suspect that I am trying to win you because you are rich. You will remember that I loved you when no one thought that you would be rich. I do love you in my heart of hearts. I think of you in my dreams and fancy then that all the world has become bright to me, because we are walking together, hand-in-hand, where none

can come between to separate us. But I would not wish you to be my wife, just because you have promised. If you do not love me,—above all, if you love this other man,—say so and I will have done with it. Your mother says that you are bound to me by gratitude. I do not wish you to be my wife unless you are bound to me by love. Tell me then how it is;—but, as you value my happiness and your own, tell me the truth.

“I will not say that I shall think well of you, if you have been carried away by this young man's nobility. I would have you give me a fair chance. Ask yourself what has brought him as a lover to your feet. How it came to pass that I was your lover you cannot but remember. But, for you, it is your first duty not to marry a man unless you love him. If you go to him because he can make you a countess you will be vile indeed. If you go to him because you find that he is in truth dearer to you than I am, because you prefer his arm to mine, because he has wound himself into your heart of hearts,—I shall think your heart indeed hardly worth the having; but according to your lights you will be doing right. In that case you shall have no further word from me to trouble you.

"But I desire that I may have an answer to this in your own handwriting.

"Your own sincere lover,

"DANIEL THWAITE."

In composing and copying and recopying this letter the tailor sat up half the night, and then very early in the morning he himself carried it to Keppel Street, thus adding nearly three miles to his usual walk to Wigmore Street. The servant at the lodging-house was not up, and could hardly be made to rise by the modest appeals which Daniel made to the bell; but at last the delivery was effected, and the forlorn lover hurried back to his work.

The Countess as she sat at breakfast read the letter over and over again, and could not bring herself to decide whether it was right that it should be given to her daughter. She had not yet seen Lady Anna since she had sent the poor offender away from the house in anger, and had more than once repeated her assurance through Mrs. Bluestone that she would not do so till a promise had been given that the tailor should be repudiated. Should she make this letter an excuse for going to the house in Bedford Square, and of



seeing her child, towards whom her very bowels were yearning? At this time, though she was a countess, with the prospect of great wealth, her condition was not enviable. From morning to night she was alone, unless when she would sit for an hour in Mr. Goffe's office, or on the rarer occasions of a visit to the chambers of Serjeant Bluestone. She had no acquaintances in London whatever. She knew that she was unfitted for London society even if it should be open to her. She had spent her life in struggling with poverty and powerful enemies,—almost alone,—taking comfort in her happiest moments in the strength and goodness of her old friend Thomas Thwaite. She now found that those old days had been happier than these later days. Her girl had been with her and had been,—or had at any rate seemed to be,—true to her. She had something then to hope, something to expect, some happiness of glory to which she could look forward. But now she was beginning to learn,—nay had already learned, that there was nothing for her to expect. Her rank was allowed to her. She no longer suffered from want of money. Her cause was about to triumph,—as the lawyers on both sides had seemed to say. But in what respect would the triumph be sweet to her? Even should her girl become the Coun-

tess Lovel, she would not be the less isolated. None of the Lovels wanted her society. She had banished her daughter to Bedford Square, and the only effect of the banishment was that her daughter was less miserable in Bedford Square than she would have been with her mother in Keppel Street.

She did not dare to act without advice, and therefore she took the letter to Mr. Goffe. Had it not been for a few words towards the end of the letter she would have sent it to her daughter at once. But the man had said that her girl would be vile indeed if she married the Earl for the sake of becoming a countess, and the widow of the late Earl did not like to put such doctrine into the hands of Lady Anna. If she delivered the letter of course she would endeavour to dictate the answer;—but her girl could be stubborn as her mother; and how would it be with them if quite another letter should be written than that which the Countess would have dictated?

Mr. Goffe read the letter and said that he would like to consider it for a day. The letter was left with Mr. Goffe, and Mr. Goffe consulted the Serjeant. The Serjeant took the letter home to Mrs. Bluestone, and

then another consultation was held. It found its way to the very house in which the girl was living for whom it was intended, but was not at last allowed to reach her hand. "It's a fine manly letter," said the Serjeant.

"Then the less proper to give it to her," said Mrs. Bluestone, whose heart was all softness towards Lady Anna, but as hard as a millstone towards the tailor.

"If she does like this young lord the best, why shouldn't she tell the man the truth?" said the Serjeant.

"Of course she likes the young lord the best,—as is natural."

"Then in God's name let her say so, and put an end to all this trouble."

"You see, my dear, it isn't always easy to understand a girl's mind in such matters. I haven't a doubt which she likes best. She is not at all the girl to have a vitiated taste about young men. But you see this other man came first, and had the advantage of being her only friend at the time. She has felt very grateful to him, and as yet she is only beginning to learn the difference between gratitude and love. I don't at all

agree with her mother as to being severe with her. I can't bear severity to young people, who ought to be made happy. But I am quite sure that this tailor should be kept away from her altogether. She must not see him or his handwriting. What would she say to herself if she got that letter? 'If he is generous, I can be generous too;' and if she ever wrote him a letter, pledging herself to him, all would be over. As it is, she has promised to write to Lord Lovel. We will hold her to that; and then, when she has given a sort of a promise to the Earl, we will take care that the tailor shall know it. It will be best for all parties. What we have got to do is to save her from this man, who has been both her best friend and her worst enemy." Mrs. Bluestone was an excellent woman, and in this emergency was endeavouring to do her duty at considerable trouble to herself and with no hope of any reward. The future Countess when she should become a Countess would be nothing to her. She was a good woman;—but she did not care what evil she inflicted on the tailor, in her endeavours to befriend the daughter of the Countess.

The tailor's letter, unseen and undreamt of by Lady Anna, was sent back through the Serjeant and

Mr. Goffe to Lady Lovel, with strong advice from Mr. Goffe that Lady Anna should not be allowed to see it. "I don't hesitate to tell you, Lady Lovel, that I have consulted the Serjeant, and that we are both of opinion that no intercourse whatever should be permitted between Lady Anna Lovel and Mr. Daniel Thwaite." The unfortunate letter was therefore sent back to the writer with the following note:—"The Countess Lovel presents her compliments to Mr. Daniel Thwaite, and thinks it best to return the enclosed. The Countess is of opinion that no intercourse whatever should take place between her daughter and Mr. Daniel Thwaite."

Then Daniel swore an oath to himself that the intercourse between them should not thus be made to cease. He had acted as he thought not only fairly but very honourably. Nay;—he was by no means sure that that which had been intended for fairness and honour might not have been sheer simplicity. He had purposely abstained from any clandestine communication with the girl he loved,—even though she was one to whom he had had access all his life, with whom he had been allowed to grow up together;—who had eaten of his bread and drank of his cup. Now her new friends,—and his own old

friend the Countess,—would keep no measures with him. There was to be no intercourse whatever! But, by the God of heaven, there should be intercourse!

END OF VOL. I.

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