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THE WAY WE LIVE NOW.

VOL. I.
THE WAY WE LIVE NOW.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

WITH FORTY ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1875.

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THE WAY WE LIVE NOW.

CHAPTER I.

THREE EDITORS.

LET the reader be introduced to Lady Carbury, upon whose character and doings much will depend of whatever interest these pages may have, as she sits at her writing-table in her own room in her own house in Welbeck Street. Lady Carbury spent many hours at her desk, and wrote many letters,—wrote also very much beside letters. She spoke of herself in these days as a woman devoted to Literature, always spelling the word with a big L. Something of the nature of her devotion may be learned by the perusal of three letters which on this morning she had written with a quickly running hand. Lady Carbury was rapid in everything, and in nothing more rapid than in the writing of letters. Here is Letter No. 1;—

Thursday, Welbeck Street.

"Dear Friend,—I have taken care that you shall have the early sheets of my two new volumes to-morrow, or Saturday at latest, so that you may, if so minded, give a poor struggler like myself a lift in your next week's paper. Do give a poor struggler a lift. You and I have so much in common, and I have ventured to flatter myself that we are really friends! I do not flatter you when I say, that not only would aid from you help me more than from any other quarter, but also that praise from you would gratify my vanity more than any other praise. I almost think you will like my 'Criminal Queens.' The sketch of Semiramis is at any rate spirited, though I had to twist it about a little to bring her in guilty. Cleopatra, of course, I have taken from Shakespeare. What a wench she was! I could not quite make Julia a queen; but it was impossible to pass over so piquant a character. You will recognise in the two or three ladies of the empire how faithfully I have studied my Gibbon. Poor dear old Belisarius! I have done the best I could with Joanna, but I could not bring myself to care for her. In our days she would simply have gone to Broadmore. I hope you will not think that I have been too strong in my delineations of Henry VIII. and his sinful but unfortunate Howard. I don't care a bit about Anne Boleyn. I am afraid that I have been tempted into too great length about the Italian Catherine; but in truth she has been my favourite. What a woman! What a devil! Pity that a second Dante could not have constructed for her a special hell. How one traces the effect of her training in
the life of our Scotch Mary. I trust you will go with me in my view as to the Queen of Scots. Guilty! guilty always! Adultery, murder, treason, and all the rest of it. But recommended to mercy because she was royal. A queen bred, born and married, and with such other queens around her, how could she have escaped to be guilty? Marie Antoinette I have not quite acquitted. It would be uninteresting;—perhaps untrue. I have accused her lovingly, and have kissed when I scourged. I trust the British public will not be angry because I do not whitewash Caroline, especially as I go along with them altogether in abusing her husband.

"But I must not take up your time by sending you another book, though it gratifies me to think that I am writing what none but yourself will read. Do it yourself, like a dear man, and, as you are great, be merciful. Or rather, as you are a friend, be loving.

"Yours gratefully and faithfully,

MATILDA CARBURY."

"After all how few women there are who can raise themselves above the quagmire of what we call love, and make themselves anything but playthings for men. Of almost all these royal and luxurious sinners it was the chief sin that in some phase of their lives they consented to be playthings without being wives. I have striven so hard to be proper; but when girls read everything, why should not an old woman write anything?"

This letter was addressed to Nicholas Bronne, Esq., the editor of the "Morning Breakfast Table," a daily newspaper of high character; and, as it was the longest, so was it considered to be the most important of the three. Mr. Bronne was a man powerful in his profession,—and he was fond of ladies. Lady Carbury in her letter had called herself an old woman, but she was satisfied to do so by a conviction that no one else regarded her in that light. Her age shall be no secret to the reader, though to her most intimate friends, even to Mr. Bronne, it had never been divulged. She was forty-three, but carried her years so well, and had received such gifts from nature, that it was impossible to deny that she was still a beautiful woman. And she used her beauty not only to increase her influence,—as is natural to women who are well-favoured,—but also with a well-considered calculation that she could obtain material assistance in the procuring of bread and cheese, which was very necessary to her, by a prudent adaptation to her purposes of the good things with which providence had endowed her. She did not fall in love, she did not wilfully flirt, she did not commit herself; but she smiled and whispered, and made confidences, and looked out of her own eyes into men's eyes as though there might be some mysterious bond between her and them—if only mysterious circumstances would permit it. But the end of all was to induce some one to do something which would cause a publisher to give her good payment for indifferent writing, or an editor to be lenient when, upon the merits of the case, he should have been severe. Among all her literary friends, Mr. Bronne was the one on whom she most trusted; and Mr. Bronne was fond of handsome women. It may be as well to give a short record of a
scene which had taken place between Lady Carbury and her friend about a month before the writing of this letter which has been produced. She had wanted him to take a series of papers for the "Morning Breakfast Table," and to have them paid for at rate No. 1, whereas she suspected that he was rather doubtful as to their merit, and knew that, without special favour, she could not hope for remuneration above rate No. 2, or possibly even No. 3. So she had looked into his eyes, and had left her soft, plump hand for a moment in his. A man in such circumstances is so often awkward, not knowing with any accuracy when to do one thing and when another! Mr. Broune, in a moment of enthusiasm, had put his arm round Lady Carbury's waist and had kissed her. To say that Lady Carbury was angry, as most women would be angry if so treated, would be to give an unjust idea of her character. It was a little accident which really carried with it no injury, unless it should be the injury of leading to a rupture between herself and a valuable ally. No feeling of delicacy was shocked. What did it matter? No unpardonable insult had been offered; no harm had been done, if only the dear susceptible old donkey could be made at once to understand that that wasn't the way to go on!

Without a flutter, and without a blush, she escaped from his arm, and then made him an excellent little speech. "Mr. Broune, how foolish, how wrong, how mistaken! Is it not so? Surely you do not wish to put an end to the friendship between us!"

"Put an end to our friendship, Lady Carbury! Oh, certainly not that."

"Then why risk it by such an act? Think of my son and of my daughter,—both grown up. Think of the past troubles of my life;—so much suffered and so little deserved. No one knows them so well as you do. Think of my name, that has been so often slandered but never disgraced! Say that you are sorry, and it shall be forgotten."

When a man has kissed a woman it goes against the grain with him to say the very next moment that he is sorry for what he has done. It is as much as to declare that the kiss had not answered his expectation. Mr. Broune could not do this, and perhaps Lady Carbury did not quite expect it. "You know that for worlds I would not offend you," he said. This sufficed. Lady Carbury again looked into his eyes, and a promise was given that the articles should be printed—and with generous remuneration.

When the interview was over Lady Carbury regarded it as having been quite successful. Of course when struggles have to be made and hard work done, there will be little accidents. The lady who uses a street cab must encounter mud and dust which her richer neighbour, who has a private carriage, will escape. She would have preferred not to have been kissed;—but what did it matter? With Mr. Broune the affair was more serious. "Confound them all," he said to himself as he left the house; "no amount of experience enables a man to know them." As he went away he almost thought that Lady Carbury had intended him to kiss her again, and he was almost angry with himself in that he had not done so.
He had seen her three or four times since, but had not repeated the
offence.

We will now go on to the other letters, both of which were
addressed to the editors of other newspapers. The second was
written to Mr. Booker, of the "Literary Chronicle." Mr. Booker was
a hard-working professor of literature, by no means without talent, by
no means without influence, and by no means without a conscience.
But, from the nature of the struggles in which he had been engaged,
by compromises which had gradually been driven upon him by the
encroachment of brother authors on the one side and by the demands
on the other of employers who looked only to their profits, he had
fallen into a routine of work in which it was very difficult to be
scrupulous, and almost impossible to maintain the delicacies of a
literary conscience. He was now a bald-headed old man of sixty,
with a large family of daughters, one of whom was a widow dependent
on him with two little children. He had five hundred a year for edit-
ing the "Literary Chronicle," which, through his energy, had become
a valuable property. He wrote for magazines, and brought out some
book of his own almost annually. He kept his head above water,
and was regarded by those who knew about him, but did not know him,
as a successful man. He always kept up his spirits, and was able in
literary circles to show that he could hold his own. But he was
driven by the stress of circumstances to take such good things as came in
his way, and could hardly afford to be independent. It must be con-
fessed that literary scruple had long departed from his mind. Letter
No. 2 was as follows;—

"Welbeck Street, 25th February, 187—

"Dear Mr. Booker,—I have told Mr. Leadham"—Mr. Leadham
was senior partner in the enterprising firm of publishers known as
Messrs. Leadham and Loiter—"to send you an early copy of my
"Criminal Queens." I have already settled with my friend Mr.
Broune that I am to do your "New Tale of a Tub" in the "Breakfast
Table." Indeed, I am about it now, and am taking great pains with it.
If there is anything you wish to have specially said as to your
view of the Protestantism of the time, let me know. I should like
you to say a word as to the accuracy of my historical details, which
I know you can safely do. Don't put it off, as the sale does so much
depend on early notices. I am only getting a royalty, which does
not commence till the first four hundred are sold.

"Yours sincerely,

"Matilda Carbury."

"Alfred Booker, Esq.,
"'Literary Chronicle,' Office, Strand."

There was nothing in this which shocked Mr. Booker. He laughed
inwardly, with a pleasantly reticent chuckle, as he thought of
Lady Carbury dealing with his views of Protestantism,—as he thought
also of the numerous historical errors into which that
clever lady must inevitably fall in writing about matters of which
he believed her to know nothing. But he was quite alive to the fact
THREE EDITORS.

that a favourable notice in the "Breakfast Table" of his very thoughtful work, called the "New Tale of a Tub," would serve him, even though written by the hand of a female literary charlatan, and he would have no compunction as to repaying the service by fulsome praise in the "Literary Chronicle." He would not probably say that the book was accurate, but he would be able to declare that it was delightful reading, that the feminine characteristics of the queens had been touched with a masterly hand, and that the work was one which would certainly make its way into all drawing-rooms. He was an adept at this sort of work, and knew well how to review such a book as Lady Carbury's "Criminal Queens," without bestowing much trouble on the reading. He could almost do it without cutting the book, so that its value for purposes of after sale might not be injured. And yet Mr. Booker was an honest man, and had set his face persistently against many literary malpractices. Stretched-out type, insufficient lines, and the French habit of meandering with a few words over an entire page, had been rebuked by him with conscientious strength. He was supposed to be rather an Aristides among reviewers. But circumstanced as he was he could not oppose himself altogether to the usages of the time. "Bad; of course it is bad," he said to a young friend who was working with him on his periodical. "Who doubts that? How many very bad things are there that we do! But if we were to attempt to reform all our bad ways at once, we should never do any good thing. I am not strong enough to put the world straight, and I doubt if you are." Such was Mr. Booker.

Then there was letter No. 8, to Mr. Ferdinand Alf. Mr. Alf managed, and, as it was supposed, chiefly owned, the "Evening Pulpit," which during the last two years had become "quite a property," as men connected with the press were in the habit of saying. The "Evening Pulpit" was supposed to give daily to its readers all that had been said and done up to two o'clock in the day by all the leading people in the metropolis, and to prophesy with wonderful accuracy what would be the sayings and doings of the twelve following hours. This was effected with an air of wonderful omniscience, and not unfrequently with an ignorance hardly surpassed by its arrogance. But the writing was clever. The facts, if not true, were well invented; the arguments, if not logical, were seductive. The presiding spirit of the paper had the gift, at any rate, of knowing what the people for whom he catered would like to read, and how to get his subjects handled, so that the reading should be pleasant. Mr. Booker's "Literary Chronicle" did not presume to entertain any special political opinions. The "Breakfast Table" was decidedly Liberal. The "Evening Pulpit" was much given to politics, but held strictly to the motto which it had assumed:—

"Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri;"—

and consequently had at all times the invaluable privilege of abusing what was being done, whether by one side or by the other. A newspaper that wishes to make its fortune should never waste its columns and weary its readers by praising anything. Eulogy is invariably dull,—a fact that Mr. Alf had discovered and had utilized.

Mr. Alf had, moreover, discovered another fact. Abuse from those
who occasionally praise is considered to be personally offensive, and they who give personal offence will sometimes make the world too hot to hold them. But censure from those who are always finding fault is regarded so much as a matter of course that it ceases to be objectionable. The caricaturist, who draws only caricatures, is held to be justifiable, let him take what liberties he may with a man's face and person. It is his trade, and his business calls upon him to vilify all that he touches. But were an artist to publish a series of portraits, in which two out of a dozen were made to be hideous, he would certainly make two enemies, if not more. Mr. Alf never made enemies, for he praised no one, and, as far as the expression of his newspaper went, was satisfied with nothing.

Personally, Mr. Alf was a remarkable man. No one knew whence he came or what he had been. He was supposed to have been born a German Jew; and certain ladies said that they could distinguish in his tongue the slightest possible foreign accent. Nevertheless it was conceded to him that he knew England as only an Englishman can know it. During the last year or two he had “come up” as the phrase goes, and had come up very thoroughly. He had been black-balled at three or four clubs, but had effected an entrance at two or three others, and had learned a manner of speaking of those which had rejected him calculated to leave on the minds of hearers a conviction that the societies in question were antiquated, imbecile, and moribund. He was never weary of implying that not to know Mr. Alf, not to be on good terms with Mr. Alf, not to understand that let Mr. Alf have been born where he might and how he might he was always to be recognised as a desirable acquaintance, was to be altogether out in the dark. And that which he so constantly asserted, or implied, men and women around him began at last to believe,—and Mr. Alf became an acknowledged something in the different worlds of politics, letters, and fashion.

He was a good-looking man, about forty years old, but carrying himself as though he was much younger, spare, below the middle height, with dark brown hair which would have shown a tinge of grey but for the dyer's art, with well-cut features, with a smile constantly on his mouth the pleasantness of which was always belied by the sharp severity of his eyes. He dressed with the utmost simplicity, but also with the utmost care. He was unmarried, had a small house of his own close to Berkeley Square at which he gave remarkable dinner parties, kept four or five hunters in Northamptonshire, and was reputed to earn £6,000 a year out of the “Evening Pulpit” and to spend about half of that income. He also was intimate after his fashion with Lady Carbury, whose diligence in making and fostering useful friendships had been unwearied. Her letter to Mr. Alf was as follows:—

“Dear Mr. Alf,—Do tell me who wrote the review on Fitzgerald Barker's last poem. Only I know you won’t. I remember nothing done so well. I should think the poor wretch will hardly hold his head up again before the autumn. But it was fully deserved. I have no patience with the pretensions of would-be poets who con-
trive by toadying and underground influences to get their volumes placed on every drawing-room table. I know no one to whom the world has been so good-natured in this way as to Fitzgerald Barker, but I have heard of no one who has extended the good nature to the length of reading his poetry.

"Is it not singular how some men continue to obtain the reputation of popular authorship without adding a word to the literature of their country worthy of note? It is accomplished by unflagging assiduity in the system of puffing. To puff and to get one's self pulled have become different branches of a new profession. Alas, me! I wish I might find a class open in which lessons could be taken by such a poor tyro as myself. Much as I hate the thing from my very soul, and much as I admire the consistency with which the "Pulpit" has opposed it, I myself am so much in want of support for my own little efforts, and am struggling so hard honestly to make for myself a remunerative career, that I think, were the opportunity offered to me, I should pocket my honour, lay aside the high feeling which tells me that praise should be bought neither by money nor friendship, and descend among the low things, in order that I might one day have the pride of feeling that I had succeeded by my own work in providing for the needs of my children.

"But I have not as yet commenced the descent downwards; and therefore I am still bold enough to tell you that I shall look, not with concern but with a deep interest, to anything which may appear in the "Pulpit" respecting my "Criminal Queens." I venture to think that the book,—though I wrote it myself,—has an importance of its own which will secure for it some notice. That my inaccuracy will be laid bare and presumption scourged I do not in the least doubt, but I think your reviewer will be able to certify that the sketches are life-like and the portraits well considered. You will not hear me told, at any rate, that I had better sit at home and darn my stockings, as you said the other day of that poor unfortunate Mrs. Effington Stubbs.

"I have not seen you for the last three weeks. I have a few friends every Tuesday evening;—pray come next week or the week following. And pray believe that no amount of editorial or critical severity shall make me receive you otherwise than with a smile.

"Most sincerely yours,

"Matilda Carbury."

Lady Carbury, having finished her third letter, threw herself back in her chair, and for a moment or two closed her eyes, as though about to rest. But she soon remembered that the activity of her life did not admit of such rest. She therefore seized her pen and began scribbling further notes.
CHAPTER II.

THE CARBURY FAMILY.

SOMETHING of herself and condition Lady Carbury has told the reader in the letters given in the former chapter, but more must be added. She has declared she had been cruelly slandered; but she has also shown that she was not a woman whose words about herself could be taken with much confidence. If the reader does not understand so much from her letters to the three editors they have been written in vain. She has been made to say that her object in work was to provide for the need of her children, and that with that noble purpose before her she was struggling to make for herself a career in literature. Detestably false as had been her letters to the editors, absolutely and abominably foul as was the entire system by which she was endeavouring to achieve success, far away from honour and honesty as she had been carried by her ready subserviency to the dirty things among which she had lately fallen, nevertheless her statements about herself were substantially true. She had been ill-treated. She had been slandered. She was true to her children,—especially devoted to one of them,—and was ready to work her nails off if by doing so she could advance their interests.

She was the widow of one Sir Patrick Carbury, who many years since had done great things as a soldier in India, and had been thereupon created a baronet. He had married a young wife late in life and, having found out when too late that he had made a mistake, had occasionally spoilt his darling and occasionally ill used her. In doing each he had done it abundantly. Among Lady Carbury's faults had never been that of even incipient,—not even of sentimental infidelity to her husband. When as a very lovely and penniless girl of eighteen she had consented to marry a man of forty-four who had the spending of a large income, she had made up her mind to abandon all hope of that sort of love which poets describe and which young people generally desire to experience. Sir Patrick at the time of his marriage was red-faced, stout, bald, very choleric, generous in money, suspicious in temper, and intelligent. He knew how to govern men. He could read and understand a book. There was nothing mean about him. He had his attractive qualities. He was a man who might be loved; —but he was hardly a man for love. The young Lady Carbury had understood her position and had determined to do her duty. She had resolved before she went to the altar that she would never allow herself to flirt and she had never flirted. For fifteen years things had gone tolerably well with her,—by which it is intended that the reader should understand that they had so gone that she had been able to tolerate them. They had been home in England for three or four years, and then Sir Patrick had returned with some new and higher appointment. For fifteen years, though he had been passionate, impe-
rious, and often cruel, he had never been jealous. A boy and a girl had been born to them, to whom both father and mother had been over indulgent;—but the mother, according to her lights, had endeavoured to do her duty by them. But from the commencement of her life she had been educated in deceit, and her married life had seemed to make the practice of deceit necessary to her. Her mother had run away from her father, and she had been tossed to and fro between this and that protector, sometimes being in danger of wanting any one to care for her, till she had been made sharp, incredulous, and untrustworthy by the difficulties of her position. But she was clever, and had picked up an education and good manners amidst the difficulties of her childhood,—and had been beautiful to look at. To marry and have the command of money, to do her duty correctly, to live in a big house and be respected, had been her ambition,—and during the first fifteen years of her married life she was successful amidst great difficulties. She would smile within five minutes of violent ill-usage. Her husband would even strike her,—and the first effort of her mind would be given to conceal the fact from all the world. In latter years he drank too much, and she struggled hard first to prevent the evil, and then to prevent and to hide the ill effects of the evil. But in doing all this she schemed, and lied, and lived a life of manoeuvres. Then, at last, when she felt that she was no longer quite a young woman, she allowed herself to attempt to form friendships for herself, and among her friends was one of the other sex. If fidelity in a wife be compatible with such friendship, if the married state does not exact from a woman the necessity of debarring herself from all friendly intercourse with any man except her lord, Lady Carbury was not faithless. But Sir Carbury became jealous, spoke words which even she could not endure, did things which drove even her beyond the calculations of her prudence,—and she left him. But even this she did in so guarded a way that, as to every step she took, she could prove her innocence. Her life at that period is of little moment to our story, except that it is essential that the reader should know in what she had been slandered. For a month or two all hard words had been said against her by her husband's friends, and even by Sir Patrick himself. But gradually the truth was known, and after a year's separation they came again together and she remained the mistress of his house till he died. She brought him home to England, but during the short period left to him of life in his old country he had been a worn-out, dying invalid. But the scandal of her great misfortune had followed her, and some people were never tired of reminding others that in the course of her married life Lady Carbury had run away from her husband, and had been taken back again by the kind-hearted old gentleman.

Sir Patrick had left behind him a moderate fortune, though by no means great wealth. To his son, who was now Sir Felix Carbury, he had left £1,000 a year; and to his widow as much, with a provision that after his death the latter sum should be divided between his son and daughter. It therefore came to pass that the young man, who had already entered the army when his father died, and upon whom devolved no necessity of keeping a house, and who in fact
not unfrequently lived in his mother's house, had an income equal to that with which his mother and his sister were obliged to maintain a roof over their head. Now Lady Carbury, when she was released from her thralldom at the age of forty, had no idea at all of passing her future life amidst the ordinary penances of widowhood. She had hitherto endeavoured to do her duty, knowing that in accepting her position she was bound to take the good and the bad together. She had certainly encountered hitherto much that was bad. To be scolded, watched, beaten, and sworn at by a choleric old man till she was at last driven out of her house by the violence of his ill-usage; to be taken back as a favour with the assurance that her name would for the remainder of her life be unjustly tarnished; to have her flight constantly thrown in her face; and then at last to become for a year or two the nurse of a dying debauchee, was a high price to pay for such good things as she had hitherto enjoyed. Now at length had come to her a period of relaxation—her reward, her freedom, her chance of happiness. She thought much about herself, and resolved on one or two things. The time for love had gone by, and she would have nothing to do with it. Nor would she marry again for convenience. But she would have friends,—real friends; friends who could help her,—and whom possibly she might help. She would, too, make some career for herself, so that life might not be without an interest to her. She would live in London, and would become somebody at any rate in some circle. Accident at first rather than choice had thrown her among literary people, but that accident had, during the last two years, been supported and corroborated by the desire which had fallen upon her of earning money. She had known from the first that economy would be necessary to her,—not chiefly or perhaps not at all from a feeling that she and her daughter could not live comfortably together on a thousand a year,—but on behalf of her son. She wanted no luxury but a house so placed that people might conceive of her that she lived in a proper part of the town. Of her daughter's prudence she was as well convinced as of her own. She could trust Henrietta in everything. But her son, Sir Felix, was not very trustworthy. And yet Sir Felix was the darling of her heart.

At the time of the writing of the three letters, at which our story is supposed to begin, she was driven very hard for money. Sir Felix was then twenty-five, had been in a fashionable regiment for four years, had already sold out, and, to own the truth at once, had altogether wasted the property which his father had left him. So much the mother knew,—and knew, therefore, that with her limited income she must maintain not only herself and daughter, but also the baronet. She did not know, however, the amount of the baronet's obligations;—nor, indeed, did he, or any one else. A baronet, holding a commission in the Guards, and known to have had a fortune left him by his father, may go very far in getting into debt; and Sir Felix had made full use of all his privileges. His life had been in every way bad. He had become a burden on his mother so heavy;—and on his sister also,—that their life had become one of unavoidable embarrassments. But not for a moment had either of them ever
THE CARBURY FAMILY.

quarrelled with him. Henrietta had been taught by the conduct of both father and mother that every vice might be forgiven in a man and in a son, though every virtue was expected from a woman, and especially from a daughter. The lesson had come to her so early in life that she had learned it without the feeling of any grievance. She lamented her brother's evil conduct as it affected him, but she pardoned it altogether as it affected herself. That all her interests in life should be made subservient to him was natural to her; and when she found that her little comforts were discontinued, and her moderate expenses curtailed because he, having eaten up all that was his own, was now eating up also all that was his mother's, she never complained. Henrietta had been taught to think that men in that rank of life in which she had been born always did eat up everything.

The mother's feeling was less noble,—or perhaps, it might be better be said, more open to censure. The boy, who had been beautiful as a star, had ever been the cynosure of her eyes, the one thing on which her heart had riveted itself. Even during the career of his folly she had hardly ventured to say a word to him with the purport of stopping him on his road to ruin. In everything she had spoilt him as a boy, and in everything she still spoilt him as a man. She was almost proud of his vices, and had taken delight in hearing of doings which if not vicious of themselves had been ruinous from their extravagance. She had so indulged him that even in her own presence he was never ashamed of his own selfishness or apparently conscious of the injustice which he did to others.

From all this it had come to pass that that dabbling in literature which had been commenced partly perhaps from a sense of pleasure in the work, partly as a passport into society, had been converted into hard work by which money if possible might be earned. So that Lady Carbury when she wrote to her friends, the editors, of her struggles was speaking the truth. Tidings had reached her of this and the other man's success, and,—coming near to her still,—of this and that other woman's earnings in literature. And it had seemed to her that, within moderate limits, she might give a wide field to her hopes. Why should she not add a thousand a year to her income, so that Felix might again live like a gentleman and marry that heiress who, in Lady Carbury's look-out into the future, was destined to make all things straight! Who was so handsome as her son? Who could make himself more agreeable? Who had more of that audacity which is the chief thing necessary to the winning of heiresses? And then he could make his wife Lady Carbury. If only enough money might be earned to tide over the present evil day, all might be well.

The one most essential obstacle to the chance of success in all this was probably Lady Carbury's conviction that her end was to be obtained not by producing good books, but by inducing certain people to say that her books were good. She did work hard at what she wrote,—hard enough at any rate to cover her pages quickly; and was, by nature, a clever woman. She could write after a glib, commonplace, sprightly fashion, and had already acquired the knack of spreading all she knew very thin, so that it might cover a vast surface.
She had no ambition to write a good book, but was painfully anxious to write a book that the critics should say was good. Had Mr. Broune, in his closet, told her that her book was absolutely trash, but had undertaken at the same time to have it violently praised in the "Breakfast Table" it may be doubted whether the critic's own opinion would have even wounded her vanity. The woman was false from head to foot, but there was much of good in her, false though she was.

Whether Sir Felix, her son, had become what he was solely by bad training, or whether he had been born bad, who shall say? It is hardly possible that he should not have been better had he been taken away as an infant and subjected to moral training by moral teachers. And yet again it is hardly possible that any training or want of training should have produced a heart so utterly incapable of feeling for others as was his. He could not even feel his own misfortunes unless they touched the outward comforts of the moment. It seemed that he lacked sufficient imagination to realise future misery though the futurity to be considered was divided from the present but by a single month, a single week,—but by a single night. He liked to be kindly treated, to be praised and petted, to be well fed and caressed; and they who so treated him were his chosen friends. He had in this the instincts of a horse, not approaching the higher sympathies of a dog. But it cannot be said of him that he had ever loved any one to the extent of denying himself a moment's gratification on that loved one's behalf. His heart was a stone. But he was beautiful to look at, ready-witted, and intelligent. He was very dark, with that soft olive complexion which so generally gives to young men an appearance of aristocratic breeding. His hair, which was never allowed to become long, was nearly black, and was soft and silky without that taint of grease which is so common with silken-headed darlings. His eyes were long, brown in colour, and were made beautiful by the perfect arch of the perfect eyebrow. But perhaps the glory of the face was due more to the finished moulding and fine symmetry of the nose and mouth than to his other features. On his short upper lip he had a moustache as well formed as his eyebrows, but he wore no other beard. The form of his chin too was perfect, but it lacked that sweetness and softness of expression, indicative of softness of heart, which a dimple conveys. He was about five feet nine in height, and was as excellent in figure as in face. It was admitted by men and clamorously asserted by women that no man had ever been more handsome than Felix Carbury, and it was admitted also that he never showed consciousness of his beauty. He had given himself airs on many scores;—on the score of his money, poor fool, while it lasted; on the score of his title; on the score of his army standing till he lost it; and especially on the score of superiority in fashionable intellect. But he had been clever enough to dress himself always with simplicity and to avoid the appearance of thought about his outward man. As yet the little world of his associates had hardly found out how callous were his affections,—or rather how devoid he was of affection. His airs and his appearance, joined with some cleverness, had carried him through even the
viciousness of his life. In one matter he had marred his name, and by a moment's weakness had injured his character among his friends more than he had done by the folly of three years. There had been a quarrel between him and a brother officer, in which he had been the aggressor; and, when the moment came in which a man's heart should have produced manly conduct, he had first threatened and had then shown the white feather. That was now a year since, and he had partly outlived the evil;—but some men still remembered that Felix Carbury had been cowed, and had cowered.

It was now his business to marry an heiress. He was well aware that it was so, and was quite prepared to face his destiny. But he lacked something in the art of making love. He was beautiful, had the manners of a gentleman, could talk well, lacked nothing of audacity, and had no feeling of repugnance at declaring a passion which he did not feel. But he knew so little of the passion, that he could hardly make even a young girl believe that he felt it. When he talked of love, he not only thought that he was talking nonsense, but showed that he thought so. From this fault he had already failed with one young lady reputed to have £40,000, who had refused him because, as she naively said, she knew "he did not really care." "How can I show that I care more than by wishing to make you my wife?" he had asked. "I don't know that you can, but all the same you don't care," she said. And so that young lady escaped the pit-fall. Now there was another young lady, to whom the reader shall be introduced in time, whom Sir Felix was instigated to pursue with unremitting diligence. Her wealth was not defined, as had been the £40,000 of her predecessor, but was known to be very much greater than that. It was, indeed, generally supposed to be fathomless, bottomless, endless. It was said that in regard to money for ordinary expenditure, money for houses, servants, horses, jewels, and the like, one sum was the same as another to the father of this young lady. He had great concerns;—concerns so great that the payment of ten or twenty thousand pounds upon any trifle was the same thing to him,—as to men who are comfortable in their circumstances it matters little whether they pay sixpence or ninepence for their mutton chops. Such a man may be ruined at any time; but there was no doubt that to any one marrying his daughter during the present season of his outrageous prosperity he could give a very large fortune indeed. Lady Carbury, who had known the rock on which her son had been once wrecked, was very anxious that Sir Felix should at once make a proper use of the intimacy which he had effected in the house of this topping Cæsus of the day.

And now there must be a few words said about about Henrietta Carbury. Of course she was of infinitely less importance than her brother, who was a baronet, the head of that branch of the Carbury's, and her mother's darling; and, therefore, a few words should suffice. She also was very lovely, being like her brother; but somewhat less dark and with features less absolutely regular. But she had in her countenance a full measure of that sweetness of expression which seems to imply that consideration of self is subordinated to consideration for others. This
sweetness was altogether lacking to her brother. And her face was a true index of her character. Again, who shall say why her brother and sister had become so opposite to each other; whether they would have been thus different had both been taken away as infants from their father's and mother's training, or whether the girl's virtues were owing altogether to the lower place which she had held in her parent's heart. She, at any rate, had not been spoilt by a title, by the command of money, and by the temptations of too early acquaintance with the world. At the present time she was barely twenty-one years old, and had not seen much of London society. Her mother did not frequent balls, and during the last two years there had grown upon them a necessity for economy which was inimical to many gloves and costly dresses. Sir Felix went out of course, but Hetta Carbury spent most of her time at home with her mother in Welbeck Street. Occasionally the world saw her, and when the world did see her the world declared that she was a charming girl. The world was so far right.

But for Henrietta Carbury the romance of life had already commenced in real earnest. There was another branch of the Carbury's, the head branch, which was now represented by one Roger Carbury, of Carbury Hall. Roger Carbury was a gentleman of whom much will have to be said, but here, at this moment, it need only be told that he was passionately in love with his cousin Henrietta. He was, however, nearly forty years old, and there was one Paul Montagu whom Henrietta had seen.

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CHAPTER III.

THE BEARGARDEN.

LADY CARBURY'S house in Welbeck Street was a modest house enough,—with no pretensions to be a mansion, hardly assuming even to be a residence; but, having some money in her hands when she first took it, she had made it pretty and pleasant, and was still proud to feel that in spite of the hardness of her position she had comfortable belongings around her when her literary friends came to see her on her Tuesday evenings. Here she was now living with her son and daughter. The back drawing-room was divided from the front by doors that were permanently closed, and in this she carried on her great work. Here she wrote her books and contrived her system for the inveigling of editors and critics. Here she was rarely disturbed by her daughter, and admitted no visitors except editors and critics. But her son was controlled by no household laws, and would break in upon her privacy without remorse. She had hardly finished two galloping notes after completing her letter to Mr. Ferrinand Alf, when Felix entered the room with a cigar in his mouth and threw himself upon the sofa.
“Just so, Mother;—but how about the Twenty Pounds?”
"My dear boy," she said, "pray leave your tobacco below when you come in here."

"What affectation it is, mother," he said, throwing, however, the half-smoked cigar into the fire-place. "Some women swear they like smoke, others say they hate it like the devil. It depends altogether on whether they wish to flatter or snub a fellow."

"You don't suppose that I wish to snub you?"

"Upon my word I don't know. I wonder whether you can let me have twenty pounds?"

"My dear Felix!"

"Just so, mother;—but how about the twenty pounds?"

"What is it for, Felix?"

"Well;—to tell the truth, to carry on the game for the nonce till something is settled. A fellow can't live without some money in his pocket. I do with as little as most fellows. I pay for nothing that I can help. I even get my hair cut on credit, and as long as it was possible I had a brougham, to save cabs."

"What is to be the end of it, Felix?"

"I never could see the end of anything, mother. I never could nurse a horse when the hounds were going well in order to be in at the finish. I never could pass a dish that I liked in favour of those that were to follow. What's the use?" The young man did not say "carpe diem," but that was the philosophy which he intended to preach.

"Have you been at the Melmotte's to-day?" It was now five o'clock on a winter afternoon, the hour at which ladies are drinking tea, and idle men playing whist at the clubs,—at which young idle men are sometimes allowed to flirt, and at which, as Lady Carbury thought, her son might have been paying his court to Marie Melmotte the great heiress.

"I have just come away."

"And what do you think of her?"

"To tell the truth, mother, I have thought very little about her. She is not pretty, she is not plain; she is not clever, she is not stupid; she is neither saint nor sinner."

"The more likely to make a good wife."

"Perhaps so. I am at any rate quite willing to believe that as wife she would be 'good enough for me.'"

"What does the mother say?"

"The mother is a caution. I cannot help speculating whether, if I marry the daughter, I shall ever find out where the mother came from. Dolly Longestaffe says that somebody says that she was a Bohemian Jewess; but I think she's too fat for that."

"What does it matter, Felix?"

"Not in the least."

"Is she civil to you?"

"Yes, civil enough."

"And the father?"

"Well, he does not turn me out, or anything of that sort. Of course there are half-a-dozen after her, and I think the old fellow is bewildered among them all. He's thinking more of getting dukes to dine
with him than of his daughter's lovers. Any fellow might pick her up who happened to hit her fancy."

"And why not you?"

"Why not, mother? I am doing my best, and it's no good flogging a willing horse. Can you let me have the money?"

"Oh, Felix, I think you hardly know how poor we are. You have still got your hunters down at the place!"

"I have got two horses, if you mean that; and I haven't paid a shilling for their keep since the season began. Look here, mother; this is a risky sort of game, I grant, but I am playing it by your advice. If I can marry Miss Melmotte, I suppose all will be right. But I don't think the way to get her would be to throw up everything and let all the world know that I haven't got a copper. To do that kind of thing a man must live a little up to the mark. I've brought my hunting down to a minimum, but if I gave it up altogether there would be lots of fellows to tell them in Grosvenor Square why I had done so."

There was an apparent truth in this argument which the poor woman was unable to answer. Before the interview was over the money demanded was forthcoming, though at the time it could be but ill afforded, and the youth went away apparently with a light heart, hardly listening to his mother's entreaties that the affair with Marie Melmotte might, if possible, be brought to a speedy conclusion.

Felix, when he left his mother, went down to the only club to which he now belonged. Clubs are pleasant resorts in all respects but one. They require ready money, or even worse than that in respect to annual payments,—money in advance; and the young baronet had been absolutely forced to restrict himself. He, as a matter of course, out of those to which he had possessed the right of entrance, chose the worst. It was called the Beargarden, and had been lately opened with the express view of combining parsimony with prodigality. Clubs were ruined, so said certain young parsimonious profligates, by providing comforts for old fogies who paid little or nothing but their subscriptions, and took out by their mere presence three times as much as they gave. This club was not to be opened till three o'clock in the afternoon, before which hour the promoters of the Beargarden thought it improbable that they and their fellows would want a club. There were to be no morning papers taken, no library, no morning-room. Dining-rooms, billiard-rooms, and card-rooms would suffice for the Beargarden. Everything was to be provided by a purveyor, so that the club should be cheated only by one man. Everything was to be luxurious, but the luxuries were to be achieved at first cost. It had been a happy thought, and the club was said to prosper. Herr Vossner, the purveyor, was a jewel, and so carried on affairs that there was no trouble about anything. He would assist even in smoothing little difficulties as to the settling of card accounts, and had behaved with the greatest tenderness to the drawers of cheques whose bankers had harshly declared them to have "no effects." Herr Vossner was a jewel, and the Beargarden was a success. Perhaps no young man about town enjoyed the Beargarden more thoroughly than did Sir Felix Carbury. The club was
in the close vicinity of other clubs, in a small street turning out of St. James's Street, and piqued itself on its outward quietness and sobriety. Why pay for stone-work for other people to look at;—why lay out money in marble pillars and cornices, seeing that you can neither eat such things, nor drink them, nor gamble with them? But the Beargarden had the best wines,—or thought that it had,—and the easiest chairs, and two billiard-tables than which nothing more perfect had ever been made to stand upon legs. Hither Sir Felix wended on that January afternoon as soon as he had his mother's cheque for £20 in his pocket.

He found his special friend, Dolly Longstaffe, standing on the steps with a cigar in his mouth, and gazing vacantly at the dull brick house opposite. "Going to dine here, Dolly?" said Sir Felix.

"I suppose I shall, because it's such a lot of trouble to go anywhere else. I'm engaged somewhere, I know; but I'm not up to getting home and dressing. By George! I don't know how fellows do that kind of thing. I can't."

"Going to hunt to-morrow?"

"Well, yes; but I don't suppose I shall. I was going to hunt every day last week, but my fellow never would get me up in time. I can't tell why it is that things are done in such a beastly way. Why shouldn't fellows begin to hunt at two or three, so that a fellow needn't get up in the middle of the night?"

"Because one can't ride by moonlight, Dolly."

"It isn't moonlight at three. At any rate I can't get myself to Euston Square by nine. I don't think that fellow of mine likes getting up himself. He says he comes in and wakes me, but I never remember it."

"How many horses have you got at Leighton, Dolly?"

"How many? There were five, but I think that fellow down there sold one; but then I think he bought another. I know he did something."

"Who rides them?"

"He does, I suppose. That is, of course, I ride them myself, only I so seldom get down. Somebody told me that Grassough was riding two of them last week. I don't think I ever told him he might. I think he tipped that fellow of mine; and I call that a low kind of thing to do. I'd ask him, only I know he'd say that I had lent them. Perhaps I did when I was tight, you know."

"You and Grassough were never pals."

"I don't like him a bit. He gives himself airs because he is a lord, and is devilish ill-natured. I don't know why he should want to ride my horses."

"To save his own."

"He isn't hard up. Why doesn't he have his own horses? I'll tell you what, Carbury, I've made up my mind to one thing, and, by Jove, I'll stick to it. I never will lend a horse again to anybody. If fellows want horses let them buy them."

"But some fellows haven't got any money, Dolly."

"Then they ought to go tick. I don't think I've paid for any
of mine I've bought this season. There was somebody here yester-
day——"

"What! here at the club?"

"Yes; followed me here to say he wanted to be paid for some-
thing! It was horses, I think, because of the fellow's trousers."

"What did you say?"

"Me! Oh, I didn't say anything."

"And how did it end?"

"When he'd done talking I offered him a cigar, and while he was
biting off the end I went up-stairs. I suppose he went away when
he was tired of waiting."

"I'll tell you what, Dolly; I wish you'd let me ride two of yours
for a couple of days,—that is, of course, if you don't want them your-
self. You ain't tight now, at any rate."

"No; I ain't tight," said Dolly, with melancholy acquiescence.

"I mean that I wouldn't like to borrow your horses without your
remembering all about it. Nobody knows as well as you do how
awfully done up I am. I shall pull through at last, but it's an awful
squeeze in the meantime. There's nobody I'd ask such a favour of
except you."

"Well, you may have them;—that is, for two days. I don't know
whether that fellow of mine will believe you. He wouldn't believe
Grasslough, and told him so. But Grasslough took them out of the
stables. That's what somebody told me."

"You could write a line to your groom."

"Oh, my dear fellow, that is such a bore; I don't think I could do
that. My fellow will believe you, because you and I have been pals.
I think I'll have a little drop of curacao before dinner. Come along
and try it. It'll give us an appetite."

It was then nearly seven o'clock. Nine hours afterwards the same
two men, with two others,—of whom young Lord Grasslough, Dolly
Longestaff's peculiar aversion, was one,—were just rising from a card-
table in one of the up-stairs rooms of the club. For it was under-
stood that, though the Beargarden was not to be open before three
o'clock in the afternoon, the accommodation denied during the day
was to be given freely during the night. No man could get a break-
fast at the Beargarden, but suppers at three o'clock in the morning
were quite within the rule. Such a supper, or rather succession of
suppering, there had been to-night, various devils and broils and
hot toasts having been brought up from time to time first for one
and then for another. But there had been no cessation of gambling since
the cards had first been opened about ten o'clock. At four in the
morning Dolly Longestaff was certainly in a condition to lend his
horses and to remember nothing about it. He was quite affectionate
with Lord Grasslough, as he was also with his other companions,—
affection being the normal state of his mind when in that condition.
He was by no means helplessly drunk, and was, perhaps, hardly more
silly than when he was sober; but he was willing to play at any game
whether he understood it or not, and for any stakes. When Sir Felix
got up and said he would play no more, Dolly also got up, apparently
quite contented. When Lord Grasslough, with a dark scowl on his
face, expressed his opinion that it was not just the thing for men to break up like that when so much money had been lost, Dolly as willingly sat down again. But Dolly's sitting down was not sufficient. "I'm going to hunt to-morrow," said Sir Felix,—meaning that day,—"and I shall play no more. A man must go to bed at some time."

"I don't see it at all," said Lord Grasslough. "It's an understood thing that when a man has won as much as you have he should stay."

"Stay how long?" said Sir Felix, with an angry look. "That's nonsense; there must be an end of everything, and there's an end of this for me to-night."

"Oh, if you choose," said his lordship.

"I do choose. Good night, Dolly; we'll settle this next time we meet. I've got it all entered."

The night had been one very serious in its results to Sir Felix. He had sat down to the card-table with the proceeds of his mother's cheque, a poor £20, and now he had,—he didn't at all know how much in his pockets. He also had drunk, but not so as to obscure his mind. He knew that Longestaffe owed him over £900, and he knew also that he had received more than that in ready money and cheques from Lord Grasslough and the other player. Dolly Longestaffe's money, too, would certainly be paid, though Dolly did complain of the importunity of his tradesmen. As he walked up St. James's Street, looking for a cab, he presume himself to be worth over £700. When begging for a small sum from Lady Carbury, he had said that he could not carry on the game without some ready money, and had considered himself fortunate in fleecing his mother as he had done. Now he was in the possession of wealth,—of wealth that might, at any rate, be sufficient to aid him materially in the object he had in hand. He never for a moment thought of paying his bills. Even the large sum of which he had become so unexpectedly possessed would not have gone far with him in such a quixotic object as that; but he could now look bright, and buy presents, and be seen with money in his hands. It is hard even to make love in these days without something in your purse.

He found no cab, but in his present frame of mind was indifferent to the trouble of walking home. There was something so joyous in the feeling of the possession of all this money that it made the night air pleasant to him. Then, of a sudden, he remembered the low wall with which his mother had spoken of her poverty when he demanded assistance from her. Now he could give her back the £20. But it occurred to him sharply, with an amount of carefulness quite new to him, that it would be foolish to do so. How soon might he want it again? And, moreover, he could not repay the money without explaining to her how he had gotten it. It would be preferable to say nothing about his money. As he let himself into the house and went up to his room he resolved that he would not say anything about it.

On that morning he was at the station at nine, and hunted down in Buckinghamshire, riding two of Dolly Longestaffe’s horses,—for the use of which he paid Dolly Longestaffe’s "fellow" thirty shillings.
CHAPTER IV.

MADAME MELMOTTE’S BALL.

THE next night but one after that of the gambling transaction at the Beargarden, a great ball was given in Grosvenor Square. It was a ball on a scale so magnificent that it had been talked about ever since Parliament met, now about a fortnight since. Some people had expressed an opinion that such a ball as this was intended to be could not be given successfully in February. Others declared that the money which was to be spent,—an amount which would make this affair something quite new in the annals of ball-giving,—would give the thing such a character that it would certainly be successful. And much more than money had been expended. Almost incredible efforts had been made to obtain the co-operation of great people, and these efforts had at last been grandly successful. The Duchess of Stevenage had come up from Castle Albury herself to be present at it and to bring her daughters, though it has never been her Grace’s wont to be in London at this inclement season. No doubt the persuasion used with the Duchess had been very strong. Her brother, Lord Alfred Grendall, was known to be in great difficulties, which,—so people said,—had been considerably modified by opportune pecuniary assistance. And then it was certain that one of the young Grendalls, Lord Alfred’s second son, had been appointed to some mercantile position, for which he received a salary which his most intimate friends thought that he was hardly qualified to earn. It was certainly a fact that he went to Abchurch Lane, in the City, four or five days a week, and that he did not occupy his time in so unaccustomed a manner for nothing. Where the Duchess of Stevenage went all the world would go. And it became known at the last moment, that is to say only the day before the party, that a prince of the blood royal was to be there. How this had been achieved nobody quite understood; but there were rumours that a certain lady’s jewels had been rescued from the pawnbroker’s. Everything was done on the same scale. The Prime Minister had indeed declined to allow his name to appear on the list; but one Cabinet Minister and two or three under-secretaries had agreed to come because it was felt that the giver of the ball might before long be the master of considerable parliamentary interest. It was believed that he had an eye to politics, and it is always wise to have great wealth on one’s own side. There had at one time been much solicitude about the ball. Many anxious thoughts had been given. When great attempts fail, the failure is disastrous, and may be ruinous. But this ball had now been put beyond the chance of failure.

The giver of the ball was Augustus Melmotte, Esq., the father of the girl whom Sir Felix Carbury desired to marry, and the husband
of the lady who was said to have been a Bohemian Jewess. It was thus that the gentleman chose to have himself designated, though within the last two years he had arrived in London from Paris, and had at first been known as M. Melmotte. But he had declared of himself that he had been born in England, and that he was an Englishman. He admitted that his wife was a foreigner,—an admission that was necessary as she spoke very little English. Melmotte himself spoke his "native" language fluently, but with an accent which betrayed at least a long expatriation. Miss Melmotte,—who a very short time since had been known as Mademoiselle Marie,—spoke English well, but as a foreigner. In regard to her it was acknowledged that she had been born out of England,—some said in New York; but Madame Melmotte, who must have known, had declared that the great event had taken place in Paris.

It was at any rate an established fact that Mr. Melmotte had made his wealth in France. He no doubt had had enormous dealings in other countries, as to which stories were told which must surely have been exaggerated. It was said that he had made a railway across Russia, that he provisioned the Southern army in the American civil war, that he had supplied Austria with arms, and had at one time bought up all the iron in England. He could make or mar any company by buying or selling stock, and could make money dear or cheap as he pleased. All this was said of him in his praise,—but it was also said that he was regarded in Paris as the most gigantic swindler that had ever lived; that he had made that City too hot to hold him; that he had endeavoured to establish himself in Vienna, but had been warned away by the police; and that he had at length found that British freedom would alone allow him to enjoy, without persecution, the fruits of his industry. He was now established privately in Grosvenor Square and officially in Abchurch Lane; and it was known to all the world that a Royal Prince, a Cabinet Minister, and the very cream of duchesses were going to his wife's ball. All this had been done within twelve months.

There was but one child in the family, one heiress for all this wealth. Melmotte himself was a large man, with bushy whiskers and rough thick hair, with heavy eyebrows, and a wonderful look of power about his mouth and chin. This was so strong as to redeem his face from vulgarity; but the countenance and appearance of the man were on the whole unpleasant, and, I may say, untrustworthy. He looked as though he were purse-proud and a bully. She was fat and fair,—unlike in colour to our traditional Jewesses; but she had the Jewish nose and the Jewish contraction of the eyes. There was certainly very little in Madame Melmotte to recommend her, unless it was a readiness to spend money on any object that might be suggested to her by her new acquaintances. It sometimes seemed that she had a commission from her husband to give away presents to any who would accept them. The world had received the man as Augustus Melmotte, Esq. The world so addressed him on the very numerous letters which reached him, and so inscribed him among the directors of three dozen companies to which he
belonged. But his wife was still Madame Melmotte. The daughter had been allowed to take her rank with an English title. She was now Miss Melmotte on all occasions.

Marie Melmotte had been accurately described by Felix Carbury to his mother. She was not beautiful, she was not clever, and she was not a saint. But then neither was she plain, nor stupid, nor, especially, a sinner. She was a little thing, hardly over twenty years of age, very unlike her father or mother, having no trace of the Jewess in her countenance, who seemed to be overwhelmed by the sense of her own position. With such people as the Melmottes things go fast, and it was very well known that Miss Melmotte had already had one lover who had been nearly accepted. The affair, however, had gone off. In this "going off" no one imputed to the young lady blame or even misfortune. It was not supposed that she had either jilted or been jilted. As in royal espousals interests of State regulate their expedience with an acknowledged absence, with even a proclaimed impossibility, of personal predilections, so in this case was money allowed to have the same weight. Such a marriage would or would not be sanctioned in accordance with great pecuniary arrangements. The young Lord Nidderdale, the eldest son of the Marquis of Aud Reekie, had offered to take the girl and make her Marchioness in the process of time for half a million down. Melmotte had not objected to the sum, so it was said, but had proposed to tie it up. Nidderdale had desired to have it free in his own grasp, and would not move on any other terms. Melmotte had been anxious to secure the Marquis, very anxious to secure the Marchioness; for at that time terms had not been made with the Duchess; but at last he had lost his temper, and had asked his lordship's lawyer whether it was likely that he would entrust such a sum of money to such a man. "You are willing to trust your only child to him," said the lawyer. Melmotte scowled at the man for a few seconds from under his bushy eyebrows; then told him that his answer had nothing in it, and marched out of the room. So that affair was over. I doubt whether Lord Nidderdale had ever said a word of love to Marie Melmotte, or whether the poor girl had expected it. Her destiny had no doubt been explained to her.

Others had tried and had broken down somewhat in the same fashion. Each had treated the girl as an encumbrance he was to undertake, at a very great price. But as affairs prospered with the Melmottes, as princes and duchesses were obtained by other means, costly no doubt, but not so ruinously costly, the immediate disposition of Marie became less necessary, and Melmotte reduced his offers. The girl herself, too, began to have an opinion. It was said that she had absolutely rejected Lord Grasslough, whose father indeed was in a state of bankruptcy, who had no income of his own, who was ugly, vicious, ill-tempered, and without any power of recommending himself to a girl. She had had experience since Lord Nidderdale, with a half laugh, had told her that he might just as well take her for his wife, and was now tempted from time to time to contemplate her own happiness and her own condition. People
around were beginning to say that if Sir Felix Carbury managed his affairs well he might be the happy man.

There was considerable doubt whether Marie was the daughter of that Jewish-looking woman. Enquiries had been made, but not successfully, as to the date of the Melmotte marriage. There was an idea abroad that Melmotte had got his first money with his wife, and had gotten it not very long ago. Then other people said that Marie was not his daughter at all. Altogether the mystery was rather pleasant as the money was certain. Of the certainty of the money in daily use there could be no doubt. There was the house. There was the furniture. There were the carriages, the horses, the servants with the livery coats and powdered heads, and the servants with the black coats and unpowdered heads. There were the gems, and the presents, and all the nice things that money can buy. There were two dinner parties every day, one at two o'clock called lunch, and the other at eight. The tradesmen had learned enough to be quite free of doubt, and in the City Mr. Melmotte's name was worth any money,—though his character was perhaps worth but little.

The large house on the south side of Grosvenor-Square was all ablaze by ten o'clock. The broad verandah had been turned into a conservatory, had been covered in with boards contrived to look like trellis-work, was heated with hot air and filled with exotics at some fabulous price. A covered way had been made from the door, down across the pathway, to the road, and the police had, I fear, been bribed to frighten foot passengers into a belief that they were bound to go round. The house had been so arranged that it was impossible to know where you were, when once in it. The hall was a paradise. The staircase was fairyland. The lobbies were grottoes rich with ferns. Walls had been knocked away and arches had been constructed. The leads behind had been supported and walled in, and covered and carpeted. The ball had possession of the ground floor and first floor, and the house seemed to be endless. "It's to cost sixty thousand pounds," said the Marchioness of Auld Reekie to her old friend the Countess of Mid-Lothian. The Marchioness had come in spite of her son's misfortune when she heard that the Duchess of Stevehage was to be there. "And worse spent money never was wasted," said the Countess. "By all accounts it was as badly come by," said the Marchioness. Then the two old noblewomen, one after the other, made graciously flattering speeches to the much-worn Bohemian Jewess, who was standing in fairyland to receive her guests, almost fainting under the greatness of the occasion.

The three saloons on the first or drawing-room floor had been prepared for dancing, and here Marie was stationed. The Duchess had however undertaken to see that somebody should set the dancing going, and she had commissioned her nephew Miles Greendall, the young gentleman who now frequented the City, to give directions to the band and to make himself generally useful. Indeed there had sprung up a considerable intimacy between the Greendall family,—that is Lord Alfred's branch of the Greendalls,—and the Melmottes; which was as it should be, as each could give much and each receive
much. It was known that Lord Alfred had not a shilling; but his brother was a duke and his sister was a duchess, and for the last thirty years there had been one continual anxiety for poor dear Alfred, who had tumbled into an unfortunate marriage without a shilling, had spent his own moderate patrimony, had three sons and three daughters, and had lived now for a very long time entirely on the unwilling contributions of his noble relatives. Melmotte could support the whole family in affluence without feeling the burden;—and why should he not? There had once been an idea that Miles should attempt to win the heiress, but it had soon been found expedient to abandon it. Miles had no title, no position of his own, and was hardly big enough for the place. It was in all respects better that the waters of the fountain should be allowed to irrigate mildly the whole Grendall family;—and so Miles went into the city.

The ball was opened by a quadrille in which Lord Buntingford, the eldest son of the Duchess, stood up with Marie. Various arrangements had been made, and this among them. We may say that it had been part of a bargain. Lord Buntingford had objected mildly, being a young man devoted to business, fond of his own order, rather shy, and not given to dancing. But he had allowed his mother to prevail. "Of course they are vulgar," the Duchess had said,—"so much so as to be no longer distasteful because of the absurdity of the thing. I dare say he hasn't been very honest. When men make so much money, I don't know how they can have been honest. Of course it's done for a purpose. It's all very well saying that it isn't right, but what are we to do about Alfred's children? Miles is to have £500 a-year. And then he is always about the house. And between you and me they have got up those bills of Alfred's, and have said they can lie in their safe till it suits your uncle to pay them."

"They will lie there a long time," said Lord Buntingford.

"Of course they expect something in return; do dance with the girl once." Lord Buntingford disapproved—mildly, and did as his mother asked him.

The affair went off very well. There were three or four card-tables in one of the lower rooms, and at one of them sat Lord Alfred Grendall and Mr. Melmotte, with two or three other players, cutting in and out at the end of each rubber. Playing whist was Lord Alfred's only accomplishment, and almost the only occupation of his life. He began it daily at his club at three o'clock, and continued playing till two in the morning with an interval of a couple of hours for his dinner. This he did during ten months of the year, and during the other two he frequented some watering-place at which whist prevailed. He did not gamble, never playing for more than the club stakes and bets. He gave to the matter his whole mind, and must have excelled those who were generally opposed to him. But so obdurate was fortune to Lord Alfred that he could not make money even of whist. Melmotte was very anxious to get into Lord Alfred's club,—The Peripatetics. It was pleasant to see the grace with which he lost his money, and the sweet intimacy with which he called his lordship Alfred. Lord Alfred had a remnant of feeling left, and would have liked to kick him. Though Melmotte was by far the bigger man, and
was also the younger, Lord Alfred would not have lacked the pluck to kick him. Lord Alfred, in spite of his habitual idleness and vapid uselessness, had still left about him a dash of vigour, and sometimes thought that he would kick Melmotte and have done with it. But there were his poor boys, and those bills in Melmotte's safe. And then Melmotte lost his points so regularly, and paid his bets with such absolute good humour! "Come and have a glass of champagne, Alfred," Melmotte said, 'as the two cut out together. Lord Alfred liked champagne, and followed his host; but as he went he almost made up his mind that on some future day he would kick the man.

Late in the evening Marie Melmotte was waltzing with Felix Carbury, and Henrietta Carbury was then standing by talking to one Mr. Paul Montague. Lady Carbury was also there. She was not well inclined either to balls or to such people as the Melmotes; nor was Henrietta. But Felix had suggested that, bearing in mind his prospects as to the heiress, they had better accept the invitation which he would cause to have sent to them. They did so; and then Paul Montague also got a card, not altogether to Lady Carbury's satisfaction. Lady Carbury was very gracious to Madame Melmotte for two minutes, and then slid into a chair expecting nothing but misery for the evening. She, however, was a woman who could do her duty and endure without complaint.

"It is the first great great ball I ever was at in London," said Hetta Carbury to Paul Montague.

"And how do you like it?"

"Not at all. How should I like it? I know nobody here. I don't understand how it is that at these parties people do know each other, or whether they all go dancing about without knowing."

"Just that; I suppose when they are used to it they get introduced backwards and forwards, and then they can know each other as fast as they like. If you would wish to dance why won't you dance with me?"

"I have danced with you,—twice already."

"Is there any law against dancing three times?"

"But I don't especially want to dance," said Henrietta. "I think I'll go and console poor mamma, who has got nobody to speak to her." Just at this moment, however, Lady Carbury was not in that wretched condition, as an unexpected friend had come to her relief.

Sir Felix and Marie Melmotte had been spinning round and round throughout a long waltz, thoroughly enjoying the excitement of the music and the movement. To give Felix Carbury what little praise might be his due, it is necessary to say that he did not lack physical activity. He would dance, and ride, and shoot eagerly, with an animation that made him happy for the moment. It was an affair not of thought or calculation, but of physical organisation. And Marie Melmotte had been thoroughly happy. She loved dancing with all her heart if she could only dance in a manner pleasant to herself. She had been warned especially as to some men,—that she should not dance with them. She had been almost thrown into Lord Nidderdale's arms, and had been prepared to take him at her father's bidding. But she had never had the slightest pleasure in his society,
and had only not been wretched because she had not as yet recognised that she had an identity of her own in the disposition of which she herself should have a voice. She certainly had never cared to dance with Lord Nidderdale. Lord Grasslough she had absolutely hated, though at first she had hardly dared to say so. One or two others had been obnoxious to her in different ways, but they had passed on, or were passing on, out of her way. There was no one at the present moment whom she had been commanded by her father to accept should an offer be made. But she did like dancing with Sir Felix Carbury.

It was not only that the man was handsome but that he had a power of changing the expression of his countenance, a play of face, which belied altogether his real disposition. He could seem to be hearty and true till the moment came in which he had really to expose his heart,—or to try to expose it. Then he failed, knowing nothing about it. But in the approaches to intimacy with a girl he could be very successful. He had already nearly got beyond this with Marie Melmotte; but Marie was by no means quick in discovering his deficiencies. To her he had seemed like a god. If she might be allowed to be wooed by Sir Felix Carbury, and to give herself to him, she thought that she would be contented.

"How well you dance," said Sir Felix, as soon as he had breath for speaking.

"Do I?" She spoke with a slightly foreign accent, which gave a little prettiness to her speech. "I was never told so. But nobody ever told me anything about myself."

"I should like to tell you everything about yourself, from the beginning to the end."

"Ah,—but you don’t know."

"I would find out. I think I could make some good guesses. I’ll tell you what you would like best in all the world."

"What is that?"

"Somebody that liked you best in all the world."

"Ah,—yes; if one knew who?"

"How can you know, Miss Melmotte, but by believing."

"That is not the way to know. If a girl told me that she liked me better than any other girl, I should not know it, just because she said so. I should have to find it out."

"And if a gentleman told you so?"

"I shouldn’t believe him a bit, and I should not care to find out. But I should like to have some girl for a friend whom I could love, oh, ten times better than myself."

"So should I."

"Have you no particular friend?"

"I mean a girl whom I could love,—oh, ten times better than myself."

"Now you are laughing at me, Sir Felix," said Miss Melmotte.

"I wonder whether that will come to anything?" said Paul Montague to Miss Carbury. They had come back into the drawing-room, and had been watching the approaches to love-making which the baronet was opening.
"You mean Felix and Miss Melmotte. I hate to think of such things, Mr. Montague."
"It would be a magnificent chance for him."
"To marry a girl, the daughter of vulgar people, just because she will have a great deal of money? He can't care for her really,—because she is rich."
"But he wants money so dreadfully! It seems to me that there is no other condition of things under which Felix can face the world, but by being the husband of an heiress."
"What a dreadful thing to say!"
"But isn't it true? He has beggared himself."
"Oh, Mr. Montague."
"And he will beggar you and your mother."
"I don't care about myself."
"Others do though."
As he said this he did not look at her, but spoke through his teeth, as if he were angry both with himself and her.
"I did not think you would have spoken so harshly of Felix."
"I don't speak harshly of him, Miss Carbury. I haven't said that it was his own fault. He seems to be one of those who have been born to spend money; and as this girl will have plenty of money to spend, I think it would be a good thing if he were to marry her. If Felix had £20,000 a year, everybody would think him the finest fellow in the world." In saying this, however, Mr. Paul Montague showed himself unfit to gauge the opinion of the world. Whether Sir Felix be rich or poor, the world, evil-hearted as it is, will never think him a fine fellow.

Lady Carbury had been seated for nearly half an hour in uncomplaining solitude under a bust, when she was delighted by the appearance of Mr. Frederick Alf. "You here?" she said.
"Why not? Melmotte and I are brother adventurers."
"I should have thought you would find so little here to amuse you."
"I have found you; and, in addition to that, duchesses and their daughters without number. They expect Prince George!"
"Do they?"
"And Legge Wilson from the India Office is here already. I spoke to him in some jewelled bower as I made my way here, not five minutes since. It's quite a success. Don't you think it very nice, Lady Carbury?"
"I don't know whether you are joking or in earnest."
"I never joke. I say it is very nice. These people are spending thousands upon thousands to gratify you and me and others, and all they want in return is a little countenance."
"Do you mean to give it then?"
"I am giving it them."
"Ah;—but the countenance of the "Evening Pulpit." Do you mean to give them that?"
"Well; it is not in our line exactly to give a catalogue of names and to record ladies' dresses. Perhaps it may be better for our host himself that he should be kept out of the newspapers."
"Are you going to be very severe upon poor me, Mr. Alf?" said the lady after a pause.
"We are never severe upon anybody, Lady Carbury. Here's the Prince. What will they do with him now they've caught him? Oh, they're going to make him dance, with the heiress. Poor heiress!"

"Poor Prince!" said Lady Carbury.

"Not at all. She's a nice little girl enough, and he'll have nothing to trouble him. But how is she, poor thing, to talk to royal blood?"

Poor thing indeed! The Prince was brought into the big room where Marie was still being talked to by Felix Carbury, and was at once made to understand that she was to stand up and dance with royalty. The introduction was managed in a very business-like manner. Miles Greendall first came in and found the female victim; the Duchess followed with the male victim. Madame Melmotte, who had been on her legs till she was ready to sink, waddled behind, but was not allowed to take any part in the affair. The band were playing a galop, but that was stopped at once, to the great confusion of the dancers. In two minutes Miles Greendall had made up a set. He stood up with his aunt, the Duchess, as vis-a-vis to Marie and the Prince, till, about the middle of the quadrille, Leggs Wilson was found and made to take his place. Lord Buntingford had gone away; but then there were still present two daughters of the Duchess who were rapidly caught. Sir Felix Carbury, being good-looking and having a name, was made to dance with one of them, and Lord Grasslough with the other. There were four other couples, all made up of titled people, as it was intended that this special dance should be chronicled, if not in the "Evening Pulpit," in some less serious daily journal. A paid reporter was present in the house ready to rush off with the list as soon as the dance should be a realized fact. The Prince himself did not quite understand why he was there, but they who marshalled his life for him had so marshalled it for the present moment. He himself probably knew nothing about the lady's diamonds which had been rescued, or the considerable subscription to St. George's Hospital which had been extracted from Mr. Melmotte as a make-weight. Poor Marie felt as though the burden of the hour would be greater than she could bear, and looked as though she would have fled had flight been possible. But the trouble passed quickly, and was not really severe. The Prince said a word or two between each figure, and did not seem to expect a reply. He made a few words go a long way, and was well trained in the work of easing the burden of his own greatness for those who were for the moment inflicted with it. When the dance was over he was allowed to escape after the ceremony of a single glass of champagne drank in the presence of the hostess. Considerable skill was shown in keeping the presence of his royal guest a secret from the host himself till the Prince was gone. Melmotte would have desired to pour out that glass of wine with his own hands, to solace his tongue by Royal Highnesses, and would probably have been troublesome and disagreeable. Miles Greendall had understood all this and had managed the affair very well. "Bless my soul;—his Royal Highness come and gone!" exclaimed Melmotte. "You and my father were so fast at your whist that it was impossible to get you away," said Miles. Melmotte was not a fool, and understood it all;—understood not only
THE DUCHESS FOLLOWED WITH THE MALE VICTIM.
that it had been thought better that he should not speak to the Prince, but also that it might be better that it should be so. He could not have everything at once. Miles Grendall was very useful to him, and he would not quarrel with Miles, at any rate as yet.

"Have another rubber, Alfred?" he said to Miles's father as the carriages were taking away the guests.

Lord Alfred had taken sundry glasses of champagne, and for a moment forgot the bills in the safe, and the good things which his boys were receiving. "Damn that kind of nonsense," he said. "Call people by their proper names." Then he left the house without a further word to the master of it. That night before they went to sleep Melmotte required from his weary wife an account of the ball, and especially of Marie's conduct. "Marie," Madame Melmotte said, "had behaved well, but had certainly preferred 'Sir Carbury' to any other of the young men." Hitherto Mr. Melmotte had heard very little of "Sir Carbury," except that he was a baronet. Though his eyes and ears were always open, though he attended to everything, and was a man of sharp intelligence, he did not yet quite understand the bearing and sequence of English titles. He knew that he must get for his daughter either an eldest son, or one absolutely in possession himself. Sir Felix, he had learned, was only a baronet; but then he was in possession. He had discovered also that Sir Felix's son would in course of time also become Sir Felix. He was not therefore at the present moment disposed to give any positive orders as to his daughter's conduct to the young baronet. He did not, however, conceive that the young baronet had as yet addressed his girl in such words as Felix had in truth used when they parted. "You know who it is," he whispered, "likes you better than any one else in the world."

"Nobody does,—don't, Sir Felix."

"I do," he said as he held her hand for a minute. He looked into her face and she thought it very sweet. He had studied the words as a lesson, and, repeating them as a lesson, he did it fairly well. He did it well enough at any rate to send the poor girl to bed with a sweet conviction that at last a man had spoken to her whom she could love.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE BALL.

"It's weary work," said Sir Felix as he got into the brougham with his mother and sister.

"What must it have been to me then, who had nothing to do?" said his mother.

"It's the having something to do that makes me call it weary work. By-the-bye, now I think of it, I'll run down to the club before I go
home." So saying he put his head out of the brougham, and stopped
the driver.
"It is two o'clock, Felix," said his mother.
"I'm afraid it is, but you see I'm hungry. You had supper, per-
haps; I had none."
"Are you going down to the club for supper at this time in the
morning?"
"I must go to bed hungry if I don't. Good night." Then he
jumped out of the brougham, called a cab, and had himself driven to
the Bear-garden. He declared to himself that the men there would
think it mean of him if he did not give them their revenge. He had
renewed his play on the preceding night, and had again won. Dolly
Longstaffe owed him now a considerable sum of money, and Lord Grass-
lough was also in his debt. He was sure that Grasslough would go
to the club after the ball, and he was determined that they should not
think that he had submitted to be carried home by his mother and
sister. So he argued with himself; but in truth the devil of gambling
was hot within his bosom; and though he feared that in losing he
might lose real money, and that if he won it would be long before he
was paid, yet he could not keep himself from the card-table.
Neither mother or daughter said a word till they reached home and
had got up-stairs. Then the elder spoke of the trouble that was nearest
to her heart at the moment. "Do you think he gambles?"
"He has got no money, mamma."
"I fear that might not hinder him. And he has money with him,
though, for him and such friends as he has, it is not much. If he
gambles everything is lost."
"I suppose they all do play,—more or less."
"I have not known that he played. I am wearied too, out of all
heart, by his want of consideration to me. It is not that he will not
obey me. A mother perhaps should not expect obedience from a
grown-up son. But my word is nothing to him. He has no respect
for me. He would as soon do what is wrong before me as before the
merest stranger."
"He has been so long his own master, mamma."
"Yes,—his own master! And yet I must provide for him as though
he were but a child. Hetta, you spent the whole evening talking to
Paul Montague."
"No, mamma;—that is unjust."
"He was always with you."
"I knew nobody else. I could not tell him not to speak to me. I
danced with him twice." Her mother was seated, with both her
hands up to her forehead, and shook her head. "If you did not
want me to speak to Paul you should not have taken me there."
"I don't wish to prevent your speaking to him. You know what
I want." Henrietta came up and kissed her, and bade her good
night. "I think I am the unhappiest woman in all London," she
said, sobbing hysterically.
"Is it my fault, mamma?"
"You could save me from much if you would. I work like a horse,
and I never spend a shilling that I can help. I want nothing for
myself,—nothing for myself. Nobody has suffered as I have. But Felix never thinks of me for a moment.”

“Think of you, mamma.”

“If you did you would accept your cousin’s offer. What right have you to refuse him? I believe it is all because of that young man.”

“No, mamma; it is not because of that young man. I like my cousin very much;—but that is all. Good night, mamma.” Lady Carbury just allowed herself to be kissed, and then was left alone.

At eight o’clock the next morning daybreak found four young men who had just risen from a card-table at the Bear-garden. The Bear-garden was so pleasant a club that there was no rule whatsoever as to its being closed,—the only law being that it should not be opened before three in the afternoon. A sort of sanction had, however, been given to the servants to demur to producing supper or drinks after six in the morning, so that, about eight, unrelieved tobacco began to be too heavy even for juvenile constitutions. The party consisted of Dolly Longstaffe, Lord Grasslough, Miles Grendall, and Felix Carbury, and the four had amused themselves during the last six hours with various innocent games. They had commenced with whist, and had culminated during the last half-hour with blind hockey. But during the whole night Felix had won. Miles Grendall hated him, and there had been an expressed opinion between Miles and the young lord that it would be both profitable and proper to relieve Sir Felix of the winnings of the last two nights. The two men had played with the same object, and being young had shown their intention,—so that a certain feeling of hostility had been engendered. The reader is not to understand that either of them had cheated, or that the baronet had entertained any suspicion of foul play. But Felix had felt that Grendall and Grasslough were his enemies, and had thrown himself on Dolly for sympathy and friendship. Dolly, however, was very tipsy.

At eight o’clock in the morning there came a sort of settling, though no money then passed. The ready-money transactions had not lasted long through the night. Grasslough was the chief loser, and the figures and scraps of paper which had been passed over to Carbury, when counted up, amounted to nearly £2,000. His lordship contested the fact bitterly, but contested it in vain. There were his own initials and his own figures, and even Miles Grendall, who was supposed to be quite wide awake, could not reduce the amount. Then Grendall had lost over £400 to Carbury,—an amount, indeed, that mattered little, as Miles could, at present, as easily have raised £40,000. However, he gave his I.O.U to his opponent with an easy air. Grasslough, also, was impecunious; but he had a father,—also impecunious, indeed; but with them the matter would not be hopeless. Dolly Longstaffe was so tipsy that he could not even assist in making up his own account. That was to be left between him and Carbury for some future occasion.

“I suppose you’ll be here to-morrow,—that is to-night,” said Miles.

“Certainly,—only one thing,” answered Felix.

“What one thing?”
"I think these things should be squared before we play any more!"

"What do you mean by that?" said Grasslough angrily. "Do you mean to hint anything?"

"I never hint anything, my Grassy," said Felix. "I believe when people play cards, it's intended to be ready-money, that's all. But I'm not going to stand on P's and Q's with you. I'll give you your revenge to-night."

"That's all right," said Miles.

"I was speaking to Lord Grasslough," said Felix. He is an old friend, and we know each other. You have been rather rough to-night, Mr. Grendall."

"Rough;—what the devil do you mean by that?"

"And I think it will be as well that our account should be settled before we begin again."

"A settlement once a week is the kind of thing I'm used to," said Grendall.

There was nothing more said; but the young men did not part on good terms. Felix, as he got himself taken home, calculated that if he could realize his spoil, he might begin the campaign again with horses, servants, and all luxuries as before. If all were paid, he would have over £3,000!
CHAPTER VI.

ROGER CARBURY AND PAUL MONTAGUE.

ROGER CARBURY, of Carbury Hall, the owner of a small property in Suffolk, was the head of the Carbury family. The Carburys had been in Suffolk a great many years,—certainly from the time of the War of the Roses,—and had always held up their heads. But they had never held them very high. It was not known that any had risen ever to the honour of knighthood before Sir Patrick, going higher than that, had been made a baronet. They had, however, been true to their acres and their acres true to them through the perils of civil wars, Reformation, Commonwealth, and Revolution, and the head Carbury of the day had always owned, and had always lived at, Carbury Hall.* At the beginning of the present century the squire of Carbury had been a considerable man, if not in his county, at any rate in his part of the county. The income of the estate had sufficed to enable him to live plenteously and hospitably, to drink port wine, to ride a stout hunter, and to keep an old lumbering coach for his wife’s use when she went visiting. He had an old butler who had never lived anywhere else, and a boy from the village who was in a way apprenticed to the butler. There was a cook, not too proud to wash up her own dishes, and a couple of young women;—while the house was kept by Mrs. Carbury herself, who marked and gave out her own linen, made her own preserves, and looked to the curing of her own hams. In the year 1800 the Carbury property was sufficient for the Carbury house. Since that time the Carbury property has considerably increased in value, and the rents have been raised. Even the acreage has been extended by the enclosure of commons. But the income is no longer comfortably adequate to the wants of an English gentleman’s household. If a moderate estate in land be left to a man now, there arises the question whether he is not damaged unless an income also be left to him wherewith to keep up the estate. Land is a luxury, and of all luxuries is the most costly. Now the Carburys never had anything but land. Suffolk has not been made rich and great either by coal or iron. No great town had sprung up on the confines of the Carbury property. No eldest son had gone into trade or risen high in a profession so as to add to the Carbury wealth. No great heiress had been married. There had been no ruin,—no misfortune. But in the days of which we write the Squire of Carbury Hall had become a poor man simply through the wealth of others. His estate was supposed to bring him in £2,000 a year. Had he been content to let the Manor House, to live abroad, and to have an agent at home to deal with the tenants, he would undoubtedly have had enough to live luxuriously. But he lived on his own land among his own people, as all the Carburys before him had done, and was poor because he was surrounded by rich neighbours. The Longestaffes of Caversham,—of which family
Dolly Longestaffe was the eldest son and hope,—had the name of
great wealth, but the founder of the family had been a Lord Mayor
of London and a chandler as lately as in the reign of Queen Anne.
The Hepworths, who could boast good blood enough on their own
side, had married into new money. The Primeros,—though the
good nature of the country folk had accorded to the head of them the
title of Squire Primero,—had been trading Spaniards fifty years ago,
and had bought the Bundlesham property from a great duke. The
estates of those three gentlemen, with the domain of the Bishop of
Elmham, lay all around the Carbury property, and in regard to
wealth enabled their owners altogether to overshadow our squire.
The superior wealth of a bishop was nothing to him. He desired
that bishops should be rich, and was among those who thought that
the country had been injured when the territorial possessions of
our prelates had been converted into stipends by Act of Parliament.
But the grandeur of the Longestaffes and the too apparent wealth of
the Primeros did oppress him, though he was a man who would
never breathe a word of such oppression into the ear even of his
darkest friend. It was his opinion,—which he did not care to
declare loudly, but which was fully understood to be his opinion by
those with whom he lived intimately,—that a man's standing in
the world should not depend at all upon his wealth. The Primeros
were undoubtedy beneath him in the social scale, although the
young Primeros had three horses apiece, and killed legions of
pheasants annually at about 10s. a head. Hepworth of Bardy was
a very good fellow, who gave himself no airs and understood his
duties as a country gentleman; but he could not be more than on a
par with Carbury of Carbury, though he was supposed to enjoy
£7,000 a year. The Longestaffes were altogether oppressive. Their
footmen, even in the country, had powdered hair. They had a house
in town,—a house of their own,—and lived altogether as magnates.
The lady was Lady Pomona Longestaffe. The daughters, who cer-
tainly were handsome, had been destined to marry peers. The only
son, Dolly, had, or had had, a fortune of his own. They were an
oppressive people in a country neighbourhood. And to make the
matter worse, rich as they were, they never were able to pay any-
body anything that they owed. They continued to live with all the
appurtenances of wealth. The girls always had horses to ride, both
in town and country. The acquaintance of Dolly the reader has
already made. Dolly, who certainly was a poor creature though
good natured, had energy in one direction. He would quarrel per-
severingly with his father, who only had a life interest in the estate.
The house at Caversham Park was during six or seven months of
the year full of servants, if not of guests, and all the tradesmen in the
little towns around, Bungay, Beccles, and Harlestone, were aware
that the Longestaffes were the great people of that country. Though
occasionally much distressed for money, they would always execute
the Longestaffe orders with submissive punctuality, because there
was an idea that the Longestaffe property was sound at the bottom.
And, then, the owner of a property so managed cannot scrutinise
bills very closely.
Carbury of Carbury had never owed a shilling that he could not pay, or his father before him. His orders to the tradesmen at Beccles were not extensive, and care was used to see that the goods supplied were neither overcharged nor unnecessary. The tradesmen, consequently, of Beccles did not care much for Carbury of Carbury;—though perhaps one or two of the elders among them entertained some ancient reverence for the family. Roger Carbury, Esq., was Carbury of Carbury,—a distinction of itself, which, from its nature, could not belong to the Longestaffes and Primeros, which did not even belong to the Hepworths of Eardly. The very parish in which Carbury Hall stood,—or Carbury Manor House, as it was more properly called,—was Carbury parish. And there was Carbury Chase, partly in Carbury parish and partly in Bundlesham,—but belonging, unfortunately, in its entirety to the Bundlesham estate.

Roger Carbury himself was all alone in the world. His nearest relatives of the name were Sir Felix and Henrietta, but they were no more than second cousins. He had sisters, but they had long since been married and had gone away into the world with their husbands, one to India, and another to the far west of the United States. At present he was not much short of forty years of age, and was still unmarried. He was a stout, good-looking man, with a firmly set square face, with features finely cut, a small mouth, good teeth, and well-formed chin. His hair was red, curling round his head, which was now partly bald at the top. He wore no other beard than small, almost unnoticeable whiskers. His eyes were small, but bright, and very cheery when his humour was good. He was about five feet nine in height, having the appearance of great strength and perfect health. A more manly man to the eye was never seen. And he was one with whom you would instinctively wish at first sight to be on good terms,—partly because in looking at him there would come on you an unconscious conviction that he would be very stout in holding his own against his opponents; partly also from a conviction equally strong, that he would be very pleasant to his friends.

When Sir Patrick had come home from India as an invalid, Roger Carbury had hurried up to see him in London, and had proffered him all kindness. Would Sir Patrick and his wife and children like to go down to the old place in the country? Sir Patrick did not care a straw for the old place in the country, and so told his cousin in almost those very words. There had not, therefore, been much friendship during Sir Patrick's life. But when the violent ill-conditioned old man was dead, Roger paid a second visit, and again offered hospitality to the widow and her daughter,—and to the young baronet. The young baronet had just joined his regiment and did not care to visit his cousin in Suffolk; but Lady Carbury and Henrietta had spent a month there, and everything had been done to make them happy. The effort as regarded Henrietta had been altogether successful. As regarded the widow, it must be acknowledged that Carbury Hall had not quite suited her tastes. She had already begun to sigh for the glories of a literary career. A career of some kind,—sufficient to repay her for the sufferings of her early life,—she certainly desired. "Dear cousin Roger," as she called him, had not seemed to her to
have much power of assisting her in these views. She was a woman who did not care much for country charms. She had endeavoured to get up some mild excitement with the bishop, but the bishop had been too plain spoken and sincere for her. The Primeros had been odious; the Hepworths stupid; the Longestaffes,—she had endeavoured to make up a little friendship with Lady Pomona,—insufferably supercilious. She had declared to Henrietta "that Carbury Hall was very dull."

But then there had come a circumstance which altogether changed her opinions as to Carbury Hall, and its proprietor. The proprietor after a few weeks followed them up to London, and made a most matter-of-fact offer to the mother for the daughter's hand. He was at that time thirty-six, and Henrietta was not yet twenty. He was very cool;—some might have thought him phlegmatic in his love-making. Henrietta declared to her mother that she had not in the least expected it. But he was very urgent, and very persistent. Lady Carbury was eager on his side. Though the Carbury Manor House did not exactly suit her, it would do admirably for Henrietta. And as for age, to her thinking, being then over forty, a man of thirty-six was young enough for any girl. But Henrietta had an opinion of her own. She liked her cousin, but did not love him. She was amazed, and even annoyed by the offer. She had praised him and praised the house so loudly to her mother,—having in her innocence never dreamed of such a proposition as this,—so that now she found it difficult to give an adequate reason for her refusal. Yes;—she had undoubtedly said that her cousin was charming, but she had not meant charming in that way. She did refuse the offer very plainly, but still with some apparent lack of persistency. When Roger suggested that she should take a few months to think of it, and her mother supported Roger's suggestion, she could say nothing stronger than that she was afraid that thinking about it would not do any good. Their first visit to Carbury had been made in September. In the following February she went there again,—much against the grain as far as her own wishes were concerned; and when there had been cold, constrained, almost dumb in the presence of her cousin. Before they left the offer was renewed, but Henrietta declared that she could not do as they would have her. She could give no reason, only she did not love her cousin in that way. But Roger declared that he by no means intended to abandon his suit. In truth he verily loved the girl, and love with him was a serious thing. All this happened a full year before the beginning of our present story.

But something else happened also. While that second visit was being made at Carbury there came to the hall a young man of whom Roger Carbury had said much to his cousins,—one Paul Montague, of whom some short account shall be given in this chapter. The squire,—Roger Carbury was always called the squire about his own place,—had anticipated no evil when he so timed this second visit of his cousins to his house that they must of necessity meet Paul Montague there. But great harm had come of it. Paul Montague had fallen into love with his cousin's guest, and there had sprung up much unhappiness.

Lady Carbury and Henrietta had been nearly a month at Carbury,
and Paul Montague had been there barely a week, when Roger Carbury thus spoke to the guest who had last arrived. "I've got to tell you something, Paul."

"Anything serious?"

"Very serious to me. I may say so serious that nothing in my own life can approach it in importance." He had unconsciously assumed that look, which his friend so thoroughly understood, indicating his resolve to hold to what he believed to be his own, and to fight if fighting be necessary. Montague knew him well, and became half aware that he had done something, he knew not what, militating against this serious resolve of his friend. He looked up, but said nothing. "I have offered my hand in marriage to my cousin Henrietta," said Roger very gravely.

"Miss Carbury?"

"Yes; to Henrietta Carbury. She has not accepted it. She has refused me twice. But I still have hopes of success. Perhaps I have no right to hope, but I do. I tell it you just as it is. Everything in life to me depends upon it. I think I may count upon your sympathy."

"Why did you not tell me before?" said Paul Montague in a hoarse voice.

Then there had come a sudden and rapid interchange of quick speaking between the men, each of them speaking the truth exactly, each of them declaring himself to be in the right and to be ill-used by the other, each of them equally hot, equally generous, and equally unreasonable. Montague at once asserted that he also loved Henrietta Carbury. He blurted out his assurance in the baldest and most incomplete manner, but still in such words as to leave no doubt. No—he had not said a word to her. He had intended to consult Roger Carbury himself,—should have done so in a day or two,—perhaps on that very day had not Roger spoken to him. "You have neither of you a shilling in the world," said Roger; "and now you know what my feelings are you must abandon it." Then Montague declared that he had a right to speak to Miss Carbury. He did not suppose that Miss Carbury cared a straw about him. He had not the least reason to think that she did. It was altogether impossible. But he had a right to his chance. That chance was all the world to him. As to money,—he would not admit that he was a pauper, and, moreover, he might earn an income as well as other men. Had Carbury told him that the young lady had shown the slightest intention to receive his, Carbury's, addresses, he, Paul, would at once have disappeared from the scene. But as it was not so, he would not say that he would abandon his hope.

The scene lasted for above an hour. When it was ended, Paul Montague packed up all his clothes and was driven away to the railway station by Roger himself, without seeing either of the ladies. There had been very hot words between the men, but the last words which Roger spoke to the other on the railway platform were not quarrelsome in their nature. "God bless you, old fellow," he said, pressing Paul's hands. Paul's eyes were full of tears, and he replied only by returning the pressure.

Paul Montague's father and mother had long been dead. The
father had been a barrister in London, having perhaps some small fortune of his own. He had, at any rate, left to this son, who was one among others, a sufficiency with which to begin the world. Paul when he had come of age had found himself possessed of about £6,000. He was then at Oxford; and was intended for the bar. An uncle of his, a younger brother of his father, had married a Carbury, the younger sister of two; though older than her brother Roger. This uncle many years since had taken his wife out to California, and had there become an American. He had a large tract of land, growing wool, and wheat, and fruit; but whether he prospered or whether he did not, had not always been plain to the Montagues and Carburys at home. The intercourse between the two families had in the quite early days of Paul Montague’s life, created an affection between him and Roger, who, as will be understood by those who have carefully followed the above family history, were not in any degree related to each other. Roger, when quite a young man, had had the charge of the boy’s education, and had sent him to Oxford. But the Oxford scheme, to be followed by the bar, and to end on some one of the many judicial benches of the country, had not succeeded. Paul had got into a “row” at Balliol, and had been rusticated,—had then got into another row, and was sent down. Indeed he had a talent for rows,—though, as Roger Carbury always declared, there was nothing really wrong about any of them. Paul was then twenty-one, and he took himself and his money out to California, and joined his uncle. He had perhaps an idea,—based on very insufficient grounds,—that rows are popular in California. At the end of three years he found that he did not like farming life in California,—and he found also that he did not like his uncle. So he returned to England, but on returning was altogether unable to get his £6,000 out of the Californian farm. Indeed he had been compelled to come away without any of it, with funds insufficient even to take him home, accepting with much dissatisfaction an assurance from his uncle that an income amounting to ten per cent. upon his capital should be remitted to him with the regularity of clockwork. The clock alluded to must have been one of Sam Slick’s. It had gone very badly. At the end of the first quarter there came the proper remittance;—then half the amount;—then there was a long interval without anything; then some dropping payments now and again;—and then a twelve-month without anything. At the end of that twelve-month he paid a second visit to California, having borrowed money from Roger for his journey. He had now again returned, with some little cash in hand, and with the additional security of a deed executed in his favour by one Hamilton K. Fisker, who had gone into partnership with his uncle, and who had added a vast flour-mill to his uncle’s concerns. In accordance with this deed he was to get twelve per cent. on his capital, and had enjoyed the gratification of seeing his name put up as one of the firm, which now stood as Fisker, Montague, and Montague. A business declared by the two elder partners to be most promising had been opened at Fiskerville, about two hundred and fifty miles from San Francisco, and the hearts of Fisker and the elder Montague were very high. Paul hated Fisker horribly, did not love
his uncle much, and would willingly have got back his £6,000 had he been able. But he was not able, and returned as one of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, not altogether unhappy, as he had succeeded in obtaining enough of his back income to pay what he owed to Roger, and to live for a few months. He was intent on considering how he should bestow himself, consulting daily with Roger on the subject, when suddenly Roger had perceived that the young man was becoming attached to the girl whom he himself loved.

What then occurred has been told.

Not a word was said to Lady Carbury or her daughter of the real cause of Paul’s sudden disappearance. It had been necessary that he should go to London. Each of the ladies probably guessed something of the truth, but neither spoke a word to the other on the subject. Before they left the Manor the squire again pleaded his case with Henrietta, but he pleaded it in vain. Henrietta was colder than ever,—but she made use of one unfortunate phrase which destroyed all the effect which her coldness might have had. She said that she was too young to think of marrying yet. She had meant to imply that the difference in their ages was too great, but had not known how to say it. It was easy to tell her that in a twelvemonth she would be older;—but it was impossible to convince her that any number of twelvemonths would alter the disparity between her and her cousin. But even that disparity was not now her strongest reason for feeling sure that she could not marry Roger Carbury.

Within a week of the departure of Lady Carbury from the Manor House, Paul Montague returned, and returned as a still dear friend. He had promised before he went that he would not see Henrietta again for three months, but he would promise nothing further. “If you won’t take me, there is no reason why I shouldn’t try.” That had been his argument. Roger would not accede to the justice even of this. It seemed to him that Paul was bound to retire altogether, partly because he had got no income, partly because of Roger’s previous claim,—partly no doubt in gratitude, but of this last reason Roger never said a word. If Paul did not see this himself, Paul was not such a man as his friend had taken him to be.

Paul did see it himself, and had many scruples. But why should his friend be a dog in the manger? He would yield at once to Roger Carbury’s older claims if Roger could make anything of them. Indeed he could have no chance if the girl were disposed to take Roger for her husband. Roger had all the advantage of Carbury Manor at his back, whereas he had nothing but his share in the doubtful business of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, in a wretched little town 250 miles further off than San Francisco! But if, with all this, Roger could not prevail, why should he not try? What Roger said about want of money was mere nonsense. Paul was sure that his friend would have created no such difficulty had not he himself been interested. Paul declared to himself that he had money, though doubtful money, and that he certainly would not give up Henrietta on that score.

He came up to London at various times in search of certain employment which had been half promised him, and, after the
expiration of the three months, constantly saw Lady Carbury and her daughter. But from time to time he had given renewed promises to Roger Carbury that he would not declare his passion,—now for two months, then for six weeks, then for a month. In the meantime the two men were fast friends,—so fast that Montague spent by far the greater part of his time as his friend's guest,—and all this was done with the understanding that Roger Carbury was to blaze up into hostile wrath should Paul ever receive the privilege to call himself Henrietta Carbury's favoured lover, but that everything was to be smooth between them should Henrietta be persuaded to become the mistress of Carbury Hall. So things went on up to the night at which Montague met Henrietta at Madame Melmotte's ball. The reader should also be informed that there had been already a former love affair in the young life of Paul Montague. There had been, and indeed there still was, a widow, one Mrs. Hurtle, whom he had been desperately anxious to marry before his second journey to California;—but the marriage had been prevented by the interference of Roger Carbury.

CHAPTER VII.
MENTOR.

LADY CARBURY'S desire for a union between Roger and her daughter was greatly increased by her solicitude in respect to her son. Since Roger's offer had first been made, Felix had gone on from bad to worse, till his condition had become one of hopeless embarrassment. If her daughter could but be settled in the world, Lady Carbury said to herself, she could then devote herself to the interests of her son. She had no very clear idea of what that devotion would be. But she did know that she had paid so much money for him, and would have so much more extracted from her, that it might well come to pass that she would be unable to keep a home for her daughter. In all these troubles she constantly appealed to Roger Carbury for advice,—which, however, she never followed. He recommended her to give up her house in town, to find a home for her daughter elsewhere, and also for Felix if he would consent to follow her. Should he not so consent, then let the young man bear the brunt of his own misdoings. Doubtless, when he could no longer get bread in London he would find her out. Roger was always severe when he spoke of the baronet,—or seemed to Lady Carbury to be severe.

But, in truth, she did not ask for advice in order that she might follow it. She had plans in her head with which she knew that Roger would not sympathise. She still thought that Sir Felix might bloom and burst out into grandeur, wealth, and fashion, as the husband of a great heiress, and in spite of her son's vices, was proud of him in that anticipation. When he succeeded in obtaining from her money, as in the case of that £20,—when, with brazen-faced
indifference to her remonstrances, he started off to his club at two in
the morning, when with impudent drollery he almost boasted of the
hopelessness of his debts, a sickness of heart would come upon her,
and she would weep hysterically, and lie the whole night without
sleeping. But could he marry Miss Melmotte, and thus conquer all
his troubles by means of his own personal beauty,—then she would
be proud of all that had passed. With such a condition of mind
Roger Carbury could have no sympathy. To him it seemed that a
gentleman was disgraced who owed money to a tradesman which he
could not pay. And Lady Carbury's heart was high with other
hopes,—in spite of her hysterics and her fears. The "Criminal
Queens" might be a great literary success. She almost thought that
it would be a success. Messrs. Leadham and Loiter, the publishers,
were civil to her. Mr. Broune had promised. Mr. Booker had said
that he would see what could be done. She had gathered from Mr.
Alf's caustic and cautious words that the book would be noticed in
the "Evening Pulpit." No;—she would not take dear Roger's advice
as to leaving London. But she would continue to ask Roger's advice.
Men like to have their advice asked. And, if possible, she would
arrange the marriage. What country retirement could be so suitable
for a Lady Carbury when she wished to retire for awhile,—as
Carbury Manor, the seat of her own daughter? And then her mind
would fly away into regions of bliss. If only by the end of this
season Henrietta could be engaged to her cousin, Felix be the
husband of the richest bride in Europe, and she be the acknowledged
author of the cleverest book of the year, what a Paradise of triumph
might still be open to her after all her troubles! Then the sanguine
nature of the woman would bear her up almost to exultation, and for
an hour she would be happy, in spite of everything.

A few days after the ball Roger Carbury was up in town, and was
closeted with her in her back drawing-room. The declared cause of
his coming was the condition of the baronet's affairs and the indis-
pendable necessity,—so Roger thought,—of taking some steps by
which at any rate the young man's present expenses might be brought
to an end. It was horrible to him that a man who had not a shilling
in the world or any prospect of a shilling, who had nothing and never
thought of earning anything, should have hunters! He was very
much in earnest about it, and quite prepared to speak his mind to the
young man himself,—if he could get hold of him. "Where is he
now, Lady Carbury;—at this moment?"

"I think he's out with the Baron." Being "out with the Baron"
meant that the young man was hunting with the stag hounds some
forty miles away from London.

"How does he manage it? Whose horses does he ride? Who
pays for them?"

"Don't be angry with me, Roger. What can I do to prevent it?"

"I think you should refuse to have anything to do with him while
he continues in such courses."

"My own son!"

"Yes;—exactly. But what is to be the end of it? Is he to be
allowed to ruin you, and Hetta? It can't go on long."
"You wouldn't have me throw him over."
"I think he is throwing you over. And then it is so thoroughly dishonest,—so ungentelemanlike! I don't understand how it goes on from day to day. I suppose you don't supply him with ready money."

"He has had a little."

Roger frowned angrily. "I can understand that you should provide him with bed and food, but not that you should pander to his vices by giving him money." This was very plain speaking, and Lady Carbury winced under it. "The kind of life that he is leading requires a large income of itself: I understand the thing; and know that with all I have in the world I could not do it myself."

"You are so different."

"I am older of course,—very much older. But he is not so young that he should not begin to comprehend. Has he any money beyond what you give him?"

Then Lady Carbury revealed certain suspicions which she had begun to entertain during the last day or two. "I think he has been playing."

"That is the way to lose money,—not to get it," said Roger.

"I suppose somebody wins,—sometimes."

"They who win are the sharers. They who lose are the dupes. I would sooner that he were a fool than a knave."

"O Roger, you are so severe!"

"You say he plays. How would he pay, were he to lose?"

"I know nothing about it. I don't even know that he does play; but I have reason to think that during the last week he has had money at his command. Indeed I have seen it. He comes home at all manner of hours and sleeps late. Yesterday I went into his room about ten and did not wake him. There were notes and gold lying on his table;—ever so much."

"Why did you not take them?"

"What; rob my own boy?"

"When you tell me that you are absolutely in want of money to pay your own bills, and that he has not hesitated to take yours from you! Why does he not repay you what he has borrowed?"

"Ah, indeed;—why not? He ought to if he has it. And there were papers, there;—I. O. U's, signed by other men."

"You looked at them."

"I saw as much as that. It is not that I am curious, but one does feel about one's own son. I think he has bought another horse. A groom came here and said something about it to the servants."

"Oh dear;—oh dear!"

"If you could only induce him to stop the gambling! Of course it is very bad whether he wins or loses,—though I am sure that Felix would do nothing unfair. Nobody ever said that of him. If he has won money, it would be a great comfort if he would let me have some of it,—for, to tell the truth, I hardly know how to turn. I am sure nobody can say that I spend it on myself."

Then Roger again repeated his advice. There could be no use in
attempting to keep up the present kind of life in Welbeck Street. Welbeck Street might be very well without a penniless spendthrift such as Sir Felix, but must be ruinous under the present conditions. If Lady Carbury felt, as no doubt she did feel, bound to afford a home to her ruined son in spite of all his wickedness and folly, that home should be found far away from London. If he chose to remain in London, let him do so on his own resources. The young man should make up his mind to do something for himself. A career might possibly be opened for him in India. "If he be a man he would sooner break stones than live on you," said Roger. Yes, he would see his cousin-to-morrow and speak to him;—that is if he could possibly find him. "Young men who gamble all night, and hunt all day are not easily found." But he would come at twelve as Felix generally breakfasted at that hour. Then he gave an assurance to Lady Carbury which to her was not the least comfortable part of the interview. In the event of her son not giving her the money which she at once required he, Roger, would lend her a hundred pounds till her half year's income should be due. After that his voice changed altogether, as he asked a question on another subject, "Can I see Henrietta to-morrow?"

"Certainly;—why not? She is at home now, I think."

"I will wait till to-morrow,—when I call to see Felix. I should like her to know that I am coming. Paul Montague was in town the other day. He was here, I suppose?"

"Yes;—he called."

"Was that all you saw of him?"

"He was at the Melmottes' ball. Felix got a card for him;—and we were there. Has he gone down to Carbury?"

"No;—not to Carbury. I think he had some business about his partners at Liverpool. There is another case of a young man without anything to do. Not that Paul is at all like Sir Felix." This he was induced to say by the spirit of honesty which was always strong within him.

"Don't be too hard upon poor Felix," said Lady Carbury. Roger, as he took his leave, thought that it would be impossible to be too hard upon Sir Felix Carbury.

The next morning Lady Carbury was in her son's bedroom before he was up, and with incredible weakness told him that his cousin Roger was coming to lecture him. "What the Devil's the use of it?" said Felix from beneath the bedclothes.

"If you speak to me in that way, Felix, I must leave the room."

"But what is the use of his coming to me? I know what he has got to say just as if it were said. It's all very well preaching sermons to good people, but nothing ever was got by preaching to people who ain't good."

"Why shouldn't you be good?"

"I shall do very well, mother, if that fellow will leave me alone. I can play my hand better than he can play it for me. If you'll go now I'll get up." She had intended to ask him for some of the money which she believed he still possessed, but her courage failed her. If she asked for his money, and took it, she would in some fashion
recognise and tacitly approve his gambling. It was not yet eleven, and it was early for him to leave his bed; but he had resolved that he would get out of the house before that horrible bore should be upon him with his sermon. To do this he must be energetic. He was actually eating his breakfast at half-past eleven, and had already contrived in his mind how he would turn the wrong way as soon as he got into the street,—towards Marylebone Road by which route Roger would certainly not come. He left the house at ten minutes before twelve, cunningly turned away, dodging round by the first corner,—and just as he had turned it encountered his cousin. Roger, anxious in regard to his errand, with time at his command, had come before the hour appointed and had strolled about, thinking not of Felix but of Felix's sister. The baronet felt that he had been caught,—caught unfairly, but by no means abandoned all hope of escape. "I was going to your mother's house on purpose to see you," said Roger.

"Were you indeed? I am so sorry. I have an engagement out here with a fellow which I must keep. I could meet you at any other time, you know."

"You can come back for ten minutes," said Roger, taking him by the arm.

"Well:—not conveniently at this moment."

"You must manage it. I am here at your mother's request, and can't afford to remain in town day after day looking for you. I go down to Carbury this afternoon. Your friend can wait. Come along." His firmness was too much for Felix; who lacked the courage to shake his cousin off violently, and to go his way. But as he returned he fortified himself with the remembrance of all the money in his pocket,—for he still had his winnings,—remembered too certain sweet words which had passed between him and Marie Melmotte since the ball, and resolved that he would not be "sat upon" by Roger Carbury. The time was coming,—he might almost say that the time had come,—in which he might defy Roger Carbury. Nevertheless, he dreaded the words which were now to be spoken to him with a craven fear.

"Your mother tells me," said Roger, "that you still keep hunters."

"I don't know what she calls hunters. I have one that I didn't part with when the others went."

"You have only one horse?"

"Well;—if you want to be exact, I have a hack as well as the horse I ride."

"And another up here in town?"

"Who told you that? No; I haven't. At least there is one staying at some stables which has been sent for me to look at."

"Who pays for all these horses?"

"At any rate I shall not ask you to pay for them."

"No:—you would be afraid to do that. But you have no scruple in asking your mother, though you should force her to come to me or to other friends for assistance. You have squandered every shilling of your own, and now you are ruining her."

"That isn't true. I have money of my own."

"Where did you get it?"

"This is all very well, Roger; but I don't know that you have any
"There's the £20."
right to ask me these questions. I have money. If I buy a horse I can pay for it. If I keep one or two I can pay for them. Of course I owe a lot of money, but other people owe me money too. I'm all right, and you needn't frighten yourself."

"Then why do you beg her last shilling from your mother, and when you have money not pay it back to her?"

"She can have the twenty pounds, if you mean that."

"I mean that, and a good deal more than that. I suppose you have been gambling."

"I don't know that I am bound to answer your questions, and I won't do it. If you have nothing else to say, I'll go about my own business."

"I have something else to say, and I mean to say it." Felix had walked towards the door, but Roger was before him, and now leaned his back against it.

"I am not going to be kept here against my will," said Felix.

"You have to listen to me, so you may as well sit still. Do you wish to be looked upon as a blackguard by all the world?"

"Oh,—go on."

"That is what it will be. You have spent every shilling of your own,—and because your mother is affectionate and weak, you are now spending all that she has, and are bringing her and your sister to beggary."

"I don't ask them to pay anything for me."

"Not when you borrow her money?"

"There is the £20. Take it and give it her," said Felix, counting the notes out of the pocket-book. "When I asked her for it, I did not think she would make such a row about such a trifle." Roger took up the notes and thrust them into his pocket. "Now, have you done?" said Felix.

"Not quite. Do you purpose that your mother should keep you and clothe you for the rest of your life?"

"I hope to be able to keep her before long, and to do it much better than it has ever been done before. The truth is, Roger, you know nothing about it. If you'll leave me to myself, you'll find that I shall do very well."

"I don't know any young man who ever did worse, or one who had less moral conception of what is right and wrong."

"Very well. That's your idea. I differ from you. People can't all think alike, you know. Now, if you please, I'll go."

Roger felt that he hadn't half said what he had to say, but he hardly knew how to get it said. And of what use could it be to talk to a young man who was altogether callous and without feeling? The remedy for the evil ought to be found in the mother's conduct rather than the son's. She, were she not foolishly weak, would make up her mind to divide herself utterly from her son, at any rate for a while, and to leave him to suffer utter penury. That would bring him round. And then when the agony of want had tamed him, he would be content to take bread and meat from her hand and would be humble. At present he had money in his pocket, and would eat and drink of the best, and be free from inconvenience for the moment.
While this prosperity remained it would be impossible to touch him. 
"You will ruin your sister, and break your mother's heart," said Roger, firing a last harmless shot after the young reprobate.

When Lady Carbury came into the room, which she did as soon as the front door was closed behind her son, she seemed to think that a great success had been achieved because the £20 had been recovered.
"I knew he would give it me back, if he had it," she said.
"Why did he not bring it to you of his own accord?"
"I suppose he did not like to talk about it. Has he said that he got it by—playing?"
"No,—he did not speak a word of truth while he was here. You may take it for granted that he did get it by gambling. How else should he have it? And you may take it for granted also that he will lose all that he has got. He talked in the wildest way,—saying that he would soon have a home for you and Hetta."
"Did he;—dear boy!"
"Had he any meaning?"
"Oh; yes. And it is quite on the cards that it should be so. You have heard of Miss Melmotte."
"I have heard of the great French swindler who has come over here, and who is buying his way into society."
"Everybody visits them now, Roger."
"More shame for everybody. Who knows anything about him,—except that he left Paris with the reputation of a specially prosperous rogue? But what of him?"
"Some people think that Felix will marry his only child. Felix is handsome; isn't he? What young man is there nearly so handsome? They say she'll have half a million of money."
"That's his game;—is it?"
"Don't you think he is right?"
"No; I think he's wrong. But we shall hardly agree with each other about that. Can I see Henrietta for a few minutes?"

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE-SICK.

ROGER CARbury said well that it was very improbable that he and his cousin, the widow, should agree in their opinions as to the expediency of fortune-hunting by marriage. It was impossible that they should ever understand each other. To Lady Carbury the prospect of a union between her son and Miss Melmotte was one of unmixed joy and triumph. Could it have been possible that Marie Melmotte should be rich and her father be a man doomed to a deserved sentence in a penal settlement, there might perhaps be a doubt about it. The wealth even in that case would certainly carry the day against the disgrace, and Lady Carbury would find reasons why "poor Marie" should not be punished for her father's sins, even
while enjoying the money which those sins had produced. But how different were the existing facts? Mr. Melmotte was not at the galleys, but was entertaining duchesses in Grosvenor Square. People said that Mr. Melmotte had a reputation throughout Europe as a gigantic swindler,—as one who in the dishonest and successful pursuit of wealth had stopped at nothing. People said of him that he had framed and carried out long premeditated and deeply laid schemes for the ruin of those who had trusted him, that he had swallowed up the property of all who had come in contact with him, that he was fed with the blood of widows and children;—but what was all this to Lady Carbury? If the duchesses condoned it all, did it become her to be prudish? People also said that Melmotte would yet get a fall,—that a man who had risen after such a fashion never could long keep his head up. But he might keep his head up long enough to give Marie her fortune. And then Felix wanted a fortune so badly;—was so exactly the young man who ought to marry a fortune! To Lady Carbury there was no second way of looking at the matter.

And to Roger Carbury also there was no second way of looking at it. That condonation of antecedents which, in the hurry of the world, is often vouchsafed to success, that growing feeling which induces people to assert to themselves that they are not bound to go outside the general verdict, and that they may shake hands with whomsoever the world shakes hands with, had never reached him. The old-fashioned idea that the touching of pitch will defile still prevailed with him. He was a gentleman;—and would have felt himself disgraced to enter the house of such a one as Augustus Melmotte. Not all the duchesses in the peerage, or all the money in the city, could alter his notions or induce him to modify his conduct. But he knew that it would be useless for him to explain this to Lady Carbury. He trusted, however, that one of the family might be taught to appreciate the difference between honour and dishonour. Henrietta Carbury had, he thought, a higher turn of mind than her mother, and had as yet been kept free from soil. As for Felix,—he had so grieved in the gutters as to be dirt all over. Nothing short of the prolonged sufferings of half a life could cleanse him.

He found Henrietta alone in the drawing-room. "Have you seen Felix?" she said, as soon as they had greeted each other.
"Yes. I caught him in the street."
"We are so unhappy about him."
"I cannot say but that you have reason. I think, you know, that your mother indulges him foolishly."
"Poor mamma! She worships the very ground he treads on."
"Even a mother should not throw her worship away like that. The fact is that your brother will ruin you both if this goes on."
"What can mamma do?"
"Leave London, and then refuse to pay a shilling on his behalf."
"What would Felix do in the country?"
"If he did nothing, how much better would that be than what he does in town? You would not like him to become a professional gambler."
"Oh, Mr. Carbury; you do not mean that he does that!"
"It seems cruel to say such things to you,—but in a matter of such importance one is bound to speak the truth. I have no influence over your mother; but you may have some. She asks my advice, but has not the slightest idea of listening to it. I don't blame her for that; but I am anxious for the sake of——, for the sake of the family."
"I am sure you are."
"Especially for your sake. You will never throw him over."
"You would not ask me to throw him over."
"But he may drag you into the mud. For his sake you have already been taken into the house of that man Melmotte."
"I do not think that I shall be injured by anything of that kind," said Henrietta, drawing herself up.
"Pardon me if I seem to interfere."
"Oh, no;—it is no interference from you."
"Pardon me then if I am rough. To me it seems that an injury is done to you if you are made to go to the house of such a one as this man. Why does your mother seek his society? Not because she likes him; not because she has any sympathy with him or his family;—but simply because there is a rich daughter."
"Everybody goes there, Mr. Carbury."
"Yes,—that is the excuse which everybody makes. Is that sufficient reason for you to go to a man's house? Is there not another place to which we are told that a great many are going, simply because the road has become thronged and fashionable? Have you no feeling that you ought to choose your friends for certain reasons of your own? I admit there is one reason here. They have a great deal of money, and it is thought possible that he may get some of it by falsely swearing to a girl that he loves her. After what you have heard, are the Melmottes people with whom you would wish to be connected?"
"I don't know."
"I do. I know very well. They are absolutely disgraceful. A social connection with the first crossing-sweeper would be less objectionable." He spoke with a degree of energy of which he was himself altogether unaware. He knit his brows, and his eyes flashed, and his nostrils were extended. Of course she thought of his own offer to herself. Of course her mind at once conceived,—not that the Melmotte connection could ever really affect him, for she felt sure that she would never accept his offer,—but that he might think that he would be so affected. Of course she resented the feeling which she thus attributed to him. But, in truth, he was much too simple-minded for any such complex idea. "Felix," he continued, "has already descended so far that I cannot pretend to be anxious as to what houses he may frequent. But I should be sorry to think that you should often be seen at Mr. Melmotte's."
"I think, Mr. Carbury, that mamma will take care that I am not taken where I ought not to be taken."
"I wish you to have some opinion of your own as to what is proper for you."
"I hope I have. I am sorry you should think that I have not."
"I am old-fashioned, Hetta."
"And we belong to a newer and worse sort of world. I dare say
it is so. You have been always very kind, but I almost doubt
whether you can change us now. I have sometimes thought that
you and mamma were hardly fit for each other."
"I have thought that you and I were,—or possibly might be fit
for each other."
"Oh,—as for me, I shall always take mamma's side. If mamma
chooses to go to the Melmottes I shall certainly go with her. If that
is contamination, I suppose I must be contaminated. I don't see
why I'm to consider myself better than any one else."
"I have always thought that you were better than any one else."
"That was before I went to the Melmottes. I am sure you have
altered your opinion now. Indeed, you have told me so. I am
afraid, Mr. Carbury, you must go your way, and we must go ours."
He looked into her face as she spoke, and gradually began to
perceive the working of her mind. He was so true himself that he
did not understand that there should be with her even that violet-
 coloured tinge of previration which women assume as an additional
charm. Could she really have thought that he was attending to his
own possible future interests when he warned her as to the making
of new acquaintances?
"For myself," he said, putting out his hand and making a slight
van effort to get hold of hers, "I have only one wish in the world;
and that is, to travel the same road with you. I do not say that you
ought to wish it too; but you ought to know that I am sincere.
When I spoke of the Melmottes, did you believe that I was thinking
of myself?"
"Oh no;—how should I?"
"I was speaking to you then as to a cousin who might regard me
as an elder brother. No contact with legions of Melmottes could
make you other to me than the woman on whom my heart has
settled. Even were you in truth disgraced,—could disgrace touch
one so pure as you,—it would be the same. I love you so well that
I have already taken you for better or for worse. I cannot change.
My nature is too stubborn for such changes. Have you a word to
say to comfort me?" She turned away her head, but did not answer
him at once. "Do you understand how much I am in need of
comfort?"
"You can do very well without comfort from me."
"No, indeed. I shall live, no doubt; but I shall not do very
well. As it is, I am not doing at all well. I am becoming sour and
moody, and ill at ease with my friends. I would have you believe
me, at any rate, when I say I love you."
"I suppose you mean something."
"I mean a great deal, dear. I mean all that a man can mean.
That is it. You hardly understand that I am serious to the extent of
ecstatic joy on the one side, and utter indifference to the world on
the other. I shall never give it up till I learn that you are to be
married to some one else."
"What can I say, Mr. Carbury?"
"That you will love me."
"But if I don't."
"Say that you will try."
"No; I will not say that. Love should come without a struggle. I don't know how one person is to try to love another in that way. I like you very much; but being married is such a terrible thing."
"It would not be terrible to me, dear."
"Yes;—when you found that I was too young for your tastes."
"I shall persevere, you know. Will you assure me of this,—that if you promise your hand to another man, you will let me know at once?"
"I suppose I may promise that," she said, after pausing for a moment.
"There is no one as yet?"
"There is no one. But, Mr. Carbury, you have no right to question me. I don't think it generous. I allow you to say things that nobody else could say because you are a cousin and because mamma trusts you so much. No one but mamma has a right to ask me whether I care for any one."
"Are you angry with me?"
"No."
"If I have offended you it is because I love you so dearly."
"I am not offended, but I don't like to be questioned by a gentleman. I don't think any girl would like it. I am not to tell everybody all that happens."
"Perhaps when you reflect how much of my happiness depends upon it you will forgive me. Good-bye now." She put out her hand to him and allowed it to remain in his for a moment. "When I walk about the old shrubberies at Carbury where we used to be together, I am always asking myself what chance there is of your walking there as the mistress."
"There is no chance."
"I am, of course, prepared to hear you say so. Well; good-bye, and may God bless you."

The man had no poetry about him. He did not even care for romance. All the outside belongings of love which are so pleasant to many men and which to many women afford the one sweetness in life which they really relish, were nothing to him. There are both men and women to whom even the delays and disappointments of love are charming, even when they exist to the detriment of hope. It is sweet to such persons to be melancholy, sweet to pine, sweet to feel that they are now wretched after a romantic fashion as have been those heroes and heroines of whose sufferings they have read in poetry. But there was nothing of this with Roger Carbury. He had, as he believed, found the woman that he really wanted, who was worthy of his love, and now, having fixed his heart upon her, he longed for her with an amazing longing. He had spoken the simple truth when he declared that life had become indifferent to him without her. No man in England could be less likely to throw himself off the Monument or to blow out his brains. But he felt numbed in all the joints of his mind by this sorrow. He could not make one thing bear upon another, so as to console himself after any fashion. There was but one thing for him;—to persevere till he got her, or till he had finally lost her.
And should the latter be his fate, as he began to fear that it would be, then, he would live, but live only, like a crippled man.

He felt almost sure in his heart of hearts that the girl loved that other, younger man. That she had never owned to such love he was quite sure. The man himself and Henrietta also had both assured him on this point, and he was a man easily satisfied by words and prone to believe. But he knew that Paul Montague was attached to her, and that it was Paul's intention to cling to his love. Sorrowfully looking forward through the vista of future years, he thought he saw that Henrietta would become Paul's wife. Were it so, what should he do? Annihilate himself as far as all personal happiness in the world was concerned, and look solely to their happiness, their prosperity, and their joys? Be as it were a beneficent old fairy to them, though the agony of his own disappointment should never depart from him? Should he do this, and be blessed by them,—or should he let Paul Montague know what deep resentment such ingratitude could produce? When had a father been kinder to a son, or a brother to a brother, than he had been to Paul? His home had been the young man's home, and his purse the young man's purse. What right could the young man have to come upon him just as he was perfecting his bliss and rob him of all that he had in the world? He was conscious all the while that there was something wrong in his argument,—that Paul when he commenced to love the girl knew nothing of his friend's love,—that the girl, though Paul had never come in the way, might probably have been as obdurate as she was now to his entreaties. He knew all this because his mind was clear. But yet the injustice,—at any rate, the misery was so great, that to forgive it and to reward it would be weak, womanly, and foolish. Roger Carbury did not quite believe in the forgiveness of injuries. If you pardon all the evil done to you, you encourage others to do you evil! If you give your cloak to him who steals your coat, how long will it be before your shirt and trousers will go also? Roger Carbury returned that afternoon to Suffolk, and as he thought of it all throughout the journey, he resolved that he would never forgive Paul Montague if Paul Montague should become his cousin's husband.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT RAILWAY TO VERA CRUZ.

"YOU have been a guest in his house. Then, I guess, the thing's about as good as done." These words were spoken with a fine, sharp, nasal twang by a brilliantly-dressed American gentleman in one of the smartest private rooms of the great railway hotel at Liverpool, and they were addressed to a young Englishman who was sitting opposite to him. Between them there was a table covered with maps, schedules, and printed programmes. The American was smoking a very large cigar, which he kept constantly turning in his
mouth, and half of which was inside his teeth. The Englishman had a short pipe. Mr. Hamilton K. Fisker, of the firm of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, was the American, and the Englishman was our friend Paul, the junior member of that firm.

"But I didn’t even speak to him," said Paul.

"In commercial affairs that matters nothing. It quite justifies you in introducing me. We are not going to ask your friend to do us a favour. We don’t want to borrow money."

"I thought you did."

"If he’ll go in for the thing he’d be one of us, and there would be no borrowing then. He’ll join us if he’s as clever as they say, because he’ll see his way to making a couple of million of dollars out of it. If he’d take the trouble to run over and show himself in San Francisco, he’d make double that. The moneyed men would go in with him at once, because they know that he understands the game and has got the pluck. A man who has done what he has by financing in Europe,—by George! there’s no limit to what he might do with us. We’re a bigger people than any of you and have more room. We go after bigger things, and don’t stand shilly-shally on the brink as you do. But Mermotte pretty nigh beats the best among us. Anyway he should come and try his luck, and he couldn’t have a bigger thing or a safer thing than this. He’d see it immediately if I could talk to him for half an hour."

"Mr. Fisker," said Paul mysteriously, "as we are partners, I think I ought to let you know that many people speak very badly of Mr. Mermotte’s honesty."

Mr. Fisker smiled gently, turned his cigar twice round in his mouth, and then closed one eye. "There is always a want of charity," he said, "when a man is successful."

The scheme in question was the grand proposal for a South Central Pacific and Mexican railway, which was to run from the Salt Lake City, thus branching off from the San Francisco and Chicago line,—and pass down through the fertile lands of New Mexico and Arizona, into the territory of the Mexican Republic, run by the city of Mexico, and come out on the gulf at the port of Vera Cruz. Mr. Fisker admitted at once that it was a great undertaking, acknowledged that the distance might be perhaps something over 2,000 miles, acknowledged that no computation had or perhaps could be made as to the probable cost of the railway; but seemed to think that questions such as these were beside the mark and childish. Mermotte, if he would go into the matter at all, would ask no such questions.

But we must go back a little. Paul Montague had received a telegram from his partner, Hamilton K. Fisker, sent on shore at Queenstown from one of the New York liners, requesting him to meet Fisker at Liverpool immediately. With this request he had felt himself bound to comply. Personally he had disliked Fisker,—and perhaps not the less so because when in California he had never found himself able to resist the man’s good humour, audacity, and cleverness combined. He had found himself talked into agreeing with any project which Mr. Fisker might have in hand. It
was altogether against the grain with him, and yet by his own consent, that the flour-mill had been opened at Fiskerville. He trembled for his money and never wished to see Fisker again; but still, when Fisker came to England, he was proud to remember that Fisker was his partner, and he obeyed the order and went down to Liverpool.

If the flour-mill had frightened him, what must the present project have done! Fisker explained that he had come with two objects,—first to ask the consent of the English partner to the proposed change in their business, and secondly to obtain the co-operation of English capitalists. The proposed change in the business meant simply the entire sale of the establishment at Fiskerville, and the absorption of the whole capital in the work of getting up the railway. "If you could realise all the money it wouldn't make a mile of the railway," said Paul. Mr. Fisker laughed at him. The object of Fisker, Montague, and Montague was not to make a railway to Vera Cruz, but to float a company. Paul thought that Mr. Fisker seemed to be indifferent whether the railway should ever be constructed or not. It was clearly his idea that fortunes were to be made out of the concern before a spadeful of earth had been moved. If brilliantly printed programmes might avail anything, with gorgeous maps, and beautiful little pictures of trains running into tunnels beneath snowy mountains and coming out of them on the margin of sunlit lakes, Mr. Fisker had certainly done much. But Paul, when he saw all these pretty things, could not keep his mind from thinking whence had come the money to pay for them. Mr. Fisker had declared that he had come over to obtain his partner's consent, but it seemed to that partner that a great deal had been done without any consent. And Paul's fears on this hand were not allayed by finding that on all these beautiful papers he himself was described as one of the agents and general managers of the company. Each document was signed Fisker, Montague, and Montague. References on all matters were to be made to Fisker, Montague and Montague,—and in one of the documents it was stated that a member of the firm had proceeded to London with the view of attending to British interests in the matter. Fisker had seemed to think that his young partner would express unbounded satisfaction at the greatness which was thus falling upon him. A certain feeling of importance, not altogether unpleasant, was produced, but at the same time there was another conviction forced upon Montague's mind, not altogether pleasant, that his money was being made to disappear without any consent given by him, and that it behoved him to be cautious lest such consent should be extracted from him unawares.

"What has become of the mill?" he asked.
"We have put an agent into it."
"Is not that dangerous? What check have you on him?"
"He pays us a fixed sum, sir. But, my word! when there is such a thing as this on hand a trumpery mill like that is not worth speaking of."
"You haven't sold it?"
"Well;—no. But we've arranged a price for a sale."
"You haven't taken the money for it?"
"Well;—yes; we have. We've raised money on it, you know. You see you weren't there, and so the two resident partners acted for the firm. But Mr. Montague, you'd better go with us. You had indeed."
"And about my own income?"
"That's a flea-bite. When we've got a little ahead with this it won't matter, sir, whether you spend twenty thousand or forty thousand dollars a year. We've got the concession from the United States Government through the territories, and we're in correspondence with the President of the Mexican Republic. I've no doubt we've an office open already in Mexico and another at Vera Cruz."
"Where's the money to come from?"
"Money to come from, sir? Where do you suppose the money comes from in all these undertakings? If we can float the shares, the money'll come in quick enough. We hold three million dollars of the stock ourselves."
"Six hundred thousand pounds!" said Montague.
"We take them at par, of course,—and as we sell we shall pay for them. But of course we shall only sell at a premium. If we can run them up even to 110, there would be three hundred thousand dollars. But we'll do better than that. I must try and see Melmotte at once. You had better write a letter now."
"I don't know the man."
"Never mind. Look here—I'll write it, and you can sign it."
Whereupon Mr. Fisker did write the following letter:—

"Langham Hotel, London. March 4, 18—.

"Dear Sir,—I have the pleasure of informing you that my partner, Mr. Fisker,—of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, of San Francisco,—is now in London with the view of allowing British capitalists to assist in carrying out perhaps the greatest work of the age,—namely, the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, which is to give direct communication between San Francisco and the Gulf of Mexico. He is very anxious to see you upon his arrival, as he is aware that your co-operation would be desirable. We feel assured that with your matured judgment in such matters you would see at once the magnificence of the enterprise. If you will name a day and an hour, Mr. Fisker will call upon you.

"I have to thank you and Madame Melmotte for a very pleasant evening spent at your house last week.

"Mr. Fisker proposes returning to New York. I shall remain here, superintending the British interests which may be involved.

"I have the honour to be,

"Dear Sir,

"Most faithfully yours,

"———"

"But I have never said that I would superintend the interests," said Montague.
"You can say so now. It binds you to nothing. You regular John Bull Englishmen are so full of scruples that you lose as much of life as should serve to make an additional fortune."

After some further conversation Paul Montague recopied the letter and signed it. He did it with doubt,—almost with dismay. But he told himself that he could do no good by refusing. If this wretched American with his hat on one side and rings on his fingers, had so far got the upper hand of Paul's uncle as to have been allowed to do what he liked with the funds of the partnership, Paul could not stop it. On the following morning they went up to London together, and in the course of the afternoon Mr. Fisker presented himself in Abchurch Lane. The letter written at Liverpool, but dated from the Langham Hotel, had been posted at the Euston Square Railway Station at the moment of Fisker's arrival. Fisker sent in his card, and was asked to wait. In the course of twenty minutes he was ushered into the great man's presence by no less a person than Miles Grendall.

It has been already said that Mr. Melmotte was a big man with large whiskers, rough hair, and with an expression of mental power on a harsh vulgar face. He was certainly a man to repel you by his presence unless attracted to him by some internal consideration. He was magnificent in his expenditure, powerful in his doings, successful in his business, and the world around him therefore was not repelled. Fisker, on the other hand, was a shining little man,—perhaps about forty years of age, with a well-twisted moustache, greasy brown hair, which was becoming bald at the top, good-looking if his features were analysed, but insignificant in appearance. He was gorgeously dressed, with a silk waistcoat and chains, and he carried a little stick. One would at first be inclined to say that Fisker was not much of a man; but after a little conversation most men would own that there was something in Fisker. He was troubled by no shyness, by no scruples, and by no fears. His mind was not capacious, but such as it was it was his own, and he knew how to use it.

Abchurch Lane is not a grand site for the offices of a merchant prince. Here, at a small corner house, there was a small brass plate on a swing door, bearing the words "Melmotte & Co." Of whom the Co. was composed no one knew. In one sense Mr. Melmotte might be said to be in company with all the commercial world, for there was no business to which he would refuse his co-operation on certain terms. But he had never burthened himself with a partner in the usual sense of the term. Here Fisker found three or four clerks seated at desks, and was desired to walk up-stairs. The steps were narrow and crooked, and the rooms were small and irregular. Here he stayed for a while in a small dark apartment in which "The Daily Telegraph" was left for the amusement of its occupant till Miles Grendall announced to him that Mr. Melmotte would see him. The millionaire looked at him for a moment or two, just condescending to touch with his fingers the hand which Fisker had projected.

"I don't seem to remember," he said, "the gentleman who has done me the honour of writing to me about you."

"I dare say not, Mr. Melmotte. When I'm at home in San Fran-
Cisco, I make acquaintance with a great many gents whom I don’t remember afterwards. My partner I think told me that he went to your house with his friend, Sir Felix Carbury.”

“I know a young man called Sir Felix Carbury.”

“That’s it. I could have got any amount of introductions to you if I had thought this would not have sufficed.” Mr. Melmotte bowed. “Our account here in London is kept with the City and West End Joint Stock. But I have only just arrived, and as my chief object in coming to London is to see you, and as I met my partner, Mr. Montague, in Liverpool, I took a note from him and came on straight.”

“And what can I do for you, Mr. Fisker?”

Then Mr. Fisker began his account of the Great South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, and exhibited considerable skill by telling it all in comparatively few words. And yet he was gorgeous and florid. In two minutes he had displayed his programme, his maps, and his pictures before Mr. Melmotte’s eyes, taking care that Mr. Melmotte should see how often the names of Fisker, Montague, and Montague, reappeared upon them. As Mr. Melmotte read the documents, Fisker from time to time put in a word. But the words had no reference at all to the future profits of the railway, or to the benefit which such means of communication would confer upon the world at large; but applied solely to the appetite for such stock as theirs, which might certainly be produced in the speculating world by a proper manipulation of the affairs.

“You seem to think you couldn’t get it taken up in your own country,” said Melmotte.

“There’s not a doubt about getting it all taken up there. Our folk, sir, are quick enough at the game; but you don’t want me to teach you, Mr. Melmotte, that nothing encourages this kind of thing like competition. When they hear at St. Louis and Chicago that the thing is alive in London, they’ll be alive there. And it’s the same here, Sir. When they know that the stock is running like wildfire in America, they’ll make it run here too.”

“How far have you got?”

“What we’ve gone to work upon is a concession for making the line from the United States Congress. We’re to have the land for nothing, of course, and a grant of one thousand acres round every station, the stations to be twenty-five miles apart.”

“And the land is to be made over to you,—when?”

“When we have made the line up to the station.” Fisker understood perfectly that Mr. Melmotte did not ask the question in reference to any value that he might attach to the possession of such lands, but to the attractiveness of such a prospectus in the eyes of the outside world of speculators.

“And what do you want me to do, Mr. Fisker?”

“I want to have your name there,” he said. And he placed his finger down on a spot on which it was indicated that there was, or was to be, a chairman of an English Board of Directors, but with a space for the name, hitherto blank.

“Who are to be your directors here, Mr. Fisker?”
THEN MR. FISHER BEGAN HIS ACCOUNT.
MR. FISKER'S SUCCESS.

"We should ask you to chose them, sir. Mr. Paul Montague should be one, and perhaps his friend Sir Felix Carbury might be another. We could get probably one of the Directors of the City and West End. But we would leave it all to you,—as also the amount of stock you would like to take yourself. If you gave yourself to it, heart and soul, Mr. Melmotte, it would be the finest thing that there has been out for a long time. There would be such a mass of stock!"

"You have to back that with a certain amount of paid-up capital?"

"We take care, sir, in the West not to cripple commerce too closely by old-fashioned bandages. Look at what we've done already, sir, by having our limbs pretty free. Look at our line, sir, right across the continent, from San Francisco to New York. Look at——""

"Never mind that, Mr. Fisker. People wanted to go from New York to San Francisco, and I don't know that they do want to go to Vera Cruz. But I will look at it, and you shall hear from me."

The interview was over, and Mr. Fisker was contented with it. Had Mr. Melmotte not intended at least to think of it he would not have given ten minutes to the subject. After all, what was wanted from Mr. Melmotte was little more than his name, for the use of which Mr. Fisker proposed that he should receive from the speculative public two or three hundred thousand pounds.

At the end of a fortnight from the date of Mr. Fisker's arrival in London, the company was fully launched in England, with a body of London directors, of whom Mr. Melmotte was the chairman. Among the directors were Lord Alfred Grendall, Sir Felix Carbury, Samuel Cohenlue, Esq., Member of Parliament for Staines, a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, Lord Nidderdale, who was also in Parliament, and Mr. Paul Montague. It may be thought that the directory was not strong, and that but little help could be given to any commercial enterprise by the assistance of Lord Alfred or Sir Felix;—but it was felt that Mr. Melmotte was himself so great a tower of strength that the fortune of the company,—as a company,—was made.

CHAPTER X.

MR. FISKER'S SUCCESS.

Mr. FISKER was fully satisfied with the progress he had made, but he never quite succeeded in reconciling Paul Montague to the whole transaction. Mr. Melmotte was indeed so great a reality, such a fact in the commercial world of London, that it was no longer possible for such a one as Montague to refuse to believe in the scheme. Melmotte had the telegraph at his command, and had been able to make as close inquiries as though San Francisco and Salt Lake City had been suburbs of London. He was chairman of the British branch of the Company, and had had shares allocated to him,—or as he said to the house,—to the extent of two millions of
dollars. But still there was a feeling of doubt, and a consciousness that Melmotte, though a tower of strength, was thought by many to have been built upon the sands.

Paul had now of course given his full authority to the work, much in opposition to the advice of his old friend Roger Carbury,—and had come up to live in town, that he might personally attend to the affairs of the great railway. There was an office just behind the Exchange, with two or three clerks and a secretary, the latter position being held by Miles Grendall, Esq. Paul, who had a conscience in the matter and was keenly alive to the fact that he was not only a director but was also one of the firm of Fisker, Montague, and Montague which was responsible for the whole affair, was grievously anxious to be really at work, and would attend most inopportune at the company’s offices. Fisker, who still lingered in London, did his best to put a stop to this folly, and on more than one occasion somewhat snubbed his partner. “My dear fellow, what’s the use of your flurrying yourself? In a thing of this kind, when it has once been set a-going, there is nothing else to do. You may have to work your fingers off before you can make it move, and then fail. But all that has been done for you. If you go there on the Thursdays that’s quite as much as you need do. You don’t suppose that such a man as Melmotte would put up with any real interference.” Paul endeavoured to assert himself, declaring that as one of the managers he meant to take a part in the management;—that his fortune, such as it was, had been embarked in the matter, and was as important to him as was Mr. Melmotte’s fortune to Mr. Melmotte. But Fisker got the better of him and put him down. “Fortune! what fortune had either of us? a few beggarly thousands of dollars not worth talking of, and barely sufficient to enable a man to look at an enterprise. And now where are you? look here, sir;—there’s more to be got out of the smashing up of such an affair as this, if it should smash up, than could be made by years of hard work out of such fortunes as yours and mine in the regular way of trade.”

Paul Montague certainly did not love Mr. Fisker personally, nor did he relish his commercial doctrines; but he allowed himself to be carried away by them. “When and how was I to have helped myself?” he wrote to Roger Carbury. “The money had been raised and spent before this man came here at all. It’s all very well to say that he had no right to do it; but he had done it. I couldn’t even have gone to law with him without going over to California, and then I should have got no redress.” Through it all he disliked Fisker, and yet Fisker had one great merit which certainly recommended itself warmly to Montague’s appreciation. Though he denied the propriety of Paul’s interference in the business, he quite acknowledged Paul’s right to a share in the existing dash of prosperity. As to the real facts of the money affairs of the firm he would tell Paul nothing. But he was well provided with money himself, and took care that his partner should be in the same position. He paid him all the arrears of his stipulated income up to the present moment, and put him nominally into possession of a large number of shares in the railway,—with, however, an understanding that he was not to sell them till they
had reached ten per cent. above par, and that in any sale transacted he was to touch no other money than the amount of profit which would thus accrue. What Melmotte was to be allowed to do with his shares, he never heard. As far as Montague could understand, Melmotte was in truth to be powerful over everything. All this made the young man unhappy, restless, and extravagant. He was living in London and had money at command, but he never could rid himself of the fear that the whole affair might tumble to pieces beneath his feet and that he might be stigmatised as one among a gang of swindlers.

We all know how, in such circumstances, by far the greater proportion of a man’s life will be given up to the enjoyments that are offered to him and the lesser proportion to the cares, sacrifices, and sorrows. Had this young director been describing to his intimate friend the condition in which he found himself, he would have declared himself to be distracted by doubts, suspicions, and fears till his life was a burden to him. And yet they who were living with him at this time found him to be a very pleasant fellow, fond of amusement, and disposed to make the most of all the good things which came in his way. Under the auspices of Sir Felix Carbury he had become a member of the Beargarden, at which best of all possible clubs the mode of entrance was as irregular as its other proceedings. When any young man desired to come in who was thought to be unfit for its style of living, it was shown to him that it would take three years before his name could be brought up at the usual rate of vacancies; but in regard to desirable companions the committee had a power of putting them at the top of the list of candidates and bringing them in at once. Paul Montague had suddenly become credited with considerable commercial wealth and greater commercial influence. He sat at the same Board with Melmotte and Melmotte’s men; and was on this account elected at the Beargarden without any of that harassing delay to which other less fortunate candidates are subjected.

And,—let it be said with regret, for Paul Montague was at heart honest and well-conditioned,—he took to living a good deal at the Beargarden. A man must dine somewhere, and everybody knows that a man dines cheaper at his club than elsewhere. It was thus he reasoned with himself. But Paul’s dinners at the Beargarden were not cheap. He saw a good deal of his brother directors, Sir Felix Carbury and Lord Nidderdale, entertained Lord Alfred more than once at the club, and had twice dined with his great chairman amidst all the magnificence of merchant-princely hospitality in Grosvenor Square. It had indeed been suggested to him by Mr. Fisker that he also ought to enter himself for the great Marie-Melmotte plate. Lord Nidderdale had again declared his intention of running, owing to considerable pressure put upon him by certain interested tradesmen, and with this intention had become one of the directors of the Mexican Railway Company. At the time, however, of which we are now writing, Sir Felix was the favourite for the race among fashionable circles generally.

The middle of April had come, and Fisker was still in London. When millions of dollars are at stake,—belonging perhaps to widows
and orphans, as Fisker remarked,—a man was forced to set his own convenience on one side. But this devotion was not left without reward, for Mr. Fisker had "a good time" in London. He also was made free of the Bear Garden, as an honorary member, and he also spent a good deal of money. But there is this comfort in great affairs, that whatever you spend on yourself can be no more than a trifle. Champagne and ginger-beer are all the same when you stand to win or lose thousands,—with this only difference, that champagne may have deteriorating results which the more innocent beverage will not produce. The feeling that the greatness of these operations relieved them from the necessity of looking to small expenses operated in the champagne direction, both on Fisker and Montague, and the result was deleterious. The Bear Garden, no doubt, was a more lively place than Carbury Manor, but Montague found that he could not wake up on these London mornings with thoughts as satisfactory as those which attended his pillow at the old Manor House.

On Saturday, the 18th of April, Fisker was to leave London on his return to New York, and on the 18th a farewell dinner was to be given to him at the club. Mr. Melmotte was asked to meet him, and on such an occasion all the resources of the club were to be brought forth. Lord Alfred Greendale was also to be a guest, and Mr. Cohenlupe, who went about a good deal with Melmotte. Niderdale, Carbury, Montague, and Miles Greendale were members of the club, and gave the dinner. No expense was spared. Herr Vossner purveyed the viands and wines,—and paid for them. Lord Niderdale took the chair, with Fisker on his right hand, and Melmotte on his left, and, for a fast-going young lord, was supposed to have done the thing well. There were only two toasts drunk, to the healths of Mr. Melmotte and Mr. Fisker, and two speeches were of course made by them. Mr. Melmotte may have been held to have clearly proved the genuineness of that English birth which he claimed by the awkwardness and incapacity which he showed on the occasion. He stood with his hands on the table and with his face turned to his plate blurted out his assurance that the floating of this railway company would be one of the greatest and most successful commercial operations ever conducted on either side of the Atlantic. It was a great thing,—a very great thing;—he had no hesitation in saying that it was one of the greatest things out. He didn't believe a greater thing had ever come out. He was happy to give his humble assistance to the furtherance of so great a thing,—and so on. These assertions, not varying much one from the other, he jerked out like so many separate interjections, endeavouring to look his friends in the face at each, and then turning his countenance back to his plate as though seeking for inspiration for the next attempt. He was not eloquent; but the gentlemen who heard him remembered that he was the great Augustus Melmotte, that he might probably make them all rich men, and they cheered him to the echo. Lord Alfred had reconciled himself to be called by his Christian name, since he had been put in the way of raising two or three hundred pounds on the security of shares which were to be allotted to him, but of which in the flesh he had as yet seen nothing. Wonderful are the ways of trade! If one can only get the tip of one's
little finger into the right pie, what noble morsels, what rich esculents, will stick to it as it is extracted!

When Melmotte sat down Fisker made his speech, and it was fluent, fast, and florid. Without giving it word for word, which would be tedious, I could not adequately set before the reader’s eye the speaker’s pleasing picture of world-wide commercial love and harmony which was to be produced by a railway from Salt Lake City to Vera Cruz, nor explain the extent of gratitude from the world at large which might be claimed by, and would finally be accorded to, the great firms of Melmotte & Co. of London, and Fisker, Montague, and Montague of San Francisco. Mr. Fisker’s arms were waved gracefully about. His head was turned now this way and now that, but never towards his plate. It was very well done. But there was more faith in one ponderous word from Mr. Melmotte’s mouth than in all the American’s oratory.

There was not one of them then present who had not after some fashion been given to understand that his fortune was to be made, not by the construction of the railway, but by the floating of the railway shares. They had all whispered to each other their convictions on this head. Even Montague did not beguile himself into an idea that he was really a director in a company to be employed in the making and working of a railway. People out of doors were to be advertised into buying shares, and they who were so to say indoors were to have the privilege of manufacturing the shares thus to be sold. That was to be their work, and they all knew it. But now, as there were eight of them collected together, they talked of humanity at large and of the coming harmony of nations.

After the first cigar, Melmotte withdrew, and Lord Alfred went with him. Lord Alfred would have liked to remain, being a man who enjoyed tobacco and soda and brandy,— but momentous days had come upon him, and he thought it well to cling to his Melmotte. Mr. Samuel Cohenlupe also went, not having taken a very distinguished part in the entertainment. Then the young men were left alone, and it was soon proposed that they should adjourn to the cardroom. It had been rather hoped that Fisker would go with the elders. Nidderdale, who did not understand much about the races of mankind, had his doubts whether the American gentleman might not be a “Heathen Chinese,” such as he had read of in poetry. But Mr. Fisker liked to have his amusement as well as did the others, and went up resolutely into the cardroom. Here they were joined by Lord Grasslough, and were very quickly at work, having chosen loo as their game. Mr. Fisker made an allusion to poker as a desirable pastime, but Lord Nidderdale, remembering his poetry, shook his head. “Oh! bother,” he said, “let’s have some game that Christians play.” Mr. Fisker declared himself ready for any game, irrespective of religious prejudices.

It must be explained that the gambling at the Beargarden had gone on with very little interruption, and that on the whole Sir Felix Carbury kept his luck. There had of course been vicissitudes, but his star had been in the ascendant. For some nights together this had been so continual that Mr. Miles Grendall had suggested to his
friend Lord Grasslough that there must be foul play. Lord Grasslough, who had not many good gifts, was, at least, not suspicious, and repudiated the idea. "We'll keep an eye on him," Miles Grendall had said. "You may do as you like, but I'm not going to watch anyone," Grasslough had replied. Miles had watched, and had watched in vain, and it may as well be said at once that Sir Felix, with all his faults, was not as yet a blackleg. Both of them now owed Sir Felix a considerable sum of money, as did also Dolly Longestaffe, who was not present on this occasion. Latterly very little ready money had passed hands,—very little in proportion to the sums which had been written down on paper,—though Sir Felix was still so well in funds as to feel himself justified in repudiating any caution that his mother might give him.

When I.O.U.'s have for some time passed freely in such a company as that now assembled the sudden introduction of a stranger is very disagreeable, particularly when that stranger intends to start for San Francisco on the following morning. If it could be arranged that the stranger should certainly lose, no doubt then he would be regarded as a godsend. Such strangers have ready money in their pockets, a portion of which would be felt to descend like a soft shower in a time of drought. When these dealings in unsecured paper have been going on for a considerable time real bank notes come to have a loveliness which they never possessed before. But should the stranger win, then there may arise complications incapable of any comfortable solution. In such a state of things some Herr Vossner must be called in, whose terms are apt to be ruinous. On this occasion things did not arrange themselves comfortably. From the very commencement Fisker won, and quite a budget of little papers fell into his possession, many of which were passed to him from the hands of Sir Felix,—bearing, however, a "G" intended to stand for Grasslough, or an "N" for Nidderdale, or a wonderful hieroglyphic which was known at the Beargarden to mean D. L——, or Dolly Longestaffe, the fabricator of which was not present on the occasion. Then there was the M. G. of Miles Grendall, which was a species of paper peculiarly plentiful and very unattractive on these commercial occasions. Paul Montague hitherto had never given an I.O.U. at the Beargarden,—nor of late had our friend Sir Felix. On the present occasion Montague won, though not heavily. Sir Felix lost continually, and was almost the only loser. But Mr. Fisker won nearly all that was lost. He was to start for Liverpool by train at 8.30 A.M., and at 6 A.M. he counted up his bits of paper and found himself the winner of about £900. "I think that most of them came from you, Sir Felix," he said,—handing the bundle across the table.

"I dare say they did, but they are all good against these other fellows." Then Fisker, with most perfect good humour, extracted one from the mass which indicated Dolly Longestaffe's indebtedness to the amount of £50. "That's Longestaffe," said Felix, "and I'll change that of course." Then out of his pocket-book he extracted other minute documents bearing that M. G. which was so little esteemed among them,—and so made up the sum. "You seem to have £150 from Grasslough, £1145 from Nidderdale, and £822 10s. from Grendall," said the baronet. Then Sir Felix got up as though
he had paid his score. Fisker, with smiling good humour, arranged the little bits of paper before him and looked round upon the company.

"This won't do, you know," said Nidderdale. "Mr. Fisker must have his money before he leaves. You've got it, Carbury."

"Of course he has," said Grasslough.

"As it happens I have not," said Sir Felix;—"but what if I had?"

"Mr. Fisker starts for New York immediately," said Lord Nidderdale. "I suppose we can muster £600 among us. Ring the bell for Vossner. I think Carbury ought to pay the money as he lost it, and we didn't expect to have our I.O.U.'s brought up in this way."

"Lord Nidderdale," said Sir Felix, "I have already said that I have not got the money about me. Why should I have it more than you, especially as I knew I had I.O.U.'s more than sufficient to meet anything I could lose when I sat down?"

"Mr. Fisker must have his money at any rate," said Lord Nidderdale, ringing the bell again.

"It doesn't matter one straw, my lord," said the American.

"Let it be sent to me to Frisco, in a bill, my lord." And so he got up to take his hat, greatly to the delight of Miles Grendall.

But the two young lords would not agree to this. "If you must go this very minute I'll meet you at the train with the money," said Nidderdale. Fisker begged that no such trouble should be taken. Of course he would wait ten minutes if they wished. But the affair was one of no consequence. Wasn't the post running every day? Then Herr Vossner came from his bed, suddenly arrayed in a dressing-gown, and there was a conference in a corner between him, the two lords, and Mr. Grendall. In a very few minutes Herr Vossner wrote a cheque for the amount due by the lords, but he was afraid that he had not money at his banker's sufficient for the greater claim. It was well understood that Herr Vossner would not advance money to Mr. Grendall unless others would pledge themselves for the amount.

"I suppose I'd better send you a bill over to America," said Miles Grendall, who had taken no part in the matter as long as he was in the same boat with the lords.

"Just so. My partner, Montague, will tell you the address." Then busting off, taking an affectionate adieu of Paul, shaking hands with them all round, and looking as though he cared nothing for the money, he took his leave. "One cheer for the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway," he said as he went out of the room.

Not one there had liked Fisker. His manners were not as their manners; his waistcoat not as their waistcoats. He smoked his cigar after a fashion different from theirs, and spat upon the carpet. He said my lord too often, and grated their prejudices equally whether he treated them with familiarity or deference. But he had behaved well about the money, and they felt that they were behaving badly. Sir Felix was the immediate offender, as he should have understood that he was not entitled to pay a stranger with documents which, by tacit contract, were held to be good among themselves. But there was no use now in going back to that. Something must be done.

"Vossner must get the money," said Nidderdale. "Let's have him up again."
"I don't think it's my fault," said Miles. "Of course no one thought he was to be called upon in this sort of way."
"Why shouldn't you be called upon?" said Carbury. "You acknowledge that you owe the money."
"I think Carbury ought to have paid it," said Grasslough.
"Grassy, my boy," said the baronet, "your attempts at thinking are never worth much. Why was I to suppose that a stranger would be playing among us? Had you a lot of ready money with you to pay if you had lost it? I don't always walk about with six hundred pounds in my pocket;—nor do you!"
"It's no good jawing," said Nidderdale; "let's get the money."
Then Montague offered to undertake the debt himself, saying that there were money transactions between him and his partner. But this could not be allowed. He had only lately come among them, had as yet had no dealing in I.O.U.'s, and was the last man in the company who ought to be made responsible for the impecuniosity of Miles Grendall. He, the impecunious one,—the one whose impecuniosity extended to the absolute want of credit,—sat silent, stroking his heavy moustache.

There was a second conference between Herr Vossner and the two lords in another room, which ended in the preparation of a document by which Miles Grendall undertook to pay to Herr Vossner £450 at the end of three months, and this was endorsed by the two lords, by Sir Felix, and by Paul Montague; and in return for this the German produced £322 10s. in notes and gold. This had taken some considerable time. Then a cup of tea was prepared and swallowed; after which Nidderdale, with Montague, started off to meet Fisker at the railway station. "It'll only be a trifle over £100 each," said Nidderdale, in the cab.
"Won't Mr. Grendall pay it?"
"Oh, dear no. How the devil should he?"
"Then he shouldn't play."
"That'd be hard on him, poor fellow. If you went to his uncle the duke, I suppose you could get it. Or Buntingford might put it right for you. Perhaps he might win, you know, some day, and then he'd make it square. He'd be fair enough if he had it. Poor Miles!"

They found Fisker wonderfully brilliant with bright rugs, and greatcoats with silk linings. "We've brought you the tin," said Nidderdale, accosting him on the platform.
"Upon my word, my lord, I'm sorry you have taken so much trouble about such a trifle."
"A man should always have his money when he wins."
"We don't think anything about such little matters at Frisco, my lord."
"You're fine fellows at Frisco, I dare say. Here we pay up,—when we can. Sometimes we can't, and then it is not pleasant." Fresh adieus were made between the two partners, and between the American and the lord;—and then Fisker was taken off on his way towards Frisco. "He's not half a bad fellow, but he's not a bit like an Englishman," said Lord Nidderdale, as he walked out of the station.
CHAPTER XI.

LADY CARBURY AT HOME.

DURING the last six weeks Lady Carbury had lived a life of very mixed depression and elevation. Her great work had come out,—the "Criminal Queens"—and had been very widely reviewed. In this matter it had been by no means all pleasure, in as much as many very hard words had been said of her. In spite of the dear friendship between herself and Mr. Alf, one of Mr. Alf's most sharp-nailed subordinates had been set upon her book, and had pulled it to pieces with almost rabid malignity. One would have thought that so slight a thing could hardly have been worthy of such protracted attention. Error after error was laid bare with merciless prolixity. No doubt the writer of the article must have had all history at his finger-ends, as in pointing out the various mistakes made he always spoke of the historical facts which had been misquoted, misdated, or misrepresented, as being familiar in all their bearings to every schoolboy of twelve years old. The writer of the criticism never suggested the idea that he himself, having been fully provided with books of reference, and having learned the art of finding in them what he wanted at a moment's notice, had, as he went on with his work, checked off the blunders without any more permanent knowledge of his own than a housekeeper has of coals when she counts so many sacks into the coal-cellar. He spoke of the parentage of one wicked ancient lady, and the dates of the frailties of another, with an assurance intended to show that an exact knowledge of all these details abided with him always. He must have been a man of vast and varied erudition, and his name was Jones. The world knew him not, but his erudition was always there at the command of Mr. Alf,—and his cruelty. The greatness of Mr. Alf consisted in this, that he always had a Mr. Jones or two ready to do his work for him. It was a great business, this of Mr. Alf's, for he had his Jones also for philology, for science, for poetry, for politics, as well as for history, and one special Jones, extraordinarily accurate and very well posted up in his references, entirely devoted to the Elizabethan drama.

There is the review intended to sell a book,—which comes out immediately after the appearance of the book, or sometimes before it; the review which gives reputation, but does not affect the sale, and which comes a little later; the review which snuffs a book out quietly; the review which is to raise or lower the author a single peg, or two pegs, as the case may be; the review which is suddenly to make an author, and the review which is to crush him. An exuberant Jones has been known before now to declare aloud that he would crush a man, and a self-confident Jones has been known to declare that he has accomplished the deed. Of all reviews, the crushing review is the most popular, as being the most readable. When the
rumour goes abroad that some notable man has been actually crushed,—been positively driven over by an entire Juggernaut’s car of criticism till his literary body be a mere amorphous mass,—then a real success has been achieved, and the Alf of the day has done a great thing; but even the crushing of a poor Lady Carbury, if it be absolute, is effective. Such a review will not make all the world call for the “Evening Pulpit,” but it will cause those who do take the paper to be satisfied with their bargain. Whenever the circulation of such a paper begins to slacken, the proprietors should, as a matter of course, admonish their Alf to add a little power to the crushing department.

Lady Carbury had been crushed by the “Evening Pulpit.” We may fancy that it was easy work, and that Mr. Alf’s historical Mr. Jones was not forced to fatigue himself by the handling of many books of reference. The errors did lie a little near the surface; and the whole scheme of the work, with its pandering to bad tastes by pretended revelations of frequently fabulous crime, was reprobated in Mr. Jones’s very best manner. But the poor authoress, though utterly crushed, and reduced to little more than literary pulp for an hour or two, was not destroyed. On the following morning she went to her publishers, and was closeted for half an hour with the senior partner, Mr. Leadham. “I’ve got it all in black and white,” she said, full of the wrong which had been done her, “and can prove him to be wrong. It was in 1522 that the man first came to Paris, and he couldn’t have been her lover before that. I got it all out of the ‘Biographie Universelle.’ I’ll write to Mr. Alf myself,—a letter to be published, you know.”

“Pray don’t do anything of the kind, Lady Carbury.”

“I can prove that I’m right.”

“And they can prove that you’re wrong.”

“I’ve got all the facts,—and the figures.”

Mr. Leadham did not care a straw for facts or figures,—had no opinion of his own whether the lady or the reviewer were right; but he knew very well that the “Evening Pulpit” would surely get the better of any mere author in such a contention. “Never fight the newspapers, Lady Carbury. Who ever yet got any satisfaction by that kind of thing? It’s their business, and you are not used to it.”

“And Mr. Alf is my particular friend! It does seem so hard,” said Lady Carbury, wiping hot tears from her cheeks.

“It won’t do us the least harm, Lady Carbury.”

“It’ll stop the sale?”

“Not much. A book of that sort couldn’t hope to go on very long, you know. The ‘Breakfast Table’ gave it an excellent lift, and came just at the right time. I rather like the notice in the ‘Pulpit,’ myself.

“Like it!” said Lady Carbury, still suffering in every fibre of her self-love from the soreness produced by those Juggernaut’s car-wheels.

“Anything is better than indifference, Lady Carbury. A great many people remember simply that the book has been noticed, but carry away nothing as to the purport of the review. It’s a very good advertisement.”
"But to be told that I have got to learn the A B C of history,—after working as I have worked!"

"That's a mere form of speech, Lady Carbury."

"You think the book has done pretty well?"

"Pretty well;—just about what we hoped, you know."

"There'll be something coming to me, Mr. Leadham?"

Mr. Leadham sent for a ledger, and turned over a few pages and ran up a few figures, and then scratched his head. There would be something, but Lady Carbury was not to imagine that it could be very much. It did not often happen that a great deal could be made by a first book. Nevertheless, Lady Carbury, when she left the publisher's shop, did carry a cheque with her. She was smartly dressed and looked very well, and had smiled on Mr. Leadham. Mr. Leadham, too, was no more than man, and had written—a small cheque.

Mr. Alf certainly had behaved badly to her; but both Mr. Broone of the "Breakfast Table," and Mr. Booker of the "Literary Chronicle," had been true to her interests. Lady Carbury had, as she promised, "done" Mr. Booker's "New Tale of a Tub" in the "Breakfast Table." That is, she had been allowed, as a reward for looking into Mr. Broone's eyes, and laying her soft hand on Mr. Broone's sleeve, and suggesting to Mr. Broone that no one understood her so well as he did, to bedaub Mr. Booker's very thoughtful book in a very thoughtless fashion,—and to be paid for her work. What had been said about his work in the "Breakfast Table" had been very distasteful to poor Mr. Booker. It grieved his inner contemplative intelligence that such rubbish should be thrown upon him; but in his outside experience of life he knew that even the rubbish was valuable, and that he must pay for it in the manner to which he had unfortunately become accustomed. So Mr. Booker himself wrote the article on the "Criminal Queens" in the "Literary Chronicle," knowing that what he wrote would also be rubbish. "Remarkable vivacity." "Power of delineating character." "Excellent choice of subject." "Considerable intimacy with the historical details of various periods." "The literary world would be sure to hear of Lady Carbury again." The composition of the review, together with the reading of the book, consumed altogether perhaps an hour of Mr. Booker's time. He made no attempt to cut the pages, but here and there read those that were open. He had done this kind of thing so often, that he knew well what he was about. He could have reviewed such a book when he was three parts asleep. When the work was done he threw down his pen and uttered a deep sigh. He felt it to be hard upon him that he should be compelled, by the exigencies of his position, to descend so low in literature; but it did not occur to him to reflect that in fact he was not compelled, and that he was quite at liberty to break stones, or to starve honestly, if no other honest mode of carrying on his career was open to him. "If I didn't, somebody else would," he said to himself.

But the review in the "Morning Breakfast Table" was the making of Lady Carbury's book, as far as it ever was made. Mr. Broone saw the lady after the receipt of the letter given in the first chapter of this
Tale, and was induced to make valuable promises which had been fully performed. Two whole columns had been devoted to the work, and the world had been assured that no more delightful mixture of amusement and instruction had ever been concocted than Lady Carbury's "Criminal Queens." It was the very book that had been wanted for years. It was a work of infinite research and brilliant imagination combined. There had been no hesitation in the laying on of the paint. At that last meeting Lady Carbury had been very soft, very handsome, and very winning; Mr. Browne had given the order with good will, and it had been obeyed in the same feeling.

Therefore, though the crushing had been very real, there had also been some elation; and as a net result, Lady Carbury was disposed to think that her literary career might yet be a success. Mr. Leadham's cheque had been for a small amount, but it might probably lead the way to something better. People at any rate were talking about her, and her Tuesday evenings at home were generally full. But her literary life, and her literary successes, her flirtations with Mr. Browne, her business with Mr. Booker, and her crushing by Mr. Alf's Mr. Jones, were after all but adjuncts to that real inner life of hers of which the absorbing interest was her son. And with regard to him too she was partly depressed, and partly elated, allowing her hopes however to dominate her fears. There was very much to frighten her. Even the moderate reform in the young man's expenses which had been effected under dire necessity had been of late abandoned. Though he never told her anything, she became aware that during the last month of the hunting season he had hunted nearly every day. She knew, too, that he had a horse up in town. She never saw him but once in the day, when she visited him in his bed about noon, and was aware that he was always at his club throughout the night. She knew that he was gambling, and she hated gambling as being of all pastimes the most dangerous. But she knew that he had ready money for his immediate purposes, and that two or three tradesmen who were gifted with a peculiar power of annoying their debtors, had ceased to trouble her in Welbeck Street. For the present, therefore, she consoled herself by reflecting that his gambling was successful. But her elation sprung from a higher source than this. From all that she could hear, she thought it likely that Felix would carry off the great prize; and then,—should he do that,—what a blessed son would he have been to her! How constantly in her triumph would she be able to forget all his vices, his debts, his gambling, his late hours, and his cruel treatment of herself! As she thought of it the bliss seemed to be too great for the possibility of realisation. She was taught to understand that £10,000 a year, to begin with, would be the least of it; and that the ultimate wealth might probably be such as to make Sir Felix Carbury the richest commoner in England. In her very heart of hearts she worshipped wealth, but desired it for him rather than for herself. Then her mind ran away to baronies and earldoms, and she was lost in the coming glories of the boy whose faults had already nearly engulfed her in his own ruin.

And she had another ground for elation, which comforted her
LADY CARBURY AT HOME.

much, though elation from such a cause was altogether absurd. She had discovered that her son had become a Director of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway Company. She must have known,—she certainly did know,—that Felix, such as he was, could not lend assistance by his work to any company or commercial enterprise in the world. She was aware that there was some reason for such a choice hidden from the world, and which comprised and conveyed a falsehood. A ruined baronet of five-and-twenty, every hour of whose life since he had been left to go alone had been loaded with vice and folly,—whose egregious misconduct warranted his friends in regarding him as one incapable of knowing what principle is,—of what service could he be, that he should be made a Director? But Lady Carbury, though she knew that he could be of no service, was not at all shocked. She was now able to speak up a little for her boy, and did not forget to send the news by post to Roger Carbury. And her son sat at the same Board with Mr. Melmotte! What an indication was this of coming triumphs!

Fisker had started, as the reader will perhaps remember, on the morning of Saturday 19th April, leaving Sir Felix at the Club at about seven in the morning. All that day his mother was unable to see him. She found him asleep in his room at noon and again at two; and when she sought him again he had flown. But on the Sunday she caught him. "I hope," she said, "you'll stay at home on Tuesday evening." Hitherto she had never succeeded in inducing him to grace her evening parties by his presence.

"All your people are coming! You know, mother, it is such an awful bore."

"Madame Melmotte and her daughter will be here."

"One looks such a fool carrying on that kind of thing in one's own house. Everybody sees that it has been contrived. And it is such a pokey, stuffy little place!"

Then Lady Carbury spoke out her mind. "Felix, I think you must be a fool. I have given over ever expecting that you would do anything to please me. I sacrifice everything for you and I do not even hope for a return. But when I am doing everything to advance your own interests, when I am working night and day to rescue you from ruin, I think you might at any rate help a little,—not for me of course, but for yourself."

"I don't know what you mean by working day and night. I don't want you to work day and night."

"There is hardly a young man in London that is not thinking of this girl, and you have chances that none of them have. I am told they are going out of town at Whitsuntide, and that she's to meet Lord Nidderdale down in the country."

"She can't endure Nidderdale. She says so herself."

"She will do as she is told,—unless she can be made to be downright in love with some one like yourself. Why not ask her at once on Tuesday?"

"If I'm to do it at all I must do it after my own fashion. I'm not going to be driven."

"Of course if you will not take the trouble to be here to see her
when she comes to your own house, you cannot expect her to think that you really love her."

"Love her! what a bother there is about loving! Well;—I'll look in. What time do the animals come to feed?"

"There will be no feeding. Felix you are so heartless and so cruel that I sometimes think I will make up my mind to let you go your own way and never to speak to you again. My friends will be here about ten;—I should say from ten till twelve. I think you should be here to receive her, not later than ten."

"If I can get my dinner out of my throat by that time, I will come."

When the Tuesday came, the over-driven young man did contrive to get his dinner eaten, and his glass of brandy sipped, and his cigar smoked, and perhaps his game of billiards played, so as to present himself in his mother's drawing-room not long after half-past ten. Madame Melmotte and her daughter were already there,—and many others, of whom the majority were devoted to literature. Among them Mr. Alf was in the room, and was at this very moment discussing Lady Carbury's book with Mr. Booker. He had been quite graciously received, as though he had not authorised the crushing. Lady Carbury had given him her hand with that energy of affection, with which she was wont to welcome her literary friends, and had simply thrown one glance of appeal into his eyes as she looked into his face,—as though asking him how he had found it in his heart to be so cruel to one so tender, so unprotected, so innocent as herself. "I cannot stand this kind of thing," said Mr. Alf, to Mr. Booker.

"There's a regular system of touting got abroad, and I mean to trample it down."

"If you're strong enough," said Mr. Booker.

"Well, I think I am. I'm strong enough, at any rate, to show that I'm not afraid to lead the way. I've the greatest possible regard for our friend here;—but her book is a bad book, a thoroughly rotten book, an unblushing compilation from half-a-dozen works of established reputation, in pilfering from which she has almost always managed to misapprehend her facts, and to muddle her dates. Then she writes to me and asks me to do the best I can for her. I have done the best I could."

Mr. Alf knew very well what Mr Booker had done, and Mr. Booker was aware of the extent of Mr. Alf's knowledge. "What you say is all very right," said Mr. Booker; "only you want a different kind of world to live in."

"Just so;—and therefore we must make it different. I wonder how our friend Bronne felt when he saw that his critic had declared that the 'Criminal Queens' was the greatest historical work of modern days."

"I didn't see the notice. There isn't much in the book, certainly, as far as I have looked at it. I should have said that violent censure or violent praise would be equally thrown away upon it. One doesn't want to break a butterfly on the wheel;—especially a friendly butterfly."

"As to the friendship, it should be kept separate. That's my idea," said Mr. Alf, moving away.
LADY CARBURY AT HOME.

"I'll never forget what you've done for me,—never!" said Lady Carbury, holding Mr. Browne's hand for a moment, as she whispered to him.

"Nothing more than my duty," said he, smiling.

"I hope you'll learn to know that a woman can really be grateful," she replied. Then she let go his hand and moved away to some other guest. There was a dash of true sincerity in what she had said. Of enduring gratitude it may be doubtful whether she was capable: but at this moment she did feel that Mr. Browne had done much for her, and that she would willingly make him some return of friendship. Of any feeling of another sort, of any turn at the moment towards flirtation, of any idea of encouragement to a gentleman who had once acted as though he were her lover, she was absolutely innocent. She had forgotten that little absurd episode in their joint lives. She was at any rate too much in earnest at the present moment to think about it. But it was otherwise with Mr. Browne. He could not quite make up his mind whether the lady was or was not in love with him,—or whether, if she were, it was incumbent on him to indulge her;—and if so, in what manner. Then as he looked after her, he told himself that she was certainly very beautiful, that her figure was distinguished, that her income was certain, and her rank considerable. Nevertheless, Mr. Browne knew of himself that he was not a marrying man. He had made up his mind that marriage would not suit his business, and he smiled to himself as he reflected how impossible it was that such a one as Lady Carbury should turn him from his resolution.

"I am so glad that you have come to-night, Mr. Alf," Lady Carbury said to the high-minded editor of the "Evening Pulpit."

"Am I not always glad to come, Lady Carbury?"

"You are very good. But I feared,—"

"Feared what, Lady Carbury?"

"That you might perhaps have felt that I should be unwilling to welcome you after,—well after the compliments of last Thursday."

"I never allow the two things to join themselves together. You see, Lady Carbury, I don't write all these things myself."

"No indeed. What a bitter creature you would be if you did."

"To tell the truth, I never write any of them. Of course we endeavour to get people whose judgments we can trust, and if, as in this case, it should unfortunately happen that the judgment of our critic should be hostile to the literary pretensions of a personal friend of my own, I can only lament the accident, and trust that my friend may have spirit enough to divide me as an individual from that Mr. Alf who has the misfortune to edit a newspaper."

"It is because you have so trusted me that I am obliged to you," said Lady Carbury with her sweetest smile. She did not believe a word that Mr. Alf had said to her. She thought, and thought rightly, that Mr. Alf's Mr. Jones had taken direct orders from his editor, as to his treatment of the "Criminal Queens." But she remembered that she intended to write another book, and that she might perhaps conquer even Mr. Alf by spirit and courage under her present infliction.

It was Lady Carbury's duty on the occasion to say pretty things
to everybody. And she did her duty. But in the midst of it all she was ever thinking of her son and Marie Melpomme, and she did at last venture to separate the girl from her mother. Marie herself was not unwilling to be talked to by Sir Felix. He had never bullied her, had never seemed to scorn her; and then he was so beautiful! She, poor girl, bewildered among various suitors, utterly confused by the life to which she was introduced, troubled by fitful attacks of admonition from her father, who would again, fitfully, leave her unnoticed for a week at a time; with no trust in her pseudo-mother—for poor Marie had in truth been born before her father had been a married man, and had never known what was her own mother's fate,—with no enjoyment in her present life, had come solely to this conclusion, that it would be well for her to be taken away somewhere by somebody. Many a varied phase of life had already come in her way. She could just remember the dirty street in the German portion of New York in which she had been born and had lived for the first four years of her life, and could remember too the poor, hardly-treated woman who had been her mother. She could remember being at sea, and her sickness,—but could not quite remember whether that woman had been with her. Then she had run about the streets of Hamburgh, and had sometimes been very hungry, sometimes in rags,—and she had a dim memory of some trouble into which her father had fallen, and that he was away from her for a time. She had had up to the present splendid moment her own convictions about that absence, but she had never mentioned them to a human being. Then her father had married her present mother in Francfort. That she could remember distinctly, as also the rooms in which she was then taken to live, and the fact that she was told that from henceforth she was to be a Jewess. But there had soon come another change. They went from Francfort to Paris, and there they were all Christians. From that time they had lived in various apartments in the French capital, but had always lived well. Sometimes there had been a carriage, sometimes there had been none. And then there came a time in which she was grown woman enough to understand that her father was being much talked about. Her father to her had always been alternately capricious and indifferent rather than cross or cruel, but just at this period he was cruel both to her and to his wife. And Madame Melpomme would weep at times and declare that they were all ruined. Then, at a moment, they burst out into sudden splendour at Paris. There was an hotel, with carriages and horses almost unnumbered;—and then there came to their rooms a crowd of dark, swarthy, greasy men, who were entertained sumptuously; but there were few women. At this time Marie was hardly nineteen, and young enough in manner and appearance to be taken for seventeen. Suddenly again she was told that she was to be taken to London, and the migration had been effected with magnificence. She was first taken to Brighton, where the half of an hotel had been hired, and had then been brought to Grosvenor-square, and at once thrown into the matrimonial market. No part of her life had been more disagreeable to her, more frightful, than the first months in which she had been trafficked for by the Nidderdales and Grassloughs. She had been
SIR FELIX IN HIS MOTHER’S HOUSE.

too frightened, too much of a coward to object to anything proposed to her, but still had been conscious of a desire to have some hand in her own future destiny. Luckily for her, the first attempts at trafficking with the Nidderdales and Grassloughs had come to nothing; and at length she was picking up a little courage, and was beginning to feel that it might be possible to prevent a disposition of herself which did not suit her own tastes. She was also beginning to think that there might be a disposition of herself which would suit her own tastes.

Felix Carbury was standing leaning against a wall, and she was seated on a chair close to him. “I love you better than anyone in the world,” he said, speaking plainly enough for her to hear, perhaps indifferent as to the hearing of others.

“Oh, Sir Felix, pray do not talk like that.”

“You knew that before. Now I want you to say whether you will be my wife.”

“How can I answer that myself? Papa settles everything.”

“May I go to papa?”

“You may if you like,” she replied in a very low whisper. It was thus that the greatest heiress of the day, the greatest heiress of any day if people spoke truly, gave herself away to a man without a penny.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR FELIX IN HIS MOTHER’S HOUSE.

WHEN all her friends were gone Lady Carbury looked about for her son,—not expecting to find him, for she knew how punctual was his nightly attendance at the Beargarden, but still with some faint hope that he might have remained on this special occasion to tell her of his fortune. She had watched the whispering, had noticed the cool effrontery with which Felix had spoken,—for without hearing the words she had almost known the very moment in which he was asking,—and had seen the girl’s timid face, and eyes turned to the ground, and the nervous twitching of her hands as she replied. As a woman, understanding such things, who had herself been wooed, who had at least dreamed of love, she had greatly disapproved her son’s manner. But yet, if it might be successful, if the girl would put up with love making so slight as that, and if the great Malmotte would accept in return for his money a title so modest as that of her son, how glorious should her son be to her in spite of his indifference!

“I heard him leave the house before the Malmottes went,” said Henrietta, when the mother spoke of going up to her son’s bedroom.

“He might have stayed to-night. Do you think he asked her?”

“How can I say, mamma?”

“I should have thought you would have been anxious about your brother. I feel sure he did,—and that she accepted him.”

“If so I hope he will be good to her. I hope he loves her.”

“Why shouldn’t he love her as well as any one else? A girl need not be odious because she has money. There is nothing disagreeable about her.”
"No,—nothing disagreeable. I do not know that she is especially attractive."
"Who is? I don't see anybody specially attractive. It seems to me you are quite indifferent about Felix."
"Do not say that, mamma."
"Yes you are. You don't understand all that he might be with this girl's fortune, and what he must be unless he gets money by marriage. He is eating us both up."
"I would not let him do that, mamma."
"It's all very well to say that, but I have some heart. I love him. I could not see him starve. Think what he might be with £20,000 a-year!"
"If he is to marry for that only, I cannot think that they will be happy."
"You had better go to bed, Henrietta. You never say a word to comfort me in all my troubles."

Then Henrietta went to bed, and Lady Carbury absolutely sat up the whole night waiting for her son, in order that she might hear his tidings. She went up to her room, disembarassed herself of her finery, and wrapped herself in a white dressing-gown. As she sat opposite to her glass, relieving her head from its garniture of false hair, she acknowledged to herself that age was coming on her. She could hide the unwelcome approach by art,—hide it more completely than can most women of her age; but, there it was, stealing on her with short grey hairs over her ears and around her temples, with little wrinkles round her eyes easily concealed by unobjectionable cosmetics, and a look of weariness round the mouth which could only be removed by that self assertion of herself which practice had made always possible to her in company, though it now so frequently deserted her when she was alone.

But she was not a woman to be unhappy because she was growing old. Her happiness, like that of most of us, was ever in the future,—never reached but always coming. She, however, had not looked for happiness to love and loveliness, and need not therefore be disappointed on that score. She had never really determined what it was that might make her happy,—having some hazy aspiration after social distinction and literary fame, in which was ever commingled solicitude respecting money. But at the present moment her great fears and her great hopes were centred on her son. She would not care how grey might be her hair, or how savage might be Mr. Alf, if her Felix were to marry this heiress. On the other hand, nothing that pearl-powder or the "Morning Breakfast Table" could do would avail anything, unless he could be extricated from the ruin that now surrounded him. So she went down into the dining-room, that she might be sure to hear the key in the door, even should she sleep, and waited for him with a volume of French memoirs in her hand.

Unfortunate woman! she might have gone to bed and have been duly called about her usual time, for it was past eight and the full starring daylight shone into her room when Felix's cab brought him to the door. The night had been very wretched to her. She had slept, and the fire had sunk nearly to nothing and had refused to become again comfortable. She could not keep her mind to her
book, and while she was awake the time seemed to be everlasting. And then it was so terrible to her that he should be gambling at such hours as these! Why should he desire to gamble if this girl's fortune was ready to fall into his hands? Fool, to risk his health, his character, his beauty, the little money which at this moment of time might be so indispensable to his great project, for the chance of winning something which in comparison with Marie Melmotte's money must be despicable! But at last he came! She waited patiently till he had thrown aside his hat and coat, and then she appeared at the dining-room door. She had studied her part for the occasion. She would not say a harsh word, and now she endeavoured to meet him with a smile. "Mother," he said, "you up at this hour!" His face was flushed, and she thought that there was some unsteadiness in his gait. She had never seen him tipsy, and it would be doubly terrible to her if such should be his condition.

"I could not go to bed till I had seen you."

"Why not? why should you want to see me? I'll go to bed now. There'll be plenty of time by-and-by."

"Is anything the matter, Felix?"

"Matter--;what should be the matter. There's been a gentle row among the fellows at the club;--that's all. I had to tell Grasslough a bit of my mind, and he didn't like it. I didn't mean that he should."

"There is not going to be any fighting, Felix?"

"What, duelling; oh no,—nothing so exciting as that. Whether somebody may not have to kick somebody is more than I can say at present. You must let me go to bed now, for I am about used up."

"What did Marie Melmotte say to you?"

"Nothing particular." And he stood with his hand on the door as he answered her.

"And what did you say to her?"

"Nothing particular. Good heavens, mother, do you think that a man is in a condition to talk about such stuff as that at eight o'clock in the morning, when he has been up all night."

"If you knew all that I suffer on your behalf you would speak a word to me," she said, imploring him, holding him by the arm, and looking into his purple face and bloodshot eyes. She was sure that he had been drinking. She could smell it in his breath.

"I must go to the old fellow, of course."

"She told you to go to her father?"

"As far as I remember, that was about it. Of course, he means to settle it as he likes. I should say that it's ten to one against me." Pulling himself away with some little roughness from his mother's hold, he made his way up to his own bedroom, occasionally stumbling against the stairs.

Then the heiress herself had accepted her son! If so, surely the thing might be done. Lady Carbury recalled to mind her old conviction that a daughter may always succeed in beating a hard-hearted parent in a contention about marriage, if she be well in earnest. But then the girl must be really in earnest, and her earnestness will depend
on that of her lover. In this case, however, there was as yet no reason for supposing that the great man would object. As far as outward signs went, the great man had shown some partiality for her son. No doubt it was Mr. Melmott who had made Sir Felix a director of the great American Company. Felix had also been kindly received in Grosvenor Square. And then Sir Felix was Sir Felix,—a real baronet. Mr. Melmott had no doubt endeavoured to catch this and that lord; but, failing a lord, why should he not content himself with a baronet? Lady Carbury thought that her son wanted nothing but money to make him an acceptable suitor to such a father-in-law as Mr. Melmott;—not money in the funds, not a real fortune, not so many thousands a-year that could be settled;—the man's own enormous wealth rendered this unnecessary;—but such a one as Mr. Melmott would not like outward palpable signs of immediate poverty. There should be means enough for present sleekness and present luxury. He must have a horse to ride, and rings and coats to wear, and bright little canes to carry, and above all the means of making presents. He must not be seen to be poor. Fortunately, most fortunately, Chance had befriended him lately and had given him some ready money. But if he went on gambling Chance would certainly take it all away again. For aught that the poor mother knew, Chance might have done so already. And then again, it was indispensable that he should abandon the habit of play—at any rate for the present, while his prospects depended on the good opinions of Mr. Melmott. Of course such a one as Mr. Melmott could not like gambling at a club, however much he might approve of it in the City. Why, with such a preceptor to help him, should not Felix learn to do his gambling on the Exchange, or among the brokers, or in the purlieus of the Bank. Lady Carbury would at any rate instigate him to be diligent in his position as director of the Great Mexican Railway,—which position ought to be the beginning to him of a fortune to be made on his own account. But what hope could there be for him if he should take to drink? Would not all hopes be over with Mr. Melmott should he ever learn that his daughter's lover reached home and tumbled upstairs to bed between eight and nine o'clock in the morning?

She watched for his appearance on the following day, and began at once on the subject.

"Do you know, Felix, I think I shall go down to your cousin Roger for Whitsuntide."

"To Carbury Manor!" said he, as he ate some devilled kidneys which the cook had been specially ordered to get for his breakfast. "I thought you found it so dull that you didn't mean to go there any more."

"I never said so, Felix. And now I have a great object."

"What will Hetta do?"

"Go too—why shouldn't she?"

"Oh; I didn't know. I thought that perhaps she mightn't like it."

"I don't see why she shouldn't like it. Besides, everything can't give way to her."

"Has Roger asked you?"

"No; but I'm sure he'd be pleased to have us if I proposed that we should all go."

"Not me, mother!"
“Yes; you especially.”

“Not if I know it, mother. What on earth should I do at Carbury Manor?”

“Madame Melmotte told me last night that they were all going down to Caversham to stay three or four days with the Longstaffes. She spoke of Lady Pomona as quite her particular friend.”

“Oh—h! that explains it all.”

“Explains what, Felix?” said Lady Carbury, who had heard of Dolly Longstaffe, and was not without some fear that this projected visit to Caversham might have some matrimonial purpose in reference to that delightful young heir.

“They say at the club that Melmotte has taken up old Longstaffe’s affairs, and means to put them straight. There’s an old property in Sussex as well as Caversham, and they say that Melmotte is to have that himself. There’s some bother because Dolly, who would do anything for anybody else, won’t join his father in selling. So the Melmotte’s are going to Caversham!”

“Madame Melmotte told me so.”

“And the Longstaffes are the proudest people in England.”

“Of course we ought to be at Carbury Manor while they are there. What can be more natural? Everybody goes out of town at Whitsuntide; and why shouldn’t we run down to the family place?”

“All very natural if you can manage it, mother.”

“And you’ll come?”

“If Marie Melmotte goes, I’ll be there at any rate for one day and night,” said Felix.

His mother thought that, for him, the promise had been graciously made.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LONGESTAFFES.

Mr. Adolphus Longstaffe, the squire of Caversham in Suffolk, and of Pickering Park in Sussex, was closeted on a certain morning for the best part of an hour with Mr. Melmotte in Abchurch Lane, had there discussed all his private affairs, and was about to leave the room with a very dissatisfied air. There are men,—and old men too, who ought to know the world,—who think that if they can only find the proper Medea to boil the cauldron for them, they can have their ruined fortunes so cooked that they shall come out of the pot fresh and new and unembarrassed. These great conjurors are generally sought for in the City; and in truth the cauldrons are kept boiling though the result of the process is seldom absolute rejuvenescence. No greater Medea than Mr. Melmotte had ever been potent in money matters, and Mr. Longstaffe had been taught to believe that if he could get the necromancer even to look at his affairs everything would be made right for him. But the necromancer had explained to the squire that property could not be created by the waving of any wand or the boiling of any cauldron. He, Mr. Melmotte, could put Mr. Longstaffe in the way of realising property without delay, of changing it from one shape into another, or could find out
the real market value of the property in question; but he could create nothing. "You have only a life interest, Mr. Longestaffe."

"No; only a life interest. That is customary with family estates in this country, Mr. Melmotte."

"Just so. And therefore you can dispose of nothing else. Your son, of course, could join you, and then you could sell either one estate or the other."

"There is no question of selling Caversham, sir. Lady Pomona and I reside there."

"Your son will not join you in selling the other place?"

"I have not directly asked him; but he never does do anything that I wish. I suppose you would not take Pickering Park on a lease for my life."

"I think not, Mr. Longestaffe. My wife would not like the uncertainty."

Then Mr. Longestaffe took his leave with a feeling of outraged aristocratic pride. His own lawyer would almost have done as much for him, and he need not have invited his own lawyer as a guest to Caversham,—and certainly not his own lawyer's wife and daughter. He had indeed succeeded in borrowing a few thousand pounds from the great man at a rate of interest which the great man's head clerk was to arrange, and this had been effected simply on the security of the lease of a house in town. There had been an ease in this, an absence of that delay which generally took place between the expression of his desire for money and the acquisition of it,—and this had gratified him. But he was already beginning to think that he might pay too dearly for that gratification. At the present moment, too, Mr. Melmotte was odious to him for another reason. He had condescended to ask Mr. Melmotte to make him a director of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway, and he,—Adolphus Longestaffe of Caversham,—had had his request refused! Mr. Longestaffe had condescended very low. "You have made Lord Alfred Grindall one!" he had said in a complaining tone. Then Mr. Melmotte explained that Lord Alfred possessed peculiar aptitudes for the position. "I'm sure I could do anything that he does," said Mr. Longestaffe. Upon this Mr. Melmotte, knitting his brows and speaking with some roughness, replied that the number of directors required was completed. Since he had had two duchesses at his house Mr. Melmotte was beginning to feel that he was entitled to bully any mere commoner, especially a commoner who could ask him for a seat at his board.

Mr. Longestaffe was a tall, heavy man, about fifty, with hair and whiskers carefully dyed, whose clothes were made with great care, though they always seemed to fit him too tightly, and who thought very much of his personal appearance. It was not that he considered himself handsome, but that he was specially proud of his aristocratic bearing. He entertained an idea that all who understood the matter would perceive at a single glance that he was a gentleman of the first water, and a man of fashion. He was intensely proud of his position in life, thinking himself to be immensely superior to all those who earned their bread. There were no doubt gentlemen
of different degrees, but the English gentleman of gentlemen was
he who had land, and family title-deeds, and an old family place,
and family portraits, and family embarrassments, and a family absence
of any useful employment. He was beginning even to look down
upon peers, since so many men of much less consequence than him-
selves had been made lords; and, having stood and been beaten three
or four times for his county, he was of opinion that a seat in the
House was rather a mark of bad breeding. He was a silly man,
who had no fixed idea that it behoved him to be of use to any one;
but, yet, he had compassed a certain nobility of feeling. There was
very little that his position called upon him to do, but there was
much that it forbade him to do. It was not allowed to him to be
close in money matters. He could leave his tradesmen’s bills unpaid
till the men were clamorous, but he could not question the items
in their accounts. He could be tyrannical to his servants, but he
could not make inquiry as to the consumption of his wines in the
servants’ hall. He had no pity for his tenants in regard to game,
but he hesitated much as to raising their rent. He had his theory
of life and endeavoured to live up to it; but the attempt had hardly
brought satisfaction to himself or to his family.

At the present moment, it was the great desire of his heart to
sell the smaller of his two properties and disembarass the other.
The debt had not been altogether of his own making, and the arrange-
ment would, he believed, serve his whole family as well as himself.
It would also serve his son, who was blessed with a third property
of his own which he had already managed to burden with debt. The
father could not bear to be refused; and he feared that his son would
decline. “But Adolphus wants money as much as any one,” Lady
Pomona had said. He had shaken his head, and pshawed and pshawed.
Women never could understand anything about money. Now he
walked down sadly from Mr. Melmotte’s office and was taken in his
brougham to his lawyer’s chambers in Lincoln’s Inn. Even for the
accommodation of those few thousand pounds he was forced to
condescend to tell his lawyers that the title-deeds of his house in
town must be given up. Mr. Longestaffe felt that the world in
general was very hard on him.

“What on earth are we to do with them?” said Sophia, the eldest
Miss Longestaffe, to her mother.

“I do think it’s a shame of papa,” said Georgiana, the
second daughter. “I certainly shan’t trouble myself to entertain them.”

“Of course you will leave them all on my hands,” said Lady
Pomona wearily.

“But what’s the use of having them,” urged Sophia. “I can
understand going to a crush at their house in town when everybody
else goes. One doesn’t speak to them, and need not know them
afterwards. As to the girl, I’m sure I shouldn’t remember her if I
were to see her.”

“It would be a fine thing if Adolphus would marry her,” said Lady
Pomona.

“Dolly will never marry anybody,” said Georgiana. “The idea of
his taking the trouble of asking a girl to have him! Besides, he won’t
come down to Caversham; cart-ropes wouldn't bring him. If that is
to be the game, mamma, it is quite hopeless."

"Why should Dolly marry such a creature as that?" asked Sophia.

"Because everybody wants money," said Lady Pomona. "I'm
sure I don't know what your papa is to do, or how it is that there
never is any money for anything. I don't spend it."

"I don't think that we do anything out of the way," said Sophia.

"I haven't the slightest idea what papa's income is; but if we're to
live at all, I don't know how we are to make a change."

"It's always been like this ever since I can remember," said
Georgiana, "and I don't mean to worry about it any more. I
suppose it's just the same with other people, only one doesn't
know it."

"But, my dears—when we are obliged to have such people as these
Melmottes!"

"As for that, if we didn't have them somebody else would. I shan't
trouble myself about them. I suppose it will only be for two days."

"My dear, they're coming for a week!"

"Then papa must take them about the country, that's all. I never
did hear of anything so absurd. What good can they do papa by
being down there?"

"He is wonderfully rich," said Lady Pomona.

"But I don't suppose he'll give papa his money," continued
Georgiana. "Of course I don't pretend to understand, but I think
there is more fuss about these things than they deserve. If papa
hasn't got money to live at home, why doesn't he go abroad for a
year. The Sydney Beauchamps did that, and the girls had quite a
nice time of it in Florence. It was there that Clara Beauchamp met
young Lord Liffey. I shouldn't at all mind that kind of thing, but I
think it quite horrible to have these sort of people brought down upon
us at Caversham. No one knows who they are, or where they came
from, or what they'll turn to." So spoke Georgiana, who among the
Longstaffes was supposed to have the strongest head, and certainly
the sharpest tongue.

This conversation took place in the drawing-room of the Longstaffes'
family town-house in Bruton Street. It was not by any means a
charming house, having but few of those luxuries and elegancies
which have been added of late years to newly-built London resi-
dences. It was gloomy and inconvenient, with large drawing-rooms,
bad bedrooms, and very little accommodation for servants. But it
was the old family town-house, having been inhabited by three or four
generations of Longstaffes, and did not savour of that radical newness
which prevails, and which was peculiarly distasteful to Mr. Longstaffe.
Queen's Gate and the quarters around were, according to Mr. Long-
staffe, devoted to opulent tradesmen. Even Belgrave Square, though
its aristocratic properties must be admitted, still smelt of the mortar.
Many of those living there and thereabouts had never possessed in
their families real family town-houses. The old streets lying between
Piccadilly and Oxford Street, with one or two well-known localities to
the south and north of these boundaries, were the proper sites for
these habitations. When Lady Pomona, instigated by some friend of
high rank but questionable taste, had once suggested a change to Eaton Square, Mr. Longstaffe had at once snubbed his wife. If Burton Street wasn’t good enough for her and the girls then they might remain at Caversham. The threat of remaining at Caversham had been often made, for Mr. Longstaffe, proud as he was of his town-house, was, from year to year, very anxious to save the expense of the annual migration. The girls’ dresses and the girls’ horses, his wife’s carriage and his own brougham, his dull London dinner-parties, and the one ball which it was always necessary that Lady Pomona should give, made him look forward to the end of July, with more dread than to any other period. It was then that he began to know what that year’s season would cost him. But he had never yet been able to keep his family in the country during the entire year. The girls, who as yet knew nothing of the Continent beyond Paris, had signified their willingness to be taken about Germany and Italy for twelve months, but had shown by every means in their power that they would mutiny against any intention on their father’s part to keep them at Caversham during the London season.

Georgiana had just finished her strong-minded protest against the Melmottes, when her brother strolled into the room. Dolly did not often show himself in Burton Street. He had rooms of his own, and could seldom even be induced to dine with his family. His mother wrote to him notes without end,—notes every day, pressing invitations of all sorts upon him; would he come and dine; would he take them to the theatre; would he go to this ball; would he go to that evening-party? These Dolly barely read, and never answered. He would open them, thrust them into some pocket, and then forget them. Consequently his mother worshipped him; and even his sisters, who were at any rate superior to him in intellect, treated him with a certain deference. He could do as he liked, and they felt themselves to be slaves, bound down by the dulness of the Longstaffe régime. His freedom was grand to their eyes, and very enviable, although they were aware that he had already so used it as to impoverish himself in the midst of his wealth.

“My dear Adolphus,” said the mother, “this is so nice of you.”

“I think it is rather nice,” said Dolly, submitting himself to be kissed.

“Oh Dolly, whoever would have thought of seeing you?” said Sophia.

“Give him some tea,” said his mother. Lady Pomona was always having tea from four o’clock till she was taken away to dress for dinner.

“I’d sooner have soda and brandy,” said Dolly.

“My darling boy!”

“I didn’t ask for it, and I don’t expect to get it; indeed I don’t want it. I only said I’d sooner have it than tea. Where’s the governor?” They all looked at him with wondering eyes. There must be something going on more than they had dreamed of, when Dolly asked to see his father.

“Papa went out in the brougham immediately after lunch,” said Sophia gravely.

“I’ll wait a little for him,” said Dolly, taking out his watch.
"Do stay and dine with us," said Lady Pomona.
"I could not do that, because I've got to go and dine with some fellow."
"Some fellow! I believe you don't know where you're going," said Georgiana.
"My fellow knows. At least he's a fool if he don't."
"Adolphus," began Lady Pomona very seriously, "I've got a plan and I want you to help me."
"I hope there isn't very much to do in it, mother."
"We're all going to Caversham, just for Whitsuntide, and we particularly want you to come."
"By George! no; I couldn't do that."
"You haven't heard half. Madame Melmotte and her daughter are coming."
"The d—they are!" ejaculated Dolly.
"Dolly!" said Sophia, "do remember where you are."
"Yes I will;—and I'll remember too where I won't be. I won't go to Caversham to meet old mother Melmotte."
"My dear boy," continued the mother, "do you know that Miss Melmotte will have twenty—thousand—a year the day she marries; and that in all probability her husband will some day be the richest man in Europe?"
"Half the fellows in London are after her," said Dolly.
"Why shouldn't you be one of them?"
"She isn't going to stay in the same house with half the fellows in London," suggested Georgiana. "If you're a mind to try it you'll have a chance which nobody else can have just at present."
"But I haven't any mind to try it. Good gracious me;—oh dear! it isn't at all in my way, mother."
"I knew he wouldn't," said Georgiana.
"It would put everything so straight," said Lady Pomona.
"They'll have to remain crooked if nothing else will put them straight. There's the governor. I heard his voice. Now for a row." Then Mr. Longstaffe entered the room.
"My dear," said Lady Pomona, "here's Adolphus come to see us."
The father nodded his head at his son but said nothing. "We want him to stay and dine, but he's engaged."
"Though he doesn't know where," said Sophia.
"My fellow knows;—he keeps a book. I've got a letter, sir, ever so long, from those fellows in Lincoln's Inn. They want me to come and see you about selling something; so I've come. It's an awful bore, because I don't understand anything about it. Perhaps there isn't anything to be sold. If so I can go away again, you know."
"You'd better come with me into the study," said the father.
"We needn't disturb your mother and sisters about business." Then the squire led the way out of the room, and Dolly followed, making a woful grimace at his sisters. The three ladies sat over their tea for about half-an-hour, waiting,—not the result of the conference, for with that they did not suppose that they would be made acquainted,—but whatever signs of good or evil might be collected from the manner and appearance of the squire when he should return to them.
THE SQUIRE LED THE WAY OUT OF THE ROOM, AND DOLLY FOLLOWED.
Dolly they did not expect to see again,—probably for a month. He and the squire never did come together without quarrelling, and careless as was the young man in every other respect, he had hitherto been obdurate as to his own rights in any dealings which he had with his father. At the end of the half hour Mr. Longstaffe returned to the drawing-room, and at once pronounced the doom of the family. "My dear," he said, "we shall not return from Caversham to London this year." He struggled hard to maintain a grand dignified tranquillity as he spoke, but his voice quivered with emotion.

"Papa!" screamed Sophia.

"My dear, you don't mean it," said Lady Pomona.

"Of course papa doesn't mean it," said Georgiana rising to her feet.

"I mean it accurately and certainly," said Mr. Longstaffe. "We go to Caversham in about ten days, and we shall not return from Caversham to London this year."

"Our ball is fixed," said Lady Pomona.

"Then it must be unfixed." So saying the master of the house left the drawing-room and descended to his study.

The three ladies, when left to deplore their fate, expressed their opinions as to the sentence which had been pronounced very strongly. But the daughters were louder in their anger than was their mother.

"He can't really mean it," said Sophia.

"He does," said Lady Pomona, with tears in her eyes.

"He must mean it again;—that's all," said Georgiana. "Dolly has said something to him very rough, and he resents it upon us. Why did he bring us up at all if he means to take us down before the season has begun?"

"I wonder what Adolphus has said to him. Your papa is always hard upon Adolphus."

"Dolly can take care of himself," said Georgiana, "and always does so. Dolly does not care for us."

"Not a bit," said Sophia.

"I'll tell you what you must do, mamma. You mustn't stir from this at all. You must give up going to Caversham altogether, unless he promises to bring us back. I won't stir,—unless he has me carried out of the house."

"My dear, I couldn't say that to him."

"Then I will. To go and be buried down in that place for a whole year with no one near us but the rusty old bishop and Mr. Carbury, who is rustier still. I won't stand it. There are some sort of things that one ought not to stand. If you go down I shall stay up with the Primeros. Mrs. Primero would have me I know. It wouldn't be nice of course. I don't like the Primeros. I hate the Primeros. Oh yes;—it's quite true; I know that as well as you, Sophia; they are vulgar; but not half so vulgar, mamma, as your friend Madame Melmotte."

"That's ill-natured, Georgiana. She is not a friend of mine."

"But you're going to have her down at Caversham. I can't think what made you dream of going to Caversham just now, knowing as you do how hard papa is to manage."
"Everybody has taken to going out of town at Whitsuntide, my dear."

"No, mamma; everybody has not. People understand too well the trouble of getting up and down for that. The Primros aren’t going down. I never heard of such a thing in all my life. What does he expect to become of us. If he wants to save money why doesn’t he shut Caversham up altogether and go abroad. Caversham costs a great deal more than is spent in London, and it’s the dullest house, I think, in all England."

The family party in Bruton Street that evening was not very gay. Nothing was being done, and they sat gloomily in each other’s company. Whatever mutinous resolutions might be formed and carried out by the ladies of the family, they were not brought forward on that occasion. The two girls were quite silent, and would not speak to their father, and when he addressed them they answered simply by monosyllables. Lady Pomona was ill, and sat in a corner of a sofa, wiping her eyes. To her had been imparted up-stairs the purport of the conversation between Dolly and his father. Dolly had refused to consent to the sale of Pickering unless half the produce of the sale were to be given to him at once. When it had been explained to him that the sale would be desirable in order that the Caversham property might be freed from debt, which Caversham property would eventually be his, he replied that he also had an estate of his own which was a little mortgaged and would be the better for money. The result seemed to be that Pickering could not be sold,—and, as a consequence of that, Mr. Longstaffe had determined that there should be no more London expenses that year.

The girls, when they got up to go to bed, bent over him and kissed his head, as was their custom. There was very little show of affection in the kiss. "You had better remember that what you have to do in town must be done this week," he said. They heard the words, but marched in stately silence out of the room without deigning to notice them.

CHAPTER XIV.

CARBURY MANOR.

"I DON’T think it quite nice, mamma; that’s all. Of course if you have made up your mind to go, I must go with you."

"What on earth can be more natural than that you should go to your own cousin’s house?"

"You know what I mean, mamma."

"It’s done now, my dear, and I don’t think there is anything at all in what you say."

This little conversation arose from Lady Carbury’s announcement to her daughter of her intention of soliciting the hospitality of Carbury Manor for the Whitsun week. It was very grievous to Henrietta that she should be taken to the house of a man who was in love with her, even though he was her cousin. But she had no
escape. She could not remain in town by herself, nor could she even allude to her grievance to anyone but to her mother. Lady Carbury, in order that she might be quite safe from opposition, had posted the following letter to her cousin before she spoke to her daughter:

"Welbeck Street, 24th April, 18—.

"My dear Roger,

"We know how kind you are and how sincere, and that if what I am going to propose doesn’t suit you’ll say so at once. I have been working very hard,—too hard indeed, and I feel that nothing will do me so much real good as getting into the country for a day or two. Would you take us for a part of Whitsun week? We would come down on the 20th May and stay over the Sunday if you would keep us. Felix says he would run down though he would not trouble you for so long a time as we talk of staying.

"I’m sure you must have been glad to hear of his being put upon that Great American Railway Board as a Director. It opens a new sphere of life to him, and will enable him to prove that he can make himself useful. I think it was a great confidence to place in one so young.

"Of course you will say so at once if my little proposal interferes with any of your plans, but you have been so very kind to us that I have no scruple in making it.

"Henrietta joins with me in kind love.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"Matilda Carbury."

There was much in this letter that disturbed and even annoyed Roger Carbury. In the first place he felt that Henrietta should not be brought to his house. Much as he loved her, dear as her presence to him always was, he hardly wished to have her at Carbury unless she would come with a resolution to be its future mistress. In one respect he did Lady Carbury an injustice. He knew that she was anxious to forward his suit, and he thought that Henrietta was being brought to his house with that object. He had not heard that the great heiress was coming into his neighbourhood, and therefore knew nothing of Lady Carbury’s scheme in that direction. He was, too, disgusted by the ill-founded pride which the mother expressed at her son’s position as a director. Roger Carbury did not believe in the Railway. He did not believe in Fisker, nor in Melmotte, and certainly not in the Board generally. Paul Montague had acted in opposition to his advice in yielding to the seductions of Fisker. The whole thing was to his mind false, fraudulent, and ruinous. Of what nature could be a Company which should have itself directed by such men as Lord Alfred Grendall and Sir Felix Carbury? And then as to their great Chairman, did not everybody know, in spite of all the duchesses, that Mr. Melmotte was a gigantic swindler? Although there was more than one immediate cause for bitterness between them, Roger loved Paul Montague well and could not bear with patience the appearance of his friend’s name on such a list. And now he was asked for warm congratulations because Sir Felix Carbury was one of the Board! He did not know which to despise most, Sir Felix for belonging to such a Board, or the Board for having such
a director. "New sphere of life!" he said to himself. "The only proper sphere for them all would be Newgate!"

And there was another trouble. He had asked Paul Montague to come to Carbury for this special week, and Paul had accepted the invitation. With the constancy, which was perhaps his strongest characteristic, he clung to his old affection for the man. He could not bear the idea of a permanent quarrel, though he knew that there must be a quarrel if the man interfered with his dearest hopes. He had asked him down to Carbury intending that the name of Henrietta Carbury should not be mentioned between them;—and now it was proposed to him that Henrietta Carbury should be at the Manor House at the very time of Paul's visit! He made up his mind at once that he must tell Paul not to come.

He wrote his two letters at once. That to Lady Carbury was very short. He would be delighted to see her and Henrietta at the time named,—and would be very glad should it suit Felix to come also. He did not say a word about the Board, or the young man's probable usefulness in his new sphere of life. To Montague his letter was longer. "It is always best to be open and true," he said. "Since you were kind enough to say that you would come to me, Lady Carbury has proposed to visit me just at the same time and to bring her daughter. After what has passed between us I need hardly say that I could not make you both welcome here together. It is not pleasant to me to have to ask you to postpone your visit, but I think you will not accuse me of a want of hospitality towards you." Paul wrote back to say that he was sure that there was no want of hospitality, and that he would remain in town.

Suffolk is not especially a picturesque county, nor can it be said that the scenery round Carbury was either grand or beautiful; but there were little prettinesses attached to the house itself and the grounds around it which gave it a charm of its own. The Carbury River,—so called, though at no place is it so wide but that an active schoolboy might jump across it,—runs, or rather creeps into the Waveney, and in its course is robbed by a moat which surrounds Carbury Manor House. The moat has been rather a trouble to the proprietors, and especially so to Roger, as in these days of sanitary considerations it has been felt necessary either to keep it clean with at any rate moving water in it, or else to fill it up and abolish it altogether. That plan of abolishing it had to be thought of and was seriously discussed about ten years since; but then it was decided that such a proceeding would altogether alter the character of the house, would destroy the gardens, and would create a waste of mud all round the place which it would take years to beautify, or even to make endurable. And then an important question had been asked by an intelligent farmer who had long been a tenant on the property; "Fill un oop;—eh, eh; sooner said than doone, squire. Where be the stoof to come from?" The squire, therefore, had given up that idea, and instead of abolishing his moat had made it prettier than ever. The high road from Bungay to Beccles ran close to the house,—so close that the gable ends of the building were separated from it only by the breadth of the moat. A short, private road, not above a hundred yards in length, led to the bridge
which faced the front door. The bridge was old, and high, with sundry architectural pretensions, and guarded by iron gates in the centre, which, however, were very rarely closed. Between the bridge and the front door there was a sweep of ground just sufficient for the turning of a carriage, and on either side of this the house was brought close to the water, so that the entrance was in a recess, or irregular quadrangle, of which the bridge and moat formed one side. At the back of the house there were large gardens screened from the road by a wall ten feet high, in which there were yew trees and cypresses said to be of wonderful antiquity. The gardens were partly inside the moat, but chiefly beyond them, and were joined by two bridges—a foot bridge and one with a carriage way,—and there was another bridge at the end of the house furthest from the road, leading from the back door to the stables and farmyard.

The house itself had been built in the time of Charles II., when that which we call Tudor architecture was giving way to a cheaper, less picturesque, though perhaps more useful form. But Carbury Manor House, through the whole county, had the reputation of being a Tudor building. The windows were long, and for the most part low, made with strong mullions, and still contained small, old-fashioned panes; for the squire had not as yet gone to the expense of plate glass. There was one high bow window, which belonged to the library, and which looked out on to the gravel sweep, at the left of the front door as you entered it. All the other chief rooms faced upon the garden. The house itself was built of a stone that had become buff, or almost yellow with years, and was very pretty. It was still covered with tiles, as were all the attached buildings. It was only two stories high, except at the end, where the kitchens were placed and the offices, which thus rose above the other part of the edifice. The rooms throughout were low, and for the most part long and narrow, with large wide fireplaces and deep wainscotings. Taking it altogether, one would be inclined to say, that it was picturesque rather than comfortable. Such as it was its owner was very proud of it,—with a pride of which he never spoke to anyone, which he endeavoured studiously to conceal, but which had made itself known to all who knew him well. The houses of the gentry around him were superior to his in material comfort and general accommodation, but to none of them belonged that thoroughly established look of old county position which belonged to Carbury. Bundlesham, where the Primeros lived, was the finest house in that part of the county, but it looked as if it had been built within the last twenty years. It was surrounded by new shrubs and new lawns, by new walls and new outhouses, and savoured of trade;—so at least thought Roger Carbury, though he never said the words. Caversham was a very large mansion, built in the early part of George III.'s reign, when men did care that things about them should be comfortable, but did not care that they should be picturesque. There was nothing at all to recommend Caversham but its size. Eardly Park, the seat of the Hepworths, had, as a park, some pretensions. Carbury possessed nothing that could be called a park, the enclosures beyond the gardens being merely so many home paddocks. But the house of Eardly was ugly and bad. The Bishop's
palace was an excellent gentleman's residence, but then that too was comparatively modern, and had no peculiar features of its own. Now Carbury Manor House was peculiar, and in the eyes of its owner was pre-eminently beautiful.

It often troubled him to think what would come of the place when he was gone. He was at present forty years old, and was perhaps as healthy a man as you could find in the whole county. Those around who had known him as he grew into manhood among them, especially the farmers of the neighbourhood, still regarded him as a young man. They spoke of him at the country fairs as the young squire. When in his happiest moods he could be almost a boy, and he still had something of old-fashioned boyish reverence for his elders. But of late there had grown up a great care within his breast,—a care which does not often, perhaps, in these days bear so heavily on men's hearts as it used to do. He had asked his cousin to marry him,—having assured himself with certainty that he did love her better than any other woman,—and she had declined. She had refused him more than once, and he believed her implicitly when she told him that she could not love him. He had a way of believing people, especially when such belief was opposed to his own interests, and had none of that self-confidence which makes a man think that if opportunity be allowed him he can win a woman even in spite of herself. But if it were fated that he should not succeed with Henrietta, then,—so he felt assured,—no marriage would now be possible to him. In that case he must look out for an heir, and could regard himself simply as a stop-gap among the Carburys. In that case he could never enjoy the luxury of doing the best he could with the property in order that a son of his own might enjoy it.

Now Sir Felix was the next heir. Roger was hampered by no entail, and could leave every acre of the property as he pleased. In one respect the natural succession to it by Sir Felix would generally be considered fortunate. It had happened that a title had been won in a lower branch of the family, and were this succession to take place the family title and the family property would go together. No doubt to Sir Felix himself such an arrangement would seem to be the most proper thing in the world,—as it would also to Lady Carbury were it not that she looked to Carbury Manor as the future home of another child. But to all this the present owner of the property had very strong objections. It was not only that he thought ill of the baronet himself,—so ill as to feel thoroughly convinced that no good could come from that quarter,—but he thought ill also of the baronetcy itself. Sir Patrick, to his thinking, had been altogether unjustifiable in accepting an enduring title, knowing that he would leave behind him no property adequate for its support. A baronet, so thought Roger Carbury, should be a rich man, rich enough to grace the rank which he assumed to wear. A title, according to Roger's doctrine on such subjects, could make no man a gentleman, but, if improperly worn, might degrade a man who would otherwise be a gentleman. He thought that a gentleman, born and bred, acknowledged as such without doubt, could not be made more than a gentleman by all the titles which the Queen could give. With these
old-fashioned notions Roger hated the title which had fallen upon a branch of his family. He certainly would not leave his property to support the title which Sir Felix unfortunately possessed. But Sir Felix was the natural heir, and this man felt himself constrained, almost as by some divine law, to see that his land went by natural descent. Though he was in no degree fettered as to its disposition, he did not presume himself to have more than a life interest in the estate. It was his duty to see that it went from Carbury to Carbury as long as there was a Carbury to hold it, and especially his duty to see that it should go from his hands, at his death, unimpaired in extent or value. There was no reason why he should himself die for the next twenty or thirty years,—but were he to die Sir Felix would undoubtedly dissipate the acres, and then there would be an end of Carbury. But in such case he, Roger Carbury, would at any rate have done his duty. He knew that no human arrangements can be fixed, let the care in making them be ever so great. To his thinking it would be better that the estate should be dissipated by a Carbury than held together by a stranger. He would stick to the old name while there was one to bear it, and to the old family while a member of it was left. So thinking he had already made his will, leaving the entire property to the man whom of all others he most despised, should he himself die without child.

In the afternoon of the day on which Lady Carbury was expected, he wandered about the place thinking of all this. How infinitely better it would be that he should have an heir of his own. How wonderfully beautiful would the world be to him if at last his cousin would consent to be his wife! How wearily insipid must it be if no such consent could be obtained from her. And then he thought much of her welfare too. In very truth he did not like Lady Carbury. He saw through her character, judging her with almost absolute accuracy. The woman was affectionate, seeking good things for others rather than for herself; but she was essentially worldly, believing that good could come out of evil, that falsehood might in certain conditions be better than truth, that shams and pretences might do the work of true service, that a strong house might be built upon the sand! It was lamentable to him that the girl he loved should be subjected to this teaching, and live in an atmosphere so burdened with falsehood. Would not the touch of pitch at last defile her? In his heart of hearts he believed that she loved Paul Montague; and of Paul himself he was beginning to fear evil. What but a sham could be a man who consented to pretend to sit as one of a Board of Directors to manage an enormous enterprise with such colleagues as Lord Alfred Grendall and Sir Felix Carbury, under the absolute control of such a one as Mr. Augustus Melmottle? Was not this building a house upon the sand with a vengeance? What a life it would be for Henrietta Carbury were she to marry a man striving to become rich without labour and without capital, and who might one day be wealthy and the next a beggar,—a city adventurer, who of all men was to him the vilest and most dishonest? He strove to think well of Paul Montague, but such was the life which he feared the young man was preparing for himself.
Then he went into the house and wandered up through the rooms which the two ladies were to occupy. As their host, a host without a wife or mother or sister, it was his duty to see that things were comfortable, but it may be doubted whether he would have been so careful had the mother been coming alone. In the smaller room of the two the hangings were all white, and the room was sweet with May flowers; and he brought a white rose from the hot-house, and placed it in a glass on the dressing table. Surely she would know who put it there.

Then he stood at the open window, looking down upon the lawn, gazing vacantly for half an hour, till he heard the wheels of the carriage before the front door. During that half hour he resolved that he would try again as though there had as yet been no repulse.

CHAPTER XV.

"YOU SHOULD REMEMBER THAT I AM HIS MOTHER."

"THIS is so kind of you," said Lady Carbury, grasping her cousin's hand as she got out of the carriage.

"The kindness is on your part," said Roger.

"I felt so much before I dared to ask you to take us. But I did so long to get into the country, and I do so love Carbury. And—and—"

"Where should a Carbury go to escape from London smoke, but to the old house? I am afraid Henrietta will find it dull."

"Oh no," said Hetta smiling. "You ought to remember that I am never dull in the country."

"The bishop and Mrs. Yeld are coming here to dine to-morrow,—and the Hepworths."

"I shall be so glad to meet the bishop once more," said Lady Carbury.

"I think everybody must be glad to meet him, he is such a dear, good fellow, and his wife is just as good. And there is another gentleman coming whom you have never seen."

"A new neighbour?"

"Yes,—a new neighbour;—Father John Barham, who has come to Becles as priest. He has got a little cottage about a mile from here, in this parish, and does duty both at Becles and Bungay. I used to know something of his family."

"He is a gentleman then?"

"Certainly he is a gentleman. He took his degree at Oxford, and then became what we call a pervert, and what I suppose they call a convert. He has not got a shilling in the world beyond what they pay him as a priest, which I take it amounts to about as much as the wages of a day labourer. He told me the other day that he was absolutely forced to buy second-hand clothes."

"How shocking!" said Lady Carbury, holding up her hands.

"He didn't seem to be at all shocked at telling it. We have got to be quite friends."
"Will the bishop like to meet him?"
"Why should not the bishop like to meet him? I've told the
bishop all about him, and the bishop particularly wishes to know him.
He won't hurt the bishop. But you and Hetta will find it very dull."
"I shan't find it dull, Mr. Carbury," said Henrietta.
"It was to escape from the eternal parties that we came down
here," said Lady Carbury. She had nevertheless been anxious to
hear what guests were expected at the Manor House. Sir Felix had
promised to come down on Saturday, with the intention of returning
on Monday, and Lady Carbury had hoped that some visiting might
be arranged between Caversham and the Manor House, so that
her son might have the full advantage of his closeness to Marie
Melmotte.

"I have asked the Longestaffes for Monday," said Roger.
"They are down here then?"
"I think they arrived yesterday. There is always a fluster ing
breeze in the air and a perturbation generally through the county
when they come or go, and I think I perceived the effects about four
in the afternoon. They won't come, I dare say."
"Why not?"
"They never do. They have probably a house full of guests, and
they know that my accommodation is limited. I've no doubt they'll
ask us on Tuesday or Wednesday, and if you like we will go."
"I know they are to have guests," said Lady Carbury.
"What guests?"
"The Melmottes are coming to them." Lady Carbury, as she made
the announcement, felt that her voice and countenance and self-
possession were failing her, and that she could not mention the
thing as she would any matter that was indifferent to her.
"The Melmottes coming to Caversham!" said Roger, looking at
Henrietta, who blushed with shame as she remembered that she had
been brought into her lover's house solely in order that her brother
might have an opportunity of seeing Marie Melmotte in the country.
"Oh yes,—Madame Melmotte told me. I take it they are very
intimate."
"Mr. Longestaffe ask the Melmottes to visit him at Caversham!"
"Why not?"
"I should almost as soon have believed that I myself might have
been induced to ask them here."
"I fancy, Roger, that Mr. Longestaffe does want a little pecuniary
assistance."
"And he condescends to get it in this way! I suppose it will
make no difference soon whom one knows, and whom one doesn't.
Things aren't as they were, of course, and never will be again.
Perhaps it's all for the better;—I won't say it isn't. But I should
have thought that such a man as Mr. Longestaffe might have kept
such another man as Mr. Melmotte out of his wife's drawing-room."
Henrietta became redder than ever. Even Lady Carbury flushed up,
as she remembered that Roger Carbury knew that she had taken her
daughter to Madame Melmotte's ball. He thought of this himself as
soon as the words were spoken, and then tried to make some half
apology. "I don't approve of them in London, you know; but I think they are very much worse in the country."

Then there was a movement. The ladies were shown into their rooms, and Roger again went out into the garden. He began to feel that he understood it all. Lady Carbury had come down to his house in order that she might be near the Melmottes! There was something in this which he felt it difficult not to resent. It was for no love of him that she was there. He had felt that Henrietta ought not to have been brought to his house; but he could have forgiven that, because her presence there was a charm to him. He could have forgiven that, even while he was thinking that her mother had brought her there with the object of disposing of her. If it were so, the mother's object would be the same as his own, and such a manœuvre he could pardon, though he could not approve. His self-love had to some extent been gratified. But now he saw that he and his house had been simply used in order that a vile project of marrying two vile people to each other might be furthered!

As he was thinking of all this, Lady Carbury came out to him in the garden. She had changed her travelling dress, and made herself pretty, as she well knew how to do. And now she dressed her face in her sweetest smiles. Her mind, also, was full of the Melmottes, and she wished to explain to her stern, unbending cousin all the good that might come to her and hers by an alliance with the heiress.

"I can understand, Roger," she said, taking his arm, "that you should not like those people."

"What people?"

"The Melmottes."

"I don't dislike them. How should I dislike people that I never saw? I dislike those who seek their society simply because they have the reputation of being rich."

"Meaning me."

"No; not meaning you. I don't dislike you, as you know very well, though I do dislike the fact that you should run after these people. I was thinking of the Longestaffes then."

"Do you suppose, my friend, that I run after them for my own gratification? Do you think that I go to their house because I find pleasure in their magnificence; or that I follow them down here for any good that they will do me?"

"I would not follow them at all."

"I will go back if you bid me, but I must first explain what I mean. You know my son's condition,—better, I fear, than he does himself." Roger nodded assent to this, but said nothing. "What is he to do? The only chance for a young man in his position is that he should marry a girl with money. He is good-looking; you can't deny that."

"Nature has done enough for him."

"We must take him as he is. He was put into the army very young, and was very young when he came into possession of his own small fortune. He might have done better; but how many young men placed in such temptations do well? As it is, he has nothing left."

"I fear not."
"And therefore is it not imperative that he should marry a girl with money?"

"I call that stealing a girl's money, Lady Carbury."

"Oh, Roger, how hard you are!"

"A man must be hard or soft,—which is best?"

"With women I think that a little softness has the most effect. I want to make you understand this about the Melmottes. It stands to reason that the girl will not marry Felix unless she loves him."

"But does he love her?"

"Why should he not? Is a girl to be debarred from being loved because she has money? Of course she looks to be married, and why should she not have Felix if she likes him best. Cannot you sympathize with my anxiety so to place him that he shall not be a disgrace to the name and to the family?"

"We had better not talk about the family, Lady Carbury."

"But I think so much about it."

"You will never get me to say that I think the family will be benefited by a marriage with the daughter of Mr. Melmotte. I look upon him as dirt in the gutter. To me, in my old-fashioned way, all his money, if he has it, can make no difference. When there is a question of marriage people at any rate should know something of each other. Who knows anything of this man? Who can be sure that she is his daughter?"

"He would give her her fortune when she married."

"Yes; it all comes to that. Men say openly that he is an adventurer and a swindler. No one pretends to think that he is a gentleman. There is a consciousness among all who speak of him that he amasses his money not by honest trade, but by unknown tricks,—as does a card sharper. He is one whom we would not admit into our kitchens, much less to our tables, on the score of his own merits. But because he has learned the art of making money, we not only put up with him, but settle upon his carcase as so many birds of prey."

"Do you mean that Felix should not marry the girl, even if they love each other?"

He shook his head in disgust, feeling sure that any idea of love on the part of the young man was a sham and a pretence, not only as regarded him, but also his mother. He could not quite declare this, and yet he desired that she should understand that he thought so. "I have nothing more to say about it," he continued. "Had it gone on in London I should have said nothing. It is no affair of mine. When I am told that the girl is in the neighbourhood, at such a house as Caversham, and that Felix is coming here in order that he may be near to his prey, and when I am asked to be a party to the thing, I can only say what I think. Your son would be welcome to my house, because he is your son and my cousin, little as I approve his mode of life; but I could have wished that he had chosen some other place for the work that he has on hand."

"If you wish it, Roger, we will return to London. I shall find it hard to explain to Hetta;—but we will go."

"No; I certainly do not wish that."

"But you have said such hard things! How are we to stay? You
speak of Felix as though he were all bad." She looked at him hoping to get from him some contradiction of this, some retraction, some kindly word; but it was what he did think, and he had nothing to say. She could bear much. She was not delicate as to censure implied, or even expressed. She had endured rough usage before, and was prepared to endure more. Had he found fault with herself, or with Henrietta, she would have put up with it, for the sake of benefits to come,—would have forgiven it the more easily because perhaps it might not have been deserved. But for her son she was prepared to fight. If she did not defend him, who would? "I am grieved, Roger, that we should have troubled you with our visit, but I think that we had better go. You are very harsh, and it crushes me."

"I have not meant to be harsh."

"You say that Felix is seeking for his—prey, and that he is to be brought here to be near—his prey. What can be more harsh than that? At any rate, you should remember that I am his mother."

She expressed her sense of injury very well. Roger began to be ashamed of himself, and to think that he had spoken unkind words. And yet he did not know how to recall them. "If I have hurt you, I regret it much."

"Of course you have hurt me. I think I will go in now. How very hard the world is! I came here thinking to find peace and sunshine, and there has come a storm at once."

"You asked me about the Melmottes, and I was obliged to speak. You cannot think that I meant to offend you." They walked on in silence till they had reached the door leading from the garden into the house, and here he stopped her. "If I have been over hot with you, let me beg your pardon." She smiled and bowed; but her smile was not one of forgiveness; and then she essayed to pass on into the house. "Pray do not speak of going, Lady Carbury."

"I think I will go to my room now. My head aches so that I can hardly stand."

It was late in the afternoon,—about six,—and according to his daily custom he should have gone round to the offices to see his men as they came from their work, but he stood still for a few moments on the spot where Lady Carbury had left him and went slowly across the lawn to the bridge and there seated himself on the parapet. Could it really be that she meant to leave his house in anger and to take her daughter with her? Was it thus that he was to part with the one human being in the world that he loved? He was a man who thought much of the duties of hospitality, feeling that a man in his own house was bound to exercise a courtesy towards his guests sweeter, softer, more gracious than the world required elsewhere. And of all guests those of his own name were the best entitled to such courtesy at Carbury. He held the place in trust for the use of others. But if there were one among all others to whom the house should be a house of refuge from care, not an abode of trouble, on whose behalf were it possible he would make the very air softer, and the flowers sweeter than their wont, to whom he would declare, were such words possible to his tongue, that of him and of his house, and of all things there she was the mistress, whether she would condescend to
"You should remember that I am his mother."
love him or no,—that one was his cousin Hetta. And now he had been told by his guest that he had been so rough to her that she and her daughter must return to London!

And he could not acquit himself. He knew that he had been rough. He had said very hard words. It was true that he could not have expressed his meaning without hard words, nor have repressed his meaning without self-reproach. But in his present mood he could not comfort himself by justifying himself. She had told him that he ought to have remembered that Felix was her son; and as she spoke she had acted well the part of an outraged mother. His heart was so soft that though he knew the woman to be false and the son to be worthless, he utterly condemned himself. Look where he would there was no comfort. When he had sat half-an-hour upon the bridge he turned towards the house to dress for dinner,—and to prepare himself for an apology, if any apology might be accepted. At the door, standing in the doorway as though waiting for him, he met his cousin Hetta. She had on her bosom the rose he had placed in her room, and as he approached her he thought that there was more in her eyes of graciousness towards him than he had ever seen there before.

"Mr. Carbury," she said, "mamma is so unhappy!"

"I fear that I have offended her."

"It is not that, but that you should be so,—so angry about Felix."

"I am vexed with myself that I have vexed her,—more vexed than I can tell you."

"She knows how good you are."

"No, I'm not. I was very bad just now. She was so offended with me that she talked of going back to London. He paused for her to speak, but Hetta had no words ready for the moment. "I should be wretched indeed if you and she were to leave my house in anger."

"I do not think she will do that."

"And you?"

"I am not angry. I should never dare to be angry with you. I only wish that Felix would be better. They say that young men have to be bad, and that they do get to be better as they grow older. He is something in the city now, a director they call him, and mamma thinks that the work will be of service to him. Roger could express no hope in this direction or even look as though he approved of the directorship. "I don't see why he should not try at any rate."

"Dear Hetta, I only wish he were like you."

"Girls are so different, you know."

It was not till late in the evening, long after dinner, that he made his apology in form to Lady Carbury; but he did make it, and at last it was accepted. "I think I was rough to you, talking about Felix," he said,—"and I beg your pardon."

"You were energetic, that was all."

"A gentleman should never be rough to a lady, and a man should never be rough to his own guests. I hope you will forgive me." She answered him by putting out her hand and smiling on him; and so the quarrel was over.
Lady Carbury understood the full extent of her triumph, and was enabled by her disposition to use it thoroughly. Felix might now come down to Carbury, and go over from thence to Caversham, and prosecute his wooing, and the master of Carbury could make no further objection. And Felix, if he would come, would not now be snubbed. Roger would understand that he was constrained to courtesy by the former severity of his language. Such points as these Lady Carbury never missed. He understood it too, and though he was soft and gracious in his bearing, endeavouring to make his house as pleasant as he could to his two guests, he felt that he had been cheated out of his undoubted right to disapprove of all connection with the Melmottes. In the course of the evening there came a note,—or rather a bundle of notes,—from Caversham. That addressed to Roger was in the form of a letter. Lady Pomona was sorry to say that the Longestaffe party were prevented from having the pleasure of dining at Carbury Hall by the fact that they had a house full of guests. Lady Pomona hoped that Mr. Carbury and his relatives, who, Lady Pomona heard, were with him at the Hall, would do the Longestaffes the pleasure of dining at Caversham either on the Monday or Tuesday following, as might best suit the Carbury plans. That was the purport of Lady Pomona’s letter to Roger Carbury. Then there were cards of invitation for Lady Carbury and her daughter, and also for Sir Felix.

Roger, as he read his own note, handed the others over to Lady Carbury, and then asked her what she would wish to have done. The tone of his voice, as he spoke, grated on her ear, as there was something in it of his former harshness. But she knew how to use her triumph. “I should like to go,” she said.

“I certainly shall not go,” he replied; “but there will be no difficulty whatever in sending you over. You must answer at once, because their servant is waiting.”

“Monday will be best,” she said. “—that is, if nobody is coming here.”

“Nobody will be here.”

“I suppose I had better say that I, and Hetta,—and Felix will accept your invitation.”

“I can make no suggestion,” said Roger, thinking how delightful it would be if Henrietta could remain with him; how objectionable it was that Henrietta should be taken to Caversham to meet the Melmottes. Poor Hetta herself could say nothing. She certainly did not wish to meet the Melmottes, nor did she wish to dine, alone, with her cousin Roger.

“That will be best,” said Lady Carbury after a moment’s thought. “It is very good of you to let us go, and to send us.”

“Of course you will do here just as you please,” he replied. But there was still that tone in his voice which Lady Carbury feared. A quarter of an hour later the Caversham servant was on his way home with two letters,—the one from Roger expressing his regret that he could not accept Lady Pomona’s invitation, and the other from Lady Carbury declaring that she and her son and daughter would have great pleasure in dining at Caversham on the Monday.
CHAPTER XVI.

THE BISHOP AND THE PRIEST.

The afternoon on which Lady Carbury arrived at her cousin's house had been very stormy. Roger Carbury had been severe, and Lady Carbury had suffered under his severity,—or had at least so well pretended to suffer as to leave on Roger's mind a strong impression that he had been cruel to her. She had then talked of going back at once to London, and when consenting to remain, had remained with a very bad feminine headache. She had altogether carried her point, but had done so in a storm. The next morning was very calm. That question of meeting the Melmottes had been settled, and there was no need for speaking of them again. Roger went out by himself about the farm, immediately after breakfast, having told the ladies that they could have the waggonette when they pleased. "I'm afraid you'll find it tiresome driving about our lanes," he said. Lady Carbury assured him that she was never dull when left alone with books. Just as he was starting he went into the garden and plucked a rose which he brought to Henrietta. He only smiled as he gave it her, and then went his way. He had resolved that he would say nothing to her of his suit till Monday. If he could prevail with her then he would ask her to remain with him when her mother and brother would be going out to dine at Caversham. She looked up into his face as she took the rose and thanked him in a whisper. She fully appreciated the truth, and honour, and honesty of his character, and could have loved him so dearly as her cousin if he would have contended himself with such cousinly love! She was beginning, within her heart, to take his side against her mother and brother, and to feel that he was the safest guide that she could have. But how could she be guided by a lover whom she did not love?

"I am afraid, my dear, we shall have a bad time of it here," said Lady Carbury.

"Why so, mamma?"

"It will be so dull. Your cousin is the best friend in all the world, and would make as good a husband as could be picked out of all the gentlemen of England; but in his present mood with me he is not a comfortable host. What nonsense he did talk about the Melmottes!"

"I don't suppose, mamma, that Mr. and Mrs. Melmotte can be nice people."

"Why shouldn't they be as nice as anybody else? Pray, Henrietta, don't let us have any of that nonsense from you. When it comes from the superhuman virtue of poor dear Roger it has to be borne, but I beg that you will not copy him."

"Mamma, I think that is unkind."

"And I shall think it very unkind if you take upon yourself to abuse people who are able and willing to set poor Felix on his legs. A word from you might undo all that we are doing."

"What word?"
"What word? Any word! If you have any influence with your brother you should use it in inducing him to hurry this on. I am sure the girl is willing enough. She did refer him to her father."

"Then why does he not go to Mr. Melmotte?"

"I suppose he is delicate about it on the score of money. If Roger could only let it be understood that Felix is the heir to this place, and that some day he will be Sir Felix Carbury of Carbury, I don't think there would be any difficulty even with old Melmotte."

"How could he do that, mamma?"

"If your cousin were to die as he is now, it would be so. Your brother would be his heir."

"You should not think of such a thing, mamma."

"Why do you dare to tell me what I am to think? Am I not to think of my own son? Is he not to be dearer to me than any one? And what I say, is so. If Roger were to die to-morrow he would be Sir Felix Carbury of Carbury."

"But, mamma, he will live and have a family. Why should he not?"

"You say he is so old that you will not look at him."

"I never said so. When we were joking, I said he was old. You know I did not mean that he was too old to get married. Men a great deal older get married every day."

"If you don't accept him he will never marry. He is a man of that kind,—so stiff and stubborn and old fashioned that nothing will change him. He will go on boodying over it, till he will become an old misanthrope. If you would take him I would be quite contented. You are my child as well as Felix. But if you mean to be obstinate I do wish that the Melmottes should be made to understand that the property and title and name of the place will all go together. It will be so, and why should not Felix have the advantage?"

"Who is to say it?"

"Ah;—that's where it is. Roger is so violent and prejudiced that one cannot get him to speak rationally."

"Oh, mamma;—you wouldn't suggest it to him;—that this place is to go to—Felix, when he—is dead!"

"It would not kill him a day sooner."

"You would not dare to do it, mamma."

"I would dare to do anything for my children. But you need not look like that, Henrietta. I am not going to say anything to him of the kind. He is not quick enough to understand of what infinite service he might be to us without in any way hurting himself." Henrietta would fain have answered that their cousin was quick enough for anything, but was by far too honest to take part in such a scheme as that proposed. She refrained, however, and was silent. There was no sympathy on the matter between her and her mother. She was beginning to understand the tortuous mazes of manoeuvres in which her mother's mind had learned to work, and to dislike and almost to despise them. But she felt it to be her duty to abstain from rebukes.

In the afternoon Lady Carbury, alone, had herself driven into Beccles that she might telegraph to her son. "You are to dine at Caversham on Monday. Come on Saturday if you can. She is
there." Lady Carbury had many doubts as to the wording of this message. The female in the office might too probably understand who was the "She," who was spoken of as being at Caversham, and might understand also the project, and speak of it publicly. But then it was essential that Felix should know how great and certain was the opportunity afforded to him. He had promised to come on Saturday and return on Monday,—and, unless warned, would too probably, stick to his plan and throw over the Longstaffes and their dinner-party. Again if he were told to come simply for the Monday, he would throw over the chance of wooring her on the Sunday. It was Lady Carbury's desire to get him down for as long a period as was possible, and nothing surely would so tend to bring him and to keep him, as a knowledge that the heiress was already in the neighbourhood. Then she returned, and shut herself up in her bedroom, and worked for an hour or two at a paper which she was writing for the "Breakfast Table." Nobody should ever accuse her justly of idleness. And afterwards, as she walked by herself round and round the garden, she revolved in her mind the scheme of a new book. Whatever might happen she would persevere. If the Carburys were unfortunate their misfortunes should come from no fault of hers. Henrietta passed the whole day alone. She did not see her cousin from breakfast till he appeared in the drawing-room before dinner. But she was thinking of him during every minute of the day,—how good he was, how honest, how thoroughly entitled to demand at any rate kindness at her hand! Her mother had spoken of him as of one who might be regarded as all but dead and buried, simply because of his love for her. Could it be true that his constancy was such that he would never marry unless she would take his hand? She came to think of him with more tenderness than she had ever felt before, but, yet, she would not tell herself she loved him. It might, perhaps, be her duty to give herself to him without loving him,—because he was so good; but she was sure that she did not love him.

In the evening the bishop came, and his wife, Mrs. Yeld, and the Hepworths of Eardly, and Father John Barham, the Eccles priest. The party consisted of eight, which is, perhaps, the best number for a mixed gathering of men and women at a dinner-table,—especially if there be no mistress whose prerogative and duty it is to sit opposite to the master. In this case Mr. Hepworth faced the giver of the feast, the bishop and the priest were opposite to each other, and the ladies graced the four corners. Roger, though he spoke of such things to no one, turned them over much in his mind, believing it to be the duty of a host to administer in all things to the comfort of his guests. In the drawing-room he had been especially courteous to the young priest, introducing him first to the bishop and his wife, and then to his cousins. Henrietta watched him through the whole evening, and told herself that he was a very mirror of courtesy in his own house. She had seen it all before, no doubt; but she had never watched him as she now watched him since her mother had told her that he would die wiseless and childless because she would not be his wife and the mother of his children.

The bishop was a man sixty years of age, very healthy and hand-
some, with hair just becoming grey, clear eyes, a kindly mouth, and something of a double chin. He was all but six feet high, with a broad chest, large hands, and legs which seemed to have been made for clerical breeches and clerical stockings. He was a man of fortune outside his bishopric; and, as he never went up to London, and had no children on whom to spend his money, he was able to live as a nobleman in the country. He did live as a nobleman, and was very popular. Among the poor around him he was idolized, and by such clergy of his diocese as were not enthusiastic in their theology either on the one side or on the other, he was regarded as a model bishop. By the very high and the very low,—by those rather who regarded ritualism as being either heavenly or devilish,—he was looked upon as a time-server, because he would not put to sea in either of those boats. He was an unselfish man, who loved his neighbour as himself, and forgave all trespasses, and thanked God for his daily bread from his heart, and prayed heartily to be delivered from temptation. But I doubt whether he was competent to teach a creed,—or even to hold one, if it be necessary that a man should understand and define his creed before he can hold it. Whether he was free from, or whether he was scared by, any inward misgivings, who shall say? If there were such he never whispered a word of them even to the wife of his bosom. From the tone of his voice and the look of his eye, you would say that he was unscathed by that agony which doubt on such a matter would surely bring to a man so placed. And yet it was observed of him that he never spoke of his faith, or entered into arguments with men as to the reasons on which he had based it. He was diligent in preaching,—moral sermons that were short, pithy, and useful. He was never weary in furthering the welfare of his clergy. His house was open to them and to their wives. The edifice of every church in his diocese was a care to him. He laboured at schools, and was zealous in improving the social comforts of the poor; but he was never known to declare to man or woman that the human soul must live or die for ever according to its faith. Perhaps there was no bishop in England more loved or more useful in his diocese than the Bishop of Elmham.

A man more antagonistic to the bishop than Father John Barham, the lately appointed Roman Catholic priest at Bepces, it would be impossible to conceive;—and yet they were both eminently good men. Father John was not above five feet nine in height, but so thin, so meagre, so wasted in appearance, that, unless when he stooped, he was taken to be tall. He had thick dark brown hair, which was cut short in accordance with the usage of his Church; but which he so constantly ruffled by the action of his hands, that, though short, it seemed to be wild and uncombed. In his younger days, when long locks straggled over his forehead, he had acquired a habit, while talking energetically, of rubbing them back with his finger, which he had not since dropped. In discussions he would constantly push back his hair, and then sit with his hand fixed on the top of his head. He had a high, broad forehead, enormous blue eyes, a thin, long nose, cheeks very thin and hollow, a handsome large mouth, and a strong square chin. He was utterly without worldly means, except those
which came to him from the ministry of his church, and which did not suffice to find him food and raiment; but no man ever lived more indifferent to such matters than Father John Barham. He had been the younger son of an English country gentleman of small fortune, had been sent to Oxford that he might hold a family living, and on the eve of his ordination had declared himself a Roman Catholic. His family had resented this bitterly, but had not quarrelled with him till he had drawn a sister with him. When banished from the house he had still striven to achieve the conversion of other sisters by his letters, and was now absolutely an alien from his father's heart and care. But of this he never complained. It was a part of the plan of his life that he should suffer for his faith. Had he been able to change his creed without incurring persecution, worldly degradation, and poverty, his own conversion would not have been to him comfortable and satisfactory as it was. He considered that his father, as a Protestant,—and in his mind Protestant and heathen were all the same,—had been right to quarrel with him. But he loved his father, and was endless in prayer, wearying his saints with supplications, that his father might see the truth and be as he was.

To him it was everything that a man should believe and obey,—that he should abandon his own reason to the care of another or of others, and allow himself to be guided in all things by authority. Faith being sufficient and of itself all in all, moral conduct could be nothing to a man, except as a testimony of faith; for to him, whose belief was true enough to produce obedience, moral conduct would certainly be added. The dogmas of his Church were to Father Barham a real religion; and he would teach them in season and out of season, always ready to commit himself to the task of proving their truth, afraid of no enemy, not even fearing the hostility which his perseverance would create. He had but one duty before him,—to do his part towards bringing over the world to his faith. It might be that with the toil of his whole life he should convert but one; that he should but half convert one; that he should do no more than disturb the thoughts of one so that future conversion might be possible. But even that would be work done. He would sow the seed if it might be so; but if it were not given to him to do that, he would at any rate plough the ground.

He had come to Beccles lately, and Roger Carbury had found out that he was a gentleman by birth and education. Roger had found out also that he was very poor, and had consequently taken him by the hand. The young priest had not hesitated to accept his neighbour's hospitality, having on one occasion laughingly protested that he should be delighted to dine at Carbury, as he was much in want of a dinner. He had accepted presents from the garden and the poultry yard, declaring that he was too poor to refuse anything. The apparent frankness of the man about himself had charmed Roger, and the charm had not been seriously disturbed when Father Barham, on one winter evening in the parlour at Carbury, had tried his hand at converting his host. "I have the most thorough respect for your religion," Roger had said; "but it would not suit me." The priest had gone on with his logic; if he could not sow the seed he might
plough the ground. This had been repeated two or three times, and Roger had begun to feel it to be disagreeable. But the man was in earnest, and such earnestness commanded respect. And Roger was quite sure that though he might be bored, he could not be injured by such teaching. Then it occurred to him one day that he had known the Bishop of Elmham intimately for a dozen years, and had never heard from the bishop’s mouth,—except when in the pulpit,—a single word of religious teaching; whereas this man, who was a stranger to him, divided from him by the very fact of his creed, was always talking to him about his faith. Roger Carbury was not a man given to much deep thinking, but he felt that the bishop’s manner was the pleasanter of the two.

Lady Carbury at dinner was all smiles and pleasantness. No one looking at her, or listening to her, could think that her heart was sore with many troubles. She sat between the bishop and her cousin, and was skilful enough to talk to each without neglecting the other. She had known the bishop before, and had on one occasion spoken to him of her soul. The first tone of the good man’s reply had convinced her of her error, and she never repeated it. To Mr. Alf she commonly talked of her mind; to Mr. Broune of her heart; to Mr. Booker of her body—and its wants. She was quite ready to talk of her soul on a proper occasion, but she was much too wise to thrust the subject even on a bishop. Now she was full of the charms of Carbury and its neighbourhood. "Yes, indeed," said the bishop, "I think Suffolk is a very nice county; and as we are only a mile or two from Norfolk, I’ll say as much for Norfolk too. ‘It’s an ill bird that fouls its own nest.’"

"I like a county in which there is something left of county feeling," said Lady Carbury. "Staffordshire and Warwickshire, Cheshire and Lancashire have become great towns, and have lost all local distinctions."

"We still keep our name and reputation," said the bishop; "Silly Suffolk!"

"But that was never deserved."

"As much, perhaps, as other general epithets. I think we are a sleepy people. We’ve got no coal, you see, and no iron. We have no beautiful scenery, like the lake country,—no rivers great for fishing, like Scotland,—no hunting grounds, like the shires."

"Partridges!" pleaded Lady Carbury, with pretty energy.

"Yes; we have partridges, fine churches, and the herring fishery. We shall do very well if too much is not expected of us. We can’t increase and multiply as they do in the great cities."

"I like this part of England so much the best for that very reason. What is the use of a crowded population?"

"The earth has to be peopled, Lady Carbury."

"Oh, yes," said her ladyship, with some little reverence added to her voice, feeling that the bishop was probably advertting to a divine arrangement. "The world must be peopled; but for myself I like the country better than the town."

"So do I," said Roger; "and I like Suffolk. The people are hearty, and radicalism is not quite so rampant as it is elsewhere."
THE BISHOP AND THE PRIEST.

The poor people touch their hats, and the rich people think of the poor. There is something left among us of old English habits."

"That is so nice," said Lady Carbury.

"Something left of old English ignorance," said the bishop. "All the same I dare say we're improving, like the rest of the world. What beautiful flowers you have here, Mr. Carbury! At any rate, we can grow flowers in Suffolk."

Mrs. Yeld, the bishop's wife, was sitting next to the priest, and was in truth somewhat afraid of her neighbour. She was, perhaps, a little stauncher than her husband in Protestantism; and though she was willing to admit that Mr. Barham might not have ceased to be a gentleman when he became a Roman Catholic priest, she was not quite sure that it was expedient for her or her husband to have much to do with him. Mr. Carbury had not taken them unawares. Notice had been given that the priest was to be there, and the bishop had declared that he would be very happy to meet the priest. But Mrs. Yeld had had misgivings. She never ventured to insist on her opinion after the bishop had expressed his; but she had an idea that right was right, and wrong wrong,—and that Roman Catholics were wrong, and therefore ought to be put down. And she thought also that if there were no priests there would be no Roman Catholics. Mr. Barham was, no doubt, a man of good family, which did make a difference.

Mr. Barham always made his approaches very gradually. The taciturn humility with which he commenced his operations was in exact proportion to the enthusiastic volubility of his advanced intimacy. Mrs. Yeld thought that it became her to address to him a few civil words, and he replied to her with a shame-faced modesty that almost overcame her dislike to his profession. She spoke of the poor of Beccles, being very careful to allude only to their material position. There was too much beer drank, no doubt, and the young women would have finery. Where did they get the money to buy those wonderful bonnets which appeared every Sunday? Mr. Barham was very meek, and agreed to everything that was said. No doubt he had a plan ready formed for inducing Mrs. Yeld to have mass said regularly within her husband's palace, but he did not even begin to bring it about on this occasion. It was not till he made some apparently chance allusion to the superior church-attending qualities of "our people," that Mrs. Yeld drew herself up and changed the conversation by observing that there had been a great deal of rain lately.

When the ladies were gone the bishop at once put himself in the way of conversation with the priest, and asked questions as to the morality of Beccles. It was evidently Mr. Barham's opinion that "his people" were more moral than other people, though very much poorer. "But the Irish always drink," said Mr. Hepworth.

"Not so much as the English, I think," said the priest. "And you are not to suppose that we are all Irish. Of my flock the greater proportion are English."

"It is astonishing how little we know of our neighbours," said the bishop. "Of course I am aware that there are a certain number of persons of your persuasion round about us. Indeed, I could give
the exact number in this diocese. But in my own immediate neighbourhood I could not put my hand upon any families which I know to be Roman Catholic.

"It is not, my lord, because there are none."

"Of course not. It is because, as I say, I do not know my neighbours."

"I think, here in Suffolk, they must be chiefly the poor," said Mr. Hepworth.

"They were chiefly the poor who at first put their faith in our Saviour," said the priest.

"I think the analogy is hardly correctly drawn," said the bishop, with a curious smile. "We were speaking of those who are still attached to an old creed. Our Saviour was the teacher of a new religion. That the poor in the simplicity of their hearts should be the first to acknowledge the truth of a new religion is in accordance with our idea of human nature. But that an old faith should remain with the poor after it has been abandoned by the rich is not so easily intelligible."

"The Roman population still believed," said Carbury, "when the patricians had learned to regard their gods as simply useful bugbears."

"The patricians had not ostensibly abandoned their religion. The people clung to it thinking that their masters and rulers clung to it also."

"The poor have ever been the salt of the earth, my lord," said the priest.

"That begs the whole question," said the bishop, turning to his host, and beginning to talk about a breed of pigs which had lately been imported into the palace styes. Father Barham turned to Mr. Hepworth and went on with his argument, or rather began another. It was a mistake to suppose that the Catholics in the county were all poor. There were the A—s and the B—s, and the C—s and the D—s. He knew all their names and was proud of their fidelity. To him these faithful ones were really the salt of the earth, who would some day be enabled by their fidelity to restore England to her pristine condition. The bishop had truly said that of many of his neighbours he did not know to what Church they belonged; but Father Barham, though he had not as yet been twelve months in the county, knew the name of nearly every Roman Catholic within its borders.

"Your priest is a very zealous man," said the bishop afterwards to Roger Carbury, "and I do not doubt but that he is an excellent gentleman; but he is perhaps a little indiscreet."

"I like him because he is doing the best he can according to his lights; without any reference to his own worldly welfare."

"That is all very grand, and I am perfectly willing to respect him. But I do not know that I should care to talk very freely in his company."

"I am sure he would repeat nothing."

"Perhaps not; but he would always be thinking that he was going to get the best of me."

"I don't think it answers," said Mrs. Yeld to her husband as they
The Bishop thinks that the Priest's analogy is not correct.
went home. "Of course I don’t want to be prejudiced; but Protestants are Protestants, and Roman Catholics are Roman Catholics."

"You may say the same of Liberals and Conservatives, but you wouldn’t have them decline to meet each other."

"It isn’t quite the same, my dear. After all religion is religion."

"It ought to be," said the bishop.

"Of course I don’t mean to put myself up against you, my dear, but I don’t know that I want to meet Mr. Barham again."

"I don’t know that I do, either," said the bishop; "but if he comes in my way I hope I shall treat him civilly."

CHAPTER XVII.

MARIE MELMOTTE HEARS A LOVE TALE.

On the following morning there came a telegram from Felix. He was to be expected at Bcecels on that afternoon by a certain train; and Roger, at Lady Carbury’s request, undertook to send a carriage to the station for him. This was done, but Felix did not arrive. There was still another train by which he might come so as to be just in time for dinner if dinner were postponed for half an hour. Lady Carbury with a tender look, almost without speaking a word, appealed to her cousin on behalf of her son. He knit his brows, as he always did, involuntarily, when displeased; but he assented. Then the carriage had to be sent again. Now carriages and carriage-horses were not numerous at Carbury. The squire kept a waggonette and a pair of horses which, when not wanted for house use, were employed about the farm. He himself would walk home from the train, leaving the luggage to be brought by some cheap conveyance. He had already sent the carriage once on this day,—and now sent it again, Lady Carbury having said a word which showed that she hoped that this would be done. But he did it with deep displeasure. To the mother her son was Sir Felix, the baronet, entitled to special consideration because of his position and rank,—because also of his intention to marry the great heiress of the day. To Roger Carbury Felix was a vicious young man, peculiarly antipathetic to himself, to whom no respect whatever was due. Nevertheless the dinner was put off, and the waggonette was sent. But the waggonette again came back empty. That evening was spent by Roger, Lady Carbury, and Henrietta, in very much gloom.

About four in the morning the house was roused by the coming of the baronet. Failing to leave town by either of the afternoon trains, he had contrived to catch the evening mail, and had found himself deposited at some distant town from which he had posted to Carbury. Roger came down in his dressing-gown to admit him, and Lady Carbury also left her room. Sir Felix evidently thought that he had been a very fine fellow in going through so much trouble. Roger held a very different opinion, and spoke little or nothing. "Oh, Felix," said the mother, "you have so terrified us!"
"I can tell you I was terrified myself when I found that I had to come fifteen miles across the country with a pair of old jades who could hardly get up a trot."

"But why didn't you come by the train you named?"

"I couldn't get out of the city," said the baronet with a ready lie.

"I suppose you were at the Board?" To this Felix made no direct answer. Roger knew that there had been no Board. Mr. Melmotte was in the country and there could be no Board, nor could Sir Felix have had business in the city. It was sheer impudence,—sheer indifference, and, into the bargain, a downright lie. The young man, who was of himself so unwelcome, who had come there on a project which he, Roger, utterly disapproved,—who had now knocked him and his household up at four o'clock in the morning,—had uttered no word of apology. "Miserable cub!" Roger muttered between his teeth. Then he spoke aloud, "You had better not keep your mother standing here. I will show you your room."

"All right, old fellow," said Sir Felix. "I'm awfully sorry to disturb you all in this way. I think I'll just take a drop of brandy and soda before I go to bed, though." This was another blow to Roger.

"I doubt whether we have soda-water in the house, and if we have, I don't know where to get it. I can give you some brandy if you will come with me." He pronounced the word "brandy" in a tone which implied that it was a wicked, dissipated beverage. It was a wretched work to Roger. He was forced to go up-stairs and fetch a key in order that he might wait upon this cub,—this cur! He did it, however, and the cub drank his brandy-and-water, not in the least disturbed by his host's ill-humour. As he went to bed he suggested the probability of his not showing himself till lunch on the following day, and expressed a wish that he might have breakfast sent to him in bed. "He is born to be hung," said Roger to himself as he went to his room,—"and he'll deserve it."

On the following morning, being Sunday, they all went to church,—except Felix. Lady Carbury always went to church when she was in the country, never when she was at home in London. It was one of those moral habits, like early dinners and long walks, which suited country life. And she fancied that were she not to do so, the bishop would be sure to know it and would be displeased. She liked the bishop. She liked bishops generally; and was aware that it was a woman's duty to sacrifice herself for society. As to the purpose for which people go to church, it had probably never in her life occurred to Lady Carbury to think of it. On their return they found Sir Felix smoking a cigar on the gravel path, close in front of the open drawing-room window.

"Felix," said his cousin, "take your cigar a little further. You are filling the house with tobacco."

"Oh heavens,—what a prejudice!" said the baronet.

"Let it be so, but still do as I ask you." Sir Felix chucked the cigar out of his mouth on to the gravel walk, whereupon Roger walked up to the spot and kicked the offending weed away. This was the first greeting of the day between the two men.

After lunch Lady Carbury strolled about with her son, instigating
him to go over at once to Caversham. "How do you mean I to get there?"
"Your cousin will lend you a horse."
"He's as cross as a bear with a sore head. He's a deal older than I am, and a cousin and all that, but I'm not going to put up with insolence. If it were anywhere else I should just go into the yard and ask if I could have a horse and saddle as a matter of course."
"Roger has not a great establishment."
"I suppose he has a horse and saddle, and a man to get it ready. I don't want anything grand."
"He is vexed because he sent twice to the station for you yesterday."
"I hate the kind of fellow who is always thinking of little grievances. Such a man expects you to go like clockwork, and because you are not wound up just as he is, he insults you. I shall ask him for a horse as I would any one else, and if he does not like it, he may lump it." About half an hour after this he found his cousin. "Can I have a horse to ride over to Caversham this afternoon?" he said.
"Our horses never go out on Sunday," said Roger. Then he added, after a pause, "You can have it. I'll give the order."
Sir Felix would be gone on Tuesday, and it should be his own fault if that odious cousin ever found his way into Carbury House again! So he declared to himself as Felix rode out of the yard; but he soon remembered how probable it was that Felix himself would be the owner of Carbury. And should it ever come to pass,—as still was possible,—that Henrietta should be the mistress of Carbury, he could hardly forbid her to receive her brother. He stood for a while on the bridge watching his cousin as he cantered away upon the road, listening to the horse's feet. The young man was offensive in every possible way. Who does not know that ladies only are allowed to canter their friends' horses upon roads? A gentleman trots his horse, and his friend's horse. Roger Carbury had but one saddle horse,—a favourite old hunter that he loved as a friend. And now this dear old friend, whose legs probably were not quite so good as they once were, was being galloped along the hard road by that odious cub! "Soda and brandy!" Roger exclaimed to himself almost aloud, thinking of the discomfort of that early morning. "He'll die some day of delirium tremens in a hospital!"

Before the Longestaffes left London to receive their new friends the Melmottes at Caversham, a treaty had been made between Mr. Longestaffe, the father, and Georgiana, the strong-minded daughter. The daughter on her side undertook that the guests should be treated with feminine courtesy. This might be called the most-favoured-nation clause. The Melmottes were to be treated exactly as though old Melmotte had been a gentleman and Madame Melmotte a lady. In return for this the Longestaffe family were to be allowed to return to town. But here again the father had carried another clause. The prolonged sojourn in town was to be only for six weeks. On the 10th of July the Longestaffes were to be removed into the country for the remainder of the year. When the question of a foreign tour was proposed, the father became absolutely violent in his refusal. "In God's name where do you expect the money is to come from?" When
Georgiana urged that other people had money to go abroad, her father told her that a time was coming in which she might think it lucky if she had a house over her head. This, however, she took as having been said with poetical licence, the same threat having been made more than once before. The treaty was very clear, and the parties to it were prepared to carry it out with fair honesty. The Melmottes were being treated with decent courtesy, and the house in town was not dismantled.

The idea, hardly ever in truth entertained but which had been barely suggested from one to another among the ladies of the family, that Dolly should marry Marie Melmotte, had been abandoned. Dolly, with all his rapid folly, had a will of his own, which, among his own family, was invincible. He was never persuaded to any course either by his father or mother. Dolly certainly would not marry Marie Melmotte. Therefore when the Longestaffes heard that Sir Felix was coming to the country, they had no special objection to entertaining him at Caversham. He had been lately talked of in London as the favourite in regard to Marie Melmotte. Georgiana Longestaffe had a grudge of her own against Lord Niddersdale, and was on that account somewhat well inclined towards Sir Felix's prospects. Soon after the Melmottes' arrival she contrived to say a word to Marie respecting Sir Felix. "There is a friend of yours going to dine here on Monday, Miss Melmotte." Marie, who was at the moment still abashed by the grandeur and size and general fashionable haughtiness of her new acquaintances, made hardly any answer. "I think you know Sir Felix Carbury," continued Georgiana.

"Oh yes, we know Sir Felix Carbury."

"He is coming down to his cousin's. I suppose it is for your bright eyes, as Carbury Manor would hardly be just what he would like."

"I don't think he is coming because of me," said Marie blushing. She had once told him that he might go to her father, which according to her idea had been tantamount to accepting his offer as far as her power of acceptance went. Since that she had seen him, indeed, but he had not said a word to press his suit, nor, as far as she knew, had he said a word to Mr. Melmotte. But she had been very rigorous in declining the attentions of other suitors. She had made up her mind that she was in love with Felix Carbury, and she had resolved on constancy. But she had begun to tremble, fearing his faithlessness.

"We had heard," said Georgiana, "that he was a particular friend of yours." And she laughed aloud, with a vulgarity which Madame Melmotte certainly could not have surpassed.

Sir Felix, on the Sunday afternoon, found all the ladies out on the lawn, and he also found Mr. Melmotte there. At the last moment Lord Alfred Grendall had been asked,—not because he was at all in favour with any of the Longestaffes, but in order that he might be useful in disposing of the great Director. Lord Alfred was used to him and could talk to him, and might probably know what he liked to eat and drink. Therefore Lord Alfred had been asked to Caversham, and Lord Alfred had come, having all his expenses paid by the great Director. When Sir Felix arrived, Lord Alfred was earning his enter-
tainment by talking to Mr. Melmotte in a summer-house. He had
cool drink before him and a box of cigars, but was probably thinking
at the time how hard the world had been to him. Lady Pomona was
languid, but not uncivil in her reception. She was doing her best to
perform her part of the treaty in reference to Madame Melmotte.
Sophia was walking apart with a certain Mr. Whitstable, a young
squire in the neighbourhood, who had been asked to Caversham
because as Sophia was now reputed to be twenty-eight,—they who
decided the question might have said thirty-one without falsehood,—it
was considered that Mr. Whitstable was good enough, or at
least as good as could be expected. Sophia was handsome, but with
a big, cold, unalluring handsomeness, and had not quite succeeded in
London. Georgiana had been more admired, and boasted among her
friends of the offers which she had rejected. Her friends on the other
hand were apt to talk of her many failures. Nevertheless she held
her head up, and had not as yet come down among the rural Whit-
stables. At the present moment her hands were empty, and she was
devoting herself to such a performance of the treaty as should make
it impossible for her father to leave his part of it unfulfilled.

For a few minutes Sir Felix sat on a garden chair making con-
versation to Lady Pomona and Madame Melmotte. "Beautiful
garden," he said; "for myself I don't much care for gardens; but if
one is to live in the country, this is the sort of thing that one would
like."

"Delicious," said Madame Melmotte, repressing a yawn, and
drawing her shawl higher round her throat. It was the end of
May, and the weather was very warm for the time of the year;
but, in her heart of hearts, Madame Melmotte did not like sitting out
in the garden.

"It isn't a pretty place; but the house is comfortable, and we
make the best of it," said Lady Pomona.

"Plenty of glass, I see," said Sir Felix. "If one is to live in the
country, I like that kind of thing. Carbury is a very poor place."

There was offence in this;—as though the Carbury property and
the Carbury position could be compared to the Longestaffe property
and the Longestaffe position. Though dreadfully hampered for
money, the Longestaffes were great people. "For a small place,"
said Lady Pomona, "I think Carbury is one of the nicest in the
county. Of course it is not extensive."

"No, by Jove," said Sir Felix, "you may say that, Lady Pomona.
It's like a prison to me with that moat round it." Then he jumped
up and joined Marie Melmotte and Georgiana. Georgiana, glad to be
released for a time from performance of the treaty, was not long
before she left them together. She had understood that the two
horses now in the running were Lord Nidderdale and Sir Felix; and
though she would not probably have done much to aid Sir Felix, she
was quite willing to destroy Lord Nidderdale.

Sir Felix had his work to do, and was willing to do it,—as far as
such willingness could go with him. The prize was so great, and the
comfort of wealth was so sure, that even he was tempted to exert
himself. It was this feeling which had brought him into Suffolk, and
induced him to travel all night, across dirty roads, in an old cab. For the girl herself he cared not the least. It was not in his power really to care for anybody. He did not dislike her much. He was not given to disliking people strongly, except at the moments in which they offended him. He regarded her simply as the means by which a portion of Mr. Melmotte’s wealth might be conveyed to his uses. In regard to feminine beauty he had his own ideas, and his own inclinations. He was by no means indifferent to such attraction. But Marie Melmotte, from that point of view, was nothing to him. Such prettiness as belonged to her came from the brightness of her youth, and from a modest shy demeanour joined to an incipient aspiration for the enjoyment of something in the world which should be her own. There was, too, arising within her bosom a struggle to be something in the world, an idea that she, too, could say something, and have thoughts of her own, if only she had some friend near her whom she need not fear. Though still shy, she was always resolving that she would abandon her shyness, and already had thoughts of her own as to the perfectly open confidence which should exist between two lovers. When alone,—and she was much alone,—she would build castles in the air, which were bright with art and love, rather than with gems and gold. The books she read, poor though they generally were, left something bright on her imagination. She fancied to herself brilliant conversations in which she bore a bright part, though in real life she had hitherto hardly talked to any one since she was a child. Sir Felix Carbury, she knew, had made her an offer. She knew also, or thought that she knew, that she loved the man. And now she was with him alone! Now surely had come the time in which some one of her castles in the air might be found to be built of real materials.

"You know why I have come down here?" he said.
"To see your cousin."
"No, indeed. I’m not particularly fond of my cousin, who is a methodical stiff-necked old bachelor,—as cross as the mischief."
"How disagreeable!"
"Yes; he is disagreeable. I didn’t come down to see him, I can tell you. But when I heard that you were going to be here with the Longestaffes, I determined to come at once. I wonder whether you are glad to see me?"
"I don’t know," said Marie, who could not at once find that brilliancy of words with which her imagination supplied her readily enough in her solitude.
"Do you remember what you said to me that evening at my mother’s?"
"Did I say anything? I don’t remember anything particular."
"Do you not? Then I fear you can’t think very much of me," He paused as though he supposed that she would drop into his mouth like a cherry. "I thought you told me that you would love me."
"Did I?"
"Did you not?"
"I don’t know what I said. Perhaps if I said that, I didn’t mean it."
"You know why I have come down here."
"Am I to believe that?"
"Perhaps you didn't mean it, yourself."
"By George, I did. I was quite in earnest. There never was a fellow more in earnest than I was. I've come down here on purpose to say it again."
"To say what?"
"Whether you'll accept me?"
"I don't know whether you love me well enough." She longed to be told by him that he loved her. He had no objection to tell her so, but, without thinking much about it, felt it to be a bore. All that kind of thing was trash and twaddle. He desired her to accept him; and he would have wished, were it possible, that she should have gone to her father for his consent. There was something in the big eyes and heavy jaws of Mr. Melmotte which he almost feared. "Do you really love me well enough?" she whispered.
"Of course I do. I'm bad at making pretty speeches, and all that, but you know I love you."
"Do you?"
"By George, yes. I always liked you from the first moment I saw you. I did indeed."
It was a poor declaration of love, but it sufficed. "Then I will love you," she said. "I will with all my heart."
"There's a darling!"
"Shall I be your darling? Indeed I will. I may call you Felix now;—mayn't I?"
"Rather."
"Oh, Felix, I hope you will love me. I will so dote upon you. You know a great many men have asked me to love them."
"I suppose so."
"But I have never, never cared for any of them in the least;—not in the least."
"You do care for me?"
"Oh yes." She looked up into his beautiful face as she spoke, and he saw that her eyes were swimming with tears. He thought at the moment that she was very common to look at. As regarded appearance only he would have preferred even Sophia Longstaffe. There was indeed a certain brightness of truth which another man might have read in Marie's mingled smiles and tears, but it was thrown away altogether upon him. They were walking in some shrubbery quite apart from the house, where they were unseen; so, as in duty bound, he put his arm round her waist and kissed her. "Oh, Felix," she said, giving her face up to him; "no one ever did it before." He did not in the least believe her, nor was the matter one of the slightest importance to him. "Say that you will be good to me, Felix. I will be so good to you."
"Of course I will be good to you."
"Men are not always good to their wives. Papa is often very cross to mamma."
"I suppose he can be cross?"
"Yes, he can. He does not often scold me. I don't know what he'll say when we tell him about this."
"But I suppose he intends that you shall be married?"

"He wanted me to marry Lord Niddersdale and Lord Glasslough, but I hated them both. I think he wants me to marry Lord Niddersdale again now. He hasn't said so, but mamma tells me. But I never will;—never!"

"I hope not, Marie."

"You needn't be a bit afraid. I would not do it if they were to kill me. I hate him,—and I do so love you." Then she leaned with all her weight upon his arm and looked up again into his beautiful face. "You will speak to papa; won't you?"

"Will that be the best way?"

"I suppose so. How else?"

"I don't know whether Madame Melmotte ought not——"

"Oh dear no. Nothing would induce her. She is more afraid of him than anybody;—more afraid of him than I am. I thought the gentleman always did that."

"Of course I'll do it," said Sir Felix. "I'm not afraid of him. Why should I? He and I are very good friends, you know."

"I'm glad of that."

"He made me a Director of one of his companies the other day."

"Did he? Perhaps he'll like you for a son-in-law."

"There's no knowing;—is there?"

"I hope he will. I shall like you for papa's son-in-law. I hope it isn't wrong to say that. Oh, Felix, say that you love me." Then she put her face up towards his again.

"Of course I love you," he said, not thinking it worth his while to kiss her. "It's no good speaking to him here. I suppose I had better go and see him in the city."

"He is in a good humour now," said Marie.

"But I couldn't get him alone. It wouldn't be the thing to do down here."

"Wouldn't it?"

"Not in the country,—in another person's house. Shall you tell Madame Melmotte?"

"Yes, I shall tell mamma; but she won't say anything to him. Mamma does not care much about me. But I'll tell you all that another time. Of course I shall tell you everything now. I never yet had anybody to tell anything to, but I shall never be tired of telling you." Then he left her as soon as he could, and escaped to the other ladies. Mr. Melmotte was still sitting in the summer-house, and Lord Alfred was still with him, smoking and drinking brandy and seltzer. As Sir Felix passed in front of the great man he told himself that it was much better that the interview should be postponed till they were all in London. Mr. Melmotte did not look as though he were in a good humour. Sir Felix said a few words to Lady Pomona and Madame Melmotte. Yes; he hoped to have the pleasure of seeing them with his mother and sister on the following day. He was aware that his cousin was not coming. He believed that his cousin Roger never did go anywhere like any one else. No; he had not seen Mr. Longstaffe. He hoped to have the pleasure of seeing him to-morrow. Then he escaped, and got on his horse, and rode away.
“That’s going to be the lucky man,” said Georgiana to her mother, that evening.

“In what way lucky?”

“He is going to get the heiress and all the money. What a fool Dolly has been!”

“I don’t think it would have suited Dolly,” said Lady Pomona.

“After all, why should not Dolly marry a lady?”

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS RUBY RUGGLES, the granddaughter of old Daniel Ruggles, of Sheep’s Acre, in the parish of Sheepstone, close to Bungay, received the following letter from the hands of the rural post letter-carrier on that Sunday morning;—“A friend will be somewhere near Sheepstone Birches between four and five o’clock on Sunday afternoon.” There was not another word in the letter, but Miss Ruby Ruggles knew well from whom it came.

Daniel Ruggles was a farmer, who had the reputation of considerable wealth, but who was not very well looked on in the neighbourhood as being somewhat of a curmudgeon and a miser. His wife was dead;—he had quarrelled with his only son, whose wife was also dead, and had banished him from his home;—his daughters were married and away; and the only member of his family who lived with him was his granddaughter Ruby. And this granddaughter was a great trouble to the old man. She was twenty-three years old, and had been engaged to a prosperous young man at Bungay in the meal and pollard line, to whom old Ruggles had promised to give £500 on their marriage. But Ruby had taken it into her foolish young head that she did not like meal and pollard, and now she had received the above very dangerous letter. Though the writer had not dared to sign his name she knew well that it came from Sir Felix Carbury,—the most beautiful gentleman she had ever set her eyes upon. Poor Ruby Ruggles! Living down at Sheep’s Acre, on the Waveney, she had heard both too much and too little of the great world beyond her ken. There were, she thought, many glorious things to be seen which she would never see were she in these her early years to become the wife of John Crumb, the dealer in meal and pollard at Bungay. Therefore she was full of a wild joy, half joy half fear, when she got her letter; and, therefore, punctually at four o’clock on that Sunday she was ensconced among the Sheepstone Birches, so that she might see without much danger of being seen. Poor Ruby Ruggles, who was left to be so much mistress of herself at the time of her life in which she most required the kindness of a controlling hand!

Mr. Ruggles held his land, or the greater part of it, on what is called a bishop’s lease, Sheep’s Acre Farm being a part of the property which did belong to the bishopric of Elmham, and which was still set apart for its sustentation;—but he also held a small extent of out-
lying meadow which belonged to the Carbury estate, so that he was one of the tenants of Roger Carbury. Those Sheepstone Birches, at which Felix made his appointment, belonged to Roger. On a former occasion, when the feeling between the two cousins was kinder than that which now existed, Felix had ridden over with the landlord to call on the old man, and had then first seen Ruby;—and had heard from Roger something of Ruby's history up to that date. It had then been just made known that she was to marry John Crumb. Since that time not a word had been spoken between the men respecting the girl. Mr. Carbury had heard, with sorrow, that the marriage was either postponed or abandoned,—but his growing dislike to the baronet had made it very improbable that there should be any conversation between them on the subject. Sir Felix, however, had probably heard more of Ruby Ruggles than her grandfather's landlord.

There is, perhaps, no condition of mind more difficult for the ordinarily well-instructed inhabitant of a city to realise than that of such a girl as Ruby Ruggles. The rural day labourer and his wife live on a level surface which is comparatively open to the eye. Their aspiration, whether for good or evil,—whether for food and drink to be honestly earned for themselves and children, or for drink first, to be come by either honestly or dishonestly,—are, if looked at at all, fairly visible. And with the men of the Ruggles class one can generally find out what they would be at, and in what direction their minds are at work. But the Ruggles woman,—especially the Ruggles young woman,—is better educated, has higher aspirations and a brighter imagination, and is infinitely more cunning than the man. If she be good-looking and relieved from the pressure of want, her thoughts soar into a world which is as unknown to her as heaven is to us, and in regard to which her longings are apt to be infinitely stronger than are ours for heaven. Her education has been much better than that of the man. She can read, whereas he can only spell words from a book. She can write a letter after her fashion, whereas he can barely spell words out on a paper. Her tongue is more glib, and her intellect sharper. But her ignorance as to the reality of things is much more gross than his. By such contact as he has with men in markets, in the streets of the towns he frequents, and even in the fields, he learns something unconsciously of the relative condition of his countrymen,—and, as to that which he does not learn, his imagination is obtuse. But the woman builds castles in the air, and wonders, and longs. To the young farmer the squire's daughter is a superior being very much out of his way. To the farmer's daughter the young squire is an Apollo, whom to look at is a pleasure,—by whom to be looked at is a delight. The danger for the most part is soon over. The girl marries after her kind, and then husband and children put the matter at rest for ever.

A mind more absolutely uninstructed than that of Ruby Ruggles as to the world beyond Suffolk and Norfolk it would be impossible to find. But her thoughts were as wide as they were vague, and as active as they were erroneous. Why should she with all her prettiness, and all her cleverness,—with all her fortune to boot,—marry that dustiest of all men, John Crumb, before she had seen something
of the beauties of the things of which she had read in the books which came in her way? John Crumb was not bad-looking. He was a sturdy, honest fellow, too,—slow of speech but sure of his points when he had got them within his grip,—fond of his beer but not often drunk, and the very soul of industry at his work. But though she had known him all her life she had never known him otherwise than dusty. The meal had so gotten within his hair, and skin, and raiment, that it never came out altogether even on Sundays. His normal complexion was a healthy pallor, through which indeed some records of hidden reddiness would make themselves visible, but which was so judiciously assimilated to his hat and coat and waistcoat, that he was more like a stout ghost than a healthy young man. Nevertheless it was said of him that he could thrash any man in Bungay, and carry two hundred weight of flour upon his back. And Ruby also knew this of him,—that he worshipped the very ground on which she trod.

But, alas, she thought there might be something better than such worship; and, therefore, when Felix Carbury came in her way, with his beautiful oval face, and his rich brown colour, and his bright hair and lovely moustache, she was lost in a feeling which she mistook for love; and when he sneaked over to her a second and a third time, she thought more of his listless praise than ever she had thought of John Crumb’s honest promises. But, though she was an utter fool, she was not a fool without a principle. She was miserably ignorant; but she did understand that there was a degradation which it behoved her to avoid. She thought, as the moths seem to think, that she might fly into the flame and not burn her wings. After her fashion she was pretty, with long glossy ringlets, which those about the farm on week days would see confined in curl-papers, and large round dark eyes, and a clear dark complexion, in which the blood showed itself plainly beneath the soft brown skin. She was strong, and healthy, and tall,—and had a will of her own which gave infinite trouble to old Daniel Ruggles, her grandfather.

Felix Carbury took himself two miles out of his way in order that he might return by Sheepstone Birches, which was a little copse distant not above half a mile from Sheep’s Acre farmhouse. A narrow angle of the little wood came up to the road, by which there was a gate leading into a grass meadow, which Sir Felix had remembered when he made his appointment. The road was no more than a country lane, unfrequented at all times, and almost sure to be deserted on Sundays. He approached the gate in a walk, and then stood awhile looking into the wood. He had not stood long before he saw the girl’s bonnet beneath a tree standing just outside the wood, in the meadow, but on the bank of the ditch. Thinking for a moment what he would do about his horse, he rode him into the field, and then, dismounting, fastened him to a rail which ran down the side of the copse. Then he sauntered on till he stood looking down upon Ruby Ruggles as she sat beneath the tree. “I like your impudence,” she said, “in calling yourself a friend.”

“Ain’t I a friend, Ruby?”

“A pretty sort of friend, you! When you was going away, you
was to be back at Carbury in a fortnight; and that is,—oh, ever so long ago now."

"But I wrote to you, Ruby."

"What's letters? And the postman to know all as in 'em for any-
thing anybody knows, and grandfather to be almost sure to see 'em.
I don't call letters no good at all, and I beg you won't write 'em any
more."

"Did he see them?"

"No thanks to you if he didn't. I don't know why you are come
here, Sir Felix,—nor yet I don't know why I should come and meet
you. It's all just folly like."

"Because I love you;—that's why I come; eh, Ruby? And you
have come because you love me; eh, Ruby? Is not that about it?"
Then he threw himself on the ground beside her, and got his arm
round her waist.

It would boot little to tell here all that they said to each other.
The happiness of Ruby Ruggles for that half hour was no doubt
complete. She had her London lover beside her; and though in every
word he spoke there was a tone of contempt, still he talked of love,
and made her promises, and told her that she was pretty. He
probably did not enjoy it much; he cared very little about her, and
carried on the liaison simply because it was the proper sort of thing
for a young man to do. He had begun to think that the odour of
patchouli was unpleasant, and that the flies were troublesome, and
the ground hard, before the half hour was over. She felt that she
could be content to sit there for ever and to listen to him. This was
a realisation of those delights of life of which she had read in the
thrice-thumbed old novels which she had gotten from the little
circulating library at Bungay.

But what was to come next? She had not dared to ask him to
marry her,—had not dared to say those very words; and he had not
dared to ask her to be his mistress. There was an animal courage
about her, and an amount of strength also, and a fire in her eye, of
which he had learned to be aware. Before the half hour was over I
think that he wished himself away;—but when he did go, he made a
promise to see her again on the Tuesday morning. Her father would
be at Harlestone market, and she would meet him at about noon at
the bottom of the kitchen garden belonging to the farm. As he made
the promise he resolved that he would not keep it. He would write
to her again, and bid her come to him in London, and would send
her money for the journey.

"I suppose I am to be his wedded wife," said Ruby to herself, as
she crept away down from the road, away also from her own home;—
so that on her return her presence should not be associated with that
of the young man, should any one chance to see the young man on the
road. "I'll never be nothing unless I'm that," she said to herself.
Then she allowed her mind to lose itself in exultating on the differ-
ence between John Crumb and Sir Felix Carbury.
CHAPTER XIX.

HETTA CARBURY HEARS A LOVE TALE.

"I HAVE half a mind to go back to-morrow morning," Felix said to his mother that Sunday evening after dinner. At that moment Roger was walking round the garden by himself, and Henrietta was in her own room.

"To-morrow morning, Felix! You are engaged to dine with the Longestaffes!"

"You could make any excuse you like about that."

"It would be the most uncourteous thing in the world. The Longestaffes you know are the leading people in this part of the country. No one knows what may happen. If you should ever be living at Carbury, how sad it would be that you should have quarrelled with them."

"You forget, mother, that Dolly Longstaffe is about the most intimate friend I have in the world."

"That does not justify you in being uncivil to the father and mother. And you should remember what you came here for."

"What did I come for?"

"That you might see Marie Melmotte more at your ease than you can in their London house."

"That's all settled," said Sir Felix, in the most indifferent tone that he could assume.

"Settled!"

"As far as the girl is concerned. I can't very well go to the old fellow for his consent down here."

"Do you mean to say, Felix, that Marie Melmotte has accepted you?"

"I told you that before."

"My dear Felix. Oh, my boy!" In her joy the mother took her unwilling son in her arms and caressed him. Here was the first step taken not only to success, but to such magnificent splendour as should make her son to be envied by all young men, and herself to be envied by all mothers in England! "No, you didn't tell me before. But I am so happy. Is she really fond of you? I don't wonder that any girl should be fond of you."

"I can't say anything about that, but I think she means to stick to it."

"If she is firm, of course her father will give way at last. Fathers always do give way when the girl is firm. Why should he oppose it?"

"I don't know that he will."

"You are a man of rank, with a title of your own. I suppose what he wants is a gentleman for his girl. I don't see why he should not be perfectly satisfied. With all his enormous wealth a thousand a year or so can't make any difference. And then he made you one of the Directors at his Board. Oh Felix;—it is almost too good to be true."

"I ain't quite sure that I care very much about being married, you know."
"Oh, Felix, pray don't say that. Why shouldn't you like being married? She is a very nice girl, and we shall all be so fond of her! Don't let any feeling of that kind come over you; pray don't. You will be able to do just what you please when once the question of her money is settled. Of course you can hunt as often as you like, and you can have a house in any part of London you please. You must understand by this time how very disagreeable it is to have to get on without an established income."

"I quite understand that."

"If this were once done you would never have any more trouble of that kind. There would be plenty of money for everything as long as you live. It would be complete success. I don't know how to say enough to you, or to tell you how dearly I love you, or to make you understand how well I think you have done it all." Then she caressed him again, and was almost beside herself in an agony of mingled anxiety and joy. If, after all, her beautiful boy, who had lately been her disgrace and her great trouble because of his poverty, should shine forth to the world as a baronet with £20,000 a year, how glorious would it be! She must have known,—she did know,—how poor, how selfish a creature he was. But her gratification at the prospect of his splendour obliterated the sorrow with which the vileness of his character sometimes oppressed her. Were he to win this girl with all her father's money, neither she nor his sister would be the better for it, except in this, that the burden of maintaining him would be taken from her shoulders. But his magnificence would be established. He was her son, and the prospect of his fortune and splendour was sufficient to elate her into a very heaven of beautiful dreams. "But, Felix," she continued, "you really must stay and go to the Longstaffes' to-morrow. It will only be one day.—And now were you to run away—"

"Run away! What nonsense you talk."

"If you were to start back to London at once I mean, it would be an affront to her, and the very thing to set Melmotte against you. You should lay yourself out to please him;—indeed you should."

"Oh, bother!" said Sir Felix. But nevertheless he allowed himself to be persuaded to remain. The matter was important even to him, and he consented to endure the almost unendurable nuisance of spending another day at the Manor House. Lady Carbury, almost lost in delight, did not know where to turn for sympathy. If her cousin were not so stiff, so pig-headed, so wonderfully ignorant of the affairs of the world, he would have at any rate consented to rejoice with her. Though he might not like Felix,—who, as his mother admitted to herself, had been rude to her cousin,—he would have rejoiced for the sake of the family. But, as it was, she did not dare to tell him. He would have received her tidings with silent scorn. And even Henrietta would not be enthusiastic. She felt that though she would have delighted to expiateate on this great triumph, she must be silent at present. It should now be her great effort to ingratiate herself with Mr. Melmotte at the dinner party at Caversham.

During the whole of that evening Roger Carbury hardly spoke to his cousin Hetta. There was not much conversation between them
till quite late, when Father Barham came in for supper. He had been
over at Bungay among his people there, and had walked back, taking
Carbury on the way. "What did you think of our bishop?" Roger
asked him, rather imprudently.

"Not much of him as a bishop. I don't doubt that he makes a
very nice lord, and that he does more good among his neighbours than
an average lord. But you don't put power or responsibility into the
hands of any one sufficient to make him a bishop."

"Nine-tenths of the clergy in the diocese would be guided by him
in any matter of clerical conduct which might come before him."

"Because they know that he has no strong opinion of his own, and
would not therefore desire to dominate theirs. Take any of your
bishops that has an opinion,—if there be one left,—and see how far
your clergy consent to his teaching!" Roger turned round and took
up his book. He was already becoming tired of his pet priest. He
himself always abstained from saying a word derogatory to his new
friend's religion in the man's hearing; but his new friend did not by
any means return the compliment. Perhaps also Roger felt that were
he to take up the cudgels for an argument he might be worsted in the
combat, as in such combats success is won by practised skill rather
than by truth. Henrietta was also reading, and Felix was smoking
elsewhere,—wondering whether the hours would ever wear themselves
away in that castle of dullness, in which no cards were to be seen,
and where, except at meal-times, there was nothing to drink. But
Lady Carbury was quite willing to allow the priest to teach her that
all appliances for the dissemination of religion outside his own church
must be naught.

"I suppose our bishops are sincere in their beliefs," she said with
her sweetest smile.

"I'm sure I hope so. I have no possible reason to doubt it as to
the two or three whom I have seen,—nor indeed as to all the rest
whom I have not seen."

"They are so much respected everywhere as good and pious men!"

"I do not doubt it. Nothing tends so much to respect as a good
income. But they may be excellent men without being excellent
bishops. I find no fault with them, but much with the system by
which they are controlled. Is it probable that a man should be fitted
to select guides for other men's souls because he has succeeded by
infinite labour in his vocation in becoming the leader of a majority in
the House of Commons?"

"Indeed, no," said Lady Carbury, who did not in the least under-
stand the nature of the question put to her.

"And when you've got your bishop, is it likely that a man should
be able to do his duty in that capacity who has no power of his own
to decide whether a clergyman under him is or is not fit for his
duty?"

"Hardly, indeed."

"The English people, or some of them,—that some being the
richest, and, at present, the most powerful,—like to play at having a
Church, though there is not sufficient faith in them to submit to the
control of a Church."
"Do you think men should be controlled by clergymen, Mr. Barham?"

"In matters of faith I do; and so, I suppose, do you; at least you make that profession. You declare it to be your duty to submit yourself to your spiritual pastors and masters."

"That, I thought, was for children," said Lady Carbury. "The clergyman, in the catechism, says, 'My good child.'"

"It is what you were taught as a child before you had made profession of your faith to a bishop, in order that you might know your duty when you had ceased to be a child. I quite agree, however, that the matter, as viewed by your Church, is childish altogether, and intended only for children. As a rule, adults with you want no religion."

"I am afraid that is true of a great many."

"It is marvellous to me that, when a man thinks of it, he should not be driven by very fear to the comforts of a safer faith,—unless, indeed, he enjoy the security of absolute infidelity."

"That is worse than anything," said Lady Carbury with a sigh and a shudder.

"I don't know that it is worse than a belief which is no belief," said the priest with energy;—"than a creed which sits so easily on a man that he does not even know what it contains, and never asks himself as he repeats it, whether it be to him credible or incredible."

"That is very bad," said Lady Carbury.

"We're getting too deep, I think," said Roger, putting down the book which he had in vain been trying to read.

"I think it is so pleasant to have a little serious conversation on Sunday evening," said Lady Carbury. The priest drew himself back into his chair and smiled. He was quite clever enough to understand that Lady Carbury had been talking nonsense, and clever enough also to be aware of the cause of Roger's uneasiness. But Lady Carbury might be all the easier converted because she understood nothing and was fond of ambitious talking; and Roger Carbury might possibly be forced into conviction by the very feeling which at present made him unwilling to hear arguments.

"I don't like hearing my Church ill-spoken of," said Roger.

"You wouldn't like me if I thought ill of it and spoke well of it," said the priest.

"And, therefore, the less said the sooner mended," said Roger, rising from his chair. Upon this Father Barham took his departure and walked away to Beccles. It might be that he had sowed some seed. It might be that he had, at any rate, ploughed some ground. Even the attempt to plough the ground was a good work which would not be forgotten.

The following morning was the time on which Roger had fixed for repeating his suit to Henrietta. He had determined that it should be so, and though the words had been almost on his tongue during that Sunday afternoon, he had repressed them because he would do as he had determined. He was conscious, almost painfully conscious, of a certain increase of tenderness in his cousin's manner towards him.
All that pride of independence, which had amounted almost to roughness, when she was in London, seemed to have left her. When he greeted her morning and night, she looked softly into his face. She cherished the flowers which he gave her. He could perceive that if he expressed the slightest wish in any matter about the house she would attend to it. There had been a word said about punctuality, and she had become punctual as the hand of the clock. There was not a glance of her eye, nor a turn of her hand, that he did not watch, and calculate its effect as regarded himself. But because she was tender to him and observant, he did not by any means allow himself to believe that her heart was growing into love for him. He thought that he understood the working of her mind. She could see how great was his disgust at her brother’s doings; how fretted he was by her mother’s conduct. Her grace, and sweetness, and sense, took part with him against those who were nearer to herself, and therefore,—in pity,—she was kind to him. It was thus he read it, and he read it almost with exact accuracy.

"Hetta," he said after breakfast, "come out into the garden awhile."

"Are not you going to the men?"

"Not yet, at any rate. I do not always go to the men as you call it." She put on her hat and tripped out with him, knowing well that she had been summoned to hear the old story. She had been sure, as soon as she found the white rose in her room, that the old story would be repeated again before she left Carbury;—and, up to this time, she had hardly made up her mind what answer she would give to it. That she could not take his offer, she thought she did know. She knew well that she loved the other man. That other man had never asked her for her love, but she thought that she knew that he desired it. But in spite of all this there had in truth grown up in her bosom a feeling of tenderness towards her cousin so strong that it almost tempted her to declare to herself that he ought to have what he wanted, simply because he wanted it. He was so good, so noble, so generous, so devoted, that it almost seemed to her that she could not be justified in refusing him. And she had gone entirely over to his side in regard to the Melmottes. Her mother had talked to her of the charm of Mr. Melmotté’s money, till her very heart had been sickened. There was nothing noble there; but, as contrasted with that, Roger’s conduct and bearing were those of a fine gentleman who knew neither fear nor shame. Should such a one be doomed to pine for ever because a girl could not love him,—a man born to be loved, if nobility and tenderness and truth were lovely!

"Hetta," he said, "put your arm here." She gave him her arm.

"I was a little annoyed last night by that priest. I want to be civil to him, and now he is always turning against me."

"He doesn’t do any harm, I suppose?"

"He does do harm if he teaches you and me to think lightly of those things which we have been brought up to revere." So, thought Henrietta, it isn’t about love this time; it’s only about the Church.

"He ought not to say things before my guests as to our way of
believing, which I wouldn’t under any circumstances say as to his. I didn’t quite like your hearing it.”

“I don’t think he’ll do me any harm. I’m not at all that way given. I suppose they all do it. It’s their business.”

“Poor fellow! I brought him here just because I thought it was a pity that a man born and bred like a gentleman should never see the inside of a comfortable house.”

“I liked him;—only I didn’t like his saying stupid things about the bishop.”

“And I like him.” Then there was a pause. “I suppose your brother does not talk to you much about his own affairs.”

“His own affairs, Roger? Do you mean money? He never says a word to me about money.”

“I meant about the Melmottes.”

“No; not to me. Felix hardly ever speaks to me about anything.”

“I wonder whether she has accepted him.”

“I think she very nearly did accept him in London.”

“I can’t quite sympathise with your mother in all her feelings about this marriage, because I do not think that I recognise as she does the necessity of money.”

“Felix is so disposed to be extravagant.”

“Well; yes. But I was going to say that though I cannot bring myself to say anything to encourage her about this heiress, I quite recognise her unselfish devotion to his interests.”

“Mamma thinks more of him than of anything,” said Hetta, not the least intending to accuse her mother of indifference to herself.

“I know it; and though I happen to think myself that her other child would better repay her devotion,”—this he said, looking up to Hetta and smiling,—“I quite feel how good a mother she is to Felix. You know, when she first came the other day we almost had a quarrel.”

“I felt that there was something unpleasant.”

“And then Felix coming after his time put me out. I am getting old and cross, or I should not mind such things.”

“I think you are so good,—and so kind.” As she said this she leaned upon his arm almost as though she meant to tell him that she loved him.

“I have been angry with myself,” he said, “and so I am making you my father confessor. Open confession is good for the soul sometimes, and I think that you would understand me better than your mother.”

“I do understand you; but don’t think there is any fault to confess.”

“You will not exact any penance?” She only looked at him and smiled. “I am going to put a penance on myself all the same. I can’t congratulate your brother on his wooing over at Caversham, as I know nothing about it, but I will express some civil wish to him about things in general.”

“Will that be a penance?”

“If you could look into my mind you’d find that it would. I’m
full of fretful anger against him for half-a-dozen little frivolous things. Didn’t he throw his cigar on the path? Didn’t he lie in bed on Sunday instead of going to church?"

"But then he was travelling all the Saturday night."

"Whose fault was that? But don’t you see it is the triviality of the offence which makes the penance necessary. Had he knocked me over the head with a pickaxe, or burned the house down, I should have had a right to be angry. But I was angry because he wanted a horse on Sunday;—and therefore I must do penance."

There was nothing of love in all this. Hetta, however, did not wish him to talk of love. He was certainly now treating her as a friend,—as a most intimate friend. If he would only do that without making love to her, how happy could she be! But his determination still held good. "And now," said he, altering his tone altogether, "I must speak about myself." Immediately the weight of her hand upon his arm was lessened. Thereupon he put his left hand round and pressed her arm to his. "No," he said; "do not make any change towards me while I speak to you. Whatever comes of it we shall at any rate be cousins and friends."

"Always friends!" she said.

"Yes;—always friends. And now listen to me for I have much to say. I will not tell you again that I love you. You know it, or else you must think me the vainest and fallest of men. It is not only that I love you, but I am so accustomed to concern myself with one thing only, so constrained by the habits and nature of my life to confine myself to single interests, that I cannot see how escape from my love. I am thinking of it always, often despising myself because I think of it so much. For, after all, let a woman be ever so good,—and you to me are all that is good,—a man should not allow his love to dominate his intellect."

"Oh, no!"

"I do. I calculate my chances within my own bosom almost as a man might calculate his chances of heaven. I should like you to know me just as I am, the weak and the strong together. I would not win you by a lie if I could. I think of you more than I ought to do. I am sure,—quite sure that you are the only possible mistress of this house during my tenure of it. If I am ever to live as other men do, and to care about the things which other men care for, it must be as your husband."

"Pray,—pray do not say that."

"Yes; I think that I have a right to say it,—and a right to expect that you should believe me. I will not ask you to be my wife if you do not love me. Not that I should fear ought for myself, but that you should not be pressed to make a sacrifice of yourself because I am your friend and cousin. But I think it is quite possible you might come to love me,—unless your heart be absolutely given away elsewhere."

"What am I to say?"

"We each of us know of what the other is thinking. If Paul Montague has robbed me of my love——?"

"Mr. Montague has never said a word."
"If he had, I think he would have wronged me. He met you in
my house, and I think must have known what my feelings were
towards you."

"But he never has."

"We have been like brothers together,—one brother being very much
older than the other, indeed; or like father and son. I think he
should place his hopes elsewhere."

"What am I to say? If he have such hope he has not told me.
I think it almost cruel that a girl should be asked in that way."

"Hetta, I should not wish to be cruel to you. Of course I know
the way of the world in such matters. I have no right to ask you
about Paul Montague,—no right to expect an answer. But it is all
the world to me. You can understand that I should think you might
learn to love even me, if you loved no one else." The tone of his
voice was manly, and at the same time full of entreaty. His eyes as
he looked at her were bright with love and anxiety. She not only
believed him as to the tale which he now told her; but she believed
in him altogether. She knew that he was a staff on which a woman
might safely lean, trusting to it for comfort and protection in life.
In that moment she all but yielded to him. Had he seized her in
his arms and kissed her then, I think she would have yielded. She
did all but love him. She so regarded him that had it been some
other woman that he craved, she would have used every art she
knew to have backed his suit, and would have been ready to swear
that any woman was a fool who refused him. She almost hated
herself because she was unkind to one who so thoroughly deserved
kindness. As it was she made him no answer, but continued to walk
beside him trembling. "I thought I would tell it you all, because I
wish you to know exactly the state of my mind. I would show you if I
could all my heart and all my thoughts about yourself as in a glass
case. Do not coy your love for me if you can feel it. When you
know, dear, that a man’s heart is set upon a woman as mine is set on
you, so that it is for you to make his life bright or dark, for you to
open or to shut the gates of his earthly Paradise, I think you will be
above keeping him in darkness for the sake of a girlish scruple."

"Oh, Roger!"

"If ever there should come a time in which you can say it truly,
remember my truth to you and say it boldly. I at least shall never
change. Of course if you love another man and give yourself to him,
it will be all over. Tell me that boldly also. I have said it all now.
God bless you, my own heart’s darling. I hope,—I hope I may be
strong enough through it all to think more of your happiness than of
my own." Then he parted from her abruptly, taking his way over
one of the bridges, and leaving her to find her way into the house
alone.
CHAPTER XX.

LADY POMONA’S DINNER PARTY.

ROGER CARBURY’S half formed plan of keeping Henrietta at home while Lady Carbury and Sir Felix went to dine at Caversham fell to the ground. It was to be carried out only in the event of Hetta’s yielding to his prayer. But he had in fact not made a prayer, and Hetta had certainly yielded nothing. When the evening came, Lady Carbury started with her son and daughter, and Roger was left alone. In the ordinary course of his life he was used to solitude. During the greater part of the year he would eat and drink and live without companionship; so that there was to him nothing peculiarly sad in this desertion. But on the present occasion he could not prevent himself from dwelling on the loneliness of his lot in life. These cousins of his who were his guests cared nothing for him. Lady Carbury had come to his house simply that it might be useful to her; Sir Felix did not pretend to treat him with even ordinary courtesy; and Hetta herself, though she was soft to him and gracious, was soft and gracious through pity rather than love. On this day he had, in truth, asked her for nothing; but he had almost brought himself to think that she might give all that he wanted without asking. And yet, when he told her of the greatness of his love, and of its endurance, she was simply silent. When the carriage taking them to dinner went away down the road, he sat on the parapet of the bridge in front of the house listening to the sound of the horses’ feet, and telling himself that there was nothing left for him in life.

If ever one man had been good to another, he had been good to Paul Montague, and now Paul Montague was robbing him of everything he valued in the world. His thoughts were not logical, nor was his mind exact. The more he considered it, the stronger was his inward condemnation of his friend. He had never mentioned to anyone the services he had rendered to Montague. In speaking of him to Hetta he had alluded only to the affection which had existed between them. But he felt that because of those services his friend Montague had owed it to him not to fall in love with the girl he loved; and he thought that if, unfortunately, this had happened unawares, Montague should have retired as soon as he learned the truth. He could not bring himself to forgive his friend, even though Hetta had assured him that his friend had never spoken to her of love. He was sore all over, and it was Paul Montague who made him sore. Had there been no such man at Carbury when Hetta came there, Hetta might now have been mistress of the house. He sat there till the servant came to tell him that his dinner was on the table. Then he crept in and ate,—so that the man might not see his sorrow; and, after dinner, he sat with a book in his hand seeming to read. But he read not a word, for his mind was fixed altogether on his cousin Hetta. “What a poor creature a man is,” he said to himself, “who is not sufficiently his own master to get over a feeling like this.”
At Caversham there was a very grand party,—as grand almost as a dinner party can be in the country. There were the Earl and Countess of Loddon and Lady Jane Pewet from Loddon Park, and the bishop and his wife, and the Hepworths. These, with the Carburys and the parson’s family, and the people staying in the house, made twenty-four at the dinner table. As there were fourteen ladies and only ten men, the banquet can hardly be said to have been very well arranged. But those things cannot be done in the country with the exactness which the appliances of London make easy; and then the Longestaffes, though they were decidedly people of fashion, were not famous for their excellence in arranging such matters. If aught, however, was lacking in exactness, it was made up in grandeur. There were three powdered footmen, and in that part of the country Lady Pomona alone was served after this fashion; and there was a very heavy butler, whose appearance of itself was sufficient to give éclat to a family. The grand saloon in which nobody ever lived was thrown open, and sofas and chairs on which nobody ever sat were uncovered. It was not above once in the year that this kind of thing was done at Caversham; but when it was done, nothing was spared which could contribute to the magnificence of the fête. Lady Pomona and her two tall daughters standing up to receive the little Countess of Loddon and Lady Jane Pewet, who was the image of her mother on a somewhat smaller scale, while Madame Melmotte and Marie stood behind as though ashamed of themselves, was a sight to see. Then the Carburys came, and then Mrs. Yeld with the bishop. The grand room was soon fairly full; but nobody had a word to say. The bishop was generally a man of much conversation, and Lady Loddon, if she were well pleased with her listeners, could talk by the hour without ceasing. But on this occasion nobody could utter a word. Lord Loddon pottered about, making a feeble attempt, in which he was seconded by no one. Lord Alfred stood, stock-still, stroking his grey moustache with his hand. That much greater man, Augustus Melmotte, put his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat, and was impassible. The bishop saw at a glance the hopelessness of the occasion, and made no attempt. The master of the house shook hands with each guest as he entered, and then devoted his mind to expectation of the next comer. Lady Pomona and her two daughters were grand and handsome, but weary and dumb. In accordance with the treaty, Madame Melmotte had been entertained civilly for four entire days. It could not be expected that the ladies of Caversham should come forth unwearied after such a struggle.

When dinner was announced Felix was allowed to take in Marie Melmotte. There can be no doubt but that the Caversham ladies did execute their part of the treaty. They were led to suppose that this arrangement would be desirable to the Melmottes, and they made it. The great Augustus himself went in with Lady Carbury, much to her satisfaction. She also had been dumb in the drawing-room; but now, if ever, it would be her duty to exert herself. “I hope you like Suffolk,” she said.

“Pretty well, I thank you. Oh, yes;—very nice place for a little fresh air.”
"Yes;—that's just it, Mr. Melmotte. When the summer comes one does long so to see the flowers."

"We have better flowers in our balconies than any I see down here," said Mr. Melmotte.

"No doubt;—because you can command the floral tribute of the world at large. What is there that money will not do? It can turn a London street into a bower of roses, and give you grottoes in Grosvenor Square."

"It's a very nice place, is London."

"If you have got plenty of money, Mr. Melmotte."

"And if you have not, it's the best place I know to get it. Do you live in London, ma'am?" He had quite forgotten Lady Carbury even if he had seen her at his house, and with the dulness of hearing common to men, had not picked up her name when told to take her out to dinner.

"Oh, yes, I live in London. I have had the honour of being entertained by you there." This she said with her sweetest smile.

"Oh, indeed. So many do come, that I don't always just remember."

"How should you,—with all the world flocking round you? I am Lady Carbury, the mother of Sir Felix Carbury, whom I think you will remember."

"Yes; I know Sir Felix. He's sitting there, next to my daughter."

"Happy fellow!"

"I don't know much about that. Young men don't get their happiness in that way now. They've got other things to think of."

"He thinks so much of his business."

"Oh! I didn't know," said Mr. Melmotte.

"He sits at the same Board with you, I think, Mr. Melmotte."

"Oh;—that's his business!" said Mr. Melmotte, with a grim smile.

Lady Carbury was very clever as to many things, and was not ill-informed on matters in general that were going on around her; but she did not know much about the city, and was profoundly ignorant as to the duties of those Directors of whom, from time to time, she saw the names in a catalogue. "I trust that he is diligent, there," she said; "and that he is aware of the great privilege which he enjoys in having the advantage of your council and guidance."

"He don't trouble me much, ma'am, and I don't trouble him much." After this Lady Carbury said no more as to her son's position in the city. She endeavoured to open various other subjects of conversation; but she found Mr. Melmotte to be heavy on her hands. After a while she had to abandon him in despair, and give herself up to raptures in favour of Protestantism at the bidding of the Caversham parson, who sat on the other side of her, and who had been worked to enthusiasm by some mention of Father Barham's name.

Opposite to her, or nearly so, sat Sir Felix and his love. "I have told mamma," Marie had whispered, as she walked in to dinner with him. She was now full of the idea so common to girls who are engaged,—and as natural as it is common,—that she might tell everything to her lover.
"Did she say anything?" he asked. Then Marie had to take her place and arrange her dress before she could reply to him. "As to her, I suppose it does not matter what she says, does it?"

"She said a great deal. She thinks that papa will think you are not rich enough. Hush! Talk about something else, or people will hear." So much she had been able to say during the bustle.

Felix was not at all anxious to talk about his love, and changed the subject very willingly. "Have you been riding?" he asked.

"No; I don't think there are horses here,—not for visitors, that is. How did you get home? Did you have any adventures?"

"None at all," said Felix, remembering Ruby Ruggles. "I just rode home quietly. I go to town to-morrow."

"And we go on Wednesday. Mind you come and see us before long." This she said bringing her voice down to a whisper.

"Of course I shall. I suppose I'd better go to your father in the city. Does he go every day?"

"Oh yes, every day. He's back always about seven. Sometimes he's good-natured enough when he comes back, but sometimes he's very cross. He's best just after dinner. But it's so hard to get to him then. Lord Alfred is almost always there; and then other people come, and they play cards. I think the city will be best."

"You'll stick to it?" he asked.

"Oh, yes;—indeed I will. Now that I've once said it nothing will ever turn me. I think papa knows that." Felix looked at her as she said this, and thought that he saw more in her countenance than he had ever read there before. Perhaps she would consent to run away with him; and, if so, being the only child, she would certainly,—almost certainly,—be forgiven. But if he were to run away with her and marry her, and then find that she were not forgiven, and that Melmote allowed her to starve without a shilling of fortune, where would he be then? Looking at the matter in all its bearings, considering among other things the trouble and the expense of such a measure, he thought that he could not afford to run away with her.

After dinner he hardly spoke to her; indeed, the room itself,—the same big room in which they had been assembled before the feast,—seemed to be ill-adapted for conversation. Again nobody talked to anybody, and the minutes went very heavily till at last the carriages were there to take them all home. "They arranged that you should sit next to her," said Lady Carbury to her son, as they were in the carriage.

"Oh, I suppose that came naturally;—one young man and one young woman, you know."

"Those things are always arranged, and they would not have done it unless they had thought that it would please Mr. Melmote. Oh, Felix! if you can bring it about."

"I shall if I can, mother; you needn't make a fuss about it."

"No, I won't. You cannot wonder that I should be anxious. You behaved beautifully to her at dinner; I was so happy to see you together. Good night, Felix, and God bless you!" she said again, as they were parting for the night. "I shall be the happiest and the proudest mother in England if this comes about."

CHAPTER XXI.

EVERYBODY GOES TO THEM.

WHEN the Melmottes went from Caversham the house was very desolate. The task of entertaining these people was indeed over, and had the return to London been fixed for a certain near day, there would have been comfort at any rate among the ladies of the family. But this was so far from being the case that the Thursday and Friday passed without anything being settled, and dreadful fears began to fill the minds of Lady Pomona and Sophia Longstaffe. Georgiana was also impatient, but she asserted boldly that treachery, such as that which her mother and sister contemplated, was impossible. Their father, she thought, would not dare to propose it. On each of these days,—three or four times daily,—hints were given and questions were asked, but without avail. Mr. Longstaffe would not consent to have a day fixed till he had received some particular letter, and would not even listen to the suggestion of a day. "I suppose we can go at any rate on Tuesday," Georgiana said on the Friday evening. "I don't know why you should suppose anything of the kind," the father replied. Poor Lady Pomona was urged by her daughters to compel him to name a day; but Lady Pomona was less audacious in urging the request than her younger child, and at the same time less anxious for its completion. On the Sunday morning before they went to church there was a great discussion up-stairs. The Bishop of Elmham was going to preach at Caversham church, and the three ladies were dressed in their best London bonnets. They were in their mother's room, having just completed the arrangements of their church-going toilet. It was supposed that the expected letter had arrived. Mr. Longstaffe had certainly received a dispatch from his lawyer, but had not as yet vouchsafed any reference to its contents. He had been more than ordinarily silent at breakfast, and,—so Sophia asserted,—more disagreeable than ever. The question had now arisen especially in reference to their bonnets. "You might as well wear them," said Lady Pomona, "for I am sure you will not be in London again this year."

"You don't mean it, mamma," said Sophia.

"I do, my dear. He looked like it when he put those papers back into his pocket. I know what his face means so well."

"It is not possible," said Sophia. "He promised, and he got us to have those horrid people because he promised."

"Well, my dear, if your father says that we can't go back, I suppose we must take his word for it. It is he must decide of course, What he meant I suppose was, that he would take us back if he could."

"Mamma!" shouted Georgiana. Was there to be treachery not only on the part of their natural adversary, who, adversary though he was, had bound himself to terms by a treaty, but treachery also in their own camp!
"My dear, what can we do?" said Lady Pomona.

"Do I!" Georgiana was now going to speak out plainly. "Make him understand that we are not going to be sat upon like that. I'll do something, if that's going to be the way of it. If he treats me like that I'll run off with the first man that will take me, let him be who it may."

"Don't talk like that, Georgiana, unless you wish to kill me."

"I'll break his heart for him. He does not care about us,—not the least,—whether we are happy or miserable; but he cares very much about the family name. I'll tell him that I'm not going to be a slave. I'll marry a London tradesman before I'll stay down here." The younger Miss Longestaffe was lost in passion at the prospect before her.

"Oh, Georgey, don't say such horrid things as that," pleaded her sister.

"It's all very well for you, Sophy. You've got George Whitstable."

"I haven't got George Whitstable."

"Yes, you have, and your fish is fried. Dolly does just what he pleases, and spends money as fast as he likes. Of course it makes no difference to you, mamma, where you are."

"You are very unjust," said Lady Pomona, wailing, "and you say horrid things."

"I ain't unjust at all. It doesn't matter to you. And Sophy is the same as settled. But I'm to be sacrificed! How am I to see anybody down here in this horrid hole? Papa promised and he must keep his word."

Then there came to them a loud voice calling to them from the hall.

"Are any of you coming to church, or are you going to keep the carriage waiting all day?" Of course they were all going to church. They always did go to church when they were at Caversham; and would more especially do so to-day, because of the bishop and because of the bonnets. They trooped down into the hall and into the carriage, Lady Pomona leading the way. Georgiana stalked along, passing her father at the front door without condescending to look at him. Not a word was spoken on the way to church, or on the way home. During the service Mr. Longestaffe stood up in the corner of his pew, and repeated the responses in a loud voice. In performing this duty he had been an example to the parish all his life. The three ladies knelt on their hassocks in the most becoming fashion, and sat during the sermon without the slightest sign either of weariness or of attention. They did not collect the meaning of any one combination of sentences. It was nothing to them whether the bishop had or had not a meaning. Endurance of that kind was their strength. Had the bishop preached for forty-five minutes instead of half an hour they would not have complained. It was the same kind of endurance which enabled Georgiana to go on from year to year waiting for a husband of the proper sort. She could put up with any amount of tedium if only the fair chance of obtaining ultimate relief were not denied to her. But to be kept at Caversham all the summer would be as bad as hearing a bishop preach for ever! After the service they came back to lunch, and that meal also was eaten in silence. When it was over the head
of the family put himself into the dining-room arm-chair, evidently meaning to be left alone there. In that case he would have meditated upon his troubles till he went to sleep, and would have thus got through the afternoon with comfort. But this was denied to him. The two daughters remained steadfast while the things were being removed; and Lady Pomona, though she made one attempt to leave the room, returned when she found that her daughters would not follow her. Georgiana had told her sister that she meant to "have it out" with her father, and Sophia had of course remained in the room in obedience to her sister's behest. When the last tray had been taken out, Georgiana began. "Papa, don't you think you could settle now when we are to go back to town? Of course we want to know about engagements and all that. There is Lady Monogram's party on Wednesday. We promised to be there ever so long ago."

"You had better write to Lady Monogram and say you can't keep your engagement."

"But why not, papa? We could go up on Wednesday morning."

"You can't do anything of the kind."

"But, my dear, we should all like to have a day fixed," said Lady Pomona. Then there was a pause. Even Georgiana, in her present state of mind, would have accepted some distant, even some undefined time, as a compromise.

"Then you can't have a day fixed," said Mr. Longstaffe.

"How long do you suppose that we shall be kept here?" said Sophia, in a low constrained voice.

"I do not know what you mean by being kept here. This is your home, and this is where you may make up your minds to live."

"But we are to go back?" demanded Sophia. Georgiana stood by in silence, listening, resolving, and biding her time.

"You'll not return to London this season," said Mr. Longstaffe, turning himself abruptly to a newspaper which he held in his hands.

"Do you mean that that is settled?" said Lady Pomona.

"I mean to say that that is settled," said Mr. Longstaffe.

Was there ever treachery like this! The indignation in Georgiana's mind approached almost to virtue as she thought of her father's falsehood. She would not have left town at all but for that promise. She would not have contaminated herself with the Melmottes but for that promise. And now she was told that the promise was to be absolutely broken, when it was no longer possible that she could get back to London,—even to the house of the hated Primeros,—without absolutely running away from her father's residence! "Then, papa," she said, with affected calmness, "you have simply and with premeditation broken your word to us."

"How dare you speak to me in that way, you wicked child!"

"I am not a child, papa, as you know very well. I am my own mistress,—by law."

"Then go and be your own mistress. You dare to tell me, your father, that I have premeditated a falsehood! If you tell me that again, you shall eat your meals in your own room or not eat them in this house."
"Did you not promise that we should go back if we would come down and entertain these people?"

"I will not argue with a child, insolent and disobedient as you are. If I have anything to say about it, I will say it to your mother. It should be enough for you that I, your father, tell you that you have to live here. Now go away, and if you choose to be sullen, go and be sullen where I shan't see you." Georgiana looked round on her mother and sister and then marched majestically out of the room. She still meditated revenge, but she was partly cowed, and did not dare in her father's presence to go on with her reproaches. She stalked off into the room in which they generally lived, and there she stood panting with anger, breathing indignation through her nostrils.

"And you mean to put up with it, mamma?" she said.

"What can we do, my dear?"

"I will do something. I'm not going to be cheated and swindled and have my life thrown away into the bargain. I have always behaved well to him. I have never run up bills without saying anything about them." This was a cut at her elder sister, who had once got into some little trouble of that kind. "I have never got myself talked about with any body. If there is anything to be done I always do it. I have written his letters for him till I have been sick, and when you were ill I never asked him to stay out with us after two or half-past two at the latest. And now he tells me that I am to eat my meals up in my bedroom because I remind him that he distinctly promised to take us back to London! Did he not promise, mamma?"

"I understood so, my dear."

"You know he promised, mamma. If I do anything now he must bear the blame of it. I am not going to keep myself straight for the sake of the family, and then be treated in that way."

"You do that for your own sake, I suppose," said her sister.

"It is more than you've been able to do for anybody's sake," said Georgiana, alluding to a very old affair,—to an ancient flirtation,—in the course of which the elder daughter had made a foolish and a futile attempt to run away with an officer of dragoons whose private fortune was very moderate. Ten years had passed since that, and the affair was never alluded to except in moments of great bitterness.

"I've kept myself as straight as you have," said Sophia. "It's easy enough to be straight, when a person never cares for anybody, and nobody cares for a person."

"My dears, if you quarrell what am I to do?" said their mother.

"It is I that have to suffer," continued Georgiana. "Does he expect me to find anybody here that I could take? Poor George Whitstable is not much; but there is nobody else at all."

"You may have him if you like," said Sophia, with a chuck of her head.

"Thank you, my dear, but I shouldn't like it at all. I haven't come to that quite yet."

"You were talking of running away with somebody."

"I shan't run away with George Whitstable; you may be sure of that. I'll tell you what I shall do,—I will write papa a letter. I
She marched majestically out of the Room.
suppose he'll condescend to read it. If he won't take me up to town himself, he must send me up to the Primeros. What makes me most angry in the whole thing is that we should have condescended to be civil to the Melmottes down in the country. In London one does those things, but to have them here was terrible!"

During that entire afternoon nothing more was said. Not a word passed between them on any subject beyond those required by the necessities of life. Georgiana had been as hard to her sister as to her father, and Sophia in her quiet way resented the affront. She was now almost reconciled to the sojourn in the country, because it inflicted a fitting punishment on Georgiana, and the presence of Mr. Whitstable at a distance of not more than ten miles did of course make a difference to herself. Lady Pomona complained of a headache, which was always an excuse with her for not speaking;—and Mr. Longstaffe went to sleep. Georgiana during the whole afternoon remained apart, and on the next morning the head of the family found the following letter on his dressing-table;—

"My dear Papa,—

"I don't think you ought to be surprised because we feel that our going up to town is so very important to us. If we are not to be in London at this time of the year we can never see anybody, and of course you know what that must mean for me. If this goes on about Sophia, it does not signify for her, and, though mamma likes London, it is not of real importance. But it is very, very hard upon me. It isn't for pleasure that I want to go up. There isn't so very much pleasure in it. But if I'm to be buried down here at Caversham, I might just as well be dead at once. If you choose to give up both houses for a year, or for two years, and take us all abroad, I should not grumble in the least. There are very nice people to be met abroad, and perhaps things go easier that way than in town. And there would be nothing for horses, and we could dress very cheap and wear our old things. I'm sure I don't want to run up bills. But if you would only think what Caversham must be to me, without any one worth thinking about within twenty miles, you would hardly ask me to stay here.

"You certainly did say that if we would come down here with those Melmottes we should be taken back to town, and you cannot be surprised that we should be disappointed when we are told that we are to be kept here after that. It makes me feel that life is so hard that I can't bear it. I see other girls having such chances when I have none, that sometimes I think I don't know what will happen to me." (This was the nearest approach which she dared to make in writing to that threat which she had uttered to her mother of running away with somebody.) "I suppose that now it is useless for me to ask you to take us all back this summer,—though it was promised; but I hope you'll give me money to go up to the Primeros. It would only be me and my maid. Julia Primero asked me to stay with them when you first talked of not going up, and I should not in the least object to reminding her, only it should be done at once.
Their house in Queen's Gate is very large, and I know they've a room. They all ride, and I should want a horse; but there would be nothing else, as they have plenty of carriages, and the groom who rides with Julia would do for both of us. Pray answer this at once, papa.

"Your affectionate daughter,

"GEORGIANA LONGESTAFFE."

Mr. Longestaffe did condescend to read the letter. He, though he had rebuked his virtuous daughter with stern severity, was also to some extent afraid of her. At a sudden burst he could stand upon his authority, and assume his position with parental dignity; but not the less did he dread the wearing toil of continued domestic strife. He thought that upon the whole his daughter liked a row in the house. If not, there surely would not be so many rows. He himself thoroughly hated them. He had not any very lively interest in life. He did not read much; he did not talk much; he was not specially fond of eating and drinking; he did not gamble, and he did not care for the farm. To stand about the door and hall and public rooms of the clubs to which he belonged and hear other men talk politics or scandal, was what he liked better than anything else in the world. But he was quite willing to give this up for the good of his family. He would be contented to drag through long listless days at Caversham, and endeavour to nurse his property, if only his daughter would allow it. By assuming a certain pomp in his living, which had been altogether unserviceable to himself and family, by besmearing his footmen's heads, and bewigging his coachmen, by aping, though never achieving, the grand ways of grander men than himself, he had run himself into debt. His own ambition had been a peerage, and he had thought that this was the way to get it. A separate property had come to his son from his wife's mother,—some £2,000 or £3,000 a year, magnified by the world into double its amount,—and the knowledge of this had for a time reconciled him to increasing the burdens on the family estates. He had been sure that Adolphus, when of age, would have consented to sell the Sussex property in order that the Suffolk property might be relieved. But Dolly was now in debt himself, and though in other respects the most careless of men, was always on his guard in any dealings with his father. He would not consent to the sale of the Suffolk property unless half of the proceeds were to be at once handed to himself. The father could not bring himself to consent to this, but, while refusing it, found the troubles of the world very hard upon him. Melmotte had done something for him,—but in doing this Melmotte was very hard and tyrannical. Melmotte, when at Caversham, had looked into his affairs, and had told him very plainly that with such an establishment in the country he was not entitled to keep a house in town. Mr. Longestaffe had then said something about his daughters,—something especially about Georgiana,—and Mr. Melmotte had made a suggestion.

Mr. Longestaffe, when he read his daughter's appeal, did feel for her, in spite of his anger. But if there was one man he hated more than another, it was his neighbour Mr. Primero; and if one woman, it was
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Mrs. Primero. Primero, whom Mr. Longestaffe regarded as quite an upstart, and anything but a gentleman, owed no man anything. He paid his tradesmen punctually, and never met the squire of Caversham without seeming to make a parade of his virtue in that direction. He had spent many thousands for his party in county elections and borough elections, and was now himself member for a metropolitan district. He was a radical, of course, or, according to Mr. Longestaffe’s view of his political conduct, acted and voted on the radical side because there was nothing to be got by voting and acting on the other. And now there had come into Suffolk a rumour that Mr. Primero was to have a peerage. To others the rumour was incredible, but Mr. Longestaffe believed it, and to Mr. Longestaffe that belief was an agony. A Baron Bundlesham just at his door, and such a Baron Bundlesham, would be more than Mr. Longestaffe could endure. It was quite impossible that his daughter should be entertained in London by the Primeros.

But another suggestion had been made. Georgiana’s letter had been laid on her father’s table on the Monday morning. On the following morning, when there could have been no intercourse with London by letter, Lady Pomona called her younger daughter to her, and handed her a note to read. “Your papa has this moment given it me. Of course you must judge for yourself.” This was the note;—

“My dear Mr. Longestaffe,

“As you seem determined not to return to London this season, perhaps one of your young ladies would like to come to us. Mrs. Melmotte would be delighted to have Miss Georgiana for June and July. If so, she need only give Mrs. Melmotte a day’s notice.

“Yours truly,

“AUGUSTUS MELMOTTE.”

Georgiana, as soon as her eye had glanced down the one side of note paper on which this invitation was written, looked up for the date. It was without a date, and had, she felt sure, been left in her father’s hands to be used as he might think fit. She breathed very hard. Both her father and mother had heard her speak of these Melmottes, and knew what she thought of them. There was an insolence in the very suggestion. But at the first moment she said nothing of that. “Why shouldn’t I go to the Primeros?” she asked.

“Your father will not hear of it. He dislikes them especially.”

“And I dislike the Melmottes. I dislike the Primeros of course, but they are not so bad as the Melmottes. That would be dreadful.”

“You must judge for yourself, Georgiana.”

“It is that,—or staying here?”

“I think so, my dear.”

“If papa chooses I don’t know why I am to mind. It will be awfully disagreeable,—absolutely disgusting!”

“She seemed to be very quiet.”
"Pooh, mamma! Quiet! She was quiet here because she was afraid of us. She isn’t yet used to be with people like us. She’ll get over that if I’m in the house with her. And then she is, oh! so frightfully vulgar! She must have been the very sweeping of the gutters. Did you not see it, mamma? She could not even open her mouth, she was so ashamed of herself. I shouldn’t wonder if they turned out to be something quite horrid. They make me shudder. Was there ever anything so dreadful to look at as he is?"

"Everybody goes to them," said Lady Pomona. "The Duchess of Stevenage has been there and over again, and so has Lady Auld Reekie. Everybody goes to their house."

"But everybody doesn’t go and live with them. Oh, mamma,—to have to sit down to breakfast every day for ten weeks with that man and that woman!"

"Perhaps they’ll let you have your breakfast up-stairs."

"But to have to go out with them;—walking into the room after her! Only think of it!"

"But you are so anxious to be in London, my dear."

"Of course I am anxious. What other chance have I, mamma? And, oh dear, I am so tired of it! Pleasure, indeed! Papa talks of pleasure. If papa had to work half as hard as I do, I wonder what he’d think of it. I suppose I must do it. I know it will make me so ill that I shall almost die under it. Horrid, horrid people! And papa to propose it, who has always been so proud of everything,—who used to think so much of being with the right set."

"Things are changed, Georgiana," said the anxious mother.

"Indeed they are when papa wants me to go and stay with people like that. Why, mamma, the apothecary in Bungay is a fine gentleman compared with Mr. Melmotte, and his wife is a fine lady compared with Madame Melmotte. But I’ll go. If papa chooses me to be seen with such people it is not my fault. There will be no disgracing one’s self after that. I don’t believe in the least that any decent man would propose to a girl in such a house, and you and papa must not be surprised if I take some horrid creature from the Stock Exchange. Papa has altered his ideas; and so, I suppose, I had better alter mine."

Georgiana did not speak to her father that night, but Lady Pomona informed Mr. Longestaffe that Mr. Melmotte’s invitation was to be accepted. She herself would write a line to Madame Melmotte, and Georgiana would go up on the Friday following. "I hope she’ll like it," said Mr. Longestaffe. The poor man had no intention of irony. It was not in his nature to be severe after that fashion. But to poor Lady Pomona the words sounded very cruel. How could any one like to live in a house with Mr. and Madame Melmotte!

On the Friday morning there was a little conversation between the two sisters, just before Georgiana’s departure to the railway station, which was almost touching. She had endeavoured to hold up her head as usual, but had failed. The thing that she was going to do cowed her even in the presence of her sister. "Sophy, I do so envy you staying here."
"But it was you who were so determined to be in London."
"Yes; I was determined, and am determined. I've got to get
myself settled somehow, and that can't be done down here. But you
are not going to disgrace yourself."
"There's no disgrace in it, Georgey."
"Yes, there is. I believe the man to be a swindler and a thief;
and I believe her to be anything low that you can think of. As to
their pretensions to be gentlefolk, it is monstrous. The footmen and
housemaids would be much better."
"Then don't go, Georgey."
"I must go. It's the only chance that is left. If I were to remain
down here everybody would say that I was on the shelf. You are
going to marry Whitstable, and you'll do very well. It isn't a big
place, but there's no debt on it, and Whitstable himself isn't a bad
sort of fellow."
"Is he, now?"
"Of course he hasn't much to say for himself, for he's always at
home. But he is a gentleman."
"That he certainly is."
"As for me I shall give over caring about gentlemen now. The
first man that comes to me with four or five thousand a year, I'll take
him, though he'd come out of Newgate or Bedlam. And I shall
always say it has been papa's doing."

And so Georgiana Longestaffe went up to London and stayed with
the Melmottes.

CHAPTER XXII.

LORD NIDDERDALE'S MORALITY.

It was very generally said in the city about this time that the Great
South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway was the very best
thing out. It was known that Mr. Melmotte had gone into it with
heart and hand. There were many who declared,—with gross in-
justice to the Great Fisker,—that the railway was Melmotte's own
child, that he had invented it, advertised it, agitated it, and floated it;
but it was not the less popular on that account. A railway from Salt
Lake City to Mexico no doubt had much of the flavour of a castle in
Spain. Our far-western American brethren are supposed to be imagina-
tive. Mexico has not a reputation among us for commercial security,
or that stability which produces its four, five, or six per cent. with the
regularity of clockwork. But there was the Panama railway, a small
affair which had paid twenty-five per cent.; and there was the great
line across the continent to San Francisco, in which enormous fortunes
had been made. It came to be believed that men with their eyes
open might do as well with the Great South Central as had ever been
done before with other speculations, and this belief was no doubt
founded on Mr. Melmotte's partiality for the enterprise. Mr. Fisker
had "struck 'ile" when he induced his partner, Montague, to give him a note to the great man.

Paul Montague himself, who cannot be said to have been a man having his eyes open, in the city sense of the word, could not learn how the thing was progressing. At the regular meetings of the Board, which never sat for above half an hour, two or three papers were read by Miles Grendall. Melmotte himself would speak a few slow words, intended to be cheery, and always indicative of triumph, and then everybody would agree to everything, somebody would sign something, and the "Board" for that day would be over. To Paul Montague this was very unsatisfactory. More than once or twice he endeavoured to stay the proceedings, not as disapproving, but "simply as desirous of being made to understand;" but the silent scorn of his chairman put him out of countenance, and the opposition of his colleagues was a barrier which he was not strong enough to overcome. Lord Alfred Greendall would declare that he "did not think all that was at all necessary." Lord Nidderdale, with whom Montague had now become intimate at the Beargarden, would nudge him in the ribs and bid him hold his tongue. Mr. Cohenlupe would make a little speech in fluent but broken English, assuring the Committee that everything was being done after the approved city fashion. Sir Felix, after the first two meetings, was never there. And thus Paul Montague, with a sorely burdened conscience, was carried along as one of the Directors of the Great South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway Company.

I do not know whether the burden was made lighter to him or heavier, by the fact that the immediate pecuniary result was certainly very comfortable. The Company had not yet been in existence quite six weeks,—or at any rate Melmotte had not been connected with it above that time,—and it had already been suggested to him twice that he should sell fifty shares at £112 10s. He did not even yet know how many shares he possessed, but on both occasions he consented to the proposal, and on the following day received a cheque for £825,—that sum representing the profit over and above the original nominal price of £100 a share. The suggestion was made to him by Miles Grendall, and when he asked some questions as to the manner in which the shares had been allocated, he was told that all that would be arranged in accordance with the capital invested and must depend on the final disposition of the Californian property. "But from what we see, old fellow," said Miles, "I don't think you have anything to fear. You seem to be about the best in of them all. Melmotte wouldn't advise you to sell out gradually, if he didn't look upon the thing as a certain income as far as you are concerned."

Paul Montague understood nothing of all this, and felt that he was standing on ground which might be blown from under his foot at any moment. The uncertainty, and what he feared might be the dishonesty, of the whole thing, made him often very miserable. In those wretched moments his conscience was asserting itself. But again there were times in which he also was almost triumphant, and in which he felt the delight of his wealth. Though he was snubbed at
the Board when he wanted explanations, he received very great attention outside the board-room from those connected with the enterprise. Melmotte had asked him to dine two or three times. Mr. Cohenlupe had begged him to go down to his little place at Rickmansworth,—an entreaty with which Montague had not as yet complied. Lord Alfred was always gracious to him, and Nidderdale and Carbury were evidently anxious to make him one of their set at the club. Many other houses became open to him from the same source. Though Melmotte was supposed to be the inventor of the railway, it was known that Fisker, Montague, and Montague were largely concerned in it, and it was known also that Paul Montague was one of the Montagues named in that firm. People, both in the City and the West End, seemed to think that he knew all about it, and treated him as though some of the manna falling from that heaven were at his disposal. There were results from this which were not unpleasing to the young man. He only partially resisted the temptation; and though determined at times to probe the affair to the bottom, was so determined only at times. The money was very pleasant to him. The period would now soon arrive before which he understood himself to be pledged not to make a distinct offer to Henrietta Carbury; and when that period should have been passed, it would be delightful to him to know that he was possessed of property sufficient to enable him to give a wife a comfortable home. In all his aspirations, and in all his fears, he was true to Hetta Carbury, and made her the centre of his hopes. Nevertheless, had Hetta known everything, it may be feared that she would have at any rate endeavoured to dismiss him from her heart.

There was considerable uneasiness in the bosoms of others of the Directors, and a disposition to complain against the Grand Director, arising from a grievance altogether different from that which afflicted Montague. Neither had Sir Felix Carbury nor Lord Nidderdale been invited to sell shares, and consequently neither of them had received any remuneration for the use of their names. They knew well that Montague had sold shares. He was quite open on the subject, and had told Felix, whom he hoped some day to regard as his brother-in-law, exactly what shares he had sold, and for how much;—and the two men had endeavoured to make the matter intelligible between themselves. The original price of the shares being £100 each, and £12 10s. a share having been paid to Montague as the premium, it was to be supposed that the original capital was re-invested in other shares. But each owned to the other that the matter was very complicated to him, and Montague could only write to Hamilton K. Fisker at San Francisco asking for explanation. As yet he had received no answer. But it was not the wealth flowing into Montague's hands which embittered Nidderdale and Carbury. They understood that he had really brought money into the concern, and was therefore entitled to take money out of it. Nor did it occur to them to grudge Melmotte his more noble pickings, for they knew how great a man was Melmotte. Of Cohenlupe's doings they heard nothing; but he was a regular city man, and had probably supplied funds. Cohenlupe
was too deep for their inquiry. But they knew that Lord Alfred had sold shares, and had received the profit; and they knew also how utterly impossible it was that Lord Alfred should have produced capital. If Lord Alfred Grendall was entitled to plunder, why were not they? And if their day for plunder had not yet come, why had Lord Alfred's? And if there was so much cause to fear Lord Alfred that it was necessary to throw him a bone, why should not they also make themselves feared? Lord Alfred passed all his time with Melmotte,—had, as these young men said, become Melmotte's head valet,—and therefore had to be paid. But that reason did not satisfy the young men.

"You haven't sold any shares;—have you?" This question Sir Felix asked Lord Nidderdale at the club. Nidderdale was constant in his attendance at the Board, and Felix was not a little afraid that he might be jockeyed also by him.

"Not a share."

"Nor got any profits?"

"Not a shilling of any kind. As far as money is concerned my only transaction has been my part of the expense of Fisker's dinner."

"What do you get then, by going into the city?" asked Sir Felix.

"I'm blessed if I know what I get. I suppose something will turn up some day."

"In the meantime, you know, there are our names. And Grendall is making a fortune out of it."

"Poor old duffer," said his lordship. "If he's doing so well, I think Miles ought to be made to pay up something of what he owes. I think we ought to tell him that we shall expect him to have the money ready when that bill of Vossner's comes round."

"Yes, by George; let's tell him that. Will you do it?"

"Not that it will be the least good. It would be quite unnatural to him to pay anything."

"Fellows used to pay their gambling debts," said Sir Felix, who was still in funds, and who still held a considerable assortment of I O U's.

"They don't now,—unless they like it. How did a fellow manage before, if he hadn't got it?"

"He went smash," said Sir Felix, "and disappeared and was never heard of any more. It was just the same as if he'd been found cheating. I believe a fellow might cheat now and nobody'd say anything!"

"I shouldn't," said Lord Nidderdale. "What's the use of being beastly ill-natured? I'm not very good at saying my prayers, but I do think there's something in that bit about forgiving people. Of course cheating isn't very nice; and it isn't very nice for a fellow to play when he knows he can't pay; but I don't know that it's worse than getting drunk like Dolly Longestaff, or quarrelling with everybody as Glasslough does,—or trying to marry some poor devil of a girl merely because she's got money. I believe in living in glass houses, but
I don’t believe in throwing stones. Do you ever read the Bible, Carbury?"

"Read the Bible! Well;—yes;—no;—that is, I suppose, I used to do."

"I often think I shouldn’t have been the first to pick up a stone and pitch it at that woman. Live and let live;—that’s my motto."

"But you agree that we ought to do something about these shares?" said Sir Felix, thinking that this doctrine of forgiveness might be carried too far.

"Oh, certainly. I’ll let old Grendall live with all my heart; but then he ought to let me live too. Only, who’s to bell the cat?"

"What cat?"

"It’s no good our going to old Grendall," said Lord Nidderdale, who had some understanding in the matter, "nor yet to young Grendall. The one would only grunt and say nothing, and the other would tell every lie that came into his head. The cat in this matter I take to be our great master, Augustus Melmottle."

This little meeting occurred on the day after Felix Carbury’s return from Suffolk, and at a time at which, as we know, it was the great duty of his life to get the consent of old Melmottle to his marriage with Marie Melmottle. In doing that he would have to put one bell on the cat, and he thought that for the present that was sufficient. In his heart of hearts he was afraid of Melmottle. But then, as he knew very well, Nidderdale was intent on the same object. Nidderdale, he thought, was a very queer fellow. That talking about the Bible, and the forgiving of trespasses, was very queer; and that allusion to the marrying of heiresses very queer indeed. He knew that Nidderdale wanted to marry the heiress, and Nidderdale must also know that he wanted to marry her. And yet Nidderdale was indecent enough to talk about it! And now the man asked who should bell the cat! "You go there oftener than I do, and perhaps you could do it best," said Sir Felix.

"Go where?"

"To the Board."

"But you’re always at his house. He’d be civil to me, perhaps, because I’m a lord: but then, for the same reason, he’d think I was the bigger fool of the two."

"I don’t see that at all," said Sir Felix.

"I ain’t afraid of him, if you mean that," continued Lord Nidderdale. "He’s a wretched old reprobate, and I don’t doubt but he’d skin you and me if he could make money of our carcasses. But as he can’t skin me, I’ll have a shy at him. On the whole I think he rather likes me, because I’ve always been on the square with him. If it depended on him, you know, I should have the girl to-morrow."

"Would you?" Sir Felix did not at all mean to doubt his friend’s assertion, but felt it hard to answer so very strange a statement.

"But then she don’t want me, and I ain’t quite sure that I want her. Where the devil would a fellow find himself if the money wasn’t all there?" Lord Nidderdale then sauntered away, leaving the baronet in a deep study of thought as to such a condition of things as that
which his lordship had suggested. Where the—mischief would he, 
Sir Felix Carbury, be, if he were to marry the girl, and then to find 
that the money was not all there?

On the following Friday, which was the Board day, Niderdale went 
to the great man’s offices in Abchurch Lane, and so contrived that he 
walked with the great man to the Board meeting. Melmotte was 
always very gracious in his manner to Lord Niderdale, but had never, 
up to this moment, had any speech with his proposed son-in-law about 
business. “I wanted just to ask you something,” said the lord, hanging 
on the chairman’s arm.

“Anything you please, my lord.”

“Don’t you think that Carbury and I ought to have some shares to 
sell?”

“No, I don’t,—if you ask me.”

“Oh;—I didn’t know. But why shouldn’t we as well as the 
others?”

“Have you and Sir Felix put any money into it?”

“Well, if you come to that, I don’t suppose we have. How much 
has Lord Alfred put into it?”

“I have taken shares for Lord Alfred,” said Melmotte, putting very 
heavy emphasis on the personal pronoun. “If it suits me to advance 
money to Lord Alfred Grendall, I suppose I may do so without asking 
your lordship’s consent, or that of Sir Felix Carbury.”

“Oh, certainly. I don’t want to make inquiry as to what you do 
with your money.”

“I’m sure you don’t, and, therefore, we won’t say anything more 
about it. You wait awhile, Lord Niderdale, and you’ll find it will 
come all right. If you’ve got a few thousand pounds loose, and will 
put them into the concern, why, of course you can sell; and, if the 
shares are up, can sell at a profit. It’s presumed just at present that, 
at some early day, you’ll qualify for your directorship by doing so, and 
till that is done, the shares are allocated to you, but cannot be trans-
ferred to you.”

“That’s it, is it,” said Lord Niderdale, pretending to understand 
all about it.

“If things go on as we hope they will between you and Marie, you 
have pretty nearly any number of shares that you please;—that 
is, if your father consents to a proper settlement.”

“I hope it’ll all go smooth, I’m sure,” said Niderdale. “Thank 
you; I’m ever so much obliged to you, and I’ll explain it all to 
Carbury.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

“YES;—I’M A BARONET.”

HOW eager Lady Carbury was that her son should at once go in 
form to Marie’s father and make his proposition may be easily 
understood. “My dear Felix,” she said, standing over his bedside
a little before noon, "pray don't put it off; you don't know how many slips there may be between the cup and the lip."

"It's everything to get him in a good humour," pleaded Sir Felix.

"But the young lady will feel that she is ill-used."

"There's no fear of that; she's all right. What am I to say to him about money? That's the question."

"I shouldn't think of dictating anything, Felix."

"Nidderdale, when he was on before, stipulated for a certain sum down; or his father did for him. So much cash was to be paid over before the ceremony, and it only went off because Nidderdale wanted the money to do what he liked with."

"You wouldn't mind having it settled?"

"No;—I'd consent to that on condition that the money was paid down, and the income insured to me,—say £7,000 or £8,000 a year. I wouldn't do it for less, mother; it wouldn't be worth while."

"But you have nothing left of your own."

"I've got a throat that I can cut, and brains that I can blow out," said the son, using an argument which he conceived might be efficacious with his mother; though, had she known him, she might have been sure that no man lived less likely to cut his own throat or blow out his own brains.

"Oh, Felix! how brutal it is to speak to me in that way."

"It may be brutal; but you know, mother, business is business. You want me to marry this girl because of her money."

"You want to marry her yourself."

"I'm quite a philosopher about it. I want her money; and when one wants money, one should make up one's mind how much or how little one means to take,—and whether one is sure to get it."

"I don't think there can be any doubt."

"If I were to marry her, and if the money wasn't there, it would be very like cutting my throat then, mother. If a man plays and loses, he can play again and perhaps win; but when a fellow goes in for an heiress, and gets the wife without the money, he feels a little hampered you know."

"Of course he'd pay the money first."

"It's very well to say that. Of course he ought; but it would be rather awkward to refuse to go into church after everything had been arranged because the money hadn't been paid over. He's so clever, that he'd contrive that a man shouldn't know whether the money had been paid or not. You can't carry £10,000 a year about in your pocket, you know. If you'll go, mother, perhaps I might think of getting up."

Lady Carbury saw the danger, and turned over the affair on every side in her own mind. But she could also see the house in Grosvenor Square, the expenditure without limit, the congregating duchesses, the general acceptation of the people, and the mercantile celebrity of the man. And she could weigh against that the absolute penlessness of her baronet-son. As he was, his condition was hopeless. Such a one must surely run some risk. The embarrassments of such a man as Lord Nidderdale were only temporary. There were the family
estates, and the marquisate, and a golden future for him; but there was nothing coming to Felix in the future. All the goods he would ever have of his own, he had now;—position, a title, and a handsome face. Surely he could afford to risk something! Even the ruins and wreck of such wealth as that displayed in Grosvenor Square would be better than the baronet's present condition. And then, though it was possible that old Melmottle should be ruined some day, there could be no doubt as to his present means; and would it not be probable that he would make hay while the sun shone by securing his daughter's position. She visited her son again on the next morning, which was Sunday, and again tried to persuade him to the marriage.

"I think you should be content to run a little risk," she said.

Sir Felix had been unlucky at cards on Saturday night, and had taken, perhaps, a little too much wine. He was at any rate sulky, and in a humour to resent interference. "I wish you'd leave me alone," he said, "to manage my own business."

"Is it not my business too?"

"No; you haven't got to marry her, and to put up with these people. I shall make up my mind what to do myself, and I don't want anybody to meddle with me."

"You ungrateful boy!"

"I understand all about that. Of course I'm ungrateful when I don't do everything just as you wish it. You don't do any good. You only set me against it all."

"How do you expect to live, then? Are you always to be a burden on me and your sister? I wonder that you've no shame. Your cousin Roger is right. I will quit London altogether, and leave you to your own wretchedness."

"That's what Roger says; is it? I always thought Roger was a fellow of that sort."

"He is the best friend I have." What would Roger have thought had he heard this assertion from Lady Carbury?

"He's an ill-tempered, close-fisted, interfering cad, and if he meddles with my affairs again, I shall tell him what I think of him. Upon my word, mother, these little disputes up in my bedroom ain't very pleasant. Of course it's your house; but if you do allow me a room, I think you might let me have it to myself." It was impossible for Lady Carbury, in her present mood, and in her present mood, to explain to him that in no other way and at no other time could she ever find him. If she waited till he came down to breakfast, he escaped from her in five minutes, and then he returned no more till some unholy hour in the morning. She was as good a pelican as ever allowed the blood to be torn from her own breast to satisfy the greed of her young, but she felt that she should have something back for her blood,—some return for her sacrifices. This chick would take all as long as there was a drop left, and then resent the fondling of the mother-bird as interference. Again and again there came upon her moments in which she thought that Roger Carbury was right. And yet she knew that when the time came she would not be able to be severe. She almost hated herself for the weakness of her own love,—
but she acknowledged it. If he should fall utterly, she must fall with him. In spite of his cruelty, his callous hardness, his insolence to herself, his wickedness and ruinous indifference to the future, she must cling to him to the last. All that she had done, and all that she had borne,—all that she was doing and bearing,—was it not for his sake?

Sir Felix had been in Grosvenor Square since his return from Carbury, and had seen Madame Melmotte and Marie; but he had seen them together, and not a word had been said about the engagement. He could not make much use of the elder woman. She was as gracious as was usual with her; but then she was never very gracious. She had told him that Miss Longstaffe was coming to her, which was a great bore, as the young lady was "fatigante." Upon this Marie had declared that she intended to like the young lady very much. "Pooh!" said Madame Melmotte. "You never like no person at all." At this Marie had looked over to her lover and smiled. "Ah, yes; that is all very well,—while it lasts; but you care for no friend." From which Felix had judged that Madame Melmotte at any rate knew of his offer, and did not absolutely disapprove of it. On the Saturday he had received a note at his club from Marie. "Come on Sunday at half-past two. You will find papa after lunch." This was in his possession when his mother visited him in his bedroom, and he had determined to obey the behest. But he would not tell her of his intention, because he had drunk too much wine, and was sulky.

At about three on Sunday he knocked at the door in Grosvenor Square and asked for the ladies. Up to the moment of his knocking,—even after he had knocked, and when the big porter was opening the door,—he intended to ask for Mr. Melmotte; but at the last his courage failed him, and he was shown up into the drawing-room. There he found Madame Melmotte, Marie, Georgiana Longstaffe, and—Lord Nidderdale. Marie looked anxiously into his face, thinking that he had already been with her father. He slid into a chair close to Madame Melmotte, and endeavoured to seem at his ease. Lord Nidderdale continued his flirtation with Miss Longstaffe,—a flirtation which she carried on in a half whisper, wholly indifferent to her hostess or the young lady of the house. "We know what brings you here," she said.

"I came on purpose to see you."

"I'm sure, Lord Nidderdale, you didn't expect to find me here."

"Lord bless you, I knew all about it, and came on purpose. It's a great institution; isn't it?"

"It's an institution you mean to belong to,—permanently."

"No, indeed. I did have thoughts about it as fellows do when they talk of going into the army or to the bar; but I couldn't pass. That fellow there is the happy man. I shall go on coming here, because you're here. I don't think you'll like it a bit, you know."

"I don't suppose I shall, Lord Nidderdale."

After awhile Marie contrived to be alone with her lover near one of the windows for a few seconds. "Papa is down-stairs in the book-room," she said. "Lord Alfred was told when he came that he was
out." It was evident to Sir Felix that everything was prepared for him. "You go down," she continued, "and ask the man to show you into the book-room."

"Shall I come up again?"

"No; but leave a note for me here under cover to Madame Didon."

Now Sir Felix was sufficiently at home in the house to know that Madame Didon was Madame Melmotte's own woman, commonly called Didon by the ladies of the family. "Or send it by post,—under cover to her. That will be better. Go at once, now." It certainly did seem to Sir Felix that the very nature of the girl was altered. But he went, just shaking hands with Madame Melmotte, and bowing to Miss Longestaff.

In a few moments he found himself with Mr. Melmotte in the chamber which had been dignified with the name of the book-room. The great financier was accustomed to spend his Sunday afternoons here, generally with the company of Lord Alfred Grendall. It may be supposed that he was meditating on millions, and arranging the prices of money and funds for the New York, Paris, and London Exchanges. But on this occasion he was waked from slumber, which he seemed to have been enjoying with a cigar in his mouth. "How do you do, Sir Felix?" he said. "I suppose you want the ladies."

"I've just been in the drawing-room, but I thought I'd look in on you as I came down." It immediately occurred to Melmotte that the baronet had come about his share of the plunder out of the railway, and he at once resolved to be stern in his manner, and perhaps rude also. He believed that he should thrive best by resenting any interference with him in his capacity as financier. He thought that he had risen high enough to venture on such conduct, and experience had told him that men who were themselves only half-plucked, might easily be cowed by a savage assumption of superiority. And he, too, had generally the advantage of understanding the game, while those with whom he was concerned did not, at any rate, more than half understand it. He could thus trade either on the timidity or on the ignorance of his colleagues. When neither of these sufficed to give him undisputed mastery, then he cultivated the cupidity of his friends. He liked young associates because they were more timid and less greedy than their elders. Lord Nidderdale's suggestions had soon been put at rest, and Mr. Melmotte anticipated no greater difficulty with Sir Felix. Lord Alfred he had been obliged to buy.

"I'm very glad to see you, and all that," said Melmotte, assuming a certain exaltation of the eyebrows, which they who had many dealings with him often found to be very disagreeable; "but this is hardly a day for business, Sir Felix, nor,—yet a place for business."

Sir Felix wished himself at the Beargarden. He certainly had come about business,—business of a particular sort; but Marie had told him that of all days Sunday would be the best, and had also told him that her father was more likely to be in a good humour on Sunday than on any other day. Sir Felix felt that he had not been received with good humour. "I didn't mean to intrude, Mr. Melmotte," he said.
"I dare say not. I only thought I'd tell you. You might have been going to speak about that railway."

"Oh dear no."

"Your mother was saying to me down in the country that she hoped you attended to the business. I told her that there was nothing to attend to."

"My mother doesn't understand anything at all about it," said Sir Felix.

"Women never do. Well;—what can I do for you, now that you are here?"

"Mr. Melmotte, I'm come,—I'm come to;—in short, Mr. Melmotte, I want to propose myself as a suitor for your daughter's hand."

"The d—— you do!"

"Well, yes; and we hope you'll give us your consent."

"She knows you're coming then?"

"Yes;—she knows."

"And my wife;—does she know?"

"I've never spoken to her about it. Perhaps Miss Melmotte has."

"And how long have you and she understood each other?"

"I've been attached to her ever since I saw her," said Sir Felix.

"I have indeed. I've spoken to her sometimes. You know how that kind of thing goes on."

"I'm blessed if I do. I know how it ought to go on. I know that when large sums of money are supposed to be concerned, the young man should speak to the father before he speaks to the girl. He's a fool if he don't, if he wants to get the father's money. So she has given you a promise?"

"I don't know about a promise."

"Do you consider that she's engaged to you?"

"Not if she's disposed to get out of it," said Sir Felix, hoping that he might thus ingratiate himself with the father. "Of course, I should be awfully disappointed."

"She has consented to your coming to me?"

"Well, yes;—in a sort of a way. Of course she knows that it all depends on you."

"Not at all. She's of age. If she chooses to marry you, she can marry you. If that's all you want, her consent is enough. You're a baronet, I believe?"

"Oh, yes, I'm a baronet."

"And therefore you've come to your own property. You haven't to wait for your father to die, and I dare say you are indifferent about money."

That was a view of things which Sir Felix felt that he was bound to dispel, even at the risk of offending the father. "Not exactly that," he said. "I suppose you will give your daughter a fortune, of course."

"Then I wonder you didn't come to me before you went to her. If my daughter marries to please me, I shall give her money, no doubt. How much is neither here nor there. If she marries to please herself, without considering me, I shan't give her a farthing."
"I had hoped that you might consent, Mr. Melmotte."

"I've said nothing about that. It is possible. You're a man of fashion and have a title of your own,—and no doubt a property. If you'll show me that you've an income fit to maintain her, I'll think about it at any rate. What is your property, Sir Felix?"

What could three or four thousand a year, or even five or six, matter to a man like Melmotte? It was thus that Sir Felix looked at it. When a man can hardly count his millions he ought not to ask questions about trifling sums of money. But the question had been asked, and the asking of such a question was no doubt within the prerogative of a proposed father-in-law. At any rate, it must be answered. For a moment it occurred to Sir Felix that he might conveniently tell the truth. It would be nasty for the moment, but there would be nothing to come after. Were he to do so he could not be dragged down lower and lower into the mire by cross-examinings. There might be an end of all his hopes, but there would at the same time be an end of all his misery. But he lacked the necessary courage. "It isn't a large property, you know," he said.

"Not like the Marquis of Westminster's, I suppose," said the horrid, big, rich scoundrel.

"No;—not quite like that," said Sir Felix, with a sickly laugh.

"But you have got enough to support a baronet's title?"

"That depends on how you want to support it," said Sir Felix, putting off the evil day.

"Where's your family seat?"

"Carbury Manor, down in Suffolk, near the Longestaffes, is the old family place."

"That doesn't belong to you," said Melmotte, very sharply.

"No; not yet. But I'm the heir."

Perhaps if there is one thing in England more difficult than another to be understood by men born and bred out of England, it is the system under which titles and property descend together, or in various lines. The jurisdiction of our Courts of Law is complex, and so is the business of Parliament. But the rules regulating them, though anomalous, are easy to the memory compared with the mixed anomalies of the peerage and primogeniture. They who are brought up among it, learn it as children do a language, but strangers who begin the study in advanced life, seldom make themselves perfect in it. It was everything to Melmotte that he should understand the ways of the country which he had adopted; and when he did not understand, he was clever at hiding his ignorance. Now he was puzzled. He knew that Sir Felix was a baronet, and therefore presumed him to be the head of the family. He knew that Carbury Manor belonged to Roger Carbury, and he judged by the name it must be an old family property. And now the baronet declared that he was heir to the man who was simply an Esquire. "Oh, the heir are you? But how did he get it before you? You're the head of the family?"

"Yes, I am the head of the family, of course," said Sir Felix, lying directly. "But the place won't be mine till he dies. It would take a long time to explain it all."
"In the meantime what is your own property?"
"He's a young man, isn't he?"
"No,—not what you'd call a young man. He isn't very old."
"If he were to marry and have children, how would it be then?"
Sir Felix was beginning to think that he might have told the truth
with discretion. "I don't quite know how it would be. I have
always understood that I am the heir. It's not very likely that he
will marry."
"And in the meantime what is your own property?"
"My father left me money in the funds and in railway stock,—and
then I am my mother's heir."
"You have done me the honour of telling me that you wish to
marry my daughter."
"Certainly."
"Would you then object to inform me the amount and nature of
the income on which you intend to support your establishment as a
married man? I fancy that the position you assume justifies the
question on my part." The bloated swindler, the vile city ruffian, was
certainly taking a most ungenerous advantage of the young aspirant for
wealth. It was then that Sir Felix felt his own position. Was he not a
baronet, and a gentleman, and a very handsome fellow, and a man of
the world who had been in a crack regiment? If this surfeited sponge
of speculation, this crammed commercial cormorant, wanted more than
that for his daughter, why could he not say so without asking dis-
gusting questions such as these,—questions which it was quite im-
possible that a gentleman should answer? Was it not sufficiently
plain that any gentleman proposing to marry the daughter of such a
man as Melmotte, must do so under the stress of pecuniary embarrass-
ment? Would it not be an understood bargain that as he provided
the rank and position, she would provide the money? And yet the
vulgar wretch took advantage of his assumed authority to ask these
dreadful questions! Sir Felix stood silent, trying to look the man in
the face, but failing;—wishing that he was well out of the house, and
at the Beargarden. "You don't seem to be very clear about your
own circumstances, Sir Felix. Perhaps you will get your lawyer to
write to me."
"Perhaps that will be best," said the lover.
"Either that, or to give it up. My daughter, no doubt, will have
money; but money expects money." At this moment Lord Alfred
entered the room. "You're very late to-day, Alfred. Why didn't
you come as you said you would?"
"I was here more than an hour ago, and they said you were out."
"I haven't been out of this room all day,—except to lunch. Good
morning, Sir Felix. Ring the bell, Alfred, and we'll have a little
soda and brandy." Sir Felix had gone through some greeting with
his fellow Director, Lord Alfred, and at last succeeded in getting
Melmotte to shake hands with him before he went. "Do you know
anything about that young fellow?" Melmotte asked as soon as the
door was closed.
"He's a baronet without a shilling;—was in the army and had to
leave it," said Lord Alfred as he buried his face in a big tumbler.
“Without a shilling! I supposed so. But he's heir to a place down in Suffolk;—eh?"  
“Not a bit of it. It's the same name, and that's about all. Mr. Carbury has a small property there, and he might give it to me tomorrow. I wish he would, though there isn't much of it. That young fellow has nothing to do with it whatever.”  
“Hasn't he now?" Mr. Melmotte as he speculated upon it, almost admired the young man's impudence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MILES GRENDALL'S TRIUMPH.

SIR FELIX as he walked down to his club felt that he had been checkmated,—and was at the same time full of wrath at the insolence of the man who had so easily beaten him out of the field. As far as he could see, the game was over. No doubt he might marry Mario Melmotte. The father had told him so much himself, and he perfectly believed the truth of that oath which Mario had sworn. He did not doubt but that she'd stick to him close enough. She was in love with him, which was natural; and was a fool,—which was perhaps also natural. But romance was not the game which he was playing. People told him that when girls succeeded in marrying without their parents' consent, fathers were always constrained to forgive them at last. That might be the case with ordinary fathers. But Melmotte was decidedly not an ordinary father. He was,—so Sir Felix declared to himself,—perhaps the greatest brute ever created. Sir Felix could not but remember that elevation of the eyebrows, and the brazen forehead, and the hard mouth. He had found himself quite unable to stand up against Melmotte, and now he cursed and swore at the man as he was carried down to the Beargarden in a cab.

But what should he do? Should he abandon Mario Melmotte altogether, never go to Grosvenor Square again, and drop the whole family, including the Great Mexican Railway? Then an idea occurred to him. Nidderdale had explained to him the result of his application for shares. "You see we haven't bought any and therefore can't sell any. There seems to be something in that. I shall explain it all to my governor, and get him to go a thou' or two. If he sees his way to get the money back, he'd do that and let me have the difference." On that Sunday afternoon Sir Felix thought over all this. "Why shouldn't he 'go a thou,' and get the difference?" He made a mental calculation. £12 10s. per £100! £125 for a thousand! and all paid in ready money. As far as Sir Felix could understand, directly the one operation had been perfected the thousand pounds would be available for another. As he looked into it with all his intelligence he thought that he began to perceive that that was the way in which the Melmottes of the world made their money. There was but one
objection. He had not got the entire thousand pounds. But luck had been on the whole very good to him. He had more than the half of it in real money, lying at a bank in the city at which he had opened an account. And he had very much more than the remainder in I O U's from Dolly Longestaaffe and Miles Grendall. In fact if every man had his own,—and his bosom glowed with indignation as he reflected on the injustice with which he was kept out of his own,—he could go into the city and take up his shares to-morrow, and still have ready money at his command. If he could do this, would not such conduct on his part be the best refutation of that charge of not having any fortune which Melmotte had brought against him? He would endeavour to work the money out of Dolly Longestaaffe;—and he entertained an idea that though it would be impossible to get cash from Miles Grendall, he might use his claim against Miles in the city. Miles was Secretary to the Board, and might perhaps contrive that the money required for the shares should not be all ready money. Sir Felix was not very clear about it, but thought that he might possibly in this way use the indebtedness of Miles Grendall. "How I do hate a fellow who does not pay up," he said to himself as he sat alone in his club, waiting for some friend to come in. And he formed in his head Draconic laws which he would fain have executed upon men who lost money at play and did not pay. "How the deuce fellows can look one in the face, is what I can't understand," he said to himself. He thought over this great stroke of exhibiting himself to Melmotte as a capitalist till he gave up his idea of abandoning his suit. So he wrote a note to Marie Melmotte in accordance with her instructions.

"Dear M.,
"Your father cut up very rough,—about money. Perhaps you had better see him yourself; or would your mother?
"Yours always, F."

This, as directed, he put under cover to Madame Didon,—Grosvenor Square, and posted at the club. He had put nothing at any rate in the letter which could commit him.

There was generally on Sundays a house dinner, so called, at eight o'clock. Five or six men would sit down, and would always gamble afterwards. On this occasion Dolly Longestaaffe sauntered in at about seven in quest of sherry and bitters, and Felix found the opportunity a good one to speak of his money. "You couldn't cash your I O U's for me to-morrow;—could you?"
"To-morrow! oh, lord!"
"I'll tell you why. You know I'd tell you anything because I think we are really friends. I'm after that daughter of Melmotte's."
"I'm told you're to have her."
"I don't know about that. I mean to try at any rate. I've gone in you know for that Board in the city."
"I don't know anything about Boards, my boy."
"Yes, you do, Dolly. You remember that American fellow, Montague's friend, that was here one night and won all our money."
"The chap that had the waistcoat, and went away in the morning
to California. Fancy starting to California after a hard night. I always wondered whether he got there alive."

"Well;—I can't explain to you all about it, because you hate those kind of things."

"And because I am such a fool."

"I don't think you're a fool at all, but it would take a week. But it's absolutely essential for me to take up a lot of shares in the city to-morrow;—or perhaps Wednesday might do. I'm bound to pay for them, and old Melmotte will think that I'm utterly hard up if I don't. Indeed he said as much, and the only objection about me and this girl of his is as to money. Can't you understand, now, how important it may be?"

"It's always important to have a lot of money. I know that."

"I shouldn't have gone in for this kind of thing if I hadn't thought I was sure. You know how much you owe me, don't you?"

"Not in the least."

"It's about eleven hundred pounds!"

"I shouldn't wonder."

"And Miles Grendall owes me two thousand. Grasslough and Nidderdale when they lose always pay with Miles's I O U's."

"So should I, if I had them."

"It'll come to that soon that there won't be any other stuff going, and they really ain't worth anything. I don't see what's the use of playing when this rubbish is shoved about the table. As for Grendall himself, he has no feeling about it."

"Not the least, I should say."

"You'll try and get me the money, won't you, Dolly?"

"Melmotte has been at me twice. He wants me to agree to sell something. He's an old thief, and of course he means to rob me. You may tell him that if he'll let me have the money in the way I've proposed, you are to have a thousand pounds out of it. I don't know any other way."

"You could write me that,—in a business sort of way."

"I couldn't do that, Carbury. What's the use? I never write any letters. I can't do it. You tell him that; and if the sale comes off, I'll make it straight."

Miles Grendall also dined there, and after dinner, in the smoking-room, Sir Felix tried to do a little business with the Secretary. He began his operations with unusual courtesy, believing that the man must have some influence with the great distributor of shares. "I'm going to take up my shares in that company," said Sir Felix.

"Ah;—indeed." And Miles enveloped himself from head to foot in smoke.

"I didn't quite understand about it, but Nidderdale saw Melmotte and he has explained it. I think I shall go in for a couple of thousand on Wednesday."

"Oh;—ah."

"It will be the proper thing to do;—won't it?"

"Very good—thing to do!" Miles Grendall smoked harder and harder as the suggestions were made to him.
"Is it always ready money?"
"Always ready money," said Miles shaking his head, as though in reprobation of so abominable an institution.
"I suppose they allow some time to their own Directors, if a deposit, say 50 per cent., is made for the shares?"
"They'll give you half the number, which would come to the same thing."
Sir Felix turned this over in his mind, but let him look at it as he would, could not see the truth of his companion's remark. "You know I should want to sell again,—for the rise."
"Oh; you'll want to sell again."
"And therefore I must have the full number."
"You could sell half the number, you know," said Miles.
"I'm determined to begin with ten shares;—that's £1,000. Well;—I have got the money, but I don't want to draw out so much. Couldn't you manage for me that I should get them on paying 50 per cent. down?"
"Melmotte does all that himself."
"You could explain, you know, that you are a little short in your own payments to me." This Sir Felix said, thinking it to be a delicate mode of introducing his claim upon the Secretary.
"That's private," said Miles frowning.
"Of course it's private; but if you would pay me the money I could buy the shares with it, though they are public."
"I don't think we could mix the two things together, Carbury."
"You can't help me?"
"Not in that way."
"Then, when, the deuce, will you pay me what you owe me?" Sir Felix was driven to this plain expression of his demand by the impossibility of his debtor. Here was a man who did not pay his debts of honour, who did not even propose any arrangement for paying them, and who yet had the impudence to talk of not mixing up private matters with affairs of business! It made the young baronet very sick. Miles Grendall smoked on in silence. There was a difficulty in answering the question, and he therefore made no answer. "Do you know how much you owe me?" continued the baronet, determined to persist now that he had commenced the attack. There was a little crowd of other men in the room, and the conversation about the shares had been commenced in an undertone. These two last questions Sir Felix had asked in a whisper, but his countenance showed plainly that he was speaking in anger.
"Of course I know," said Miles.
"Well?"
"I'm not going to talk about it here."
"Not going to talk about it here?"
"No. This is a public room."
"I am going to talk about it," said Sir Felix, raising his voice.
"Will any fellow come up-stairs and play a game of billiards?" said Miles Grendall rising from his chair. Then he walked slowly out of the room, leaving Sir Felix to take what revenge he pleased. For a
moment Sir Felix thought that he would expose the transaction to the whole room; but he was afraid, thinking that Miles Grendall was a more popular man than himself.

It was Sunday night; but not the less were the gamblers assembled in the card-room at about eleven. Dolly Longstaffe was there, and with him the two lords, and Sir Felix, and Miles Grendall of course, and, I regret to say, a much better man than any of them, Paul Montague. Sir Felix had doubted much as to the propriety of joining the party. What was the use of playing with a man who seemed by general consent to be liberated from any obligation to pay? But then if he did not play with him, where should he find another gambling table? They began with whist, but soon laid that aside and devoted themselves to loo. The least respected man in that confraternity was Grendall, and yet it was in compliance with the persistency of his suggestion that they gave up the nobler game.

"Let's stick to whist; I like cutting out," said Grasslough. "It's much more jolly having nothing to do now and then; one can always bet," said Dolly shortly afterwards. "I hate loo," said Sir Felix in answer to a third application. "I like whist best," said Nidderdale, "but I'll play anything anybody likes;—pitch and toss if you please." But Miles Grendall had his way, and loo was the game.

At about two o'clock Grendall was the only winner. The play had not been very high, but nevertheless he had won largely. Whenever a large pool had collected itself he swept it into his garners. The men opposed to him hardly grudged him this stroke of luck. He had hitherto been unlucky; and they were able to pay him with his own paper, which was so valueless that they parted with it without a pang. Even Dolly Longstaffe seemed to have a supply of it. The only man there not so furnished was Montague, and while the sums won were quite small he was allowed to pay with cash. But to Sir Felix it was frightful to see ready money going over to Miles Grendall, as under no circumstances could it be got back from him. "Montague," he said, "just change these for the time. I'll take them back, if you still have them when we've done." And he handed a lot of Miles's paper across the table. The result of course would be that Felix would receive so much real money, and that Miles would get back more of his own worthless paper. To Montague it would make no difference, and he did as he was asked;—or rather was preparing to do so, when Miles interfered. On what principle of justice could Sir Felix come between him and another man? "I don't understand this kind of thing," he said. "When I win from you, Carbury, I'll take my I O U's, as long as you have any."

"By George, that's kind."

"But I won't have them handed about the table to be changed."

"Pay them yourself, then," said Sir Felix, laying a handful down on the table.

"Don't let's have a row," said Lord Nidderdale.
"Carbury is always making a row," said Grasslough.
"Of course he is," said Miles Grendall.
"I don't make more row than anybody else; but I do say that
as we have such a lot of these things, and as we all know that we
don’t get cash for them as we want it, Grendall shouldn’t take money
and walk off with it.”

“Who is walking off?” said Miles.

“And why should you be entitled to Montague’s money more than
any of us?” asked Grasslough.

The matter was debated, and was thus decided. It was not to be
allowed that Miles’s paper should be negotiated at the table in the
manner that Sir Felix had attempted to adopt. But Mr. Grendall
pledged his honour that when they broke up the party he would apply
any money that he might have won to the redemption of his I O U’s,
paying a regular percentage to the holders of them. The decision
made Sir Felix very cross. He knew that their condition at six or
seven in the morning would not be favourable to such commercial
accuracy,—which indeed would require an accountant to effect it; and
he felt sure that Miles, if still a winner, would in truth walk off with
the ready money.

For a considerable time he did not speak, and became very moderate
in his play, tossing his cards about, almost always losing, but losing
a minimum, and watching the board. He was sitting next to Grendall,
and he thought that he observed that his neighbour moved his chair
farther and farther away from him, and nearer to Dolly Longestaffe,
who was next to him on the other side. This went on for an hour,
during which Grendall still won,—and won heavily from Paul Mon-
tague. “I never saw a fellow have such a run of luck in my life,”
said Grasslough. “You’ve had two trumps dealt to you every hand
almost since we began!”

“Ever so many hands I haven’t played at all,” said Miles.

“You’ve always won when I’ve played,” said Dolly. “I’ve been
loved every time.”

“You oughtn’t to begrudge me one run of luck, when I’ve lost so
much,” said Miles, who, since he began, had destroyed paper counters
of his own making, supposed to represent considerably above £1,000,
and had also,—which was of infinitely greater concern to him,—
received an amount of ready money which was quite a godsend to him.

“What’s the good of talking about it,” said Nidderdale. “I hate
all this row about winning and losing. Let’s go on, or go to bed.”
The idea of going to bed was absurd. So they went on. Sir Felix,
however, hardly spoke at all, played very little, and watched Miles
Grendall without seeming to watch him. At last he felt certain that
he saw a card go into the man’s sleeve, and remembered at the moment
that the winner had owed his success to a continued run of aces. He
was tempted to rush at once upon the player, and catch the card on
his person. But he feared. Grendall was a big man; and where
would he be if there should be no card there? And then, in the
scramble, there would certainly be at any rate a doubt. And he knew
that the men around him would be most unwilling to believe such an
accusation. Grasslough was Grendall’s friend, and Nidderdale and
Dolly Longestaffe would infinitely rather be cheated than suspect any
one of their own set of cheating them. He feared both the violence of
the man he should accuse, and also the impassive good humour of the others. He let that opportunity pass by, again watched, and again saw the card abstracted. Thrice he saw it, till it was wonderful to him that others also should not see it. As often as the deal came round, the man did it. Felix watched more closely, and was certain that in each round the man had an ace at least once. It seemed to him that nothing could be easier. At last he pleaded a headache, got up, and went away, leaving the others playing. He had lost nearly a thousand pounds, but it had been all in paper. "There's something the matter with that fellow," said Grasslough.

"There's always something the matter with him, I think," said Miles. "He is so awfully greedy about his money." Miles had become somewhat triumphant in his success.

"The less said about that, Grendall, the better," said Nidderdale. "We have put up with a good deal, you know, and he has put up with as much as anybody." Miles was cowed at once, and went on dealing without manœuvring a card on that hand.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN GROSVENOR SQUARE.

MARIE MELMOTTE was hardly satisfied with the note which she received from Didon early on the Monday morning. With a volubility of French eloquence, Didon declared that she would be turned out of the house if either Monsieur or Madame were to know what she was doing. Marie told her that Madame would certainly never dismiss her. "Well, perhaps not Madame," said Didon, who knew too much about Madame to be dismissed; "but Monsieur!" Marie declared that by no possibility could Monsieur know anything about it. In that house nobody ever told anything to Monsieur. He was regarded as the general enemy, against whom the whole household was always making ambushes, always firing guns from behind rocks and trees. It is not a pleasant condition for a master of a house; but in this house the master at any rate knew how he was placed. It never occurred to him to trust anybody. Of course his daughter might run away. But who would run away with her without money? And there could be no money except from him. He knew himself and his own strength. He was not the man to forgive a girl, and then bestow his wealth on the Lothario who had injured him. His daughter was valuable to him because she might make him the father-in-law of a Marquis or an Earl; but the higher that he rose without such assistance, the less need had he of his daughter's aid. Lord Alfred was certainly very useful to him. Lord Alfred had whishepered into his ear that by certain conduct and by certain uses of his money, he himself might be made a baronet. "But if they should say that I'm not an Englishman?" suggested Melmotte. Lord Alfred had explained that it was not necessary that he should have been born in England, or even that he should have an English name. No ques-
tions would be asked. Let him first get into Parliament, and then spend a little money on the proper side,—by which Lord Alfred meant the Conservative side,—and be munificent in his entertainments, and the baronetcy would be almost a matter of course. Indeed, there was no knowing what honours might not be achieved in the present days by money scattered with a liberal hand. In these conversations, Melmotte would speak of his money and power of making money as though they were unlimited,—and Lord Alfred believed him.

Marie was dissatisfied with her letter,—not because it described her father as "cutting up very rough." To her who had known her father all her life that was a matter of course. But there was no word of love in the note. An impassioned correspondence carried on through Didon would be delightful to her. She was quite capable of loving, and she did love the young man. She had, no doubt, consented to accept the addresses of others whom she did not love,—but this she had done at the moment almost of her first introduction to the marvellous world in which she was now living. As days went on she ceased to be a child, and her courage grew within her. She became conscious of an identity of her own, which feeling was produced in great part by the contempt which accompanied her increasing familiarity with grand people, and grand names and grand things. She was no longer afraid of saying No to the Nidderdales on account of any awe of them personally. It might be that she should acknowledge herself to be obliged to obey her father, though she was drifting away even from the sense of that obligation. Had her mind been as it was now when Lord Nidderdale first came to her, she might indeed have loved him, who, as a man, was infinitely better than Sir Felix, and who, had he thought it to be necessary, would have put some grace into his love-making. But at that time she had been childish. He, finding her to be a child, had hardly spoken to her. And she, child though she was, had resented such usage. But a few months in London had changed all this, and now she was a child no longer. She was in love with Sir Felix, and had told her love. Whatever difficulties there might be, she intended to be true. If necessary, she would run away. Sir Felix was her idol, and she abandoned herself to its worship. But she desired that her idol should be of flesh and blood, and not of wood. She was at first half-inclined to be angry; but as she sat with his letter in her hand, she remembered that he did not know Didon as well as she did, and that he might be afraid to trust his raptures to such custody. She could write to him at his club, and having no such fear, she could write warmly.

"— Grosvenor Square. Early Monday Morning.

"Dearest, Dearest Felix,

"I have just got your note;—such a scrap! Of course papa would talk about money because he never thinks of anything else. I don’t know anything about money, and I don’t care in the least how much you have got. Papa has got plenty, and I think he would give us some if we were once married. I have told mamma, but mamma is always afraid of everything. Papa is very cross to her sometimes;—
more so than to me. I will try to tell him, though I can't always get
at him. I very often hardly see him all day long. But I don't mean
to be afraid of him, and will tell him that on my word and honour I
will never marry any one except you. I don't think he will beat me,
but if he does, I'll bear it,—for your sake. He does beat mamma
sometimes, I know.

"You can write to me quite safely through Didon. I think if you
would call some day and give her something, it would help, as she is
very fond of money. Do write and tell me that you love me. I love
you better than anything in the world, and I will never,—never give
you up. I suppose you can come and call,—unless papa tells the man
in the hall not to let you in. I'll find that out from Didon, but I can't
do it before sending this letter. Papa dined out yesterday somewhere
with that Lord Alfred, so I haven't seen him since you were here. I
never see him before he goes into the city in the morning. Now I am
going down-stairs to breakfast with mamma and that Miss Longestaffe.
She is a stuck-up thing. Didn't you think so at Caversham?

"Good-bye. You are my own, own, own darling Felix,

"And I am your own, own affectionate ladylove,

"Marie."

Sir Felix when he read this letter at his club in the afternoon of the
Monday, turned up his nose and shook his head. He thought if
there were much of that kind of thing to be done, he could not go on
with it, even though the marriage were certain, and the money
secure. "What an infernal little ass!" he said to himself as he
crumpled the letter up.

Marie having intrusted her letter to Didon, together with a little
present of gloves and shoes, went down to breakfast. Her mother
was the first there, and Miss Longestaffe soon followed. That lady
when she found that she was not expected to breakfast with the
master of the house, abandoned the idea of having her meal sent to
her in her own room. Madame Melmottle she must endure. With
Madame Melmottle she had to go out in the carriage every day.
Indeed she could only go to those parties to which Madame Melmottle
accompanied her. If the London season was to be of any use at all,
she must accustom herself to the companionship of Madame Melmottle.
The man kept himself very much apart from her. She met him only
at dinner, and that not often. Madame Melmottle was very bad; but
she was silent, and seemed to understand that her guest was only her
guest as a matter of business.

But Miss Longestaffe already perceived that her old acquaintances
were changed in their manner to her. She had written to her dear
friend Lady Monogram, whom she had known intimately as Miss Trip-
lex, and whose marriage with Sir Damask Monogram had been splendid
preferment, telling how she had been kept down in Suffolk at the
time of her friend's last party, and how she had been driven to
consent to return to London as the guest of Madame Melmottle. She
hoped her friend would not throw her off on that account. She had
been very affectionate, with a poor attempt at fun, and rather humble.
Georgiana Longestaffe had never been humble before; but the Mono-
grams were people so much thought of and in such an excellent set! She would do anything rather than lose the Monograms. But it was of no use. She had been humble in vain, for Lady Monogram had not even answered her note. "She never really cared for anybody but herself," Georgiana said in her wretched solitude. Then, too, she had found that Lord Nidderdale's manner to her had been quite changed. She was not a fool, and could read these signs with sufficient accuracy. There had been little flirtations between her and Nidderdale,—meaning nothing, as every one knew that Nidderdale must marry money; but in none of them had he spoken to her as he spoke when he met her in Madame Melmotte's drawing-room. She could see it in the faces of people as they greeted her in the park,—especially in the faces of the men. She had always carried herself with a certain high demeanour, and had been able to maintain it. All that was now gone from her, and she knew it. Though the thing was as yet but a few days old she understood that others understood that she had degraded herself. "What's all this about?" Lord Grasslough had said to her, seeing her come into a room behind Madame Melmotte. She had simpered, had tried to laugh, and had then turned away her face. "Impudent scoundrel!" she said to herself, knowing that a fortnight ago he would not have dared to address her in such a tone.

A day or two afterwards an occurrence took place worthy of commemoration. Dolly Longestaffes called on his sister! His mind must have been much stirred when he allowed himself to be moved to such uncommon action. He came too at a very early hour, not much after noon, when it was his custom to be eating his breakfast in bed. He declared at once to the servant that he did not wish to see Madame Melmotte or any of the family. He had called to see his sister. He was therefore shown into a separate room where Georgiana joined him. "What's all this about?"

She tried to laugh as she tossed her head. "What brings you here, I wonder? This is quite an unexpected compliment."

"My being here doesn't matter. I can go anywhere without doing much harm. Why are you staying with these people?"

"Ask papa."

"I don't suppose he sent you here?"

"That's just what he did do."

"You needn't have come, I suppose, unless you liked it. Is it because they are none of them coming up?"

"Exactly that, Dolly. What a wonderful young man you are for guessing?"

"Don't you feel ashamed of yourself?"

"No;—not a bit."

"Then I feel ashamed for you."

"Everybody comes here."

"No;—everybody does not come and stay here as you are doing. Everybody doesn't make themselves a part of the family. I have heard of nobody doing it except you. I thought you used to think so much of yourself."
"I think as much of myself as ever I did," said Georgiana, hardly able to restrain her tears.
"I can tell you nobody else will think much of you if you remain here. I could hardly believe it when Nidderdale told me."
"What did he say, Dolly?"
"He didn’t say much to me, but I could see what he thought. And of course everybody thinks the same. How you can like the people yourself, is what I can’t understand!"
"I don’t like them,—I hate them."
"Then why do you come and live with them?"
"Oh, Dolly, it is impossible to make you understand. A man is so different. You can go just where you please, and do what you like. And if you’re short of money, people will give you credit. And you can live by yourself, and all that sort of thing. How should you like to be shut up down at Caversham all the season?"
"I shouldn’t mind it,—only for the governor."
"You have got a property of your own. Your fortune is made for you. What is to become of me?"
"You mean about marrying?"
"I mean altogether," said the poor girl, unable to be quite as explicit with her brother, as she had been with her father, and mother, and sister. "Of course I have to think of myself."
"I don’t see how the Melmottes are to help you. The long and the short of it is, you oughtn’t to be here. It’s not often I interfere, but when I heard it I thought I’d come and tell you. I shall write to the governor, and tell him too. He should have known better."
"Don’t write to papa, Dolly!"
"Yes, I shall. I am not going to see everything going to the devil without saying a word. Good-bye."
As soon as he had left he hurried down to some club that was open,—not the Bear garden, as it was long before the Bear garden hours,—and actually did write a letter to his father.

"My dear Father,
"I have seen Georgiana at Mr. Melmotte’s house. She ought not to be there. I suppose you don’t know it, but everybody says he’s a swindler. For the sake of the family I hope you will get her home again. It seems to me that Bruton Street is the proper place for the girls at this time of the year.
"Your affectionate son,

"Adolphus Longstaffe."

This letter fell upon old Mr. Longstaffe at Caversham like a thunderbolt. It was marvellous to him that his son should have been instigated to write a letter. The Melmottes must be very bad indeed,—worse than he had thought,—or their iniquities would not have brought about such energy as this. But the passage which angered him most was that which told him that he ought to have taken his family back to town. This had come from his son, who had refused to do anything to help him in his difficulties.
CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. HURTE.

PAUL MONTAGUE at this time lived in comfortable lodgings in
Sackville Street, and ostensibly the world was going well with
him. But he had many troubles. His troubles in reference to Fisker,
Montague, and Montague,—and also their consolation,—are already
known to the reader. He was troubled too about his love, though
when he allowed his mind to expatiate on the success of the great
railway he would venture to hope that on that side his life might
perhaps be blessed. Henrietta had at any rate as yet showed no
disposition to accept her cousin's offer. He was troubled too about
the gambling, which he disliked, knowing that in that direction there
might be speedy ruin, and yet returning to it from day to day in spite
of his own conscience. But there was yet another trouble which
culminated just at this time. One morning, not long after that Sunday
night which had been so wretchedly spent at the Beergarten, he got
into a cab in Piccadilly and had himself taken to a certain address in
Islington. Here he knocked at a decent, modest door,—at such a
house as men live in with two or three hundred a year,—and asked
for Mrs. Hurte. Yes;—Mrs. Hurte lodged there, and he was shown
into the drawing-room. There he stood by the round table for a
quarter of an hour turning over the lodging-house books which lay
there, and then Mrs. Hurte entered the room. Mrs. Hurte was a
widow whom he had once promised to marry. "Paul," she said,
with a quick, sharp voice, but with a voice which could be very
pleasant when she pleased,—taking him by the hand as she spoke,
"Paul, say that that letter of yours must go for nothing. Say that it
shall be so, and I will forgive everything."

"I cannot say that," he replied, laying his hand in hers.
"You cannot say it! What do you mean? Will you dare to
tell me that your promises to me are to go for nothing?"

"Things are changed," said Paul hoarsely. He had come thither
at her bidding because he had felt that to remain away would be
cowardly, but the meeting was inexpressibly painful to him. He did
think that he had sufficient excuse for breaking his troth to this
woman, but the justification of his conduct was founded on reasons
which he hardly knew how to plead to her. He had heard that of
her past life which, had he heard it before, would have saved him
from his present difficulty. But he had loved her,—did love her in a
certain fashion; and her offences, such as they were, did not debar
her from his sympathies.

"How are they changed? I am two years older, if you mean
that." As she said this she looked round at the glass, as though to
see whether she was become so haggard with age as to be unfit to
become this man's wife. She was very lovely, with a kind of beauty
which we seldom see now. In these days men regard the form and

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outward lines of a woman's face and figure more than either the colour or the expression, and women fit themselves to men's eyes. With padding and false hair without limit a figure may be constructed of almost any dimensions. The sculptors who construct them, male and female, hairdressers and milliners, are very skilful, and figures are constructed of noble dimensions, sometimes with voluptuous expansion, sometimes with classic reticence, sometimes with dishevelled negligence which becomes very dishevelled indeed when long out of the sculptors' hands. Colours indeed are added, but not the colours which we used to love. The taste for flesh and blood has for the day given place to an appetite for horsehair and pearl powder. But Mrs. Hurtie was not a beauty after the present fashion. She was very dark,—a dark brunette,—with large round blue eyes, that could indeed be soft, but could also be very severe. Her silken hair, almost black, hung in a thousand curls all round her head and neck. Her cheeks and lips and neck were full, and the blood would come and go, giving a varying expression to her face with almost every word she spoke. Her nose was also full, and had something of the pug. But nevertheless it was a nose which any man who loved her would swear to be perfect. Her mouth was large, and she rarely showed her teeth. Her chin was full, marked by a large dimple, and as it ran down to her neck was beginning to form a second. Her bust was full and beautifully shaped; but she invariably dressed as though she were oblivious, or at any rate negligent, of her own charms. Her dress, as Montague had seen her, was always black,—not a sad weeping widow's garment, but silk or woollen or cotton as the case might be, always new, always nice, always well-fitting, and most especially always simple. She was certainly a most beautiful woman, and she knew it. She looked as though she knew it,—but only after that fashion in which a woman ought to know it. Of her age she had never spoken to Montague. She was in truth over thirty,—perhaps almost as near thirty-five as thirty. But she was one of those whom years hardly seem to touch.

"You are beautiful as ever you were," he said.

"'Psha! Do not tell me of that. I care nothing for my beauty unless it can bind me to your love. Sit down there and tell me what it means."' Then she let go his hand, and seated herself opposite to the chair which she gave him.

"I told you in my letter."

"You told me nothing in your letter,—except that it was to be off. Why is it to be—off? Do you not love me?" Then she threw herself upon her knees, and leaned upon his, and looked up in his face. "Paul," she said, "I have come again across the Atlantic on purpose to see you,—after so many months,—and will you not give me one kiss? Even though you should leave me for ever, give me one kiss." Of course he kissed her, not once, but with a long, warm embrace. How could it have been otherwise? With all his heart he wished that she would have remained away, but while she knelt there at his feet what could he do but embrace her? "Now tell me everything," she said, seating herself on a footstool at his feet.

She certainly did not look like a woman whom a man might illtreat.
"I have come across the Atlantic to see you."
or scorn with impunity. Paul felt, even while she was lavishing her
carresses upon him, that she might too probably turn and rend him
before he left her. He had known something of her temper before,
though he had also known the truth and warmth of her love. He had
travelled with her from San Francisco to England, and she had been
very good to him in illness, in distress of mind and in poverty,—for
he had been almost penniless in New York. When they landed at
Liverpool they were engaged as man and wife. He had told her all
his affairs, had given her the whole history of his life. This was
before his second journey to America, when Hamilton R. Fisker was
unknown to him. But she had told him little or nothing of her own
life,—but that she was a widow, and that she was travelling to Paris
on business. When he left her at the London railway station, from
which she started for Dover, he was full of all a lover’s ardour. He
had offered to go with her, but that she had declined. But when he
remembered that he must certainly tell his friend Roger of his engage-
ment, and remembered also how little he knew of the lady to whom
he was engaged, he became embarrassed. What were her means he
did not know. He did know that she was some years older than him-
self, and that she had spoken hardly a word to him of her own family.
She had indeed said that her husband had been one of the greatest
miscreants ever created, and had spoken of her release from him as
the one blessing she had known before she had met Paul Montague.
But it was only when he thought of all this after she had left him,—
only when he reflected how bald was the story which he must tell
Roger Carbury,—that he became dismayed. Such had been the
woman’s cleverness, such her charm, so great her power of adap-
tation, that he had passed weeks in her daily company, with still pro-
gressing intimacy and affection, without feeling that anything had
been missing.

He had told his friend, and his friend had declared to him that it
was impossible that he should marry a woman whom he had met in a
railway train without knowing something about her. Roger did all
he could to persuade the lover to forget his love,—and partially suc-
cceeded. It is so pleasant and so natural that a young man should
enjoy the company of a clever, beautiful woman on a long journey,—
so natural that during the journey he should allow himself to think
that she may during her whole life be all in all to him as she is at that
moment ;—and so natural again that he should see his mistake when
he has parted from her! But Montague, though he was half false to
his widow, was half true to her. He had pledged his word, and that
he said ought to bind him. Then he returned to California, and
learned through the instrumentality of Hamilton R. Fisker, that in
San Francisco Mrs. Hurtle was regarded as a mystery. Some people
did not quite believe that there ever had been a Mr. Hurtle. Others
said that there certainly had been a Mr. Hurtle, and that to the best
of their belief he still existed. The fact, however, best known of her
was, that she had shot a man through the head somewhere in Oregon.
She had not been tried for it, as the world of Oregon had considered
that the circumstances justified the deed. Everybody knew that she

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was very clever and very beautiful,—but everybody also thought that she was very dangerous. "She always had money when she was here," Hamilton Fiskar said, "but no one knew where it came from." Then he wanted to know why Paul inquired. "I don’t think, you know, that I should like to go in for a life partnership, if you mean that," said Hamilton K. Fiskar.

Montague had seen her in New York as he passed through on his second journey to San Francisco, and had then renewed his promises in spite of his cousin’s caution. He told her that he was going to see what he could make of his broken fortunes,—for at this time, as the reader will remember, there was no great railway in existence,—and she had promised to follow him. Since that they had never met till this day. She had not made the promised journey to San Francisco, at any rate before he had left it. Letters from her had reached him in England, and these he had answered by explaining to her, or endeavouring to explain, that their engagement must be at an end. And now she had followed him to London! "Tell me everything," she said, leaning upon him and looking up into his face.

"But you,—when did you arrive here?"

"Here, at this house, I arrived the night before last. On Tuesday I reached Liverpool. There I found that you were probably in London, and so I came on. I have come only to see you. I can understand that you should have been estranged from me. That journey home is now so long ago! Our meeting in New York was so short and wretched. I would not tell you because you then were poor yourself, but at that moment I was penniless. I have got my own now out from the very teeth of robbers." As she said this, she looked as though she could be very persistent in claiming her own,—or what she might think to be her own. "I could not get across to San Francisco as I said I would, and when I was there you had quarrelled with your uncle and returned. And now I am here. I at any rate have been faithful." As she said this his arm was again thrown over her, so as to press her head to his knee. "And now," she said, "tell me about yourself?"

His position was embarrassing and very odious to himself. Had he done his duty properly, he would gently have pushed her from him, have sprung to his legs, and have declared that, however faulty might have been his previous conduct, he now found himself bound to make her understand that he did not intend to become her husband. But he was either too much of a man or too little of a man for conduct such as that. He did make the avowal to himself, even at that moment as she sat there. Let the matter go as it would, she should never be his wife. He would marry no one unless it was Hetta Carbury. But he did not at all know how to get this said with proper emphasis, and yet with properly apologetic courtesy. "I am engaged here about this railway," he said. "You have heard, I suppose, of our projected scheme?"

"Heard of it! San Francisco is full of it. Hamilton Fiskar is the great man of the day there, and, when I left, your uncle was buying a villa for seventy-four thousand dollars. And yet they say that the
MRS. HURTELE.

best of it all has been transferred to you Londoners. Many there are very hard upon Fisker for coming here and doing as he did."

"It's doing very well, I believe," said Paul, with some feeling of shame, as he thought how very little he knew about it.

"You are the manager here in England?"

"No,—I am a member of the firm that manages it at San Francisco; but the real manager here is our chairman, Mr. Melmotte."

"Ah,—I have heard of him. He is a great man;—a Frenchman, is he not? There was a talk of inviting him to California. You know him of course?"

"Yes;—I know him. I see him once a week."

"I would sooner see that man than your Queen, or any of your dukes or lords. They tell me that he holds the world of commerce in his right hand. What power;—what grandeur!"

"Grand enough," said Paul, "if it all came honestly."

"Such a man rises above honesty," said Mrs. Hurtle, "as a great general rises above humanity when he sacrifices an army to conquer a nation. Such greatness is incompatible with small scruples. A pigmy man is stopped by a little ditch, but a giant stalks over the rivers."

"I prefer to be stopped by the ditches," said Montague.

"Ah, Paul, you were not born for commerce. And I will grant you this, that commerce is not noble unless it rises to great heights. To live in plenty by sticking to your counter from nine in the morning to nine at night, is not a fine life. But this man with a scratch of his pen can send out or call in millions of dollars. Do they say here that he is not honest?"

"As he is my partner in this affair perhaps I had better say nothing against him."

"Of course such a man will be abused. People have said that Napoleon was a coward, and Washington a traitor. You must take me where I shall see Melmotte. He is a man whose hand I would kiss; but I would not condescend to speak even a word of reverence to any of your Emperors."

"I fear you will find that your idol has feet of clay."

"Ah,—you mean that he is bold in breaking those precepts of yours about coveting worldly wealth. All men and women break that commandment, but they do so in a stealthy fashion, half drawing back the grasping hand, praying to be delivered from temptation while they fitch only a little, pretending to despise the only thing that is dear to them in the world. Here is a man who boldly says that he recognises no such law; that wealth is power, and that power is good, and that the more a man has of wealth the greater and the stronger and the nobler he can be. I love a man who can turn the hobgoblins inside out and burn the wooden bogies that he meets."

Montague had formed his own opinions about Melmotte. Though connected with the man, he believed their Grand Director to be as vile a scoundrel as ever lived. Mrs. Hurtle's enthusiasm was very pretty, and there was something of feminine eloquence in her words. But it was shocking to see them lavish on such a subject. "Personally, I do not like him," said Paul.
"I had thought to find that you and he were hand and glove."
"Oh no."
"But you are prospering in this business?"
"Yes,—I suppose we are prospering. It is one of those hazardous things in which a man can never tell whether he be really prosperous till he is out of it. I fell into it altogether against my will. I had no alternative."
"It seems to me to have been a golden chance."
"As far as immediate results go it has been golden."
"That at any rate is well, Paul. And now,—now that we have got back into our old way of talking, tell me what all this means. I have talked to no one after this fashion since we parted. Why should our engagement be over? You used to love me, did you not?"

He would willingly have left her question unanswered, but she waited for an answer. "You know I did," he said.
"I thought so. This I know, that you were sure and are sure of my love to you. Is it not so? Come, speak openly like a man. Do you doubt me?"

He did not doubt her, and was forced to say so. "No, indeed."
"Oh, with what bated, half-mouthed words you speak,—fit for a girl from a nursery! Out with it if you have anything to say against me! You owe me so much at any rate. I have never ill-treated you. I have never lied to you. I have taken nothing from you,—if I have not taken your heart. I have given you all that I have to give." Then she leaped to her feet and stood a little apart from him. "If you hate me, say so."

"Winifred," he said, calling her by her name.
"Winifred! Yes, now for the first time, though I have called you Paul from the moment you entered the room. Well, speak out. Is there another woman that you love?"

At this moment Paul Montague proved that at any rate he was no coward. Knowing the nature of the woman, how ardent, how impetuous she could be, and how full of wrath, he had come at her call intending to tell her the truth which he now spoke. "There is another," he said.

She stood silent, looking into his face, thinking how she would commence her attack upon him. She fixed her eyes upon him, standing upright, squeezing her own right hand with the fingers of the left. "Oh," she said, in a whisper;—"that is the reason why I am told that I am to be—off."
"That was not the reason."
"What;—can there be more reason than that,—better reason than that? Unless, indeed, it be that as you have learned to love another so also you have learned to—hate me."
"Listen to me, Winifrid."
"No, sir; no Winifrid now! How did you dare to kiss me, knowing that it was on your tongue to tell me I was to be cast aside? And so you love—some other woman! I am too old to please you, too rough,—too little like the dolls of your own country! What were
your—other reasons? Let me hear your—other reasons, that I may
tell you that they are lies."

The reasons were very difficult to tell, though when put forward
by Roger Carbury they had been easily pleaded. Paul knew but
little about Winifrid Hurtle, and nothing at all about the late Mr.
Hurtle. His reasons curtly put forward might have been so stated.
"We know too little of each other," he said.

"What more do you want to know? You can know all for the
asking. Did I ever refuse to answer you? As to my knowledge of
you and your affairs, if I think it sufficient, need you complain?
What is it that you want to know? Ask anything and I will tell you.
Is it about my money? You knew when you gave me your word that
I had next to none. Now I have ample means of my own. You knew
that I was a widow. What more? If you wish to hear of the wretch
that was my husband, I will deluge you with stories. I should have
thought that a man who loved would not have cared to hear much of
one—who perhaps was loved once."

He knew that his position was perfectly indefensible. It would
have been better for him not to have alluded to any reasons, but to
have remained firm to his assertion that he loved another woman. He
must have acknowledged himself to be false, perjured, inconstant, and
very base. A fault that may be venial to those who do not suffer, is
damnable, deserving of an eternity of tortures, in the eyes of the
sufferer. He must have submitted to be told that he was a fiend, and
might have had to endure whatever of punishment a lady in her wrath
could inflict upon him. But he would have been called upon for no
further mental effort. His position would have been plain. But
now he was at sea. "I wish to hear nothing," he said.

"Then why tell me that we know so little of each other? That,
surely, is a poor excuse to make to a woman,—after you have been
false to her. Why did you not say that when we were in New York
together? Think of it, Paul. Is not that mean?"

"I do not think that I am mean."

"No;—a man will lie to a woman, and justify it always. Who is
—this lady?"

He knew that he could not at any rate be warranted in mentioning
Hetta Carbury's name. He had never even asked her for her love,
and certainly had received no assurance that he was loved. "I can
not name her."

"And I, who have come hither from California to see you, am to
return satisfied because you tell me that you have—changed your
affections? That is to be all, and you think that fair? That suits
your own mind, and leaves no sore spot in your heart? You can do
that, and shake hands with me, and go away,—without a pang, with-
out a scruple?"

"I did not say so."

"And you are the man who cannot bear to hear me praise Augustus
Melmotte because you think him dishonest! Are you a liar?"

"I hope not."

"Did you say you would be my husband? Answer me, sir."
"I did say so."
"Do you now refuse to keep your promise? You shall answer me."
"I cannot marry you."
"Then, sir, are you not a liar?" It would have taken him long to explain to her, even had he been able, that a man may break a promise and yet not tell a lie. He had made up his mind to break his engagement before he had seen Hetta Carbury, and therefore he could not accuse himself of falseness on her account. He had been brought to his resolution by the rumours he had heard of her past life, and as to his uncertainty about her husband. If Mr. Hurtle were alive, certainly then he would not be a liar because he did not marry Mrs. Hurtle. He did not think himself to be a liar, but he was not at once ready with his defence. "Oh, Paul," she said, changing at once into softness,—"I am pleading to you for my life. Oh, that I could make you feel that I am pleading for my life. Have you given a promise to this lady also?"
"No," said he. "I have given no promise."
"But she loves you?"
"She has never said so."
"You have told her of your love?"
"Never."
"There is nothing, then, between you? And you would put her against me,—some woman who has nothing to suffer, no cause of complaint, who, for aught you know, cares nothing for you. Is that so?"
"I suppose it is," said Paul.
"Then you may still be mine. Oh, Paul, come back to me. Will any woman love you as I do;—live for you as I do? Think what I have done in coming here, where I have no friend,—not a single friend,—unless you are a friend. Listen to me. I have told the woman here that I am engaged to marry you."
"You have told the woman of the house?"
"Certainly I have. Was I not justified? Were you not engaged to me? Am I to have you to visit me here, and to risk her insults, perhaps to be told to take myself off and to find accommodation elsewhere, because I am too mealy-mouthed to tell the truth as to the cause of my being here? I am here because you have promised to make me your wife, and, as far as I am concerned, I am not ashamed to have the fact advertised in every newspaper in the town. I told her that I was the promised wife of one Paul Montague, who was joined with Mr. Melmotte in managing the new great American railway, and that Mr. Paul Montague would be with me this morning. She was too far-seeing to doubt me, but had she doubted, I could have shown her your letters. Now go and tell her that what I have said is false,—if you dare." The woman was not there, and it did not seem to be his immediate duty to leave the room in order that he might denounce a lady whom he certainly had ill-used. The position was one which required thought. After a while he took up his hat to go. "Do you mean to tell her that my statement is untrue?"
"No,"—he said; "not to-day."
"And you will come back to me?"
"Yes;—I will come back."
"I have no friend here, but you, Paul. Remember that. Remember all your promises. Remember all our love,—and be good to me."
Then she let him go without another word.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MRS. HURTLE GOES TO THE PLAY.

On the day after the visit just recorded, Paul Montague received the following letter from Mrs. Hurtle:

"My dear Paul,—
"I think that perhaps we hardly made ourselves understood to each other yesterday, and I am sure that you do not understand how absolutely my whole life is now at stake. I need only refer you to our journey from San Francisco to London to make you conscious that I really love you. To a woman such love is all important. She cannot throw it away as a man may do amidst the affairs of the world. Nor, if it has to be thrown from her, can she bear the loss as a man bears it. Her thoughts have dwelt on it with more constancy than his;—and then too her devotion has separated her from other things. My devotion to you has separated me from everything.
"But I scorn to come to you as a suppliant. If you choose to say after hearing me that you will put me away from you because you have seen some one fairer than I am, whatever course I may take in my indignation, I shall not throw myself at your feet to tell you of my wrongs. I wish, however, that you should hear me. You say that there is some one you love better than you love me, but that you have not committed yourself to her. Alas, I know too much of the world to be surprised that a man's constancy should not stand out two years in the absence of his mistress. A man cannot wrap himself up and keep himself warm with an absent love as a woman does. But I think that some remembrance of the past must come back upon you now that you have seen me again. I think that you must have owned to yourself that you did love me, and that you could love me again. You sin against me to my utter destruction if you leave me. I have given up every friend I have to follow you. As regards the other—nameless lady, there can be no fault; for, as you tell me, she knows nothing of your passion.
"You hinted that there were other reasons,—that we know too little of each other. You meant no doubt that you knew too little of me. Is it not the case that you were content when you knew only what was to be learned in those days of our sweet intimacy,
but that you have been made discontented by stories told you by your partners at San Francisco? If this be so, trouble yourself at any rate to find out the truth before you allow yourself to treat a woman as you propose to treat me. I think you are too good a man to cast aside a woman you have loved,—like a soiled glove,—because illnatured words have been spoken of her by men, or perhaps by women, who know nothing of her life. My late husband, Caradoc Hurtle, was Attorney-General in the State of Kansas when I married him, I being then in possession of a considerable fortune left to me by my mother. There his life was infamously bad. He spent what money he could get of mine, and then left me and the State, and took himself to Texas;—where he drank himself to death. I did not follow him, and in his absence I was divorced from him in accordance with the laws of Kansas State. I then went to San Francisco about property of my mother's, which my husband had fraudulently sold to a countryman of ours now resident in Paris,—having forged my name. There I met you, and in that short story I tell you all that there is to be told. It may be that you do not believe me now; but if so, are you not bound to go where you can verify your own doubts or my word?

"I try to write dispassionately, but I am in truth overborne by passion. I also have heard in California rumours about myself, and after much delay I received your letter. I resolved to follow you to England as soon as circumstances would permit me. I have been forced to fight a battle about my property, and I have won it. I had two reasons for carrying this through by my personal efforts before I saw you. I had begun it and had determined that I would not be beaten by fraud. And I was also determined that I would not plead to you as a pauper. We have talked too freely together in past days of our mutual money matters for me to feel any delicacy in alluding to them. When a man and woman have agreed to be husband and wife there should be no delicacy of that kind. When we came here together we were both embarrassed. We both had some property, but neither of us could enjoy it. Since that I have made my way through my difficulties. From what I have heard at San Francisco I suppose that you have done the same. I at any rate shall be perfectly contented if from this time our affairs can be made one.

"And now about myself,—immediately. I have come here all alone. Since I last saw you in New York I have not had altogether a good time. I have had a great struggle and have been thrown on my own resources and have been all alone. Very cruel things have been said of me. You heard cruel things said, but I presume them to have been said to you with reference to my late husband. Since that they have been said to others with reference to you. I have not now come, as my countrymen do generally, backed with a trunk full of introductions and with scores of friends ready to receive me. It was necessary to me that I should see you and hear my fate,—and here I am. I appeal to you to release me in some degree from the misery of my solitude. You know,—no one so well,—that my nature is social and that I am not given to be melancholy. Let us be cheerful
together, as we once were, if it be only for a day. Let me see you as I used to see you, and let me be seen as I used to be seen.

"Come to me and take me out with you, and let us dine together, and take me to one of your theatres. If you wish it I will promise you not to allude to that revelation you made to me just now, though of course it is nearer to my heart than any other matter. Perhaps some woman's vanity makes me think that if you would only see me again, and talk to me as you used to talk, you would think of me as you used to think.

"You need not fear but you will find me at home. I have no whither to go,—and shall hardly stir from the house till you come to me. Send me a line, however, that I may have my hat on if you are minded to do as I ask you.

"Yours with all my heart,

"WINIFRID HURTLE."

This letter took her much time to write, though she was very careful so to write as to make it seem that it had flown easily from her pen. She copied it from the first draught, but she copied it rapidly, with one or two premeditated erasures, so that it should look to have been done hurriedly. There had been much art in it. She had at any rate suppressed any show of anger. In calling him to her she had so written as to make him feel that if he would come he need not fear the claws of an offended lioness;—and yet she was angry as a lioness who had lost her cub. She had almost ignored that other lady whose name she had not yet heard. She had spoken of her lover's entanglement with that other lady as a light thing which might easily be put aside. She had said much of her own wrongs, but had not said much of the wickedness of the wrong doer. Invited as she had invited him, surely he could not but come to her! And then, in her reference to money, not descending to the details of dollars and cents, she had studied how to make him feel that he might marry her without impropriety. As she read it over to herself she thought that there was a tone through it of natural feminine uncautious eagerness. She put her letter up in an envelope, stuck a stamp on it and addressed it,—and then threw herself back in her chair to think of her position.

He should marry her,—or there should be something done which should make the name of Winifred Hurtle known to the world! She had no plan of revenge yet formed. She would not talk of revenge,—she told herself that she would not even think of revenge,—till she was quite sure that revenge would be necessary. But she did think of it, and could not keep her thoughts from it for a moment. Could it be possible that she, with all her intellectual gifts as well as those of her outward person, should be thrown over by a man whom well as she loved him,—and she did love him with all her heart,—she regarded as greatly inferior to herself! He had promised to marry her; and he should marry her, or the world should hear the story of his perjury!

Paul Montague felt that he was surrounded by difficulties as soon as he read the letter. That his heart was all the other way he was
quite sure; but yet it did seem to him that there was no escape from
his troubles open to him. There was not a single word in this
woman's letter that he could contradict. He had loved her and had
promised to make her his wife,—and had determined to break his
word to her because he found that she was enveloped in dangerous
mystery. He had so resolved before he had ever seen Hetta Carbury,
having been made to believe by Roger Carbury that a marriage with
an unknown American woman,—of whom he only did know that
she was handsome and clever,—would be a step to ruin. The
woman, as Roger said, was an adventuress,—might never have had
a husband,—might at this moment have two or three,—might be
overwhelmed with debt,—might be anything bad, dangerous, and
abominable. All that he had heard at San Francisco had substantiated
Roger's views. "Any scrape is better than that scrape," Roger had
said to him. Paul had believed his Mentor, and had believed with a
double faith as soon as he had seen Hetta Carbury.

But what should he do now? It was impossible, after what had
passed between them, that he should leave Mrs. Hurtle at her lodgings
at Islington without any notice. It was clear enough to him that she
would not consent to be so left. Then her present proposal,—though
it seemed to be absurd and almost comical in the tragical condition
of their present circumstances,—had in it some immediate comfort.
To take her out and give her a dinner, and then go with her to some
theatre, would be easy and perhaps pleasant. It would be easier, and
certainly much pleasanter, because she had pledged herself to abstain
from talking of her grievances. Then he remembered some happy
evenings, delicious hours, which he had so passed with her, when
they were first together at New York. There could be no better
companion for such a festival. She could talk,—and she could listen
as well as talk. And she could sit silent, conveying to her neighbour
the sense of her feminine charms by her simple proximity. He had
been very happy when so placed. Had it been possible he would
have escaped the danger now, but the reminiscence of past delights
in some sort reconciled him to the performance of this perilous duty.

But when the evening should be over, how would he part with her?
When the pleasant hour should have passed away and he had brought
her back to her door, what should he say to her then? He must
make some arrangement as to a future meeting. He knew that he
was in a great peril, and he did not know how he might best escape
it. He could not now go to Roger Carbury for advice; for was not
Roger Carbury his rival? It would be for his friend's interest that
he should marry the widow. Roger Carbury, as he knew well, was
too honest a man to allow himself to be guided in any advice he might
give by such a feeling, but, still, on this matter, he could no longer
tell everything to Roger Carbury. He could not say all that he
would have to say without speaking of Hetta;—and of his love for
Hetta he could not speak to his rival.

He had no other friend in whom he could confide. There was no
other human being he could trust, unless it was Hetta herself. He
thought for a moment that he would write a stern and true letter to
the woman, telling her that as it was impossible that there should ever be marriage between them, he felt himself bound to abstain from her society. But then he remembered her solitude, her picture of herself in London without even an acquaintance except himself, and he convinced himself that it would be impossible that he should leave her without seeing her. So he wrote to her thus;

"Dear Winifrid,

"I will come for you to-morrow at half-past five. We will dine together at the Thespian;—and then I will have a box at the Haymarket. The Thespian is a good sort of place, and lots of ladies dine there. You can dine in your bonnet.

"Yours affectionately,

"P. M."

Some half-formed idea ran through his brain that P. M. was a safer signature than Paul Montague. Then came a long train of thoughts as to the perils of the whole proceeding. She had told him that she had announced herself to the keeper of the lodging-house as engaged to him, and he had in a manner authorised the statement by declining to contradict it at once. And now, after that announcement, he was assenting to her proposal that they should go out and amuse themselves together. Hitherto she had always seemed to him to be open, candid, and free from intrigue. He had known her to be impulsive, capricious, at times violent, but never deceitful. Perhaps he was unable to read correctly the inner character of a woman whose experience of the world had been much wider than his own. His mind misgave him that it might be so; but still he thought that he knew that she was not treacherous. And yet did not her present acts justify him in thinking that she was carrying on a plot against him? The note, however, was sent, and he prepared for the evening of the play, leaving the dangers of the occasion to adjust themselves. He ordered the dinner and he took the box, and at the hour fixed he was again at her lodgings.

The woman of the house with a smile showed him into Mrs. Hurtle's sitting-room, and he at once perceived that the smile was intended to welcome him as an accepted lover. It was a smile half of congratulation to the lover, half of congratulation to herself as a woman that another man had been caught by the leg and made fast. Who does not know the smile? What man, who has been caught and made sure, has not felt a certain dissatisfaction at being so treated, understanding that the smile is intended to convey to him a sense of his own captivity? It has, however, generally mattered but little to us. If we have felt that something of ridicule was intended, because we have been regarded as cocks with their spurs cut away, then we also have a pride when we have declared to ourselves that upon the whole we have gained more than we have lost. But with Paul Montague at the present moment there was no satisfaction, no pride,—only a feeling of danger which every hour became deeper, and stronger, with less chance of escape. He was almost tempted at this moment to detain the woman, and tell her the truth,—and bear the immediate
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consequences. But there would be treason in doing so, and he would not, could not do it.

He was left hardly a moment to think of this. Almost before the woman had shut the door, Mrs. Hurtle came to him out of her bedroom, with her hat on her head. Nothing could be more simple than her dress, and nothing prettier. It was now June, and the weather was warm, and the lady wore a light gauzy black dress,—there is a fabric which the milliners I think call grenadine,—coming close up round her throat. It was very pretty, and she was prettier even than her dress. And she had on a hat, black also, small and simple, but very pretty. There are times at which a man going to a theatre with a lady wishes her to be bright in her apparel,—almost gorgeous; in which he will hardly be contented unless her cloak be scarlet, and her dress white, and her gloves of some bright hue,—unless she wear roses or jewels in her hair. It is thus our girls go to the theatre now, when they go intending that all the world shall know who they are. But there are times again in which a man would prefer that his companion should be very quiet in her dress,—but still pretty; in which he would choose that she should dress herself for him only. All this Mrs. Hurtle had understood accurately; and Paul Montague, who understood nothing of it, was gratified. "You told me to have a hat, and here I am,—hat and all." She gave him her hand, and laughed, and looked pleasantly at him, as though there was no cause of unhappiness between them. The lodging-house woman saw them enter the cab, and muttered some little word as they went off. Paul did not hear the word, but was sure that it bore some indistinct reference to his expected marriage.

Neither during the drive, nor at the dinner, nor during the performance at the theatre, did she say a word in allusion to her engagement. It was with them, as in former days it had been at New York. She whispered pleasant words to him, touching his arm now and again with her finger as she spoke, seeming ever better inclined to listen than to speak. Now and again she referred, after some slightest fashion, to little circumstances that had occurred between them, to some joke, some hour of tedium, some moment of delight; but it was done as one man might do it to another,—if any man could have done it so pleasantly. There was a scent which he had once approved, and now she bore it on her handkerchief. There was a ring which he had once given her, and she wore it on the finger with which she touched his sleeve. With his own hands he had once adjusted her curls, and each curl was as he had placed it. She had a way of shaking her head, that was very pretty,—a way that might, one would think, have been dangerous at her age, as likely to betray those first grey hairs which will come to disturb the last days of youth. He had once told her in sport to be more careful. She now shook her head again, and, as he smiled, she told him that she could still dare to be careless. There are a thousand little silly softnesses which are pretty and endearing between acknowledged lovers, with which no woman would like to dispense, to which even men who are in love submit sometimes with delight; but which in
other circumstances would be vulgar,—and to the woman distasteful. There are closenesses and sweet approaches, smiles and nods and pleasant winkings, whispers, innendoes and hints, little mutual admirations and assurances that there are things known to those two happy ones of which the world beyond is altogether ignorant. Much of this comes of nature, but something of it sometimes comes by art. Of such art as there may be in it Mrs. Hurtle was a perfect master. No allusion was made to their engagement,—not an unpleasant word was spoken; but the art was practised with all its pleasant adjuncts. Paul was flattered to the top of his bent; and, though the sword was hanging over his head, though he knew that the sword must fall,—must partly fall that very night,—still he enjoyed it.

There are men who, of their natures, do not like women, even though they may have wives and legions of daughters, and be surrounded by things feminine in all the affairs of their lives. Others again have their strongest affinities and sympathies with women, and are rarely altogether happy when removed from their influence. Paul Montague was of the latter sort. At this time he was thoroughly in love with Hetta Carbury, and was not in love with Mrs. Hurtle. He would have given much of his golden prospects in the American railway to have had Mrs. Hurtle reconveyed suddenly to San Francisco. And yet he had a delight in her presence. "The acting isn't very good," he said when the piece was nearly over.

"What does it signify? What we enjoy or what we suffer depends upon the humour. The acting is not first-rate, but I have listened and laughed and cried, because I have been happy."

He was bound to tell her that he also had enjoyed the evening, and was bound to say it in no voice of hypocritical constraint. "It has been very jolly," he said.

"And one has so little that is really jolly, as you call it. I wonder whether any girl ever did sit and cry like that because her lover talked to another woman. What I find fault with is that the writers and actors are so ignorant of men and women as we see them every day. It's all right that she should cry, but she shouldn't cry there." The position described was so nearly her own, that he could say nothing to this. She had so spoken on purpose,—fighting her own battle after her own fashion, knowing well that her words would confuse him. "A woman hides such tears. She may be found crying because she is unable to hide them;—but she does not willingly let the other woman see them. Does she?"

"I suppose not."

"Medea did not weep when she was introduced to Creusa."

"Women are not all Medaeas," he replied.

"There's a dash of the savage princess about most of them. I am quite ready if you like. I never want to see the curtain fall. And I have had no nosegay brought in a wheelbarrow to throw on to the stage. Are you going to see me home?"

"Certainly."

"You need not. I'm not a bit afraid of a London cab by myself."
But of course he accompanied her to Islington. He owed her at any rate as much as that. She continued to talk during the whole journey. What a wonderful place London was,—so immense, but so dirty! New York of course was not so big, but was, she thought, pleasanter. But Paris was the gem of gems among towns. She did not like Frenchmen, and she liked Englishmen even better than Americans; but she fancied that she could never like English women. “I do so hate all kinds of buckram. I like good conduct, and law, and religion too if it be not forced down one’s throat; but I hate what your women call propriety. I suppose what we have been doing to-night is very improper; but I am quite sure that it has not been in the least wicked.”

“I don’t think it has,” said Paul Montagne very tamely.

It is a long way from the Haymarket to Islington, but at last the cab reached the lodging-house door. “Yes, this is it,” she said. “Even about the houses there is an air of stiff-necked propriety which frightens me.” She was getting out as she spoke, and he had already knocked at the door. “Come in for one moment,” she said as he paid the cabman. The woman the while was standing with the door in her hand. It was near midnight,—but, when people are engaged, hours do not matter. The woman of the house, who was respectability herself,—a nice kind widow, with five children, named Pipkin,—understood that and smiled again as he followed the lady into the sitting-room. She had already taken off her hat and was flinging it on to the sofa as he entered. “Shut the door for one moment,” she said; and he shut it. Then she threw herself into his arms, not kissing him but looking up into his face. “Oh Paul,” she exclaimed, “my darling! Oh Paul, my love! I will not bear to be separated from you. No, no;—never. I swear it, and you may believe me. There is nothing I cannot do for love of you,—but to lose you.” Then she pushed him from her and looked away from him, clasping her hands together. “But Paul, I mean to keep my pledge to you to-night. It was to be an island in our troubles, a little holiday in our hard school-time, and I will not destroy it at its close. You will see me again soon,—will you not?” He nodded assent, then took her in his arms and kissed her, and left her without a word.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOLLY LONGEYAFFE GOES INTO THE CITY.

I t has been told how the gambling at the Bear Garden went on one Sunday night. On the following Monday Sir Felix did not go to the club. He had watched Miles Grendall at play, and was sure that on more than one or two occasions the man had cheated. Sir Felix did not quite know what in such circumstances it would be best for
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him to do. Reprobate as he was himself, this work of villainy was new to him and seemed to be very terrible. What steps ought he to take? He was quite sure of his facts, and yet he feared that Nidderdale and Grasslough and Longestaffe would not believe him. He would have told Montague, but Montague had, he thought, hardly enough authority at the club to be of any use to him. On the Tuesday again he did not go to the club. He felt severely the loss of the excitement to which he had been accustomed, but the thing was too important to him to be slurred over. He did not dare to sit down and play with the man who had cheated him without saying anything about it. On the Wednesday afternoon life was becoming unbearable to him and he sauntered into the building at about five in the afternoon. There, as a matter of course, he found Dolly Longestaffe drinking sherry and bitters. "Where, the blessed angels, have you been?" said Dolly. Dolly was at that moment alert with the sense of a duty performed. He had just called on his sister and written a sharp letter to his father, and felt himself to be almost a man of business.

"I've had fish of my own to fry," said Felix, who had passed the last two days in unendurable idleness. Then he referred again to the money which Dolly owed him, not making any complaint, not indeed asking for immediate payment, but explaining with an air of importance that if a commercial arrangement could be made, it might, at this moment, be very serviceable to him. "I'm particularly anxious to take up those shares," said Felix.

"Of course you ought to have your money."

"I don't say that at all, old fellow. I know very well that you're all right. You're not like that fellow, Miles Greendale."

"Well; no. Poor Miles has got nothing to bless himself with. I suppose I could get it, and so I ought to pay."

"That's no excuse for Greendale," said Sir Felix, shaking his head.

"A chap can't pay if he hasn't got it, Carbury. A chap ought to pay of course. I've had a letter from our lawyer within the last half hour—here it is." And Dolly pulled a letter out of his pocket which he had opened and read indeed within the last hour, but which had been duly delivered at his lodgings early in the morning. "My governor wants to sell Pickering, and Melmotte wants to buy the place. My governor can't sell without me, and I've asked for half the plunder. I know what's what. My interest in the property is greater than his. It isn't much of a place, and they are talking of £50,000, over and above the debt upon it. £25,000 would pay off what I owe on my own property, and make me very square. From what this fellow says I suppose they're going to give in to my terms."

"By George, that'll be a grand thing for you, Dolly."

"Oh yes. Of course I want it. But I don't like the place going. I'm not much of a fellow, I know. I'm awfully lazy and can't get myself to go in for things as I ought to do; but I've a sort of feeling that I don't like the family property going to pieces. A fellow oughtn't to let his family property go to pieces."

"You never lived at Pickering."
"No;—and I don't know that it is any good. It gives us 8 per cent. on the money it's worth, while the governor is paying 6 per cent., and I'm paying 25, for the money we've borrowed. I know more about it than you'd think. It ought to be sold, and now I suppose it will be sold. Old Marmotte knows all about it, and if you like I'll go with you to the city to-morrow and make it straight about what I owe you. He'll advance me £1,000, and then you can get the shares. Are you going to dine here?"

Sir Felix said that he would dine at the club, but declared, with considerable mystery in his manner, that he could not stay and play whist afterwards. He acceded willingly to Dolly's plan of visiting Abchurch Lane on the following day, but had some difficulty in inducing his friend to consent to fix on an hour early enough for city purposes. Dolly suggested that they should meet at the club at 4 p.m. Sir Felix had named noon, and promised to call at Dolly's lodgings. They split the difference at last and agreed to start at two. They then dined together, Miles Gren dall dining alone at the next table to them. Dolly and Gren dall spoke to each other frequently, but in that conversation the young baronet would not join. Nor did Gren dall ever address himself to Sir Felix. "Is there anything up between you and Miles?" said Dolly, when they had adjourned to the smoking-room.

"I can't bear him."

"There never was any love between you two, I know. But you used to speak, and you've played with him all through."

"Played with him! I should think I have. Though he did get such a haul last Sunday he owes me more than you do now."

"Is that the reason you haven't played the last two nights?"

Sir Felix paused a moment. "No;—that is not the reason. I'll tell you all about it in the cab to-morrow." Then he left the club, declaring that he would go up to Grosvenor Square and see Marie Marmotte. He did go up to the Square, and when he came to the house he would not go in. What was the good? He could do nothing further till he got old Marmotte's consent, and in no way could he so probably do that as by showing that he had got money wherewith to buy shares in the railway. What he did with himself during the remainder of the evening the reader need not know, but on his return home at some comparatively early hour, he found this note from Marie.

"Wednesday Afternoon."

"Dearest Felix,

"Why don't we see you? Mamma would say nothing if you came. Papa is never in the drawing-room. Miss Longstaffe is here of course, and people always come in in the evening. We are just going to dine out at the Duchess of Stevenage's. Papa, and mamma and I. Mamma told me that Lord Nidderdale is to be there, but you need not be a bit afraid. I don't like Lord Nidderdale, and I will never take any one but the man I love. You know who that is. Miss Longstaffe is so angry because she can't go with us. What do you
think of her telling me that she did not understand being left alone?
We are to go afterwards to a musical party at Lady Gamut's. Miss
Longestaffe is going with us, but she says that she hates music. She
is such a set-up thing! I wonder why papa has her here. We don't
go anywhere to-morrow evening, so pray come.

"And why haven't you written me something and sent it to Didon?
She won't betray us. And if she did, what matters? I mean to be
true. If papa were to beat me into a mummy I would stick to you.
He told me once to take Lord Nidderdale, and then he told me to
refuse him. And now he wants me to take him again. But I won't.
I'll take no one but my own darling.

"Yours for ever and ever,
"MARIE."

Now that the young lady had begun to have an interest of her own
in life, she was determined to make the most of it. All this was
delightful to her, but to Sir Felix it was simply "a bother." Sir
Felix was quite willing to marry the girl to-morrow,—on condition of
course that the money was properly arranged; but he was not willing
to go through much work in the way of love-making with Marie
Melmotte. In such business he preferred Ruby Raggles as a com-
panion.

On the following day Felix was with his friend at the appointed time,
and was only kept an hour waiting while Dolly ate his breakfast and
struggled into his coat and boots. On their way to the city Felix
told his dreadful story about Miles Grendall. "By George!" said
Dolly. "And you think you saw him do it!"

"It's not thinking at all. I'm sure I saw him do it three times,
I believe he always had an ace somewhere about him." Dolly sat
quite silent thinking of it. "What had I better do?" asked Sir Felix.
"By George,—I don't know."

"What should you do?"

"Nothing at all. I shouldn't believe my own eyes. Or if I did,
should take care not to look at him."

"You wouldn't go on playing with him?"

"Yes I should. It'd be such a bore breaking up."

"But Dolly,—if you think of it!"

"That's all very fine, my dear fellow, but I shouldn't think of it."

"And you won't give me your advice."

"Well;—no; I think I'd rather not. I wish you hadn't told me.
Why did you pick me out to tell me? Why didn't you tell Nidd-
derdale?"

"He might have said, why didn't you tell Longestaffe?"

"No, he wouldn't. Nobody would suppose that anybody would
pick me out for this kind of thing. If I'd known that you were
going to tell me such a story as this I wouldn't have come with
you."

"That's nonsense, Dolly."

"Very well. I can't bear these kind of things. I feel all in a
twitter already."
"You mean to go on playing just the same?"
"Of course I do. If he won anything very heavy I should begin to think about it, I suppose. Oh; this is Abchurch Lane, is it? Now for the man of money."

The man of money received them much more graciously than Sir Felix had expected. Of course nothing was said about Marie and no further allusion was made to the painful subject of the baronet's "property." Both Dolly and Sir Felix were astonished by the quick way in which the great financier understood their views and the readiness with which he undertook to comply with them. No disagreeable questions were asked as to the nature of the debt between the young men. Dolly was called upon to sign a couple of documents, and Sir Felix to sign one,—and then they were assured that the thing was done. Mr. Adolphus Longstaffe had paid Sir Felix Carbury a thousand pounds, and Sir Felix Carbury's commission had been accepted by Mr. Melmotte for the purchase of railway stock to that amount. Sir Felix attempted to say a word. He endeavoured to explain that his object in this commercial transaction was to make money immediately by reselling the shares,—and to go on continually making money by buying at a low price and selling at a high price. He no doubt did believe that, being a Director, if he could once raise the means of beginning this game, he could go on with it for an unlimited period;—buy and sell, buy and sell;—so that he would have an almost regular income. This, as far as he could understand, was what Paul Montague was allowed to do,—simply because he had become a Director with a little money. Mr. Melmotte was cordiality itself, but he could not be got to go into particulars. It was all right. "You will wish to sell again, of course;—of course. I'll watch the market for you." When the young men left the room all they knew, or thought that they knew, was, that Dolly Longstaffe had authorised Melmotte to pay a thousand pounds on his behalf to Sir Felix, and that Sir Felix had instructed the same great man to buy shares with the amount. "But why didn't he give you the scrip?" said Dolly on his way westwards.

"I suppose it's all right with him," said Sir Felix.
"Oh yes;—it's all right. Thousands of pounds to him are only like half-crowns to us fellows. I should say it's all right. All the same, he's the biggest rogue out, you know," Sir Felix already began to be unhappy about his thousand pounds.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MISS MELMOTTE'S COURAGE.

LADY CARBURY continued to ask frequent questions as to the prosecution of her son's suit, and Sir Felix began to think that he was persecuted. "I have spoken to his father," he said crossly.
"And what did Mr. Melmotte say?"
"Say,—what should he say? He wanted to know what income I had got. After all he's an old screw."

"Did he forbid you to come there any more?"

"Now, mother, it's no use your cross-examining me. If you'll let me alone I'll do the best I can."

"She has accepted you, herself?"

"Of course she has. I told you that at Carbury."

"Then, Felix, if I were you I'd run off with her. I would indeed. It's done every day, and nobody thinks any harm of it when you marry the girl. You could do it now because I know you've got money. From all I can hear she's just the sort of girl that would go with you." Tho son sat silent, listening to these maternal councils. He did believe that Marie would go off with him, were he to propose the scheme to her. Her own father had almost alluded to such a proceeding,—had certainly hinted that it was feasible,—but at the same time had very clearly stated that in such case the ardent lover would have to content himself with the lady alone. In any such event as that there would be no fortune. But then, might not that only be a threat? Rich fathers generally do forgive their daughters, and a rich father with only one child would surely forgive her when she returned to him, as she would do in this instance, graced with a title. Sir Felix thought of all this as he sat there silent. His mother read his thoughts as she continued. "Of course, Felix, there must be some risk."

"Fancy what it would be to be thrown over at last!" he exclaimed. "I couldn't bear it. I think I should kill her."

"Oh no, Felix; you wouldn't do that. But when I say there would be some risk I mean that there would be very little. There would be nothing in it that ought to make him really angry. He has nobody else to give his money to, and it would be much nicer to have his daughter, Lady Carbury, with him, than to be left all alone in the world."

"I couldn't live with him, you know. I couldn't do it."

"You needn't live with him, Felix. Of course she would visit her parents. When the money was once settled you need see as little of them as you pleased. Pray do not allow trifles to interfere with you. If this should not succeed, what are you to do? We shall all starve unless something be done. If I were you, Felix, I would take her away at once. They say she is of age."

"I shouldn't know where to take her," said Sir Felix, almost stunned into thoughtfulness by the magnitude of the proposition made to him. "All that about Scotland is done with now."

"Of course you would marry her at once."

"I suppose so,—unless it were better to stay as we were, till the money was settled."

"Oh, no; no! Everybody would be against you. If you take her off in a spirited sort of way and then marry her, everybody will be with you. That's what you want. The father and mother will be sure to come round, if—"

"The mother is nothing."

"Ho will come round if people speak up in your favour. I could
get Mr. Alf and Mr. Browne to help. I'd try it, Felix; indeed I would. Ten thousand a year is not to be had every year.'

Sir Felix gave no assent to his mother's views. He felt no desire to relieve her anxiety by an assurance of activity in the matter. But the prospect was so grand that it had excited even him. He had money sufficient for carrying out the scheme, and if he delayed the matter now, it might well be that he would never again find himself so circumstanced. He thought that he would ask somebody whether he ought to take her, and what he ought to do with her;—and that he would then make the proposition to herself. Miles Grendall would be the man to tell him, because, with all his faults, Miles did understand things. But he could not ask Miles. He and Nidderdale were good friends; but Nidderdale wanted the girl for himself. Grasslough would be sure to tell Nidderdale. Dolly would be altogether useless. He thought that, perhaps, Herr Vossner would be the man to help him. There would be no difficulty out of which Herr Vossner would not extricate 'a fellow,'—if 'the fellow' paid him.

On Thursday evening he went to Grosvenor Square, as desired by Mario,—but unfortunately found Melmotte in the drawing-room. Lord Nidderdale was there also, and his lordship's old father, the Marquis of Auld Reekie, whom Felix, when he entered the room, did not know. He was a fierce-looking, gouty old man, with watery eyes, and very stiff grey hair,—almost white. He was standing up supporting himself on two sticks when Sir Felix entered the room. There were also present Madame Melmotte, Miss Longstaffe, and Marie. As Felix had entered the hall one huge footman had said that the ladies were not at home; then there had been for a moment a whispering behind a door,—in which he afterwards conceived that Madame Didon had taken a part;—and upon that a second tall footman had contradicted the first and had ushered him up to the drawing-room. He felt considerably embarrassed, but shook hands with the ladies, bowed to Melmotte, who seemed to take no notice of him, and nodded to Lord Nidderdale. He had not had time to place himself, when the Marquis arranged things. "Suppose we go down-stairs," said the Marquis.

"Certainly, my lord," said Melmotte. "I'll show your lordship the way." The Marquis did not speak to his son, but poked at him with his stick, as though poking him out of the door. So instigated Nidderdale followed the financier, and the gouty old Marquis toddled after them.

Madame Melmotte was beside herself with trepidation. "You should not have been made to come up at all," she said. "Il faut que vous vous retirez."

"I am very sorry," said Sir Felix, looking quite aghast. "I think that I had at any rate better retire," said Miss Longstaffe, raising herself to her full height and stalking out of the room.

"Qu'elle est mechante," said Madame Melmotte. "Oh, she is so bad. Sir Felix, you had better go too. Yes,—indeed."

"No," said Marie, running to him, and taking hold of his arm. "Why should he go? I want papa to know."

“Then he shall,” said Marie, clinging to her lover. “I will never marry Lord Niderdale. If he were to cut me into bits I wouldn’t do it. Felix, you love me;—do you not?”

“Certainly,” said Sir Felix, slipping his arm round her waist.

“Mamma,” said Marie, “I will never have any other man but him;—never, never, never. Oh, Felix, tell her that you love me.”

“You know that, don’t you, ma’am.” Sir Felix was a little troubled in his mind as to what he should say, or what he should do.

“Oh, love! It is a beastliness,” said Madame Melmotte. “Sir Felix, you had better go. Yes, indeed. Will you be so obliging?”

“Don’t go,” said Marie. “No, mamma, he shan’t go. What has he to be afraid of? I will walk down among them into papa’s room, and say that I will never marry that man, and that this is my lover. Felix, will you come?”

Sir Felix did not quite like the proposition. There had been a savage ferocity in that Marquis’s eye, and there was habitually a heavy sternness about Melmotte, which together made him resist the invitation. “I don’t think I have a right to do that,” he said, “because it is Mr. Melmotte’s own house.”

“I wouldn’t mind,” said Marie. “I told papa to-day that I wouldn’t marry Lord Niderdale.”

“Was he angry with you?”

“He laughed at me. He manages people till he thinks that everybody must do exactly what he tells them. He may kill me, but I will not do it. I have quite made up my mind. Felix, if you will be true to me, nothing shall separate us. I will not be ashamed to tell everybody that I love you.”

Madame Melmotte had now thrown herself into a chair and was sighing. Sir Felix stood on the rug with his arm round Marie’s waist, listening to her protestations, but saying little in answer to them,—when, suddenly, a heavy step was heard ascending the stairs.

“C’est lui,” screamed Madame Melmotte, busting up from her seat and hurrying out of the room by a side door. The two lovers were alone for one moment, during which Marie lifted up her face, and Sir Felix kissed her lips. “Now be brave,” she said, escaping from his arm, “and I’ll be brave.” Mr. Melmotte looked round the room as he entered. “Where are the others?” he asked.

“Mamma has gone away, and Miss Longstaffe went before mamma.”

“Sir Felix, it is well that I should tell you that my daughter is engaged to marry Lord Niderdale.”

“Sir Felix, I am not engaged—to—marry Lord Niderdale,” said Marie. “It’s no good, papa. I won’t do it. If you chop me to pieces, I won’t do it.”

“She will marry Lord Niderdale,” continued Mr. Melmotte, addressing himself to Sir Felix. “As that is arranged, you will perhaps think it better to leave us. I shall be happy to renew my acquaintance with you as soon as the fact is recognised;—or happy to see you in the city at any time.”
"Papa, he is my lover," said Marie.

"Pooh!"

"It is not pooh. He is. I will never have any other. I hate Lord Nidderdale; and as for that dreadful old man, I could not bear to look at him. Sir Felix is as good a gentleman as he is. If you loved me, papa, you would not want to make me unhappy all my life."

Her father walked up to her rapidly with his hand raised, and she clung only the closer to her lover's arm. At this moment Sir Felix did not know what he might best do, but he thoroughly wished him- self out in the square. "Jade," said Melmotte, "get to your room."

"Of course I will go to bed, if you tell me, papa."

"I do tell you. How dare you take hold of him in that way before me! Have you no idea of disgrace?"

"I am not disgraced. It is not more disgraceful to love him than that other man. Oh, papa, don't. You hurt me. I am going." He took her by the arm and dragged her to the door, and then thrust her out.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Melmotte," said Sir Felix, "to have had a hand in causing this disturbance."

"Go away, and don't come back any more;—that's all. You can't both marry her. All you have got to understand is this. I'm not the man to give my daughter a single shilling if she marries against my consent. By the God that bears me, Sir Felix, she shall not have one shilling. But look you,—if you'll give this up, I shall be proud to co-operate with you in anything you may wish to have done in the city."

After this Sir Felix left the room, went down the stairs, had the door opened for him, and was ushered into the square. But as he went through the hall a woman managed to shove a note into his hand,—which he read as soon as he found himself under a gas lamp. It was dated that morning, and had therefore no reference to the fray which had just taken place. It ran as follows:—

"I hope you will come to-night. There is something I cannot tell you then, but you ought to know it. When we were in France papa thought it wise to settle a lot of money on me. I don't know how much, but I suppose it was enough to live on if other things went wrong. He never talked to me about it, but I know it was done. And it hasn't been undone, and can't be without my leave. He is very angry about you this morning, for I told him I would never give you up. He says he won't give me anything if I marry without his leave. But I am sure he cannot take it away. I tell you, because I think I ought to tell you everything."

"M."

Sir Felix as he read this could not but think that he had become engaged to a very enterprising young lady. It was evident that she did not care to what extent she braved her father on behalf of her lover, and now she coolly proposed to rob him. But Sir Felix saw no
"Get to your Room."
reason why he should not take advantage of the money made over to
the girl’s name, if he could lay his hands on it. He did not know
much of such transactions, but he knew more than Marie Melmotte,
and could understand that a man in Melmotte’s position should want
to secure a portion of his fortune against accidents, by settling it on
his daughter. Whether having so settled it, he could again resume it
without the daughter’s assent, Sir Felix did not know. Marie, who
had no doubt been regarded as an absolutely passive instrument when
the thing was done, was now quite alive to the benefit which she
might possibly derive from it. Her proposition, put into plain English,
amounted to this: “Take me and marry me without my father’s
consent,—and then you and I together can rob my father of the money
which, for his own purposes, he has settled upon me.” He had looked
upon the lady of his choice as a poor weak thing, without any special
character of her own, who was made worthy of consideration only by
the fact that she was a rich man’s daughter; but now she began to
loom before his eyes as something bigger than that. She had had a
will of her own when the mother had none. She had not been afraid
of her brutal father when he, Sir Felix, had trembled before him.
She had offered to be beaten, and killed, and chopped to pieces on
behalf of her lover. There could be no doubt about her running
away if she were asked.

It seemed to him that within the last month he had gained a great
deal of experience, and that things which heretofore had been trouble-
some to him, or difficult, or perhaps impossible, were now coming easily
within his reach. He had won two or three thousand pounds at cards,
whereas invariable loss had been the result of the small play in which
he had before indulged. He had been set to marry this heiress,
having at first no great liking for the attempt, because of its diffi-
culties and the small amount of hope which it offered him. The girl
was already willing and anxious to jump into his arms. Then he
had detected a man cheating at cards,—an extent of iniquity that
was awful to him before he had seen it,—and was already beginning to
think that there was not very much in that. If there was not much
in it, if such a man as Miles Grenvall could cheat at cards and be
dbrought to no punishment, why should not he try it? It was a
rapid way of winning, no doubt. He remembered that on one or
two occasions he had asked his adversary to cut the cards a second
time at whist, because he had observed that there was no honour
at the bottom. No feeling of honesty had interfered with him.
The little trick had hardly been premeditated, but when successful
without detection had not troubled his conscience. Now it seemed
to him that much more than that might be done without detection.
But nothing had opened his eyes to the ways of the world so widely
as the sweet little lover-like proposition made by Miss Melmotte for
robbing her father. It certainly recommended the girl to him. She
had been able at an early age, amidst the circumstances of a very
secluded life, to throw off from her altogether those scruples of
honesty, those bugbears of the world, which are apt to prevent great
enterprises in the minds of men.
What should he do next? This sum of money of which Marie wrote so easily was probably large. It would not have been worth the while of such a man as Mr. Melmotte to make a trifling provision of this nature. It could hardly be less than £50,000,—might probably be very much more. But this was certain to him,—that if he and Marie were to claim this money as man and wife, there could then be no hope of further liberality. It was not probable that such a man as Mr. Melmotte would forgive even an only child such an offence as that. Even if it were obtained, £50,000 would not be very much. And Melmotte might probably have means, even if the robbery were duly perpetrated, of making the possession of the money very uncomfortable. These were deep waters into which Sir Felix was preparing to plunge; and he did not feel himself to be altogether comfortable, although he liked the deep waters.

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. MELMOTTE’S PROMISE.

On the following Saturday there appeared in Mr. Alf’s paper, the “Evening Pulpit,” a very remarkable article on the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway. It was an article that attracted a great deal of attention and was therefore remarkable, but it was in nothing more remarkable than in this,—that it left on the mind of its reader no impression of any decided opinion about the railway. The Editor would at any future time be able to refer to his article with equal pride whether the railway should become a great cosmopolitan fact, or whether it should collapse amidst the foul struggles of a horde of swindlers. In utrumque paratus, the article was mysterious, suggestive, amusing, well-informed,—that in the “Evening Pulpit” was a matter of course,—and, above all things, ironical. Next to its omniscience its irony was the strongest weapon belonging to the “Evening Pulpit.” There was a little praise given, no doubt in irony, to the duchesses who served Mr. Melmotte. There was a little praise, given of course in irony, to Mr. Melmotte’s Board of English Directors. There was a good deal of praise, but still alloyed by a dash of irony, bestowed on the idea of civilising Mexico by joining it to California. Praise was bestowed upon England for taking up the matter, but accompanied by some ironical touches at her incapacity to believe thoroughly in any enterprise not originated by herself. Then there was something said of the universality of Mr. Melmotte’s commercial genius, but whether said in a spirit prophetic of ultimate failure and disgrace, or of heavenborn success and unequalled commercial splendour, no one could tell.

It was generally said at the clubs that Mr. Alf had written this article himself. Old Splinter, who was one of a body of men possessing an excellent cellar of wine and calling themselves Paides
Pallados, and who had written for the heavy quarterlies any time this last forty years, professed that he saw through the article. The "Evening Pulpit" had been, he explained, desirous of going as far as it could in denouncing Mr. Melmotte without incurring the danger of an action for libel. Mr. Splinter thought that the thing was clever but mean. These new publications generally were mean. Mr. Splinter was constant in that opinion; but, putting the meanness aside, he thought that the article was well done. According to his view it was intended to expose Mr. Melmotte and the railway. But the Pades Pallados generally did not agree with him. Under such an interpretation, what had been the meaning of that paragraph in which the writer had declared that the work of joining one ocean to another was worthy of the nearest approach to divinity that had been granted to men? Old Splinter chuckled and gabbled as he heard this, and declared that there was not wit enough left now even among the Pades Pallados to understand a shaft of irony. There could be no doubt, however, at the time, that the world did not go with old Splinter, and that the article served to enhance the value of shares in the great railway enterprise.

Lady Carbury was sure that the article was intended to write up the railway, and took great joy in it. She entertained in her brain a somewhat confused notion that if she could only befrist herself in the right direction and could induce her son to open his eyes to his own advantage, very great things might be achieved, so that wealth might become his handmaid and luxury the habit and the right of his life. He was the beloved and the accepted suitor of Marie Melmotte. He was a Director of this great company, sitting at the same board with the great commercial hero. He was the handsomest young man in London. And he was a baronet. Very wild ideas occurred to her. Should she take Mr. Alf into her entire confidence? If Melmotte and Alf could be brought together what might they not do? Alf could write up Melmotte, and Melmotte could shower shares upon Alf. And if Melmotte would come and be smiled upon by herself, be flattered as she thought that she could flatter him, be told that he was a god, and have that passage about the divinity of joining ocean to ocean construed to him as she could construe it, would not the great man become plastic under her hands? And if, while this was a-doing, Felix would run away with Marie, could not forgiveness be made easy? And her creative mind ranged still farther. Mr. Browne might help, and even Mr. Booker. To such a one as Melmotte, a man doing great things through the force of the confidence placed in him by the world at large, the freely-spoken support of the Press would be everything. Who would not buy shares in a railway as to which Mr. Browne and Mr. Alf would combine in saying that it was managed by "divinity?" Her thoughts were rather hazy, but from day to day she worked hard to make them clear to herself.

On the Sunday afternoon Mr. Booker called on her and talked to her about the article. She did not say much to Mr. Booker as to her own connection with Mr. Melmotte, telling herself that prudence was essential in the present emergency. But she listened with all
her care. It was Mr. Booker's idea that the man was going "to make a spoon or spoil a horn." "You think him honest; — don't you?" asked Lady Carbury. Mr. Booker smiled and hesitated. "Of course, I mean honest as men can be in such very large transactions."

"Perhaps that is the best way of putting it," said Mr. Booker.

"If a thing can be made great and beneficent, a boon to humanity, simply by creating a belief in it, does not a man become a benefactor to his race by creating that belief?"

"At the expense of veracity?" suggested Mr. Booker.

"At the expense of anything?" rejoined Lady Carbury with energy. "One cannot measure such men by the ordinary rule."

"You would do evil to produce good?" asked Mr. Booker.

"I do not call it doing evil. You have to destroy a thousand living creatures every time you drink a glass of water, but you do not think of that when you are athirst. You cannot send a ship to sea without endangering lives. You do send ships to sea though men perish yearly. You tell me this man may perhaps ruin hundreds, but then again he may create a new world in which millions will be rich and happy."

"You are an excellent casuist, Lady Carbury."

"I am an enthusiastic lover of beneficent audacity," said Lady Carbury, picking her words slowly, and showing herself to be quite satisfied with herself as she picked them. "Did I hold your place, Mr. Booker, in the literature of my country,—"

"I hold no place, Lady Carbury."

"Yes; — and a very distinguished place. Were I circumstances as you are I should have no hesitation in lending the whole weight of my periodical, let it be what it might, to the assistance of so great a man and so great an object as this."

"I should be dismissed to-morrow," said Mr. Booker getting up and laughing as he took his departure. Lady Carbury felt that, as regarded Mr. Booker, she had only thrown out a chance word that could not do any harm. She had not expected to effect much through Mr. Booker's instrumentality. On the Tuesday evening,— her regular Tuesday as she called it,—all her three editors came to her drawing-room; but there came also a greater man than either of them. She had taken the bull by the horns, and without saying anything to anybody had written to Mr. Melmotte himself, asking him to honour her poor house with his presence. She had written a very pretty note to him, reminding him of their meeting at Caversham, telling him that on a former occasion Madame Melmotte and his daughter had been so kind as to come to her, and giving him to understand that of all the potentates now on earth he was the one to whom she could bow the knee with the purest satisfaction. He wrote back,— or Miles Gren- dall did for him,— a very plain note, accepting the honour of Lady Carbury's invitation.

The great man came, and Lady Carbury took him under her immediate wing with a grace that was all her own. She said a word about their dear friends at Caversham, expressed her sorrow that her son's engagements did not admit of his being there, and then with the
MR. MELMOTTE'S PROMISE.

utmost audacity rushed off to the article in the "Pulpit." Her friend, Mr. Alf, the editor, had thoroughly appreciated the greatness of Mr. Melmotte's character, and the magnificence of Mr. Melmotte's undertakings. Mr. Melmotte bowed and muttered something that was inaudible. "Now I must introduce you to Mr. Alf," said the lady. The introduction was effected, and Mr. Alf explained that it was hardly necessary, as he had already been entertained as one of Mr. Melmotte's guests.

"There were a great many there I never saw, and probably never shall see," said Mr. Melmotte.

"I was one of the unfortunates," said Mr. Alf.

"I'm sorry you were unfortunate. If you had come into the whist room you would have found me."

"Ah,—if I had but known!" said Mr. Alf. The editor, as was proper, carried about with him samples of the irony which his paper used so effectively, but it was altogether thrown away upon Melmotte.

Lady Carbury finding that no immediate good results could be expected from this last introduction, tried another. "Mr. Melmotte," she said, whispering to him, "I do so want to make you known to Mr. Broune. Mr. Broune I know you have never met before. A morning paper is a much heavier burden to an editor than one published in the afternoon. Mr. Broune, as of course you know, manages the 'Breakfast Table.' There is hardly a more influential man in London than Mr. Broune. And they declare, you know," she said, lowering the tone of her whisper as she communicated the fact, "that his commercial articles are gospel,—absolutely gospel." Then the two men were named to each other, and Lady Carbury retreated;—but not out of hearing.

"Getting very hot," said Mr. Melmotte.

"Very hot indeed," said Mr. Broune.

"It was over 70 in the city to-day. I call that very hot for June."

"Very hot indeed," said Mr. Broune again. Then the conversation was over. Mr. Broune sidled away, and Mr. Melmotte was left standing in the middle of the room. Lady Carbury told herself at the moment that Rome was not built in a day. She would have been better satisfied certainly if she could have laid a few more bricks on this day. Perseverance, however, was the thing wanted.

But Mr. Melmotte himself had a word to say, and before he left the house he said it. "It was very good of you to ask me, Lady Carbury;—very good." Lady Carbury intimated her opinion that the goodness was all on the other side. "And I came," continued Mr. Melmotte, "because I had something particular to say. Otherwise I don't go out much to evening parties. Your son has proposed to my daughter." Lady Carbury looked up into his face with all her eyes;—clasped both her hands together; and then, having unclasped them, put one upon his sleeve. "My daughter, ma'am, is engaged to another man."

"You would not enslave her affections, Mr. Melmotte?"

"I won't give her a shilling if she marries any one else; that's all.
You reminded me down at Caversham that your son is a Director at
our Board."

"I did;—I did."

"I have a great respect for your son, ma'am. I don't want to hurt
him in any way. If he'll signify to my daughter that he withdraws
from this offer of his, because I'm against it, I'll see that he does
uncommon well in the city. I'll be the making of him. Good
night, ma'am." Then Mr. Melmotte took his departure without
another word.

Here at any rate was an undertaking on the part of the great man
that he would be the "making of Felix," if Felix would only obey
him,—accompanied, or rather preceded, by a most positive assurance
that if Felix were to succeed in marrying his daughter he would not
give his son-in-law a shilling! There was very much to be considered
in this. She did not doubt that Felix might be "made" by Mr.
Melmotte's city influences, but then any perpetuity of such making
must depend on qualifications in her son which she feared that he did
not possess. The wife without the money would be terrible! That
would be absolute ruin! There could be no escape then; no hope.
There was an appreciation of real tragedy in her heart while she con-
templated the position of Sir Felix married to such a girl as she
supposed Marie Melmotte to be, without any means of support for
either of them but what she could supply. It would kill her. And
for those young people there would be nothing before them, but
beggary and the workhouse. As she thought of this she trembled
with true maternal instincts. Her beautiful boy,—so glorious with
his outward gifts, so fit, as she thought him, for all the graces of the
grand world! Though the ambition was vilely ignoble, the mother's
love was noble and disinterested.

But the girl was an only child. The future honours of the house
of Melmotte could be made to settle on no other head. No doubt
the father would prefer a lord for a son-in-law; and, having that
preference, would of course do as he was now doing. That he
should threaten to disinherit his daughter if she married contrary to
his wishes was to be expected. But would it not be equally a matter
of course that he should make the best of the marriage if it were once
effect ed? His daughter would return to him with a title, though
with one of a lower degree than his ambition desired. To herself
personally, Lady Carbury felt that the great financier had been very
rude. He had taken advantage of her invitation that he might come
to her house and threaten her. But she would forgive that. She
could pass that over altogether if only anything were to be gained by
passing it over.

She looked round the room, longing for a friend, whom she might
consult with a true feeling of genuine womanly dependence. Her
most natural friend was Roger Carbury. But even had he been there
she could not have consulted him on any matter touching the Mel-
mottes. His advice would have been very clear. He would have
told her to have nothing at all to do with such adventurers. But
then dear Roger was old fashioned, and knew nothing of people as
they are now. He lived in a world which, though slow, had been
good in its way; but which, whether bad or good, had now passed
away. Then her eye settled on Mr. Broune. She was afraid of
Mr. Alf. She had almost begun to think that Mr. Alf was too dif-
cult of management to be of use to her. But Mr. Broune was softer.
Mr. Booker was serviceable for an article, but would not be sympa-
thetic as a friend. Mr. Broune had been very courteous to her lately;
—so much so that on one occasion she had almost feared that the
"susceptible old goose," was going to be a goose again. That would
be a bore; but still she might make use of the friendly condition of
mind which such susceptibility would produce. When her guests began
to leave her, she spoke a word aside to him. She wanted his advice.
Would he stay for a few minutes after the rest of the company?
He did stay, and when all the others were gone she asked her daughter
to leave them. "Hetty," she said, "I have something of business to
communicate to Mr. Broune." And so they were left alone.

"I'm afraid you didn't make much of Mr. Melmottle," she said
smiling. He had seated himself on the end of a sofa, close to the
arm-chair which she occupied. In reply, he only shook his head and
laughed. "I saw how it was, and I was sorry for it; for he certainly
is a wonderful man."

"I suppose he is, but he is one of those men whose powers do not
lie, I should say, chiefly in conversation. Though, indeed, there is
no reason why he should not say the same of me;—for if he said
little, I said less."

"It didn't just come off," Lady Carbury suggested with her
sweetest smile. "But now I want to tell you something. I think I
am justified in regarding you as a real friend."

"Certainly," he said, putting out his hand for hers.
She gave it to him for a moment, and then took it back again,—
finding that he did not relinquish it of his own accord. "Stupid old
goose!" she said to herself. "And now to my story. You know my
boy, Felix?" The editor nodded his head. "He is engaged to
marry that man's daughter."

"Engaged to marry Miss Melmottle?" Then Lady Carbury
nodded her head. "Why, she is said to be the greatest heiress that
the world has ever produced. I thought she was to marry Lord
Nidderdale."

"She has engaged herself to Felix. She is desperately in love
with him,—as is he with her." She tried to tell her story truly,
knowing that no advice can be worth anything that is not based on a
true story;—but lying had become her nature. "Melmottle naturally
wants her to marry the lord. He came here to tell me that if his
dughter married Felix she should not have a penny."

"Do you mean that he volunteered that,—as a threat?"

"Just so;—and he told me that he had come here simply with
the object of saying so. It was more candid than civil, but we must
take it as we get it."

"He would be sure to make some such threat."

"Exactly. That is just what I feel. And in those days young
people are not often kept from marrying simply by a father's fantasy. But I must tell you something else. He told me that if Felix would desist, he would enable him to make a fortune in the city."

"That's bosh," said Bronne with decision.

"Do you think it must be so;—certainly?"

"Yes, I do. Such an undertaking, if intended by Melmotte, would give me a worse opinion of him than I have ever held."

"He did make it."

"Then he did very wrong. He must have spoken with the purpose of deceiving."

"You know my son is one of the Directors of that great American Railway. It was not just as though the promise were made to a young man who was altogether unconnected with him."

"Sir Felix's name was put there, in a hurry, merely because he has a title, and because Melmotte thought he, as a young man, would not be likely to interfere with him. It may be that he will be able to sell a few shares at a profit; but, if I understand the matter rightly, he has no capital to go into such a business."

"No;—he has no capital."

"Dear Lady Carbury, I would place no dependence at all on such a promise as that."

"You think he should marry the girl then in spite of the father?"

Mr. Bronne hesitated before he replied to this question. But it was to this question that Lady Carbury especially wished for a reply. She wanted some one to support her under the circumstances of an elopement. She rose from her chair, and he rose at the same time.

"Perhaps I should have begun by saying that Felix is all but prepared to take her off. She is quite ready to go. She is devoted to him. Do you think he would be wrong?"

"That is a question very hard to answer."

"People do it every day. Lionel Goldsheiner ran away the other day with Lady Julia Start, and everybody visits them."

"Oh yes, people do run away, and it all comes right. It was the gentleman had the money then, and it is said you knew that old Lady Catchboy, Lady Julia's mother, had arranged the elopement herself as offering the safest way of securing the rich prize. The young lord didn't like it, so the mother had it done in that fashion."

"There would be nothing disgraceful."

"I didn't say there would;—but nevertheless it is one of those things a man hardly ventures to advise. If you ask me whether I think that Melmotte would forgive her, and make her an allowance afterwards,—I think he would."

"I am so glad to hear you say that."

"And I feel quite certain that no dependence whatever should be placed on that promise of assistance."

"I quite agree with you. I am so much obliged to you," said Lady Carbury, who was now determined that Felix should run off with the girl. "You have been so very kind." Then again she gave him her hand, as though to bid him farewell for the night.

"And now," he said, "I also have something to say to you."
CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. BROUHE HAS MADE UP HIS MIND.

"And now I have something to say to you." Mr. Broune as he thus spoke to Lady Carbury rose up to his feet and then sat down again. There was an air of perturbation about him which was very manifest to the lady, and the cause and coming result of which she thought that she understood. "The susceptible old goose is going to do something highly ridiculous and very disagreeable." It was thus that she spoke to herself of the scene that she saw was prepared for her, but she did not foresee accurately the shape in which the susceptibility of the "old goose" would declare itself. "Lady Carbury," said Mr. Broune, standing up a second time, "we are neither of us so young as we used to be."

"No, indeed;—and therefore it is that we can afford to ourselves the luxury of being friends. Nothing but age enables men and women to know each other intimately."

This speech was a great impediment to Mr. Broune's progress. It was evidently intended to imply that he at least had reached a time of life at which any allusion to love would be absurd. And yet, as a fact, he was nearer fifty than sixty, was young of his age, could walk his four or five miles pleasantly, could ride his cob in the park with as free an air as any man of forty, and could afterwards work through four or five hours of the night with an easy steadiness which nothing but sound health could produce. Mr. Broune, thinking of himself and his own circumstances, could see no reason why he should not be in love. "I hope we know each other intimately at any rate," he said somewhat lamely.

"Oh, yes;—and it is for that reason that I have come to you for advice. Had I been a young woman I should not have dared to ask you."

"I don't see that. I don't quite understand that. But it has nothing to do with my present purpose. When I said that we were neither of us so young as we once were, I uttered what was a stupid platitude,—a foolish truism."

"I did not think so," said Lady Carbury smiling.

"Or would have been, only that I intended something further." Mr. Broune had got himself into a difficulty and hardly knew how to get out of it. "I was going on to say that I hoped we were not too old to—love."

Foolish old darling! What did he mean by making such an ass of himself? This was worse even than the kiss, as being more troublesome and less easily pushed on one side and forgotten. It may serve to explain the condition of Lady Carbury's mind at the time if it be stated that she did not even at this moment suppose that the editor of the "Morning Breakfast Table" intended to make her an offer of marriage.
She knew, or thought she knew, that middle-aged men are fond of prating about love, and getting up sensational scenes. The falseness of the thing, and the injury which may come of it, did not shock her at all. Had she known that the editor professed to be in love with some lady in the next street, she would have been quite ready to enlist the lady in the next street among her friends that she might thus strengthen her own influence with Mr. Broune. For herself such make-belief of an improper passion would be inconvenient, and therefore to be avoided. But that any man, placed as Mr. Broune was in the world,—blessed with power, with a large income, with influence throughout all the world around him, courted, feted, feared and almost worshipped,—that he should desire to share her fortunes, her misfortunes, her struggles, her poverty and her obscurity, was not within the scope of her imagination. There was a homage in it, of which she did not believe any man to be capable,—and which to her would be the more wonderful as being paid to herself. She thought so badly of men and women generally, and of Mr. Broune and herself as a man and a woman individually, that she was unable to conceive the possibility of such a sacrifice. "Mr. Broune," she said, "I did not think that you would take advantage of the confidence I have placed in you to annoy me in this way."

"To annoy you, Lady Carbury! The phrase at any rate is singular. After much thought I have determined to ask you to be my wife. That I should be—annoyed, and more than annoyed by your refusal, is a matter of course. That I ought to expect such annoyance is perhaps too true. But you can extricate yourself from the dilemma only too easily."

The word "wife" came upon her like a thunder-clap. It at once changed all her feelings towards him. She did not dream of loving him. She felt sure that she never could love him. Had it been on the cards with her to love any man as a lover, it would have been some handsome spendthrift who would have hung from her neck like a nether millstone. This man was a friend to be used,—to be used because he knew the world. And now he gave her this clear testimony that he knew as little of the world as any other man. Mr. Broune of the "Daily Breakfast Table" asking her to be his wife! But mixed with her other feelings there was a tenderness which brought back some memory of her distant youth, and almost made her weep. That a man,—such a man,—should offer to take half her burdens, and to confer upon her half his blessings! What an idiot! But what a God! She had looked upon the man as all intellect, alloyed perhaps by some passionless remnants of the vices of his youth; and now she found that he not only had a human heart in his bosom, but a heart that she could touch. How wonderfully sweet! How infinitely small!

It was necessary that she should answer him;—and to her it was only natural that she should at first think what answer would best assist her own views without reference to his. It did not occur to her that she could love him; but it did occur to her that he might lift her out of her difficulties. What a benefit it would be to her to have a father, and such a father, for Felix! How easy would be a literary
career to the wife of the editor of the "Morning Breakfast Table!"  
And then it passed through her mind that somebody had told her 
that the man was paid £8,000 a year for his work.  Would not the 
world, or any part of it that was desirable, come to her drawing-room 
if she were the wife of Mr. Broune?  It all passed through her brain 
at once during that minute of silence which she allowed herself after 
the declaration was made to her.  But other ideas and other feelings 
were present to her also.  Perhaps the truest aspiration of her heart 
had been the love of freedom which the tyranny of her late husband 
had engendered.  Once she had fled from that tyranny and had been 
amost crushed by the censure to which she had been subjected. 
Then her husband's protection and his tyranny had been restored to 
er.  After that the freedom had come.  It had been accompanied by 
many hopes never as yet fulfilled, and embittered by many sorrows 
which had been always present to her; but still the hopes were alive 
and the remembrance of the tyranny was very clear to her.  At last 
the minute was over and she was bound to speak.  "Mr. Broune," 
she said, "you have quite taken away my breath.  I never expected 
anything of this kind."

And now Mr. Broune's mouth was opened, and his voice was free. 
"Lady Carbury," he said, "I have lived a long time without marrying, 
and I have sometimes thought that it would be better for me to go 
on in the same way to the end.  I have worked so hard all my 
life that when I was young I had no time to think of love.  And, 
as I have gone on, my mind has been so fully employed, that I have 
hardly realised the want which nevertheless I have felt.  And so it 
has been with me till I fancied, not that I was too old for love, but 
that others would think me so.  Then I met you.  As I said at first, 
perhaps with scant gallantry, you also are not as young as you once 
were.  But you keep the beauty of your youth, and the energy, and 
something of the freshness of a young heart.  And I have come to love 
you.  I speak with absolute frankness, risking your anger.  I have 
doubted much before I resolved upon this.  It is so hard to know the 
nature of another person.  But I think I understand yours;—and if you 
can confide your happiness with me, I am prepared to intrust mine to 
your keeping."  Poor Mr. Broune!  Though endowed with gifts 
peculiarly adapted for the editing of a Daily Newspaper, he could have 
had but little capacity for reading a woman's character when he 
talked of the freshness of Lady Carbury's young mind!  And he 
must have surely been much blinded by love, before convincing him- 
self that he could trust his happiness to such keeping.

"You do me infinite honour.  You pay me a great compliment," 
ejaculated Lady Carbury.

"Well?"

"How am I to answer you at a moment?  I expected nothing of 
this.  As God is to be my judge it has come upon me like a dream. 
I look upon your position as almost the highest in England,—on your 
prosperity as the uttermost that can be achieved."

"That prosperity, such as it is, I desire most anxiously to share 
with you."

"You tell me so;—but I can hardly yet believe it.  And then
how am I to know my own feelings so suddenly? *Marriage* as I have found it, Mr. Broune, has not been happy. I have suffered much. I have been wounded in every joint, hurt in every nerve,—tortured till I could hardly endure my punishment. At last I got my liberty, and to that I have looked for happiness."

"Has it made you happy?"

"It has made me less wretched. And there is so much to be considered! I have a son and a daughter, Mr. Broune."

"Your daughter I can love as my own. I think I prove my devotion to you when I say that I am willing for your sake to encounter the troubles which may attend your son’s future career."

"Mr. Broune, I love him better,—always shall love him better,—than anything in the world." This was calculated to damp the lover’s ardour, but he probably reflected that should he now be successful, time might probably change the feeling which had just been expressed. "Mr. Broune," she said, "I am now so agitated that you had better leave me. And it is very late. The servant is sitting up, and will wonder that you should remain. It is near two o’clock."

"When may I hope for an answer?"

"You shall not be kept waiting. I will write to you, almost at once. I will write to you,—to-morrow; say the day after to-morrow, on Thursday. I feel that I ought to have been prepared with an answer; but I am so surprised that I have none ready." He took her hand in his, and kissing it, left her without another word.

As he was about to open the front door to let himself out, a key from the other side raised the latch, and Sir Felix, returning from his club, entered his mother’s house. The young man looked up into Mr. Broune’s face with mingled impudence and surprise. "Halloo; old fellow," he said, "you’ve been keeping it up late here; haven’t you?" He was nearly drunk, and Mr. Broune perceiving his condition, passed him without a word. Lady Carbury was still standing in the drawing-room, struck with amazement at the scene which had just passed, full of doubt as to her future conduct, when she heard her son tumbling up the stairs. It was impossible for her not to go out to him. "Felix," she said, "why do you make so much noise as you come in?"

"Noish! I’m not making any noise. I think I’m very early. Your people’s only just gone. I shaw that editor fellow at the door that won’t call himself Brown. He’sh great ass’h, that fellow. All right, mother. Oh, ye’sh I’m all right." And so he stumbled up to bed, and his mother followed him to see that the candle was at any rate placed squarely on the table, beyond the reach of the bed curtains.

Mr. Broune as he walked to his newspaper office experienced all those pangs of doubts which a man feels when he has just done that which for days and weeks past he has almost resolved that he had better leave undone. That last apparition which he had encountered at his lady love’s door certainly had not tended to reassure him. What curse can be much greater than that inflicted by a drunken, reprobate son? The evil, when in the course of things it comes upon a man, has to be borne; but why should a man in,
middle life unnecessarily afflict himself with so terrible a misfortune? The woman, too, was devoted to the cub! Then thousands of other thoughts crowded upon him. How would this new life suit him? He must have a new house, and new ways; must live under a new dominion, and fit himself to new pleasures. And what was he to gain by it? Lady Carbury was a handsome woman, and he liked her beauty. He regarded her too as a clever woman; and, because she had flattered him, he had liked her conversation. He had been long enough about town to have known better,—and as he now walked along the streets, he almost felt that he ought to have known better. Every now and again he warmed himself a little with the remembrance of her beauty, and told himself that his new home would be pleasanter, though it might perhaps be less free, than the old one. He tried to make the best of it; but as he did so was always repressed by the memory of the appearance of that drunken young baronet.

Whether for good or for evil, the step had been taken and the thing was done. It did not occur to him that the lady would refuse him. All his experience of the world was against such refusal. Towns which consider, always render themselves. Ladies who doubt always solve their doubts in the one direction. Of course she would accept him;—and of course he would stand to his guns. As he went to his work he endeavoured to bathe himself in self-complacency; but, at the bottom of it, there was a substratum of melancholy which leavened his prospects.

Lady Carbury went from the door of her son's room to her own chamber, and there sat thinking through the greater part of the night. During these hours she perhaps became a better woman, as being more oblivious of herself, than she had been for many a year. It could not be for the good of this man that he should marry her,—and she did in the midst of her many troubles try to think of the man's condition. Although in the moments of her triumph,—and such moments were many,—she would buoy herself up with assurances that her Felix would become a rich man, brilliant with wealth and rank, an honour to her, a personage whose society would be desired by many, still in her heart of hearts she knew how great was the peril, and in her imagination she could foresee the nature of the catastrophe which might come. He would go utterly to the dogs and would take her with him. And whithersoever he might go, to what lowest canine regions he might descend, she knew herself well enough to be sure that whether married or single she would go with him. Though her reason might be ever so strong in bidding her to desert him, her heart, she knew, would be stronger than her reason. He was the one thing in the world that overpowered her. In all other matters she could scheme, and contrive, and pretend; could get the better of her feelings and fight the world with a double face, laughing at illusions and telling herself that passions and preferences were simply weapons to be used. But her love for her son mastered her,—and she knew it. As it was so, could it be fit that she should marry another man?

And then her liberty! Even though Felix should bring her to
utter ruin, nevertheless she would be and might remain a free woman. Should the worse come to the worst she thought that she could endure a Bohemian life in which, should all her means have been taken from her, she could live on what she earned. Though Felix was a tyrant after a kind, he was not a tyrant who could bid her do this or that. A repetition of marriage vows did not of itself recommend itself to her. As to loving the man, liking his caresses, and being specially happy because he was near her,—no romance of that kind ever presented itself to her imagination. How would it affect Felix and her together,—and Mr. Broune as connected with her and Felix? If Felix should go to the dogs, then would Mr. Broune not want her. Should Felix go to the stars instead of the dogs, and become one of the gilded ornaments of the metropolis, then would not he and she want Mr. Broune. It was thus that she regarded the matter.

She thought very little of her daughter as she considered all this. There was a home for Hetta, with every comfort, if Hetta would only condescend to accept it. Why did not Hetta marry her cousin Roger Carbury and let there be an end of that trouble? Of course Hetta must live wherever her mother lived till she should marry; but Hetta’s life was so much at her own disposal that her mother did not feel herself bound to be guided in the great matter by Hetta’s predispositions.

But she must tell Hetta should she ultimately make up her mind to marry the man, and in that case the sooner this was done the better. On that night she did not make up her mind. Ever and again as she declared to herself that she would not marry him, the picture of a comfortable assured home over her head, and the conviction that the editor of the “Morning Breakfast Table” would be powerful for all things, brought new doubts to her mind. But she could not convince herself, and when at last she went to her bed her mind was still vacillating. The next morning she met Hetta at breakfast, and with assumed nonchalance asked a question about the man who was perhaps about to be her husband. “Do you like Mr. Broune, Hetta?”

“Yes;—pretty well. I don’t care very much about him. What makes you ask, mamma?”

“Because among my acquaintances in London there is no one so truly kind to me as he is.”

“He always seems to me to like to have his own way.”

“Why shouldn’t he like it?”

“He has to me that air of selfishness which is so very common with people in London;—as though what he said were all said out of surface politeness.”

“I wonder what you expect, Hetta, when you talk of—London people? Why should not London people be as kind as other people? I think Mr. Broune is as obliging a man as any one I know. But if I like anybody, you always make little of him. The only person you seem to think well of, is Mr. Montague.”

“Mamma, that is unfair and unkind. I never mention Mr. Montague’s name if I can help it,—and I should not have spoken of Mr. Broune, had you not asked me.”
CHAPTER XXXII.

LADY MONOGRAM.

GEORGIANA LONGESTAFFE had now been staying with the Melmottes for a fortnight, and her prospects in regard to the London season had not much improved. Her brother had troubled her no further, and her family at Caversham had not, as far as she was aware, taken any notice of Dolly's interference. Twice a week she received a cold, dull letter from her mother,—such letters as she had been accustomed to receive when away from home; and these she had answered, always endeavouring to fill her sheet with some customary description of fashionable doings, with some bit of scandal such as she would have repeated for her mother's amusement,—and her own delation in the telling of it,—had there been nothing painful in the nature of her sojourn in London. Of the Melmottes she hardly spoke. She did not say that she was taken to the houses in which it was her ambition to be seen. She would have lied directly in saying so. But she did not announce her own disappointment. She had chosen to come up to the Melmottes in preference to remaining at Caversham, and she would not declare her own failure. "I hope they are kind to you," Lady Pomona always said. But Georgiana did not tell her mother whether the Melmottes were kind or unkind.

In truth, her "season" was a very unpleasant season. Her mode of living was altogether different to anything she had already known. The house in Bruton Street had never been very bright, but the appendages of life there had been of a sort which was not known in the gorgeous mansion in Grosvenor Square. It had been full of books and little toys and those thousand trifling household gods which are accumulated in years, and which in their accumulation suit themselves to the taste of their owners. In Grosvenor Square there were no Larès;—no toys, no books, nothing but gold and grandeur, pomatum, powder and pride. The Longestaffe life had not been an easy, natural, or intellectual life; but the Melmotte life was hardly endurable even by a Longestaffe. She had, however, come prepared to suffer much, and was endowed with considerable power of endurance in pursuit of her own objects. Having willed to come, even to the Melmottes, in preference to remaining at Caversham, she fortified herself to suffer much. Could she have ridden in the park at mid-day in desirable company, and found herself in proper houses at midnight, she would have borne the rest, bad as it might have been. But it was not so. She had her horse, but could with difficulty get any proper companion. She had been in the habit of riding with one of the Primero girls,—and old Primero would accompany them, or perhaps a brother Primero, or occasionally her own father. And then, when once out, she would be surrounded by a cloud of young
men,—and though there was but little in it, a walking round and round the same bit of ground with the same companions and with the smallest attempt at conversation, still it had been the proper thing and had satisfied her. Now it was with difficulty that she could get any cavalier such as the laws of society demand. Even Penelope Primero snubbed her,—whom she, Georgiana Longestaffe, had hitherto endured and snubbed. She was just allowed to join them when old Primero rode, and was obliged even to ask for that assistance.

But the nights were still worse. She could only go where Madame Melmote went, and Madame Melmote was more prone to receive people at home than to go out. And the people she did receive were antipathetic to Miss Longestaffe. She did not even know who they were, whence they came, or what was their nature. They seemed to be as little akin to her as would have been the shopkeepers in the small town near Caversham. She would sit through long evenings almost speechless, trying to fathom the depth of the vulgarity of her associates. Occasionally she was taken out, and was then, probably, taken to very grand houses. The two duchesses and the Marchioness of Auld Reekie received Madame Melmote, and the garden parties of royalty were open to her. And some of the most elaborate fêtes of the season,—which indeed were very elaborate on behalf of this and that travelling potentate,—were attained. On these occasions Miss Longestaffe was fully aware of the struggle that was always made for invitations, often unsuccessfully, but sometimes with triumph. Even the bargains, conducted by the hands of Lord Alfred and his mighty sister, were not altogether hidden from her. The Emperor of China was to be in London and it was thought proper that some private person, some untitled individual, should give the Emperor a dinner, so that the Emperor might see how an English merchant lives. Mr. Melmote was chosen on condition that he would spend £10,000 on the banquet;—and, as a part of his payment for this expenditure, was to be admitted with his family, to a grand entertainment given to the Emperor at Windsor Park. Of these good things Georgiana Longestaffe would receive her share. But she went to them as a Melmote and not as a Longestaffe,—and when amidst these gaieties, though she could see her old friends, she was not with them. She was ever behind Madame Melmote, till she hated the make of that lady’s garments and the shape of that lady’s back.

She had told both her father and mother very plainly that it behoved her to be in London at this time of the year that she might—look for a husband. She had not hesitated in declaring her purpose; and that purpose, together with the means of carrying it out, had not appeared to them to be unreasonable. She wanted to be settled in life. She had meant, when she first started on her career, to have a lord;—but lords are scarce. She was herself not very highly born, not very highly gifted, not very lovely, not very pleasant, and she had no fortune. She had long made up her mind that she could do without a lord, but that she must get a commoner of the proper sort. He must be a man with a place in the country and sufficient means to bring him annually to London. He must be a gentleman,—and,
probably, in parliament. And above all things he must be in the right set. She would rather go on for ever struggling than take some country Whitstable as her sister was about to do. But now the men of the right sort never came near her. The one object for which she had subjected herself to all this ignominy seemed to have vanished altogether in the distance. When by chance she danced or exchanged a few words with the Nidderdales and Grassloughs whom she used to know, they spoke to her with a want of respect which she felt and tasted but could hardly analyse. Even Miles Grendall, who had hitherto been below her notice, attempted to patronise her in a manner that bewildered her. All this nearly broke her heart.

And then from time to time little rumours reached her ears which made her aware that, in the teeth of all Mr. Melmotte's social successes, a general opinion that he was a gigantic swindler was rather gaining ground than otherwise. "Your host is a wonderful fellow, by George!" said Lord Nidderdale. "No one seems to know which way he'll turn up at last." "There's nothing like being a robber, if you can only rob enough," said Lord Grasslough,—not exactly naming Melmotte, but very clearly alluding to him. There was a vacancy for a member of parliament at Westminster, and Melmotte was about to come forward as a candidate. "If he can manage that I think he'll pull through," she heard one man say. "If money'll do it, it will be done," said another. She could understand it all. Mr. Melmotte was admitted into society, because of some enormous power which was supposed to lie in his hands; but even by those who thus admitted him he was regarded as a thief and a scoundrel. This was the man whose house had been selected by her father in order that she might make her search for a husband from beneath his wing!

In her agony she wrote to her old friend Julia Triplex, now the wife of Sir Damask Monogram. She had been really intimate with Julia Triplex, and had been sympathetic when a brilliant marriage had been achieved. Julia had been without fortune, but very pretty. Sir Damask was a man of great wealth, whose father had been a contractor. But Sir Damask himself was a sportsman, keeping many horses on which other men often rode, a yacht in which other men sunned themselves, a deer forest, a moor, a large machinery for making pheasants. He shot pigeons at Hurlingham, drove four-in-hand in the park, had a box at every race-course, and was the most good-natured fellow known. He had really conquered the world, had got over the difficulty of being the grandson of a butcher, and was now as good as though the Monograms had gone to the crusades. Julia Triplex was equal to her position, and made the very most of it. She dispensed champagne and smiles, and made everybody, including herself, believe that she was in love with her husband. Lady Mono-gram had climbed to the top of the tree, and in that position had been, of course, invaluable to her old friend. We must give her her due and say that she had been fairly true to friendship while Georgiana— behaved herself. She thought that Georgiana in going to the Melmottes had—not behaved herself, and therefore she had determined to drop Georgiana. "Heartless, false, purseproud creature,"
Georgiana said to herself as she wrote the following letter in humiliating agony.

"Dear Lady Monogram,

"I think you hardly understand my position. Of course you have cut me. Haven't you? And of course I must feel it very much. You did not use to be ill-natured, and I hardly think you can have become so now when you have everything pleasant around you. I do not think that I have done anything that should make an old friend treat me in this way, and therefore I write to ask you to let me see you. Of course it is because I am staying here. You know me well enough to be sure that it can't be my own choice. Papa arranged it all. If there is anything against these people, I suppose papa does not know it. Of course they are not nice. Of course they are not like anything that I have been used to. But when papa told me that the house in Bruton Street was to be shut up and that I was to come here, of course I did as I was bid. I don't think an old friend like you, whom I have always liked more than anybody else, ought to cut me for it. It's not about the parties, but about yourself that I mind. I don't ask you to come here, but if you will see me I can have the carriage and will go to you.

"Yours, as ever,
"Georgiana Longstaffe."

It was a troublesome letter to get written. Lady Monogram was her junior in age and had once been lower than herself in social position. In the early days of their friendship she had sometimes domineered over Julia Triplex, and had been entreated by Julia, in reference to balls here and routes there. The great Monogram marriage had been accomplished very suddenly, and had taken place, —exalting Julia very high,—just as Georgiana was beginning to allow her aspirations to descend. It was in that very season that she moved her castle in the air from the Upper to the Lower House. And now she was absolutely begging for notice, and praying that she might not be cut! She sent her letter by post and on the following day received a reply, which was left by a footman.

"Dear Georgiana,

"Of course I shall be delighted to see you. I don't know what you mean by cutting. I never cut anybody. We happen to have got into different sets, but that is not my fault. Sir Damask won't let me call on the Melmottes. I can't help that. You wouldn't have me go where he tells me not. I don't know anything about them myself, except that I did go to their ball. But everybody knows that's different. I shall be at home all to-morrow till three,—that is to-day I mean, for I'm writing after coming home from Lady Killarney's ball; but if you wish to see me alone you had better come before lunch.

"Yours affectionately,
"J. Monogram."

Georgiana condescended to borrow the carriage and reached her
friend's house a little after noon. The two ladies kissed each other when they met—of course, and then Miss Longestaffe at once began. "Julia, I did think that you would at any rate have asked me to your second ball."

"Of course you would have been asked if you had been up in Bruton Street. You know that as well as I do. It would have been a matter of course."

"What difference does a house make?"

"But the people in a house make a great deal of difference, my dear. I don't want to quarrel with you, my dear; but I can't know the Melmottes."

"Who asks you?"

"You are with them."

"Do you mean to say that you can't ask anybody to your house without asking everybody that lives with that person? It's done every day."

"Somebody must have brought you."

"I would have come with the Primros, Julia."

"I couldn't do it. I asked Damask and he wouldn't have it. When that great affair was going on in February, we didn't know much about the people. I was told that everybody was going and therefore I got Sir Damask to let me go. He says now that he won't let me know them; and after having been at their house I can't ask you out of it, without asking them too."

"I don't see it at all, Julia."

"I'm very sorry, my dear, but I can't go against my husband."

"Everybody goes to their house," said Georgiana, pleading her cause to the best of her ability. "The Duchess of Stevenage has dined in Grosvenor Square since I have been there."

"We all know what that means," replied Lady Monogram.

"And people are giving their eyes to be asked to the dinner party which he is to give to the Emperor in July;—and even to the reception afterwards."

"To hear you talk, Georgiana, one would think that you didn't understand anything," said Lady Monogram. "People are going to see the Emperor, not to see the Melmottes. I dare say we might have gone,—only I suppose we shan't now because of this row."

"I don't know what you mean by a row, Julia."

"Well;—it is a row, and I hate rows. Going there when the Emperor of China is there, or anything of that kind, is no more than going to the play. Somebody chooses to get all London into his house, and all London chooses to go. But it isn't understood that that means acquaintance. I should meet Madame Melmotte in the park afterwards and not think of bowing to her."

"I should call that rude."

"Very well. Then we differ. But really it does seem to me that you ought to understand these things as well as anybody. I don't find any fault with you for going to the Melmottes,—though I was very sorry to hear it; but when you have done it, I don't think you should complain of people because they won't have the Melmottes crammed down their throats."
"Nobody has wanted it," said Georgiana sobbing. At this moment the door was opened, and Sir Damask came in. "I'm talking to your wife about the Melmottes," she continued, determined to take the bull by the horns. "I'm staying there, and—I think it—unkind that Julia hasn't been—to see me. That's all."

"How'd you do, Miss Longstaffe? She doesn't know them." And Sir Monogram, folding his hands together, raising his eyebrows, and standing on the rug, looked as though he had solved the whole difficulty.

"She knows me, Sir Damask."

"Oh yes;—she knows you. That's a matter of course. We're delighted to see you, Miss Longstaffe—I am, always. Wish we could have had you at Ascot. But—.-."

"Then he looked as though he had again explained everything.

"I've told her that you don't want me to go to the Melmottes," said Lady Monogram.

"Well, no;—not just to go there. Stay and have lunch, Miss Longstaffe."

"No, thank you."

"Now you're here, you'd better," said Lady Monogram.

"No, thank you. I'm sorry that I have not been able to make you understand me. I could not allow our very long friendship to be dropped without a word."

"Don't say—dropped," exclaimed the baronet.

"I do say dropped, Sir Damask. I thought we should have understood each other;—your wife and I. But we haven't. Wherever she might have gone, I should have made it my business to see her; but she feels differently. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, my dear. If you will quarrel, it isn't my doing." Then Sir Damask led Miss Longstaffe out, and put her into Madame Melmotte's carriage. "It's the most absurd thing I ever knew in my life," said the wife as soon as her husband had returned to her. "She hasn't been able to bear to remain down in the country for one season, when all the world knows that her father can't afford to have a house for them in town. Then she condescends to come and stay with these abominations and pretends to feel surprised that her old friends don't run after her. She is old enough to have known better."

"I suppose she likes parties," said Sir Damask.

"Likes parties! She'd like to get somebody to take her. It's twelve years now since Georgiana Longstaffe came out. I remember being told of the time when I was first entered myself. Yes, my dear, you know all about it, I dare say. And there she is still. I can feel for her, and do feel for her. But if she will let herself down in that way she can't expect not to be dropped. You remember the woman;—don't you?"

"What woman?"

"Madame Melmotte?"

"Never saw her in my life."

"Oh yes, you did. You took me there that night when Prince danced with the girl. Don't you remember the bloasty fat woman at the top of the stairs;—a regular horror?"
Sir Damask solving the difficulty.
"Didn't look at her. I was only thinking what a lot of money it all cost."

"I remember her, and if Georgiana Longestaffe thinks I'm going there to make an acquaintance with Madame Melmotte she is very much mistaken. And if she thinks that that is the way to get married, I think she is mistaken again." Nothing perhaps is so efficacious in preventing men from marrying as the tone in which married women speak of the struggles made in that direction by their unmarried friends.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JOHN CRUMB.

SIR FELIX CARBURY made an appointment for meeting Ruby Raggles a second time at the bottom of the kitchen-garden belonging to Sheep's Acre farm, which appointment he neglected, and had, indeed, made without any intention of keeping it. But Ruby was there, and remained hanging about among the cabbages till her grandfather returned from Harlestone market. An early hour had been named; but hours may be mistaken, and Ruby had thought that a fine gentleman, such as was her lover, used to live among fine people up in London, might well mistake the afternoon for the morning. If he would come at all she could easily forgive such a mistake. But he did not come, and late in the afternoon she was obliged to obey her grandfather's summons as he called her into the house.

After that for three weeks she heard nothing of her London lover, but she was always thinking of him;—and though she could not altogether avoid her country lover, she was in his company as little as possible. One afternoon her grandfather returned from Bungay and told her that her country lover was coming to see her. "John Crumb be a coming over by-and-by," said the old man. "See and have a bit o' supper ready for him."

"John Crumb coming here, grandfather? He's welcome to stay away then, for me."

"That be dommed." The old man thrust his old hat on to his head and seated himself in a wooden arm-chair that stood by the kitchen-fire. Whenever he was angry he put on his hat, and the custom was well understood by Ruby. "Why not welcome, and he all one as your husband? Look ye here, Ruby, I'm going to have an eend o' this. John Crumb is to marry you next month, and the banns is to be said."

"The parson may say what he pleases, grandfather. I can't stop his saying of 'em. It isn't likely I shall try, neither. But no parson among 'em all can marry me without I'm willing."

"And why should you no be willing, you contrary young jade, you?"

"You've been a' drinking, grandfather."
He turned round at her sharp, and threw his old hat at her head;—nothing to Ruby's consternation, as it was a practice to which she was well accustomed. She picked it up, and returned it to him with a cool indifference which was intended to exasperate him. "Look ye here, Ruby," he said, "out o' this place you go. If you go as John Crumb's wife you'll go with five hun'erd pound, and we'll have a dinner here, and a dance, and all Bungay."

"Who cares for all Bungay,—a set of beery chaps as knows nothing but swilling and smoking;—and John Crumb the main of 'em all? There never was a chap for beer like John Crumb."

"Never saw him the worse o' liquor in all my life." And the old farmer, as he gave this grand assurance, rattled his fist down upon the table.

"It ony just makes him stoopider and stoopider the more he swills. You can't tell me, grandfather, about John Crumb. I knows him."

"Didn't ye say as how ye'd have him? Didn't ye give him a promise?"

"If I did, I ain't the first girl as has gone back of her word,—and I shan't be the last."

"You means you won't have him?"

"That's about it, grandfather."

"Then you'll have to have somebody to fend for ye, and that pretty sharp,—for you won't have me."

"There ain't no difficulty about that, grandfather."

"Very well. He's a coming here to-night, and you may settle it along wi' him. Out o' this ye shall go. I know of your doings."

"What doings! You don't know of no doings. There ain't no doings. You don't know nothing ag'in me."

"He's a coming here to-night, and if you can make it up wi' him, well and good. There's five hun'erd pound, and ye shall have the dinner and the dance and all Bungay. He ain't a going to be put off no longer;—he ain't."

"Whoever wanted him to be put on? Let him go his own gait."

"If you can't make it up wi' him———""

"Well, grandfather, I shan't anyways."

"Let me have my say, will ye, yer jade, you? There's five hun'erd pound! and there ain't ere a farmer in Suffolk or Norfolk paying rent for a bit of land like this can do as well for his darter as that,—let alone only a granddarter. You never thinks o' that;—you don't. If you don't like to take it,—leave it. But you'll leave Sheep's Acre too."

"Bother Sheep's Acre. Who wants to stop at Sheep's Acre? It's the stoopidest place in all England."

"Then find another. Then find another. That's all about it. John Crumb's a coming up for a bit o' supper. You tell him your own mind. I'm dommed if I trouble about it. On'y you don't stay here. Sheep's Acre ain't good enough for you, and you'd best find another home. Stoopid, is it? You'll have to put up wi' places stoopider nor Sheep's Acre, afore you've done."

In regard to the hospitality promised to Mr. Crumb, Miss Ruggles went about her work with sufficient alacrity. She was quite willing that the young man should have a supper, and she did understand
that, so far as the preparation of the supper went, she owed her service to her grandfather. She therefore went to work herself, and gave directions to the servant girl who assisted her in keeping her grandfather's house. But as she did this, she determined that she would make John Crumb understand that she would never be his wife. Upon that she was now fully resolved. As she went about the kitchen, taking down the ham and cutting the slices that were to be broiled, and as she trussed the fowl that was to be boiled for John Crumb, she made mental comparisons between him and Sir Felix Carbury. She could see, as though present to her at the moment, the mealy, floury head of the one, with hair stiff with perennial dust from his sacks, and the sweet glossy dark well-combed locks of the other, so bright, so seductive, that she was ever longing to twine her fingers among them. And she remembered the heavy, flat, broad honest face of the meal-man, with his mouth slow in motion, and his broad nose looking like a huge white promontory, and his great staring eyes, from the corners of which he was always extracting meal and grit;—and then also she remembered the white teeth, the beautiful soft lips, the perfect eyebrows, and the rich complexion of her London lover. Surely a lease of Paradise with the one, though but for one short year, would be well purchased at the price of a life with the other! "It's no good going against love," she said to herself, "and I won't try. He shall have his supper, and be told all about it, and then go home. He cares more for his supper than he do for me." And then, with this final resolution firmly made, she popped the fowl into the pot. Her grandfather wanted her to leave Sheep's Acre. Very well. She had a little money of her own, and would take herself off to London. She knew what people would say, but she cared nothing for old women's tales. She would know how to take care of herself, and could always say in her own defence that her grandfather had turned her out of Sheep's Acre.

Seven had been the hour named, and punctually at that hour John Crumb knocked at the back door of Sheep's Acre farm-house. Nor did he come alone. He was accompanied by his friend Joe Mixel, the baker of Bungay, who, as all Bungay knew, was to be his best man at his marriage. John Crumb's character was not without many fine attributes. He could earn money,—and having earned it could spend and keep it in fair proportion. He was afraid of no work, and,—to give him his due,—was afraid of no man. He was honest, and ashamed of nothing that he did. And after his fashion he had chivalrous ideas about women. He was willing to thrash any man that ill-used a woman, and would certainly be a most dangerous antagonist to any man who would misuse a woman belonging to him. But Ruby had told the truth of him in saying that he was slow of speech, and what the world calls stupid in regard to all forms of expression. He knew good meal from bad as well as any man, and the price at which he could buy it so as to leave himself a fair profit at the selling. He knew the value of a clear conscience, and without much argument had discovered for himself that honesty is in truth the best policy. Joe Mixel, who was dapper of person and glib of tongue, had often declared that any one buying John Crumb for a fool
would lose his money. Joe Mixet was probably right; but there had been a want of prudence, a lack of worldly sagacity, in the way in which Crumb had allowed his proposed marriage with Ruby Ruggles to become a source of gossip to all Bungay. His love was now an old affair; and, though he never talked much, whenever he did talk, he talked about that. He was proud of Ruby's beauty, and of her fortune, and of his own status as her acknowledged lover,—and he did not hide his light under a bushel. Perhaps the publicity so produced had some effect in prejudicing Ruby against the man whose offer she had certainly once accepted. Now when he came to settle the day,—having heard more than once or twice that there was a difficulty with Ruby,—he brought his friend Mixet with him as though to be present at his triumph. "If here isn't Joe Mixet," said Ruby to herself. "Was there ever such a stoopid as John Crumb? There's no end to his being stoopid."

The old man had slept off his anger and his beer while Ruby had been preparing the feast, and now roused himself to entertain his guests. "What, Joe Mixet; is that thou? Thou'rt welcome. Come in, man. Well, John, how is it wi' you? Ruby's a stewing o' something for us to eat a bit. Don't 'e smell it?"—John Crumb lifted up his great nose, sniffed and grinned.

"John didn't like going home in the dark like," said the baker, with his little joke. "So I just come along to drive away the bogies."

"The more the merrier;—the more the merrier. Ruby 'll have enough for the two o' you, I'll go bail. So John Crumb's afraid of bogies;—is he? The more need he to have some 'un in his house to scart 'em away."

The lover had seated himself without speaking a word; but now he was instigated to ask a question. "Where be she, Muster Ruggles?" They were seated in the outside or front kitchen, in which the old man and his granddaughter always lived; while Ruby was at work in the back kitchen. As John Crumb asked this question she could be heard distinctly among the pots and the plates. She now came out, and wiping her hands on her apron, shook hands with the two young men. She had enveloped herself in a big household apron when the cooking was in hand, and had not cared to take it off for the greeting of this lover. "Grandfather said as how you was a coming out for your supper, so I've been a seeing to it. You'll excuse the apron, Mr. Mixet."

"You couldn't look nicer, miss, if you was to try it ever so. My mother says as it's houisery as recommends a girl to the young men. What do you say, John?"

"I loiks to see her loik o' that," said John rubbing his hands down the back of his trousers, and stooping till he had brought his eyes down to a level with those of his sweetheart.

"It looks homely; don't it, John?" said Mixet.
"Bother!" said Ruby, turning round sharp, and going back to the other kitchen. John Crumb turned round also, and grinned at his friend, and then grinned at the old man.

"You've got it all afore you," said the farmer,—leaving the lover to draw what lesson he might from this oracular proposition.
"I loiks to see her look the loik o' that."
"And I don't care how soon I ha'e it in b'ond;—that I don't," said John.

"That's the chat," said Joe Mixet. "There ain't nothing wanting in his house;—is there, John? It's all there,—cradle, cauldle-cup, and the rest of it. A young woman going to John knows what she'll have to eat when she gets up, and what she'll lie down upon when she goes to bed." This he declared in a loud voice for the benefit of Ruby in the back kitchen.

"That she do," said John, grinning again. "There's a hun'erd and fifty pood o' things in my house forbye what mother left behind her."

After this there was no more conversation till Ruby reappeared with the boiled fowl, and without her apron. She was followed by the girl with a dish of broiled ham and an enormous pyramid of cabbage. Then the old man got up slowly and opening some private little door of which he kept the key in his breeches pocket, drew a jug of ale and placed it on the table. And from a cupboard of which he also kept the key, he brought out a bottle of gin. Everything being thus prepared, the three men sat round the table, John Crumb looking at his chair again and again before he ventured to occupy it. "If you'll sit yourself down, I'll give you a bit of something to eat," said Ruby at last. Then he sank at once into his chair. Ruby cut up the fowl standing, and dispensed the other good things, not even placing a chair for herself at the table,—and apparently not expected to do so, for no one invited her. "Is it to be spirits or ale, Mr. Crumb?" she said, when the other two men had helped themselves. He turned round and gave her a look of love that might have softened the heart of an Amazon; but instead of speaking he held up his tumbler, and bobbed his head at the beer jug. Then she filled it to the brim, frothing it in the manner in which he loved to have it frothed. He raised it to his mouth slowly, and poured the liquor in as though to a vat. Then she filled it again. He had been her lover, and she would be as kind to him as she knew how,—short of love.

There was a good deal of eating done, for more ham came in, and another mountain of cabbage; but very little or nothing was said. John Crumb ate whatever was given to him of the fowl, sedulously picking the bones, and almost swallowing them; and then finished the second dish of ham, and after that the second instalment of cabbage. He did not ask for more beer, but took it as often as Ruby replenished his glass. When the eating was done, Ruby retired into the back kitchen, and there regaled herself with some bone or merry-thought of the fowl, which she had with prudence reserved, sharing her spoils however with the other maiden. This she did standing, and then went to work, cleaning the dishes. The men lit their pipes and smoked in silence, while Ruby went through her domestic duties. So matters went on for half an hour; during which Ruby escaped by the back door, went round into the house, got into her own room, and formed the grand resolution of going to bed. She began her operations in fear and trembling, not being sure but that her grandfather would bring the man up-stairs to her. As she thought of this she stayed her hand, and looked to the door. She knew well that there was no bolt there. It would be terrible to her
to be invaded by John Crumb after his fifth or sixth glass of beer. And, she declared to herself, that should he come he would be sure to bring Joe Mixet with him to speak his mind for him. So she paused and listened.

When they had smoked for some half hour the old man called for his granddaughter, but called of course in vain. "Where the mischief is the jade gone?" he said, slowly making his way into the back kitchen. The maid as soon as she heard her master moving, escaped into the yard and made no response, while the old man stood bawling at the back door. "The devil's in them. They're off some gates," he said aloud. "She'll make the place hot for her, if she goes on this way." Then he returned to the two young men. "She's playing off her games somewheres," he said. "Take a glass of sperrits and water, Mr. Crumb, and I'll see after her."

"I'll just take a drop of y'ell," said John Crumb, apparently quite unmoved by the absence of his sweetheart.

It was sad work for the old man. He went down the yard and into the garden, hobbling among the cabbages, not daring to call very loud, as he did not wish to have it supposed that the girl was lost; but still anxious, and sore at heart as to the ingratitude shown to him. He was not bound to give the girl a home at all. She was not his own child. And he had offered her £500! "Domm her," he said aloud as he made his way back to the house. After much search and considerable loss of time he returned to the kitchen in which the two men were sitting, leading Ruby in his hand. She was not smart in her apparel, for she had half undressed herself, and been then compelled by her grandfather to make herself fit to appear in public. She had acknowledged to herself that she had better go down and tell John Crumb the truth. For she was still determined that she would never be John Crumb's wife. "You can answer him as well as I, grandfather," she had said. Then the farmer had cuffed her, and told her that she was an idiot. "Oh, if it comes to that," said Ruby, "I'm not afraid of John Crumb, nor yet of nobody else. Only I didn't think you'd go to strike me, grandfather." "I'll knock the life out of thee, if thou goest on this gate," he had said. But she had consented to come down, and they entered the room together.

"We're a disturbing you a'most too late, miss," said Mr. Mixet.

"It ain't that at all, Mr. Mixet. If grandfather chooses to have a few friends, I ain't nothing against it. I wish he'd have a few friends a deal oftener than he do. I likes nothing better than to do for 'em;—only when I've done for 'em and they're smoking their pipes and that like, I don't see why I ain't to leave 'em to 'emselvses."

"But we've come here on a hauspicious occasion, Miss Ruby."

"I don't know nothing about auspicious, Mr. Mixet. If you and Mr. Crumb 've come out to Sheep's Acre farm for a bit of supper——"

"Which we ain't," said John Crumb very loudly;—"nor yet for beer;—not by no means."

"We've come for the smiles of beauty," said Joe Mixet.

Ruby chuckled up her head. "Mr. Mixet, if you'll be so good as to stow that! There ain't no beauty here as I knows of, and if there was it isn't nothing to you."
"Except in the way of friendship," said Mixet.
"I'm just as sick of all this as a man can be," said Mr. Ruggles, who was sitting low in his chair, with his back bent, and his head forward. "I won't put up with it no more."
"Who wants you to put up with it?" said Ruby. "Who wants 'em to come here with their trash? Who brought 'em to-night? I don't know what business Mr. Mixet has interfering along o' me. I never interfere along o' him."
"John Crumb, have you anything to say?" asked the old man.
Then John Crumb slowly arose from his chair, and stood up at his full height. "I hove," said he, swinging his head to one side.
"Then say it."
"I will," said he. He was still standing bolt upright with his hands down by his side. Then he stretched out his left to his glass which was half full of beer, and strengthened himself as far as that would strengthen him. Having done this he slowly deposited the pipe which he still held in his right hand.
"Now speak your mind, like a man," said Mixet.
"I intends it," said John. But he still stood dumb, looking down upon old Ruggles, who from his crouched position was looking up at him. Ruby was standing with both her hands upon the table and her eyes intent upon the wall over the fire-place.
"You've asked Miss Ruby to be your wife a dozen times;—haven't you, John?" suggested Mixet.
"I hove."
"And you mean to be as good as your word."
"I do."
"And she has promised to have you?"
"She hove."
"More nor once or twice?" To this proposition Crumb found it only necessary to bob his head. "You're ready,—and willing."
"I om."
"You're wishing to have the banns said without any more delay."
"There ain't no delay 'bout me;—never was."
"Everything is ready in your own house?"
"They is."
"And you will expect Miss Ruby to come to the scratch."
"I shall."
"That's about it, I think," said Joe Mixet, turning to the grandfather. "I don't think there was ever anything much more straightforward than that. You know, I know, Miss Ruby knows all about John Crumb. John Crumb didn't come to Bungay yesterday,—nor yet the day before. There's been a talk of five hundred pounds, Mr. Ruggles." Mr. Ruggles made a slight gesture of assent with his head. "Five hundred pounds is very comfortable; and added to what John has will make things that snug that things never was snugger. But John Crumb isn't after Miss Ruby along of her fortune."
"Nohow's," said the lover, shaking his head and still standing upright with his hands by his side.
"Not he;—it isn't his ways, and them as knows him'll never say it of him. John has a heart in his buzsom."
"I has," said John, raising his hand a little above his stomach.

"And feelings as a man. It's true love as has brought John Crumb to Sheep's Acre farm this night;—love of that young lady, if she'll let me make so free. He's proposed to her, and she's a has accepted
him, and now it's about time as they was married. That's what
John Crumb has to say."

"That's what I has to say," repeated John Crumb, "and I means it."

"And now, miss," continued Mixet, addressing himself to Ruby,

"you've heard what John has to say."

"I've heard you, Mr. Mixet, and I've heard quite enough."

"You can't have anything to say against it, miss; can you?
There's your grandfather as is willing, and the money as one may say
counted out,—and John Crumb is willing, with his house so ready
that there isn't a ha'porth to do. All we want is for you to name the
day."

"Say to-morrow, Ruby, and I'll not be agen it," said John Crumb,
slapping his thigh.

"I won't say to-morrow, Mr. Crumb, nor yet the day after to-
morrow, nor yet no day at all. I'm not going to have you. I've told
you as much before."

"That was only in fun, loike."

"Then now I tell you in earnest. There's some folk wants such a
deal of telling."

"You don't mean,—never?"

"I do mean never, Mr. Crumb."

"Didn't you say as you would, Ruby? Didn't you say so as plain
as the nose on my face?" John as he asked these questions could
hardly refrain from tears.

"Young women is allowed to change their minds," said Ruby.

"Brute!" exclaimed old Ruggles. "Pig! Jade! I'll tell'ee what, John. She'll go out o' this into the streets;—that's what
she wull. I won't keep her here, no longer;—nasty, ungrateful,
lying slut."

"She ain't that;—she ain't that," said John. "She ain't that at
all. She's no slut. I won't hear her called so;—not by her grand-
father. But, oh, she has a mind to put me so abouts, that I'll have
to go home and hang myself."

"Dash it, Miss Ruby, you ain't a going to serve a young man that
way," said the baker.

"If you'll jist keep yourself to yourself, I'll be obliged to you,
Mr. Mixet," said Ruby. "If you hadn't come here at all things might
have been different."

"Hark at that now," said John, looking at his friend almost with
indignation.

Mr. Mixet, who was fully aware of his rare eloquence and of the
absolute necessity there had been for its exercise if any arrangement
were to be made at all, could not trust himself to words after this.
He put on his hat and walked out through the back kitchen into the
yard declaring that his friend would find him there, round by the pig-
stye wall, whenever he was ready to return to Bungay. As soon as
Mixet was gone John looked at his sweetheart out of the corners of
his eyes and made a slow motion towards her, putting out his right hand as a feeler. "He's aff now, Ruby," said John.
"And you'd better be aff after him," said the cruel girl.
"And when'll I come back again?"
"Never. It ain't no use. What's the good of more words, Mr. Crumb?"
"Domm her; domm her," said old Ruggles. "I'll even it to her. I'll even it to her. She'll have to be out on the roads this night."
"She shall have the best bed in my house if she'll come for it," said John, "and the old woman to look after her; and I won't come nigh her till she sends for me."
"I can find a place for myself, thank ye, Mr. Crumb." Old Ruggles sat grinding his teeth, and swearing to himself, taking his hat off and putting it on again, and meditating vengeance. "And now if you please, Mr. Crumb, I'll go up-stairs to my own room."
"You don't go up to any room here, you jade you." The old man as he said this got up from his chair as though to fly at her. And he would have struck her with his stick but that he was stopped by John Crumb.
"Don't hit the girl, no gate, Mr. Ruggles."
"Domm her, John; she breaks my heart." While her lover held her grandfather Ruby escaped, and seated herself on the bedside, again afraid to undress, lest she should be disturbed by her grandfather. "Ain't it more nor a man ought to have to bear;—ain't it, Mr. Crumb?" said the grandfather appealing to the young man.
"It's the ways on 'em, Mr. Ruggles."
"Ways on 'em! A whipping at the cart-tail ought to be the ways on her. She's been and seen some young buck."
Then John Crumb turned red all over, through the flour, and sparks of anger flashed from his eyes. "You ain't a meaning of it, master?"
"I'm told there's been the squiere's cousin aboot,—him as they call the baronite."
"Been along wi' Ruby?" The old man nodded at him. "By the mortials I'll baronite him;—I wull," said John seizing his hat and stalking off through the back kitchen after his friend.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RUBY RUGGLES OBEYS HER GRANDFATHER.

The next day there was great surprise at Sheep's Acre farm, which communicated itself to the towns of Bungay and Beccles, and even affected the ordinary quiet life of Carbury Manor. Ruby Ruggles had gone away, and at about twelve o'clock in the day the old farmer became aware of the fact. She had started early, at about seven in the morning; but Ruggles himself had been out long before that, and had not condescended to ask for her when he returned to
the house for his breakfast. There had been a bad scene up in the bedroom overnight, after John Crumb had left the farm. The old man in his anger had tried to expel the girl; but she had hung on to the bed-post and would not go; and he had been frightened, when the maid came up crying and screaming murder. "You'll be out o' this to-morrow as sure as my name's Dannel Ruggles," said the farmer panting for breath. But for the gin which he had taken he would hardly have struck her;—but he had struck her, and pulled her by the hair, and knocked her about;—and in the morning she took him at his word and was away. About twelve he heard from the servant girl that she had gone. She had packed a box and had started up the road carrying the box herself. "Grandfather says I'm to go, and I'm gone," she had said to the girl. At the first cottage she had got a boy to carry her box into Beccles, and to Beccles she had walked. For an hour or two Ruggles sat, quiet, within the house, telling himself that she might do as she pleased with herself,—that he was well rid of her, and that from henceforth he would trouble himself no more about her. But by degrees there came upon him a feeling half of compassion and half of fear, with perhaps some mixture of love, instigating him to make search for her. She had been the same to him as a child, and what would people say of him if he allowed her to depart from him after this fashion? Then he remembered his violence the night before, and the fact that the servant girl had heard if she had not seen it. He could not drop his responsibility in regard to Ruby, even if he would. So, as a first step, he sent in a message to John Crumb, at Bungay, to tell him that Ruby Ruggles had gone off with a box to Beccles. John Crumb went open-mouthed with the news to Joe Mixet, and all Bungay soon knew that Ruby Ruggles had run away.

After sending his message to Crumb the old man still sat thinking, and at last made up his mind that he would go to his landlord. He held a part of his farm under Roger Carbury, and Roger Carbury would tell him what he ought to do. A great trouble had come upon him. He would fain have been quiet, but his conscience and his heart and his terrors all were at work together,—and he found that he could not eat his dinner. So he had out his cart and horse and drove himself off to Carbury Hall.

It was past four when he started, and he found the squire seated on the terrace after an early dinner, and with him was Father Barham, the priest. The old man was shown at once round into the garden, and was not long in telling his story. There had been words between him and his granddaughter about her lover. Her lover had been accepted and had come to the farm to claim his bride. Ruby had behaved very badly. The old man made the most of Ruby's bad behaviour, and of course as little as possible of his own violence. But he did explain that there had been threats used when Ruby refused to take the man, and that Ruby had, this day, taken herself off.

"I always thought it was settled they were to be man and wife," said Roger.

"It was settled, squiro;—and be war to have five hun'erd pound down;—money as I'd saved myself. Drat the jade."
"Didn't she like him, Daniel?"
"She liked him well enough till she'd seed somebody else." Then old Daniel paused, and shook his head, and was evidently the owner of a secret. The squire got up and walked round the garden with him,—and then the secret was told. The farmer was of opinion that there was something between the girl and Sir Felix. Sir Felix some weeks since had been seen near the farm and on the same occasion Ruby had been observed at some little distance from the house with her best clothes on.

"He's been so little here, Daniel," said the squire.
"It goes as tinder and a spark o' fire, that does," said the farmer. "Girls like Ruby don't want no time to be woo'd by one such as that, though they'll fall-lall with a man like John Crumb for years."
"I suppose she's gone to London."
"Don't know nothing of where she's gone, squier;—only she have gone some'eres. May be it's Lowestoffe. There's lots of quality at Lowestoffe a' washing theyselves in the sea."

Then they returned to the priest who might be supposed to be cognisant of the guiles of the world and competent to give advice on such an occasion as this. "If she was one of our people," said Father Barham, "we should have her back quick enough."
"Would ye now?" said Ruggles, wishing at the moment that he and all his family had been brought up as Roman Catholics.
"I don't see how you would have more chance of catching her than we have," said Carbury.
"She'd catch herself. Wherever she might be she'd go to the priest, and he wouldn't leave her till he'd seen her put on the way back to her friends."
"With a flea in her lug," suggested the farmer.
"Your people never go to a clergyman in their distress. It's the last thing they'd think of. Any one might more probably be regarded as a friend than the parson. But with us the poor know where to look for sympathy."
"She ain't that poor, neither," said the grandfather.
"She had money with her?"
"I don't know just what she had; but she ain't been brought up poor. And I don't think as our Ruby 'd go of herself to any clergyman. It never was her way."
"It never is the way with a Protestant," said the priest.
"We'll say no more about that for the present," said Roger, who was waxing wroth with the priest. That a man should be fond of his own religion is right; but Roger Carbury was beginning to think that Father Barham was too fond of his religion. "What had we better do? I suppose we shall hear something of her at the railway. There are not so many people leaving Beccles but that she may be remembered." So the waggonette was ordered, and they all prepared to go off to the station together.

But before they started John Crumb rode up to the door. He had gone at once to the farm on hearing of Ruby's departure, and had followed the farmer from thence to Carbury. Now he found the squire and the priest and the old man standing around as the
horses were being put to the carriage. "Ye ain't a' found her, Mr. Rugeles, ha' ye?" he asked as he wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Noa;—we ain't a' found no one yet."

"If it was as she was to come to harm, Mr. Carbury, I'd never forgive myself,—never," said Crumb.

"As far as I can understand it is no doing of yours, my friend," said the squire.

"In one way, it ain't; and in one way it is. I was over there last night a bothering of her. She'd a' come round may be, if she'd a' been left alone. She wouldn't a' been off now, only for our going over to Sheep's Acre. But,—oh!"

"What is it, Mr. Crumb?"

"He's a cousin o' yours, squire; and long as I've known Suffolk, I've never known nothing but good o' you and yourn. But if your baronite has been and done this! Oh, Mr. Carbury! If I was to wring his neck round, you wouldn't say as how I was wrong; would ye, now?" Roger could hardly answer the question. On general grounds the wringing of Sir Felix's neck, let the immediate cause for such a performance have been what it might, would have seemed to him to be a good deed. The world would be better, according to his thinking, with Sir Felix out of it than in it. But still the young man was his cousin and a Carbury, and to such a one as John Crumb he was bound to defend any member of his family as far as he might be defensible. "They says as how he was groping about Sheep's Acre when he was last here, a hiding himself and skulking behind hedges. Drat 'em all. They've gals enough of their own,—them fellows. Why can't they let a fellow alone? I'll do him a mischief, Master Roger; I wull;—if he's had a hand in this." Poor John Crumb! When he had his mistress to win he could find no words for himself; but was obliged to take an eloquent baker with him to talk for him. Now in his anger he could talk freely enough.

"But you must first learn that Sir Felix has had anything to do with this, Mr. Crumb."

"In course; in course. That's right. That's right. Must l'arn as he did it, afore I does it. But when I have l'arned!" And John Crumb clenched his fist as though a very short lesson would suffice for him upon this occasion.

They all went to the Beccles Station, and from thence to the Beccles post office,—so that Beccles soon knew as much about it as Bungay. At the railway station Ruby was distinctly remembered. She had taken a second-class ticket by the morning train for London, and had gone off without any appearance of secrecy. She had been decently dressed, with a hat and cloak, and her luggage had been such as she might have been expected to carry, had all her friends known that she was going. So much was made clear at the railway station, but nothing more could be learned there. Then a message was sent by telegraph to the station in London, and they all waited, loitering about the post office, for a reply. One of the porters in London remembered seeing such a girl as was described, but the man who was supposed to have carried her box for her to a cab had gone away for the day. It was believed that she had left the station in a four-wheel cab.
"I'll be arter her. I'll be arter her at once," said John Crumb. But there was no train till night, and Roger Carbury was doubtful whether his going would do any good. It was evidently fixed on Crumb's mind that the first step towards finding Ruby would be the breaking of every bone in the body of Sir Felix Carbury. Now it was not at all apparent to the squire that his cousin had had anything to do with this affair. It had been made quite clear to him that the old man had quarrelled with his granddaughter and had threatened to turn her out of his house, not because she had misbehaved with Sir Felix, but on account of her refusing to marry John Crumb. John Crumb had gone over to the farm expecting to arrange it all, and up to that time there had been no fear about Felix Carbury. Nor was it possible that there should have been communication between Ruby and Felix since the quarrel at the farm. Even if the old man were right in supposing that Ruby and the baronet had been acquainted,—and such acquaintance could not but be prejudicial to the girl,—not on that account would the baronet be responsible for her abduction. John Crumb was thirsting for blood and was not very capable in his present mood of arguing the matter out coolly, and Roger, little as he loved his cousin, was not desirous that all Suffolk should know that Sir Felix Carbury had been thrashed within an inch of his life by John Crumb of Bungay. "I'll tell you what I'll do," said he, putting his hand kindly on the old man's shoulder. "I'll go up myself by the first train to-morrow. I can trace her better than Mr. Crumb can do, and you will both trust me."

"There's not one in the two counties I'd trust so soon," said the old man.

"But you'll let us know the very truth," said John Crumb. Roger Carbury made him an indelicate promise that he would let him know the truth. So the matter was settled, and the grandfather and lover returned together to Bungay.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MELMOTTE’S GLORY.

Augustus Melmotte was becoming greater and greater in every direction,—mightier and mightier every day. He was learning to despise mere lords, and to feel that he might almost domineer over a duke. In truth he did recognise it as a fact that he must either domineer over dukes, or else go to the wall. It can hardly be said of him that he had intended to play so high a game, but the game that he had intended to play had become thus high of its own accord. A man cannot always restrain his own doings and keep them within the limits which he had himself planned for them. They will very often fall short of the magnitude to which his ambition has aspired. They will sometimes soar higher than his own imagi-
nation. So it had now been with Mr. Melmotte. He had contemplated great things; but the things which he was achieving were beyond his contemplation.

The reader will not have thought much of Fisker on his arrival in England. Fisker was, perhaps, not a man worthy of much thought. He had never read a book. He had never written a line worth reading. He had never said a prayer. He cared nothing for humanity. He had sprung out of some Californian guil|ly, was perhaps ignorant of his own father and mother, and had tumbled up in the world on the strength of his own audacity. But, such as he was, he had sufficed to give the necessary impetus for rolling Augustus Melmotte onwards into almost unprecedented commercial greatness. When Mr. Melmotte took his offices in Abchurch Lane, he was undoubtedly a great man, but nothing so great as when the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway had become not only an established fact, but a fact established in Abchurch Lane. The great company indeed had an office of its own, where the Board was held; but everything was really managed in Mr. Melmotte’s own commercial sanctum. Obeying, no doubt, some inescrutable law of commerce, the grand enterprise,—“perhaps the grandest when you consider the amount of territory manipulated, which has ever opened itself before the eyes of a great commercial people,” as Mr. Fisker with his peculiar eloquence observed through his nose, about this time to a meeting of shareholders at San Francisco,—had swung itself across from California to London, turning itself to the centre of the commercial world as the needle turns to the pole, till Mr. Fisker almost regretted the deed which himself had done. And Melmotte was not only the head, but the body also, and the feet of it all. The shares seemed to be all in Melmotte’s pocket, so that he could distribute them as he would; and it seemed also that when distributed and sold, and when bought again and sold again, they came back to Melmotte’s pocket. Men were contented to buy their shares and to pay their money, simply on Melmotte’s word. Sir Felix had realised a large portion of his winnings at cards,—with commendable prudence for one so young and extravagant,—and had brought his savings to the great man. The great man had swept the earnings of the Bear-garden into his till, and had told Sir Felix that the shares were his. Sir Felix had been not only contented, but supremely happy. He could now do as Paul Montague was doing,—and Lord Alfred Gren dall. He could realize a perennial income, buying and selling. It was only after the reflection of a day or two that he found that he had as yet got nothing to sell. It was not only Sir Felix that was admitted into these good things after this fashion. Sir Felix was but one among hundreds. In the meantime the bills in Grosvenor Square were no doubt paid with punctuality,—and these bills must have been stupendous. The very servants were as tall, as gorgeous, almost as numerous, as the servants of royalty,—and remunerated by much higher wages. There were four coachmen with egregious wigs, and eight footmen, not one with a circumference of calf less than eighteen inches.

And now there appeared a paragraph in the “Morning Breakfast Table,” and another appeared in the “Evening Pulpit,” telling the
world that Mr. Melmotte had bought Pickering Park, the magnificent Sussex property of Adolphus Longstaffe, Esq., of Caversham. And it was so. The father and son who never had agreed before, and who now had come to no agreement in the presence of each other, had each considered that their affairs would be safe in the hands of so great a man as Mr. Melmotte, and had been brought to terms. The purchase-money, which was large, was to be divided between them. The thing was done with the greatest ease,—there being no longer any delay as is the case when small people are at work. The magnificence of Mr. Melmotte affected even the Longstaffe lawyers. Were I to buy a little property, some humble cottage with a garden,—or you, O reader, unless you be magnificent,—the money to the last farthing would be wanted, or security for the money more than sufficient, before we should be able to enter in upon our new home. But money was the very breath of Melmotte's nostrils, and therefore his breath was taken for money. Pickering was his, and before a week was over a London builder had collected masons and carpenters by the dozen down at Chichester, and was at work upon the house to make it fit to be a residence for Madame Melmotte. There were rumours that it was to be made ready for the Goodwood week, and that the Melmotte entertainment during that festival would rival the duke's.

But there was still much to be done in London before the Goodwood week should come round in all of which Mr. Melmotte was concerned, and of much of which Mr. Melmotte was the very centre. A member for Westminster had succeeded to a peerage, and thus a seat was vacated. It was considered to be indispensable to the country that Mr. Melmotte should go into Parliament, and what constituency could such a man as Melmotte so fitly represent as one combining as Westminster does all the essences of the metropolis? There was the popular element, the fashionable element, the legislative element, the legal element, and the commercial element. Melmotte undoubtedly was the man for Westminster. His thorough popularity was evinced by testimony which perhaps was never before given in favour of any candidate for any county or borough. In Westminster there must of course be a contest. A seat for Westminster is a thing not to be abandoned by either political party without a struggle. But, at the beginning of the affair, when each party had to seek the most suitable candidate which the country could supply, each party put its hand upon Melmotte. And when the seat, and the battle for the seat were suggested to Melmotte, then for the first time was that great man forced to descend from the altitudes on which his mind generally dwelt, and to decide whether he would enter Parliament as a Conservative or a Liberal. He was not long in convincing himself that the conservative element in British Society stood the most in need of that fiscal assistance which it would be in his province to give; and on the next day every hoarding in London declared to the world that Melmotte was the conservative candidate for Westminster. It is needless to say that his committee was made up of peers, bankers, and publicans, with all that absence of class prejudice for which the party has become famous since the ballot was introduced among us. Some unfortunate Liberal was to be made
to run against him, for the sake of the party; but the odds were ten to one on Melmotte.

This no doubt was a great matter,—this affair of the seat; but the dinner to be given to the Emperor of China was much greater. It was the middle of June, and the dinner was to be given on Monday, 8th July, now three weeks hence;—but all London was already talking of it. The great purport proposed was to show to the Emperor by this banquet what an English merchant-citizen of London could do. Of course there was a great amount of scolding and a loud clamour on the occasion. Some men said that Melmotte was not a citizen of London, others that he was not a merchant, others again that he was not an Englishman. But no man could deny that he was both able and willing to spend the necessary money; and as this combination of ability and will was the chief thing necessary, they who opposed the arrangement could only storm and scold. On the 20th of June the tradesmen were at work, throwing up a building behind, knocking down walls, and generally transmuting the house in Grosvenor Square in such a fashion that two hundred guests might be able to sit down to dinner in the dining-room of a British merchant.

But who were to be the two hundred? It used to be the case that when a gentleman gave a dinner he asked his own guests;—but when affairs become great, society can hardly be carried on after that simple fashion. The Emperor of China could not be made to sit at table without English royalty, and English royalty must know whom it has to meet,—must select at any rate some of its comrades. The minister of the day also had his candidates for the dinner,—in which arrangement there was however no private patronage, as the list was confined to the cabinet and their wives. The Prime Minister took some credit to himself in that he would not ask for a single ticket for a private friend. But the Opposition as a body desired their share of seats. Melmotte had elected to stand for Westminster on the conservative interest, and was advised that he must insist on having as it were a conservative cabinet present, with its conservative wives. He was told that he owed it to his party, and that his party exacted payment of the debt. But the great difficulty lay with the city merchants. This was to be a city merchant’s private feast, and it was essential that the Emperor should meet this great merchant’s brother merchants at the merchant’s board. No doubt the Emperor would see all the merchants at the Guildhall; but that would be a semi-public affair, paid for out of the funds of a corporation. This was to be a private dinner. Now the Lord Mayor had set his face against it, and what was to be done? Meetings were held; a committee was appointed; merchant guests were selected, to the number of fifteen with their fifteen wives;—and subsequently the Lord Mayor was made a baronet on the occasion of receiving the Emperor in the city. The Emperor with his suite was twenty. Royalty had twenty tickets, each ticket for guest and wife. The existing Cabinet was fourteen; but the coming was numbered at about eleven only;—each one for self and wife. Five ambassadors and five ambassadors were to be asked. There were to be fifteen real merchants out of the
city. Ten great peers,—with their peeresses,—were selected by the
general committee of management. There were to be three wise
men, two poets, three independent members of the House of Com-
mons, two Royal Academicians, three editors of papers, an African
traveller who had just come home, and a novelist;—but all these
latter gentlemen were expected to come as bachelors. Three tickets
were to be kept over for presentation to bores endowed with a power
of making themselves absolutely undurable if not admitted at the last
moment,—and ten were left for the giver of the feast and his own
family and friends. It is often difficult to make things go smooth,—
but almost all roughnesses may be smoothed at last with patience and
care, and money and patronage.

But the dinner was not to be all. Eight hundred additional tickets
were to be issued for Madame Melmotte’s evening entertainment, and
the fight for these was more internecine than for seats at the dinner.
The dinner-seats, indeed, were handled in so statesmanlike a fashion
that there was not much visible fighting about them. Royalty
manages its affairs quietly. The existing Cabinet was existing, and
though there were two or three members of it who could not have
got themselves elected at a single unpolitical club in London, they had
a right to their seats at Melmotte’s table. What disappointed ambi-
tion there might be among conservative candidates was never known
to the public. Those gentlemen do not wash their dirty linen in
public. The ambassadors of course were quiet, but we may be sure
that the Minister from the United States was among the favoured
five. The city bankers and bigwigs, as has been already said, were
at first unwilling to be present, and therefore they who were not
chosen could not afterwards express their displeasure. No grumbling
was heard among the peers, and that which came from the peeresses
floated down into the current of the great fight about the evening
entertainment. The poet laureate was of course asked, and the
second poet was as much a matter of course. Only two Academi-
cians had in this year painted royalty, so that there was no ground
for jealousy there. There were three, and only three, specially inso-
lent and specially disagreeable independent members of Parliament at
that time in the House, and there was no difficulty in selecting them.
The wise men were chosen by their age. Among editors of news-
papers there was some ill-blood. That Mr. Alf and Mr. Broune
should be selected was almost a matter of course. They were hated
accordingly, but still this was expected. But why was Mr. Eooker
there? Was it because he had praised the Prime Minister’s transla-
tion of Catullus? The African traveller chose himself by living
through all his perils and coming home. A novelist was selected;
but as royalty wanted another ticket at the last moment, the gentle-
man was only asked to come in after dinner. His proud heart, how-
ever, resented the treatment, and he joined amicably with his literary
brethren in decrying the festival altogether.

We should be advancing too rapidly into this portion of our story
were we to concern ourselves deeply at the present moment with the
feud as it raged before the evening came round, but it may be right to
indicate that the desire for tickets at last became a burning passion,
and a passion which in the great majority of cases could not be indulged. The value of the privilege was so great that Madame Melmotte thought that she was doing almost more than friendship called for when she informed her guest, Miss Longestaff, that unfortunately there would be no seat for her at the dinner-table; but that, as payment for her loss, she should receive an evening ticket for herself and a joint ticket for a gentleman and his wife. Georgiana was at first indignant, but she accepted the compromise. What she did with her tickets shall be hereafter told.

From all this I trust it will be understood that the Mr. Melmotte of the present hour was a very different man from that Mr. Melmotte who was introduced to the reader in the early chapters of this chronicle. Royalty was not to be smuggled in and out of his house now without his being allowed to see it. No manoeuvres now were necessary to catch a simple duchess. Duchesses were willing enough to come. Lord Alfred when he was called by his Christian name felt no aristocratic twinges. He was only too anxious to make himself more and more necessary to the great man. It is true that all this came as it were by jumps, so that very often a part of the world did not know on what ledge in the world the great man was perched at that moment. Miss Longestaff who was staying in the house did not at all know how great a man her host was. Lady Monogram when she refused to go to Grosvenor Square, or even to allow any one to come out of the house in Grosvenor Square to her parties, was groping in outer darkness. Madame Melmotte did not know. Marie Melmotte did not know. The great man did not quite know himself where, from time to time, he was standing. But the world at large knew. The world knew that Mr. Melmotte was to be Member for Westminster, that Mr. Melmotte was to entertain the Emperor of China, that Mr. Melmotte carried the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway in his pocket;—and the world worshipped Mr. Melmotte.

In the meantime Mr. Melmotte was much troubled about his private affairs. He had promised his daughter to Lord Nidderdale, and as he rose in the world had lowered the price which he offered for this marriage,—not so much in the absolute amount of fortune to be ultimately given, as in the manner of giving it. Fifteen thousand a year was to be settled on Marie and on her eldest son, and twenty thousand pounds were to be paid into Nidderdale's hands six months after the marriage. Melmotte gave his reasons for not paying this sum at once. Nidderdale would be more likely to be quiet, if he were kept waiting for that short time. Melmotte was to purchase and furnish for them a house in town. It was, too, almost understood that the young people were to have Pickering Park for themselves, except for a week or so at the end of July. It was absolutely given out in the papers that Pickering was to be theirs. It was said on all sides that Nidderdale was doing very well for himself. The absolute money was not perhaps so great as had been at first asked; but then, at that time, Melmotte was not the strong rock, the impregnable tower of commerce, the very navel of the commercial enterprise of the world,—as all men now regarded him. Nidderdale's father, and Nidderdale himself, were, in the present condition of things, content
with a very much less stringent bargain than that which they had endeavoured at first to exact.

But, in the midst of all this, Marie, who had at one time consented at her father's instance to accept the young lord, and who in some speechless fashion had accepted him, told both the young lord and her father, very roundly, that she had changed her mind. Her father scowled at her and told her that her mind in the matter was of no concern. He intended that she should marry Lord Nidderdale, and himself fixed some day in August for the wedding. "It is no use, father, for I will never have him," said Marie.

"Is it about that other scamp?" he asked angrily.

"If you mean Sir Felix Carbury, it is about him. He has been to you and told you, and therefore I don't know why I need hold my tongue."

"You'll both starve, my lady; that's all." Marie however was not so wedded to the grandeur which she encountered in Grosvenor Square as to be afraid of the starvation which she thought she might have to suffer if married to Sir Felix Carbury. Melmotte had not time for any long discussion. As he left her he took hold of her and shook her. "By ———," he said, "if you run rusty after all I've done for you, I'll make you suffer. You little fool; that man's a beggar. He hasn't the price of a petticoat or a pair of stockings. He's looking only for what you haven't got, and shan't have if you marry him. He wants money, not you, you little fool!"

But after that she was quite settled in her purpose when Nidderdale spoke to her. They had been engaged and then it had been off;—and now the young nobleman, having settled everything with the father, expected no great difficulty in resettling everything with the girl. He was not very skilful at making love,—but he was thoroughly good-humoured, from his nature anxious to please, and averse to give pain. There was hardly any injury which he could not forgive, and hardly any kindness which he would not do,—so that the labour upon himself was not too great. "Well, Miss Melmotte," he said; "governors are stern beings: are they not?"

"Is yours stern, my lord?"

"What I mean is that sons and daughters have to obey them. I think you understand what I mean. I was awfully spoony on you that time before; I was indeed."

"I hope it didn't hurt you much, Lord Nidderdale."

"That's so like a woman; that is. You know well enough that you and I can't marry without leave from the governors."

"Nor with it," said Marie, nodding her head.

"I don't know how that may be. There was some hitch somewhere,—I don't quite know where."—The hitch had been with himself, as he demanded ready money. "But it's all right now. The old fellows are agreed. Can't we make a match of it, Miss Melmotte?"

"No, Lord Nidderdale; I don't think we can."

"Do you mean that?"

"I do mean it. When that was going on before I knew nothing about it. I have seen more of things since then."
"And you've seen somebody you like better than me?"
"I say nothing about that, Lord Nidderdale. I don't think you ought to blame me, my lord."
"Oh dear no."
"There was something before, but it was you that was off first. Wasn't it now?"
"The governors were off, I think."
"The governors have a right to be off, I suppose. But I don't think any governor has a right to make anybody marry any one."
"I agree with you there;—I do indeed," said Lord Nidderdale.
"And no governor shall make me marry. I've thought a great deal about it since that other time, and that's what I've come to determine."
"But I don't know why you shouldn't—just marry me—because you—like me."
"Only,—just because I don't. Well; I do like you, Lord Nidderdale."
"Thanks;—so much!"
"I like you ever so,—only marrying a person is different."
"There's something in that to be sure."
"And I don't mind telling you," said Marie with an almost solemn expression on her countenance, "because you are good-natured and won't get me into a scrape if you can help it, that I do like somebody else;—oh, so much."
"I supposed that was it."
"That is it."
"It's a deuced pity. The governors had settled everything, and we should have been awfully jolly. I'd have gone in for all the things you go in for; and though your governor was screwing us up a bit, there would have been plenty of tin to go on with. You couldn't think of it again?"
"I tell you, my lord, I'm—in love."
"Oh, ah;—yes. So you were saying. It's an awful bore. That's all. I shall come to the party all the same if you send me a ticket?" And so Nidderdale took his dismissal, and went away,—not however without an idea that the marriage would still come off. There was always,—so he thought,—such a bother about things before they would get themselves fixed. This happened some days after Mr. Broune's proposal to Lady Carbury, more than a week since Marie had seen Sir Felix. As soon as Lord Nidderdale was gone she wrote again to Sir Felix begging that she might hear from him,—and entrusted her letter to Didon.
CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. BROUNES PERILS.

LADY CARBURY had allowed herself two days for answering Mr. Browne’s proposition. It was made on Tuesday night and she was bound by her promise to send a reply some time on Thursday. But early on the Wednesday morning she had made up her mind; and at noon on that day her letter was written. She had spoken to Hetta about the man, and she had seen that Hetta had disliked him. She was not disposed to be much guided by Hetta’s opinion. In regard to her daughter she was always influenced by a vague idea that Hetta was an unnecessary trouble. There was an excellent match ready for her if she would only accept it. There was no reason why Hetta should continue to add herself to the family burden. She never said this even to herself,—but she felt it, and was not therefore inclined to consult Hetta’s comfort on this occasion. But nevertheless, what her daughter said had its effect. She had encountered the troubles of one marriage, and they had been very bad. She did not look upon that marriage as a mistake,—having even up to this day a consciousness that it had been the business of her life, as a portionless girl, to obtain maintenance and position at the expense of suffering and servility. But that had been done. The maintenance was, indeed, again doubtful, because of her son’s vices; but it might so probably be again secured,—by means of her son’s beauty! Hetta had said that Mr. Browne liked his own way. Had not she herself found that all men liked their own way. And she liked her own way. She liked the comfort of a home to herself. Personally she did not want the companionship of a husband. And what scenes would there be between Felix and the man! And added to all this there was something within her, almost amounting to conscience, which told her that it was not right that she should burden any one with the responsibility and inevitable troubles of such a son as her son Felix. What would she do were her husband to command her to separate herself from her son? In such circumstances she would certainly separate herself from her husband. Having considered these things deeply, she wrote as follows to Mr. Browne;—

"Dearest Friend,

"I need not tell you that I have thought much of your generous and affectionate offer. How could I refuse such a prospect as you offer me without much thought? I regard your career as the most noble which a man’s ambition can achieve. And in that career no one is your superior. I cannot but be proud that such a one as you should have asked me to be his wife. But, my friend, life is subject to wounds which are incurable, and my life has been so wounded. I have not strength left me to make my heart whole
enough to be worthy of your acceptance. I have been so cut and
scotched and lopped by the sufferings which I have endured that I am
best alone. It cannot all be described;—and yet with you I would
have no reticence. I would put the whole history before you to read,
with all my troubles past and still present, all my hopes, and all my
fears,—with every circumstance as it has passed by and every expec-
tation that remains, were it not that the poor tale would be too long
for your patience. The result of it would be to make you feel that
I am no longer fit to enter in upon a new home. I should bring
showers instead of sunshine, melancholy in lieu of mirth.

"I will, however, be bold enough to assure you that could I bring
myself to be the wife of any man I would now become your wife.
But I shall never marry again.

"Nevertheless, I am your most affectionate friend,

"Matilda Carbury."

About six o'clock in the afternoon she sent this letter to Mr.
Broune's rooms in Pall Mall East, and then sat for awhile alone,—
full of regrets. She had thrown away from her a firm footing which
would certainly have served her for her whole life. Even at this
moment she was in debt,—and did not know how to pay her debts
without mortgaging her life income. She longed for some staff on
which she could lean. She was afraid of the future. When she
would sit with her paper before her, preparing her future work for
the press, copying a bit here and a bit there, inventing historical
details, dovetailing her chronicle, her head would sometimes seem to
be going round as she remembered the unpaid baker, and her son's
horses, and his unmeaning dissipation, and all her doubts about the
marriage. As regarded herself, Mr. Broune would have made her
secure,—but that now was all over. Poor woman! This at any rate
may be said for her,—that had she accepted the man her regrets
would have been as deep.

Mr. Broune's feelings were more decided in their tone than those of
the lady. He had not made his offer without consideration, and yet
from the very moment in which it had been made he repented it.
That gently sarcastic appellation by which Lady Carbury had de-
scribed him to herself when he had kissed her best explained that
side of Mr. Broune's character which showed itself in this matter.
He was a susceptible old goose. Had she allowed him to kiss her
without objection, the kissing might probably have gone on; and,
whatever might have come of it, there would have been no offer of
marriage. He had believed that her little manoeuvres had indicated
love on her part, and he had felt himself constrained to reciprocate
the passion. She was beautiful in his eyes. She was bright. She
wore her clothes like a lady; and,—if it was written in the Book of
the Fates that some lady was to sit at the top of his table,—Lady
Carbury would look as well there as any other. She had repudiated
the kiss, and therefore he had felt himself bound to obtain for himself
the right to kiss her.

The offer had no sooner been made than he met her son reeling in,
drunk, at the front door. As he made his escape the lad had insulted
him. This, perhaps helped, to open his eyes. When he woke the next morning, or rather late in the next day, after his night's work, he was no longer able to tell himself that the world was all right with him. Who does not know that sudden thoughtfulness at waking, that first matutinal retrospection, and pro-spection, into things as they have been and are to be; and the lowness of heart, the blankness of hope which follows the first remembrance of some folly lately done, some word ill-spoken, some money misspent,—or perhaps a cigar too much, or a glass of brandy and soda-water which he should have left untasted? And when things have gone well, how the waker comforts himself among the bedclothes as he claims for himself to be whole all over, teres atque rotundus,—so to have managed his little affairs that he has to fear no harm, and to blush inwardly at no error! Mr. Broune, the way of whose life took him among many perils, who in the course of his work had to steer his bark among many rocks, was in the habit of thus auditing his daily account as he shook off sleep about noon,—for such was his lot, that he seldom was in bed before four or five in the morning. On this Wednesday he found that he could not balance his sheet comfortably. He had taken a very great step and he feared that he had not taken it with wisdom. As he drank the cup of tea with which his servant supplied him while he was yet in bed, he could not say of himself, teres atque rotundus, as he was wont to do when things were well with him. Everything was to be changed. As he lit a cigarette he bethought himself that Lady Carbury would not like him to smoke in her bedroom. Then he remembered other things. "I'll be d—— if he shall live in my house," he said to himself.

And there was no way out of it. It did not occur to the man that his offer could be refused. During the whole of that day he went about among his friends in a melancholy fashion, saying little snappish uncivil things at the club, and at last dining by himself with about fifteen newspapers around him. After dinner he did not speak a word to any man, but went early to the office of the newspaper in Trafalgar Square at which he did his nightly work. Here he was lapped in comforts,—if the best of chairs, of sofas, of writing tables, and of reading lamps can make a man comfortable who has to read nightly thirty columns of a newspaper, or at any rate to make himself responsible for their contents.

He seated himself to his work like a man, but immediately saw Lady Carbury's letter on the table before him. It was his custom when he did not dine at home to have such documents brought to him at his office as had reached his home during his absence;—and here was Lady Carbury's letter. He knew her writing well, and was aware that here was the confirmation of his fate. It had not been expected, as she had given herself another day for her answer,—but here it was, beneath his hand. Surely this was almost unfeminine haste. He chucked the letter, unopened, a little from him, and endeavoured to fix his attention on some printed slip that was ready for him. For some ten minutes his eyes went rapidly down the lines, but he found that his mind did not follow what he was reading. He struggled again, but still his thoughts were on the letter. He
did not wish to open it, having some vague idea that, till the letter should have been read, there was a chance of escape. The letter would not become due to be read till the next day. It should not have been there now to tempt his thoughts on this night. But he could do nothing while it lay there. "It shall be a part of the bargain that I shall never have to see him," he said to himself, as he opened it. The second line told him that the danger was over.

When he had read so far he stood up with his back to the fireplace, leaving the letter on the table. Then, after all, the woman wasn't in love with him! But that was a reading of the affair which he could hardly bring himself to look upon as correct. The woman had shown her love by a thousand signs. There was no doubt, however, that she now had her triumph. A woman always has a triumph when she rejects a man,—and more especially when she does so at a certain time of life. Would she publish her triumph? Mr. Broone would not like to have it known about among brother editors, or by the world at large, that he had offered to marry Lady Carbury and that Lady Carbury had refused him. He had escaped; but the sweetness of his present safety was not in proportion to the bitterness of his late fears.

He could not understand why Lady Carbury should have refused him! As he reflected upon it, all memory of her son for the moment passed away from him. Full ten minutes had passed, during which he had still stood upon the rug, before he read the entire letter. "'Cut and scotched and lopped! I suppose she has been," he said to himself. He had heard much of Sir Patrick, and knew well that the old general had been no lamb. "I shouldn't have cut her, or scotched her, or lopped her." When he had read the whole letter patiently there crept upon him gradually a feeling of admiration for her, greater than he had ever yet felt,—and, for awhile, he almost thought that he would renew his offer to her. "'Showers instead of sunshine; melancholy instead of mirth,'" he repeated to himself. "'I should have done the best for her, taking the showers and the melancholy if they were necessary.'"

He went to his work in a mixed frame of mind, but certainly without that dragging weight which had oppressed him when he entered the room. Gradually, through the night, he realised the conviction that he had escaped, and threw from him altogether the idea of repeating his offer. Before he left he wrote her a line—

"Be it so. It need not break our friendship.

"N. B."

This he sent by a special messenger, who returned with a note to his lodgings long before he was up on the following morning.

"No;—no; certainly not. No word of this will ever pass my mouth.

"M. C."

Mr. Broone thought that he was very well out of the danger, and resolved that Lady Carbury should never want anything that his friendship could do for her.
CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BOARD-ROOM.

ON Friday, the 21st June, the Board of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway sat in its own room behind the Exchange, as was the Board's custom every Friday. On this occasion all the members were there, as it had been understood that the chairman was to make a special statement. There was the great chairman as a matter of course. In the midst of his numerous and immense concerns he never threw over the railway, or delegated to other less experienced hands those cares which the commercial world had intrusted to his own. Lord Alfred was there, with Mr. Cohenlupe, the Hebrew gentleman, and Paul Montague, and Lord Nidderdale,—and even Sir Felix Carbury. Sir Felix had come, being very anxious to buy and sell, and not as yet having had an opportunity of realising his golden hopes, although he had actually paid a thousand pounds in hard money into Mr. Meltome's hands. The secretary, Mr. Miles Grendall, was also present as a matter of course. The Board always met at three, and had generally been dissolved at a quarter past three. Lord Alfred and Mr. Cohenlupe sat at the chairman's right and left hand. Paul Montague generally sat immediately below, with Miles Grendall opposite to him;—but on this occasion the young lord and the young baronet took the next places. It was a nice little family party, the great chairman with his two aspiring sons-in-law, his two particular friends,—the social friend, Lord Alfred, and the commercial friend Mr. Cohenlupe,—and Miles, who was Lord Alfred's son. It would have been complete in its friendliness, but for Paul Montague, who had lately made himself disagreeable to Mr. Meltome;—and most ungratefully so, for certainly no one had been allowed so free a use of the shares as the younger member of the house of Fisker, Montague, and Montague.

It was understood that Mr. Meltome was to make a statement. Lord Nidderdale and Sir Felix had conceived that this was to be done as it were out of the great man's own heart, of his own wish, so that something of the condition of the company might be made known to the directors of the company. But this was not perhaps exactly the truth. Paul Montague had insisted on giving vent to certain doubts at the last meeting but one, and, having made himself very disagreeable indeed, had forced this trouble on the great chairman. On the intermediate Friday the chairman had made himself very unpleasant to Paul, and this had seemed to be an effort on his part to frighten the inimical director out of his opposition, so that the promise of a statement need not be fulfilled. What nuisance can be so great to a man busied with immense affairs, as to have to explain,—or to attempt to explain,—small details to men incapable of understanding them? But Montague had stood to his guns. He had not
intended, he said, to dispute the commercial success of the company. But he felt very strongly, and he thought that his brother directors should feel as strongly, that it was necessary that they should know more than they did know. Lord Alfred had declared that he did not in the least agree with his brother director. "If anybody don't understand, it's his own fault," said Mr. Cohenlupe. But Paul would not give way, and it was understood that Mr. Melmotte would make a statement.

The "Boards" were always commenced by the reading of a certain record of the last meeting out of a book. This was always done by Miles Grendall; and the record was supposed to have been written by him. But Montague had discovered that this statement in the book was always prepared and written by a satellite of Melmotte's from Abchurch Lane who was never present at the meeting. The adverse director had spoken to the secretary,—it will be remembered that they were both members of the Beargarden,—and Miles had given a somewhat evasive reply. "A cussed deal of trouble and all that, you know! He's used to it, and it's what he's meant for. I'm not going to fluff myself about stuff of that kind." Montague after this had spoken on the subject both to Nidderdale and Felix Carbury. "He couldn't do it, if it was ever so," Nidderdale had said. "I don't think I'd bully him if I were you. He gets £500 a-year, and if you knew all he owes, and all he hasn't got, you wouldn't try to rob him of it." With Felix Carbury Montague had as little success. Sir Felix hated the secretary, had detected him cheating at cards, had resolved to expose him,—and had then been afraid to do so. He had told Dolly Longstaffe, and the reader will perhaps remember with what effect. He had not mentioned the affair again, and had gradually fallen back into the habit of playing at the club. Loo, however, had given way to whist, and Sir Felix had satisfied himself with the change. He still meditated some dreadful punishment for Miles Grendall, but, in the meantime, felt himself unable to oppose him at the Board. Since the day at which the aces had been manipulated at the club he had not spoken to Miles Grendall except in reference to the affairs of the whist-table. The "Board" was now commenced as usual. Miles read the short record out of the book,—stumbling over every other word, and going through the performance so badly that had there been anything to understand no one could have understood it. "Gentlemen," said Mr. Melmotte, in his usual hurried way, "is it your pleasure that I shall sign the record?" Paul Montague rose to say that it was not his pleasure that the record should be signed. But Melmotte had made his scrawl, and was deep in conversation with Mr. Cohenlupe before Paul could get upon his legs.

Melmotte, however, had watched the little struggle. Melmotte, whatever might be his faults, had eyes to see and ears to hear. He perceived that Montague had made a little struggle and had been cowed; and he knew how hard it is for one man to persevere against five or six, and for a young man to persevere against his elders. Nidderdale was fiddling bits of paper across the table at Carbury. Miles Grendall was poring over the book which was in
his charge. Lord Alfred sat back in his chair, the picture of a model director, with his right hand within his waistcoat. He looked aristocratic, respectable, and almost commercial. In that room he never by any chance opened his mouth, except when called on to say that Mr. Melmotte was right, and was considered by the chairman really to earn his money. Melmotte for a minute or two went on conversing with Cohenlupe, having perceived that Montague for the moment was cowed. Then Paul put both his hands upon the table, intending to rise and ask some perplexing question. Melmotte saw this also and was upon his legs before Montague had risen from his chair. "Gentlemen," said Mr. Melmotte, "it may perhaps be as well if I take this occasion of saying a few words to you about the affairs of the company." Then, instead of going on with his statement, he sat down again, and began to turn over sundry voluminous papers very slowly, whispering a word or two every now and then to Mr. Cohenlupe. Lord Alfred never changed his posture and never took his hand from his breast. Nidderdale and Carbury fumbled their paper pellets backwards and forwards. Montague sat profoundly listening,—or ready to listen when anything should be said. As the chairman had risen from his chair to commence his statement, Paul felt that he was bound to be silent. When a speaker is in possession of the floor, he is in possession even though he be somewhat dilatory in looking to his references, and whispering to his neighbour. And, when that speaker is a chairman, of course some additional latitude must be allowed to him. Montague understood this, and sat silent. It seemed that Melmotte had much to say to Cohenlupe, and Cohenlupe much to say to Melmotte. Since Cohenlupe had sat at the Board he had never before developed such powers of conversation.

Nidderdale didn't quite understand it. He had been there twenty minutes, was tired of his present amusement, having been unable to hit Carbury on the nose, and suddenly remembered that the Bear-garden would now be open. He was no respecter of persons, and had got over any little feeling of awe with which the big table and the solemnity of the room may have first inspired him. "I suppose that's about all," he said, looking up at Melmotte.

"Well;—perhaps as your lordship is in a hurry, and as my lord here is engaged elsewhere,"—turning round to Lord Alfred who had not uttered a syllable or made a sign since he had been in his seat,—"we had better adjourn this meeting for another week."

"I cannot allow that," said Paul Montague.

"I suppose then we must take the sense of the Board," said the Chairman.

"I have been discussing certain circumstances with our friend and Chairman," said Cohenlupe, "and I must say that it is not expedient just at present to go into matters too freely."

"My lords and gentlemen," said Melmotte. "I hope that you trust me."

Lord Alfred bowed down to the table and muttered something which was intended to convey most absolute confidence. "Hear, hear," said Mr. Cohenlupe. "All right," said Lord Nidderdale; "go on;" and he fired another pellet with improved success.
"I trust," said the Chairman, "that my young friend, Sir Felix, doubts neither my discretion nor my ability."

"Oh dear, no;—not at all," said the baronet, much flattered at being addressed in this kindly tone. He had come there with objects of his own, and was quite prepared to support the Chairman on any matter whatever.

"My Lords and Gentlemen," continued Melmotte, "I am delighted to receive this expression of your confidence. If I know anything in the world I know something of commercial matters. I am able to tell you that we are prospering. I do not know that greater prosperity has ever been achieved in a shorter time by a commercial company. I think our friend here, Mr. Montague, should be as feelingly aware of that as any gentleman."

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Melmotte?" asked Paul.

"What do I mean?—Certainly nothing adverse to your character, sir. Your firm in San Francisco, sir, know very well how the affairs of the Company are being transacted on this side of the water. No doubt you are in correspondence with Mr. Fisker. Ask him. The telegraph wires are open to you, sir. But, my Lords and Gentlemen, I am able to inform you that in affairs of this nature great discretion is necessary. On behalf of the shareholders at large whose interests are in our hands, I think it expedient that any general statement should be postponed for a short time, and I flatter myself that in that opinion I shall carry the majority of this Board with me." Mr. Melmotte did not make his speech very fluently; but, being accustomed to the place which he occupied, he did manage to get the words spoken in such a way as to make them intelligible to the company. "I now move that this meeting be adjourned to this day week," he added.

"I second that motion," said Lord Alfred, without moving his hand from his breast.

"I understood that we were to have a statement," said Montague.

"You've had a statement," said Mr. Cohenluge.

"I will put my motion to the vote," said the Chairman.

"I shall move an amendment," said Paul, determined that he would not be altogether silenced.

"There is nobody to second it," said Mr. Cohenluge.

"How do you know till I've made it?" asked the rebel. "I shall ask Lord Nidderdale to second it, and when he has heard it I think that he will not refuse."

"Oh, gracious me! why me? No;—don't ask me. I've got to go away. I have indeed."

"At any rate I claim the right of saying a few words. I do not say whether every affair of this Company should or should not be published to the world."

"You'd break up everything if you did," said Cohenluge.

"Perhaps everything ought to be broken up. But I say nothing about that. What I do say is this. That as we sit here as directors and will be held to be responsible as such by the public, we ought to know what is being done. We ought to know where the shares really are. I for one do not even know what scrip has been issued."
"You've bought and sold enough to know something about it," said Melfotte.

Paul Montague became very red in the face. "I, at any rate, began," he said, "by putting what was to me a large sum of money into the affair."

"That's more than I know," said Melfotte. "Whatever shares you have, were issued at San Francisco, and not here.

"I have taken nothing that I haven't paid for," said Montague. "Nor have I yet had allotted to me anything like the number of shares which my capital would represent. But I did not intend to speak of my own concerns."

"It looks very like it," said Cohenlupa.

"So far from it that I am prepared to risk the not improbable loss of everything I have in the world. I am determined to know what is being done with the shares, or to make it public to the world at large that I, one of the directors of the Company, do not in truth know anything about it. I cannot, I suppose, absolve myself from further responsibility; but I can at any rate do what is right from this time forward,—and that course I intend to take."

"The gentleman had better resign his seat at this Board," said Melfotte. "There will be no difficulty about that."

"Bound up as I am with Fisker and Montague in California I fear that there will be difficulty."

"Not in the least," continued the Chairman. "You need only gazette your resignation and the thing is done. I had intended, gentlemen, to propose an addition to our number. When I name to you a gentleman, personally known to many of you, and generally esteemed throughout England as a man of business, as a man of probity, and as a man of fortune, a man standing deservedly high in all British circles, I mean Mr. Longestaffe of Caversham—"

"Young Dolly, or old?" asked Lord Nidderdale.

"I mean Mr. Adolphus Longestaffe, senior, of Caversham. I am sure that you will all be glad to welcome him among you. I had thought to strengthen our number by this addition. But if Mr. Montague is determined to leave us,—and no one will regret the loss of his services so much as I shall,—it will be my pleasing duty to move that Adolphus Longestaffe, senior, Esquire, of Caversham, be requested to take his place. If on reconsideration Mr. Montague shall determine to remain with us,—and I for one most sincerely hope that such reconsideration may lead to such determination,—then I shall move that an additional director be added to our number, and that Mr. Longestaffe be requested to take the chair of that additional director." The latter speech Mr. Melfotte got through very glibly, and then immediately left the chair, so as to show that the business of the Board was closed for that day without any possibility of reopening it.

Paul went up to him and took him by the sleeve, signifying that he wished to speak to him before they parted. "Certainly," said the great man bowing. "Carbury," he said, looking round on the young baronet with his blandest smile, "if you are not in a hurry, wait a moment for me. I have a word or two to say before you go. Now,
Mr. Montague, what can I do for you?" Paul began his story, expressing again the opinion which he had already very plainly expressed at the table. But Melmotte stopped him very shortly, and with much less courtesy than he had shown in the speech which he had made from the chair. "The thing is about this way, I take it, Mr. Montague; —you think you know more of this matter than I do."

"Not at all, Mr. Melmotte."

"And I think that I know more of it than you do. Either of us may be right. But as I don't intend to give way to you, perhaps the less we speak together about it the better. You can't be in earnest in the threat you made, because you would be making public things communicated to you under the seal of privacy,—and no gentleman would do that. But as long as you are hostile to me, I can't help you; —and so good afternoon." Then, without giving Montague the possibility of a reply, he escaped into an inner room which had the word "Private" painted on the door, and which was supposed to belong to the chairman individually. He shut the door behind him, and then, after a few moments, put out his head and beckoned to Sir Felix Carbury. Niderdale was gone. Lord Alfred with his son were already on the stairs. Cohenupe was engaged with Melmotte's clerk on the record-book. Paul Montague finding himself without support and alone, slowly made his way out into the court.

Sir Felix had come into the city intending to suggest to the Chairman that having paid his thousand pounds he should like to have a few shares to go on with. He was, indeed, at the present moment very nearly penniless, and had negotiated, or lost at cards, all the I.O.U.'s which were in any degree serviceable. He still had a pocket-book full of those issued by Miles Grendall; but it was now an understood thing at the Bear-garden that no one was to be called upon to take them except Miles Grendall himself; —an arrangement which robbed the card-table of much of its delight. Beyond this, also, he had lately been forced to issue a little paper himself,—in doing which he had talked largely of his shares in the railway. His case certainly was hard. He had actually paid a thousand pounds down in hard cash, a commercial transaction which, as performed by himself, he regarded as stupendous. It was almost incredible to himself that he should have paid any one a thousand pounds, but he had done it with much difficulty,—having carried Dolly junior with him all the way into the city,—in the belief that he would thus put himself in the way of making a continual and unfailing income. He understood that as a director he would be always entitled to buy shares at par, and, as a matter of course, always able to sell them at the market price. This he understood to range from ten to fifteen and twenty per cent. profit. He would have nothing to do but to buy and sell daily. He was told that Lord Alfred was allowed to do it to a small extent; and that Melmotte was doing it to an enormous extent. But before he could do it he must get something,—he hardly knew what,—out of Melmotte's hands. Melmotte certainly did not seem disposed to shun him, and therefore there could be no difficulty about the shares. As to danger; —who could think of danger in reference to money intrusted to the hands of Augustus Melmotte?
"I am delighted to see you here," said Melmotte, shaking him cordially by the hand. "You come regularly, and you'll find that it will be worth your while. There's nothing like attending to business. You should be here every Friday."
"I will," said the baronet.
"And let me see you sometimes up at my place in Abchurch Lane. I can put you more in the way of understanding things there than I can here. This is all a mere formal sort of thing. You can see that."
"Oh yes, I see that."
"We are obliged to have this kind of thing for men like that fellow Montague. By-the-bye, is he a friend of yours?"
"Not particularly. He is a friend of a cousin of mine; and the women know him at home. He isn't a pal of mine if you mean that."
"If he makes himself disagreeable, he'll have to go to the wall;—that's all. But never mind him at present. Was your mother speaking to you of what I said to her?"
"No, Mr. Melmotte," said Sir Felix, staring with all his eyes.
"I was talking to her about you, and I thought that perhaps she might have told you. This is all nonsense, you know, about you and Marie." Sir Felix looked into the man's face. It was not savage, as he had seen it. But there had suddenly come upon his brow that heavy look of a determined purpose which all who knew the man were wont to mark. Sir Felix had observed it a few minutes since in the Board-room, when the chairman was putting down the rebellious director. "You understand that; don't you?" Sir Felix still looked at him, but made no reply. "It's all d--- nonsense. You haven't got a brass farthing, you know. You've no income at all; you're just living on your mother, and I'm afraid she's not very well off. How can you suppose that I shall give my girl to you?" Felix still looked at him but did not dare to contradict a single statement made. Yet when the man told him that he had not a brass farthing he thought of his own thousand pounds which were now in the man's pocket. "You're a baronet, and that's about all, you know," continued Melmotte. "The Carbury property, which is a very small thing, belongs to a distant cousin who may leave to me if he pleases;—and who isn't very much older than you are yourself."
"Oh, come, Mr. Melmotte; he's a great deal older than me."
"It wouldn't matter if he were as old as Adam. The thing is out of the question, and you must drop it." Then the look on his brow became a little heavier. "You hear what I say. She is going to marry Lord Nidderdale. She was engaged to him before you ever saw her. What do you expect to get by it?"
Sir Felix had not the courage to say that he expected to get the girl he loved. But as the man waited for an answer he was obliged to say something. "I suppose it's the old story," he said.
"Just so;—the old story. You want my money, and she wants you, just because she has been told to take somebody else. You want something to live on;—that's what you want. Come;—out with it. Is not that it? When we understand each other I'll put you in the way of making money."
"Of course I'm not very well off," said Felix.

"About as badly as any young man that I can hear of. You give me your written promise that you'll drop this affair with Marie, and you shan't want for money."

"A written promise!"

"Yes;—a written promise. I give nothing for nothing. I'll put you in the way of doing so well with these shares that you shall be able to marry any other girl you please;—or to live without marrying, which you'll find to be better."

There was something worthy of consideration in Mr. Melmotte's proposition. Marriage of itself, simply as a domestic institution, had not specially recommended itself to Sir Felix Carbury. A few horses at Leighton, Ruby Ruggles or any other beauty, and life at the Beergarten were much more to his taste. And then he was quite alive to the fact that it was possible that he might find himself possessed of the wife without the money. Marie, indeed, had a grand plan of her own, with reference to that settled income; but then Marie might be mistaken,—or she might be lying. If he were sure of making money in the way Melmotte now suggested, the loss of Marie would not break his heart. But then also Melmotte might be—lying. "By-the-bye, Mr. Melmotte," said he, "could you let me have those shares?"

"What shares?" And the heavy brow became still heavier.

"Don't you know?—I gave you a thousand pounds, and I was to have ten shares."

"You must come about that on the proper day, to the proper place."

"When is the proper day?"

"It is the twentieth of each month I think." Sir Felix looked very blank at hearing this, knowing that this present was the twenty-first of the month. "But what does that signify? Do you want a little money?"

"Well, I do," said Sir Felix. "A lot of fellows owe me money, but it's so hard to get it."

"That tells a story of gambling," said Mr. Melmotte. "You think I'd give my girl to a gambler?"

"Niddordale's in it quite as thick as I am."

"Niddordale has a settled property which neither he nor his father can destroy. But don't you be such a fool as to argue with me. You won't get anything by it. If you'll write that letter here now—"

"What;—to Marie?"

"No;—not to Marie at all; but to me. It need never be shown to her. If you'll do that I'll stick to you and make a man of you. And if you want a couple of hundred pounds I'll give you a cheque for it before you leave the room. Mind, I can tell you this. On my word of honour as a gentleman, if my daughter were to marry you, she'd never have a single shilling. I should immediately make a will and leave all my property to St. George's Hospital. I have quite made up my mind about that."

"And couldn't you manage that I should have the shares before the twentieth of next month?"
"I’ll see about it. Perhaps I could let you have a few of my own. At any rate I won’t see you short of money."

The terms were enticing and the letter was of course written. Melmotte himself dictated the words, which were not romantic in their nature. The reader shall see the letter.

"Dear Sir,

"In consideration of the offers made by you to me, and on a clear understanding that such a marriage would be disagreeable to you and to the lady’s mother, and would bring down a father’s curse upon your daughter, I hereby declare and promise that I will not renew my suit to the young lady, which I hereby altogether renounce.

"I am, Dear Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"Felix Carbury.

"Augustus Melmotte, Esq.,

"—, Grosvenor Square."

The letter was dated 21st July, and bore the printed address of the offices of the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway.

"You’ll give me that cheque for £200, Mr. Melmotte." The financier hesitated for a moment, but did give the baronet the cheque as promised. "And you’ll see about letting me have those shares."

"You can come to me in Abchurch Lane, you know." Sir Felix said that he would call in Abchurch Lane.

As he went westward towards the Beargarden, the baronet was not happy in his mind. Ignorant as he was as to the duties of a gentleman, indifferent as he was to the feelings of others, still he felt ashamed of himself. He was treating the girl very badly. Even he knew that he was behaving badly. He was so conscious of it that he tried to console himself by reflecting that his writing such a letter as that would not prevent his running away with the girl, should he, on consideration, find it to be worth his while to do so.

That night he was again playing at the Beargarden, and he lost a great part of Mr. Melmotte’s money. He did in fact lose much more than the £200; but when he found his ready money going from him he issued paper.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PAUL MONTAGUE’S TROUBLES.

Paul Montague had other troubles on his mind beyond this trouble of the Mexican Railway. It was now more than a fortnight since he had taken Mrs. Hurtle to the play, and she was still living in lodgings at Islington. He had seen her twice, once on the following day, when he was allowed to come and go without any special reference to their engagement, and again, three or four days afterwards, when the meeting was by no means so pleasant. She had wept, and after weeping had stormed. She had stood upon what she
called her rights, and had dared him to be false to her. Did he mean to deny that he had promised to marry her? Was not his conduct to her, ever since she had now been in London, a repetition of that promise? And then again she became soft, and pleaded with him. But for the storm he might have given way. At that moment he had felt that any fate in life would be better than a marriage on compulsion. Her tears and her pleadings, nevertheless, touched him very nearly. He had promised her most distinctly. He had loved her and had won her love. And she was lovely. The very violence of the storm made the sunshine more sweet. She would sit down on a stool at his feet, and it was impossible to drive her away from him. She would look up in his face and he could not but embrace her. Then there had come a passionate flood of tears and she was in his arms. How he had escaped he hardly knew, but he did know that he had promised to be with her again before two days should have passed.

On the day named he wrote to her a letter excusing himself, which was at any rate true in words. He had been summoned, he said, to Liverpool on business, and must postpone seeing her till his return. And he explained that the business on which he was called was connected with the great American railway, and, being important, demanded his attention. In words this was true. He had been corresponding with a gentleman at Liverpool with whom he had become acquainted on his return home after having involuntarily become a partner in the house of Fisker, Montague, and Montague. This man he trusted and had consulted, and the gentleman, Mr. Ramsbottom by name, had suggested that he should come to him at Liverpool. He had gone, and his conduct at the Board had been the result of the advice which he had received; but it may be doubted whether some dread of the coming interview with Mrs. Hurtle had not added strength to Mr. Ramsbottom's invitation.

In Liverpool he had heard tidings of Mrs. Hurtle, though it can hardly be said that he obtained any trustworthy information. The lady after landing from an American steamer had been at Mr. Ramsbottom's office, inquiring for him, Paul; and Mr. Ramsbottom had thought that the inquiries were made in a manner indicating danger. He therefore had spoken to a fellow-traveller with Mrs. Hurtle, and the fellow-traveller had opined that Mrs. Hurtle was "a queer card." "On board ship we all gave it up to her that she was about the handsomest woman we had ever seen, but we all said that there was a bit of the wild cat in her breeding." Then Mr. Ramsbottom had asked whether the lady was a widow. "There was a man on board from Kansas," said the fellow-traveller, "who knew a man named Hurtle at Leavenworth, who was separated from his wife and is still alive. There was, according to him, a queer story about the man and his wife having fought a duel with pistols, and then having separated." This Mr. Ramsbottom, who in an earlier stage of the affair had heard something of Paul and Mrs. Hurtle together, managed to communicate to the young man. His advice about the railway company was very clear and general, and such as an honest man would certainly give; but it might have been conveyed by letter. The information, such as it was, respecting Mrs. Hurtle,
could only be given vivâ voce, and perhaps the invitation to Liverpool
had originated in Mr. Ramsbottom's appreciation of this fact. "As
she was asking after you here, perhaps it is as well that you should
know," his friend said to him. Paul had only thanked him, not
daring on the spur of the moment to speak of his own difficulties.

In all this there had been increased dismay, but there had also
been some comfort. It had only been at moments in which he had
been subject to her softer influences that Paul had doubted as to his
adherence to the letter which he had written to her, breaking off his
engagement. When she told him of her wrongs and of her love;
of his promise and his former devotion to her; when she assured him
that she had given up everything in life for him, and threw her arms
round him, looking into his eyes;—then he would almost yield. But
when, what the traveller called the breeding of the wild cat, showed
itself;—and when, having escaped from her, he thought of Hetta
Carbury and of her breeding,—he was fully determined that let his
fate be what it might, it should not be that of being the husband of
Mrs. Hurtle. That he was in a mass of troubles from which it would
be very difficult for him to extricate himself he was well aware;—but
if it were true that Mr. Hurtle was alive, that fact might help him. She
certainly had declared him to be,—not separated, or even divorced,—
but dead. And if it were true also that she had fought a duel with
one husband, that also ought to be a reason why a gentleman should
object to become her second husband. These facts would at any
rate justify himself to himself, and would enable himself to break
from his engagement without thinking himself to be a false traitor.

But he must make up his mind as to some line of conduct. She
must be made to know the truth. If he meant to reject the lady
finally on the score of her being a wild cat, he must tell her so. He
felt very strongly that he must not flinch from the wild cat's claws.
That he would have to undergo some severe handling, an amount of
clawing which might perhaps go near his life, he could perceive.
Having done what he had done he would have no right to shrink from
such usage. He must tell her to her face that he was not satisfied
with her past life, and that therefore he would not marry her. Of
course he might write to her;—but when summoned to her presence
he would be unable to excuse himself, even to himself, for not going.
It was his misfortune,—and also his fault,—that he had submitted to
be loved by a wild cat.

But it might be well that before he saw her he should get hold of
information that might have the appearance of real evidence. He
returned from Liverpool to London on the morning of the Friday on
which the Board was held, and thought even more of all this than he
did of the attack which he was prepared to make on Mr. Melmotte.
If he could come across that traveller he might learn something.
The husband's name had been Caradoc Carson Hurtle. If Caradoc
Carson Hurtle had been seen in the State of Kansas within the last
two years, that certainly would be sufficient evidence. As to the
duel he felt that it might be very hard to prove that, and that if
proved, it might be hard to found upon the fact any absolute right on
his part to withdraw from the engagement. But there was a rumour
also, though not corroborated during his last visit to Liverpool, that
she had shot a gentleman in Oregon. Could he get at the truth of
that story? If they were all true, surely he could justify himself to
himself.

But this detective's work was very distasteful to him. After having
had the woman in his arms how could he undertake such inquiries as
these? And it would be almost necessary that he should take her in
his arms again while he was making them,—unless indeed he made
them with her knowledge. Was it not his duty, as a man, to tell
everything to herself. To speak to her thus;—"I am told that your
life with your last husband was, to say the least of it, eccentric; that
you even fought a duel with him. I could not marry a woman who
had fought a duel,—certainly not a woman who had fought with her
own husband. I am told also that you shot another gentleman in
Oregon. It may well be that the gentleman deserved to be shot; but
there is something in the deed so repulsive to me,—no doubt
irrationally,—that, on that score also, I must decline to marry you.
I am told also that Mr. Hurley has been seen alive quite lately.
I had understood from you that he is dead. No doubt you may have
been deceived. But as I should not have engaged myself to you had
I known the truth, so now I consider myself justified in absolving
myself from an engagement which was based on a misconception."
It would no doubt be difficult to get through all these details; but it
might be accomplished gradually,—unless in the process of doing so
he should incur the fate of the gentleman in Oregon. At any rate he
would declare to her as well as he could the ground on which he
claimed a right to consider himself free, and would bear the conse-
quences. Such was the resolve which he made on his journey up
from Liverpool, and that trouble was also on his mind when he rose
up to attack Mr. Malmute single-handed at the Board.

When the Board was over, he also went down to the Bear Garden.
Perhaps, with reference to the Board, the feeling which hurt him most
was the conviction that he was spending money which he would never
have had to spend had there been no Board. He had been twitted
with this at the Board-meeting, and had justified himself by referring
to the money which had been invested in the Company of Fisk,
Montague, and Montague, which money was now supposed to have
been made over to the railway. But the money which he was spend-
ing had come to him after a loose fashion, and he knew that if called
upon for an account, he could hardly make out one which would be
square and intelligible to all parties. Nevertheless he spent much of
his time at the Bear Garden, dining there when no engagement carried
him elsewhere. On this evening he joined his table with Nidderdale's,
at the young lord's instigation. "What made you so savage at old
Malmute to-day?" said the young lord.

"I didn't mean to be savage, but I think that as we call our-
selves Directors we ought to know something about it."

"I suppose we ought. I don't know, you know. I'll tell you
what I've been thinking. I can't make out why the mischief they
made me a Director."

"Because you're a lord," said Paul bluntly.
"I suppose there's something in that. But what good can I do them? Nobody thinks that I know anything about business. Of course I'm in Parliament, but I don't often go there unless they want me to vote. Everybody knows that I'm hard up. I can't understand it. The Governor said that I was to do it, and so I've done it."

"They say, you know,—there's something between you and Mott's daughter."

"But if there is, what has that to do with a railway in the city? And why should Carbury be there? And, heaven and earth, why should old Grenad be a Director? I'm impecunious; but if you were to pick out the two most hopeless men in London in regard to money, they would be old Grenad and young Carbury. I've been thinking a good deal about it, and I can't make it out."

"I have been thinking about it too," said Paul.

"I suppose old Mott is all right?" asked Nidderdale. This was a question which Montague found it difficult to answer. How could he be justified in whispering suspicions to the man who was known to be at any rate one of the competitors for Marie Mott's hand? "You can speak out to me, you know," said Nidderdale, nodding his head.

"I've got nothing to speak. People say that he is about the richest man alive."

"He lives as though he were."

"I don't see why it shouldn't be all true. Nobody, I take it, knows very much about him." When his companion had left him, Nidderdale sat down, thinking of it all. It occurred to him that he would "be coming a cropper rather," were he to marry Mott's daughter for her money, and then find that she had got none.

A little later in the evening he invited Montague to go up to the card-room. "Carbury, and Grasslough, and Dolly Longstaffe are there waiting," he said. But Paul declined. He was too full of his troubles for play. "Poor Miles isn't there, if you're afraid of that," said Nidderdale.

"Miles Grenad wouldn't hinder me," said Montague.

"Nor me either. Of course it's a confounded shame. I know that as well as any body. But, God bless me, I owe a fellow down in Leicestershire heaven knows how much for keeping horses, and that's a shame."

"You'll pay him some day."

"I suppose I shall,—if I don't die first. But I should have gone on with the horses just the same if there had never been anything to come;—only they wouldn't have given me tick, you know. As far as I'm concerned it's just the same. I like to live whether I've got money or not. And I fear I don't have many scruples about paying. But then I like to let live too. There's Carbury always saying nasty things about poor Miles. He's playing himself without a rap to back him. If he were to lose, Vossner wouldn't stand him a £10 note. But because he has won, he goes on as though he were old Mott himself. You'd better come up."

But Montague wouldn't go up. Without any fixed purpose he left the club, and slowly sauntered northwards through the streets till he
found himself in Welbeck Street. He hardly knew why he was there, and certainly had not determined to call on Lady Carbury when he left the Bear Garden. His mind was full of Mrs. Hardie. As long as she was present in London,—as long at any rate as he was unable to tell himself that he had finally broken away from her,—he knew himself to be an unfit companion for Henrietta Carbury. And, indeed, he was still under some promise made to Roger Carbury, not that he would avoid Hetta's company, but that for a certain period, as yet unexpired, he would not ask her to be his wife. It had been a foolish promise, made and then repented without much attention to words;—but still it was existing, and Paul knew well that Roger trusted that it would be kept. Nevertheless Paul made his way up to Welbeck Street and almost unconsciously knocked at the door. No;—Lady Carbury was not at home. She was out somewhere with Mr. Roger Carbury. Up to that moment Paul had not heard that Roger was in town; but the reader may remember that he had come up in search of Ruby Ruggless. Miss Carbury was at home, the page went on to say. Would Mr. Montague go up and see Miss Carbury? Without much consideration Mr. Montague said that he would go up and see Miss Carbury. "Mamma is out with Roger," said Hetta, endeavouring to save herself from confusion. "There is a soirée of learned people somewhere, and she made poor Roger take her. The ticket was only for her and her friend, and therefore I could not go."

"I am so glad to see you. What an age it is, since we met."

"Hardly since the Melmotte's ball," said Hetta.

"Hardly indeed. I have been here once since that. What has brought Roger up to town?"

"I don't know what it is. Some mystery, I think. Whenever there is a mystery I am always afraid that there is something wrong about Felix. I do get so unhappy about Felix, Mr. Montague."

"I saw him to-day in the city, at the Railway Board."

"But Roger says the Railway Board is all a sham,"—Paul could not keep himself from blushing as he heard this,—"and that Felix should not be there. And then there is something going on about that horrid man's daughter."

"She is to marry Lord Nidderdale, I think."

"Is she? They are talking of her marrying Felix, and of course it is for her money. And I believe that man is determined to quarrel with them."

"What man, Miss Carbury?"

"Mr. Melmotte himself. It's all horrid from beginning to end."

"But I saw them in the city to-day and they seemed to be the greatest friends. When I wanted to see Mr. Melmotte he bolted himself into an inner room, but he took your brother with him. He would not have done that if they had not been friends. When I saw it I almost thought that he had consented to the marriage."

"Roger has the greatest dislike to Mr. Melmotte."

"I know he has," said Paul.

"And Roger is always right. It is always safe to trust him. Don't you think so, Mr. Montague?" Paul did think so, and was
I DO LOVE HIM.

So it was. Lady Carbury had returned home from the soirée of learned people, and had brought Roger Carbury with her. They both came up to the drawing-room and found Paul and Henrietta together. It need hardly be said that they were both surprised. Roger supposed that Montague was still at Liverpool, and, knowing that he was not a frequent visitor in Welbeck Street, could hardly avoid a
feeling that a meeting between the two had now been planned in the mother's absence. The reader knows that it was not so. Roger certainly was a man not liable to suspicion, but the circumstances in this case were suspicious. There would have been nothing to suspect,—no reason why Paul should not have been there,—but from the promise which had been given. There was, indeed, no breach of that promise proved by Paul's presence in Welbeck Street; but Roger felt rather than thought that the two could hardly have spent the evening together without such breach. Whether Paul had broken the promise by what he had already said the reader must be left to decide.

Lady Carbury was the first to speak. "This is quite an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Montague." Whether Roger suspected anything or not, she did. The moment she saw Paul the idea occurred to her that the meeting between Hetta and him had been preconcerted.

"Yes," he said,—making a lame excuse, where no excuse should have been made,—"I had nothing to do, and was lonely, and thought that I would come up and see you." Lady Carbury disbelieved him altogether, but Roger felt assured that his coming in Lady Carbury's absence had been an accident. The man had said so, and that was enough.

"I thought you were at Liverpool," said Roger.
"I came back to-day,—to be present at that Board in the city. I have had a good deal to trouble me. I will tell you all about it just now. What has brought you to London?"

"A little business," said Roger.

Then there was an awkward silence. Lady Carbury was angry, and hardly knew whether she ought or ought not to show her anger. For Henrietta it was very awkward. She, too, could not but feel that she had been caught, though no innocence could be whiter than hers. She knew well her mother's mind, and the way in which her mother's thoughts would run. Silence was frightful to her, and she found herself forced to speak. "Have you had a pleasant evening, mamma?"

"Have you had a pleasant evening, my dear?" said Lady Carbury, forgetting herself in her desire to punish her daughter.

"Indeed, no," said Hetta, attempting to laugh, "I have been trying to work hard at Dante, but one never does any good when one has to try to work. I was just going to bed when Mr. Montague came in. What did you think of the wise men and the wise women, Roger?"

"I was out of my element, of course; but I think your mother liked it."

"I was very glad indeed to meet Dr. Palmoil. It seems that if we can only open the interior of Africa a little further, we can get everything that is wanted to complete the chemical combination necessary for feeding the human race. Isn't that a grand idea, Roger?"

"A little more elbow grease is the combination that I look to."

"Surely, Roger, if the Bible is to go for anything, we are to believe that labour is a curse and not a blessing. Adam was not born to labour."
“But he fell; and I doubt whether Dr. Palmoil will be able to put
his descendants back into Eden.”

“Roger, for a religious man, you do say the strangest things! I
have quite made up my mind to this;—if ever I can see things so
settled here as to enable me to move, I will visit the interior of Africa.
It is the garden of the world.”

This scrap of enthusiasm so carried them through their immediate
difficulties that the two men were able to take their leave and to get
out of the room with fair comfort. As soon as the door was closed
behind them Lady Carbury attacked her daughter. ‘What brought
him here?’

“He brought himself, mamma.”

“Don’t answer me in that way, Hetta. Of course he brought him-
self. That is insolent.”

“Insolent, mamma! How can you say such hard words? I meant
that he came of his own accord.”

“How long was he here?"

“Two minutes before you came in. Why do you cross-question
me like this? I could not help his coming. I did not desire that he
might be shown up.”

“You did not know that he was to come?”

“Mamma, if I am to be suspected, all is over between us.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“If you can think that I would deceive you, you will think so
always. If you will not trust me, how am I to live with you as though
you did? I knew nothing of his coming.”

“Tell me this, Hetta; are you engaged to marry him?”

“No;—I am not.”

“Has he asked you to marry him?”

Hetta paused a moment, considering, before she answered this
question. “I do not think he ever has.”

“You do not think?”

“I was going on to explain. He never has asked me. But he
has said that which makes me know that he wishes me to be his
wife.”

“What has he said? When did he say it?”

Again she paused. But again she answered with straightforward
simplicity. “Just before you came in, he said——; I don’t know
what he said; but it meant that.”

“You told me he had been here but a minute.”

“It was but very little more. If you take me at my word in that
way, of course you can make me out to be wrong, mamma. It was
almost no time, and yet he said it.”

“He had come prepared to say it.”

“How could he,—expecting to find you?”

“Psha! He expected nothing of the kind.”

“I think you do him wrong, mamma. I am sure you are doing
me wrong. I think his coming was an accident, and that what he
said was—an accident.”

“An accident!”

“It was not intended,—not then, mamma. I have known it ever
so long;—and so have you. It was natural that he should say so
when we were alone together."

"And you;—what did you say?"

"Nothing. You came."

"I am sorry that my coming should have been so inopportune.
But I must ask one other question, Hetta. What do you intend to
say?" Hetta was again silent, and now for a longer space. She
put her hand up to her brow and pushed back her hair as she thought
whether her mother had a right to continue this cross-examination.
She had told her mother everything as it had happened. She had
kept back no deed done, no word spoken, either now or at any time.
But she was not sure that her mother had a right to know her thoughts,
feeling as she did that she had so little sympathy from her mother.

"How do you intend to answer him?" demanded Lady Carbury.

"I do not know that he will ask again?"

"That is prevaricating."

"No, mamma;—I do not prevaricate. It is unfair to say that to
me. I do love him. There. I think it ought to have been enough
for you to know that I should never give him encouragement without
telling you about it. I do love him, and I shall never love any one
else."

"He is a ruined man. Your cousin says that all this Company in
which he is involved will go to pieces."

Hetta was too clever to allow this argument to pass. She did
not doubt that Roger had so spoken of the Railway to her mother, but
she did doubt that her mother had believed the story. "If so," said
she, "Mr. Melmotte will be a ruined man too, and yet you want Felix
to marry Marie Melmotte."

"It makes me ill to hear you talk,—as if you understood these
things. And you think you will marry this man because he is to
make a fortune out of the Railway!" Lady Carbury was able to
speak with an extremity of scorn in reference to the assumed pursuit
by one of her children of an advantageous position which she was
doing all in her power to recommend to the other child.

"I have not thought of his fortune. I have not thought of marrying
him, mamma. I think you are very cruel to me. You say things so
hard, that I cannot bear them."

"Why will you not marry your cousin?"

"I am not good enough for him."

"Nonsense!"

"Very well; you say so. But that is what I think. He is so
much above me, that, though I do love him, I cannot think of him in
that way. And I have told you that I do love some one else. I have
no secret from you now. Good night, mamma," she said, coming
up to her mother and kissing her. "Do be kind to me; and pray,
—pray,—do believe me." Lady Carbury then allowed herself to be
kissed, and allowed her daughter to leave the room.

There was a great deal said that night between Roger Carbury
and Paul Montague before they parted. As they walked together to
Roger's hotel he said not a word as to Paul's presence in Welbeck
Street. Paul had declared his visit in Lady Carbury's absence to
LADY CARRURY ALLOWED HERSELF TO BE KISSED.
have been accidental,—and therefore there was nothing more to be said. Montague then asked as to the cause of Carbury’s journey to London. “I do not wish it to be talked of,” said Roger after a pause,—“and of course I could not speak of it before Hetta. A girl has gone away from our neighbourhood. You remember old Ruggles?”

“You don’t mean that Ruby has levanted? She was to have married John Crumb.”

“Just so,—but she has gone off, leaving John Crumb in an unhappy frame of mind. John Crumb is an honest man and almost too good for her.”

“Ruby is very pretty. Has she gone with any one?”

“No;—she went alone. But the horror of it is this. They think down there that Felix has,—well, made love to her, and that she has been taken to London by him.”

“That would be very bad.”

“He certainly has known her. Though he lied, as he always lies, when I first spoke to him, I brought him to admit that he and she had been friends down in Suffolk. Of course we know what such friendship means. But I do not think that she came to London at his instance. Of course he would lie about that. He would lie about anything. If his horse cost him a hundred pounds, he would tell one man that he gave fifty, and another two hundred. But he has not lived long enough yet to be able to lie and tell the truth with the same eye. When he is as old as I am he’ll be perfect.”

“He knows nothing about her coming to town?”

“He did not when I first asked him. I am not sure, but I fancy that I was too quick after her. She started last Saturday morning. I followed on the Sunday, and made him out at his club. I think that he knew nothing then of her being in town. He is very clever if he did. Since that he has avoided me. I caught him once but only for half a minute, and then he swore that he had not seen her.”

“You still believed him?”

“No;—he did it very well, but I knew that he was prepared for me. I cannot say how it may have been. To make matters worse old Ruggles has now quarrelled with Crumb, and is no longer anxious to get back his granddaughter. He was frightened at first; but that has gone off, and he is now reconciled to the loss of the girl and the saving of his money.”

After that Paul told all his own story,—the double story, both in regard to Melmotte and to Mrs. Hurtle. As regarded the Railway, Roger could only tell him to follow explicitly the advice of his Liverpool friend. “I never believed in the thing, you know.”

“Nor did I. But what could I do?”

“I’m not going to blame you. Indeed, knowing you as I do, feeling sure that you intend to be honest, I would not for a moment insist on my own opinion, if it did not seem that Mr. Ramsbottom thinks as I do. In such a matter, when a man does not see his own way clearly, it behoves him to be able to show that he has followed the advice of some man whom the world esteems and recognises. You have to bind your character to another man’s character; and
that other man's character, if it be good, will carry you through. From what I hear Mr. Ramsbottom's character is sufficiently good; —but then you must do exactly what he tells you."

But the Railway business, though it comprised all that Montagu had in the world, was not the heaviest of his troubles. What was he to do about Mrs. Hurtle? He had now, for the first time, to tell his friend that Mrs. Hurtle had come to London, and that he had been with her three or four times. There was this difficulty in the matter, too,—that it was very hard to speak of his engagement with Mrs. Hurtle without in some sort alluding to his love for Henrietta Carbury. Roger knew of both loves;—had been very urgent with his friend to abandon the widow, and at any rate equally urgent with him to give up the other passion. Were he to marry the widow, all danger on the other side would be at an end. And yet, in discussing the question of Mrs. Hurtle, he was to do so as though there were no such person existing as Henrietta Carbury. The discussion did take place exactly as though there were no such person as Henrietta Carbury. Paul told it all,—the rumoured duel, the rumoured murder, and the rumour of the existing husband.

"It may be necessary that you should go out to Kansas,—and to Oregon," said Roger.

"But even if the rumours be untrue I will not marry her," said Paul. Roger shrugged his shoulders. He was doubtless thinking of Hetta Carbury, but he said nothing. "And what would she do, remaining here?" continued Paul. Roger admitted that it would be awkward. "I am determined that under no circumstances will I marry her. I know I have been a fool. I know I have been wrong. But of course, if there be a fair cause for my broken word, I will use it if I can."

"You will get out of it, honestly if you can; but you will get out of it honestly or—any other way."

"Did you not advise me to get out of it, Roger;—before we knew as much as we do now?"

"I did,—and I do. If you make a bargain with the Devil, it may be dishonest to cheat him,—and yet I would have you cheat him if you could. As to this woman, I do believe she has deceived you. If I were you, nothing should induce me to marry her;—not though her claws were strong enough to tear me utterly in pieces. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go and see her if you like it."

But Paul would not submit to this. He felt that he was bound himself to incur the risk of those claws, and that no substitute could take his place. They sat long into the night, and it was at last resolved between them that on the next morning Paul should go to Islington, should tell Mrs. Hurtle all the stories which he had heard, and should end by declaring his resolution that under no circumstances would be marry her. They both felt how improbable it was that he should ever be allowed to get to the end of such a story,—how almost certain it was that the breeding of the wild cat would show itself before that time should come. But, still, that was the course to be pursued as far as circumstances would admit; and Paul was at any rate to declare, claws or no claws, husband or no husband,—
whether the duel or the murder was admitted or denied,—that he would never make Mrs. Hurtle his wife. "I wish it were over, old fellow," said Roger.

"So do I," said Paul, as he took his leave.

He went to bed like a man condemned to die on the next morning, and he awoke in the same condition. He had slept well, but as he shook from him his happy dream, the wretched reality at once overwhelmed him. But the man who is to be hung, has no choice. He cannot when he wakes, declare that he has changed his mind, and postpone the hour. It was quite open to Paul Montague to give himself such instant relief. He put his hand up to his brow, and almost made himself believe that his head was aching. This was Saturday. Would it not be well that he should think of it further, and put off his execution till Monday? Monday was so far distant that he felt that he could go to Islington quite comfortably on Monday. Was there not some hitherto forgotten point which it would be well that he should discuss with his friend Roger before he saw the lady? Should he not rush down to Liverpool, and ask a few more questions of Mr. Ramsbottom? Why should he go forth to execution, seeing that the matter was in his own hands?

At last he jumped out of bed and into his tub, and dressed himself as quickly as he could. He worked himself up into a fit of fortitude, and resolved that the thing should be done before the fit was over. He ate his breakfast about nine, and then asked himself whether he might not be too early were he to go at once to Islington. But he remembered that she was always early. In every respect she was an energetic woman, using her time for some purpose, either good or bad, not sleeping it away in bed. If one has to be hung on a given day, would it not be well to be hung as soon after waking as possible? I can fancy that the hangman would hardly come early enough. And if one had to be hung in a given week, would not one wish to be hung on the first day of the week, even at the risk of breaking one's last Sabbath day in this world? Whatever be the misery to be endured, get it over. The horror of every agony is in its anticipation. Paul had realised something of this when he threw himself into a Hansom cab, and ordered the man to drive him to Islington.

How quick that cab went! Nothing ever goes so quick as a Hansom cab when a man starts for a dinner-party a little too early;—nothing so slow when he starts too late. Of all cabs this, surely, was the quickest. Paul was lodging in Suffolk Street, close to Pall Mall,—whence the way to Islington, across Oxford Street, across Tottenham Court Road, across numerous squares north-east of the Museum, seems to be long. The end of Goswell Road is the outside of the world in that direction, and Islington is beyond the end of Goswell Road. And yet that Hansom cab was there before Paul Montague had been able to arrange the words with which he would begin the interview. He had given the street and the number of the street. It was not till after he had started that it occurred to him that it might be well that he should get out at the end of the street, and walk to the house,—so that he might, as it were, fetch his breath before the interview was commenced. But the cabman dashed up to
the door in a manner purposely devised to make every inmate of the house aware that a cab had just arrived before it. There was a little garden before the house. We all know the garden;—twenty-four feet long, by twelve broad;—and an iron-grated door, with the landlady's name on a brass plate. Paul, when he had paid the cabman,—giving the man half-a-crown, and asking for no change in his agony,—pushed in the iron gate and walked very quickly up to the door, rang rather furiously, and before the door was well opened asked for Mrs. Hurtle.

"Mrs. Hurtle is out for the day," said the girl who opened the door. "Leastways, she went out yesterday and won't be back till to-night." Providence had sent him a reprieve! But he almost forgot the reprieve, as he looked at the girl and saw that she was Ruby Ruggles. "Oh laws, Mr. Montague, is that you?" Ruby Ruggles had often seen Paul down in Suffolk, and recognised him as quickly as he did her. It occurred to her at once that he had come in search of herself. She knew that Roger Carbury was up in town looking for her. So much she had of course learned from Sir Felix,—for at this time she had seen the baronet more than once since her arrival. Montague, she knew, was Roger Carbury's intimate friend, and now she felt that she was caught. In her terror she did not at first remember that the visitor had asked for Mrs. Hurtle.

"Yes, it is I. I was sorry to hear, Miss Ruggles, that you had left your home."

"I'm all right, Mr. Montague;—I am. Mrs. Pipkin is my aunt, or, leastways, my mother's brother's widow, though grandfather never would speak to her. She's quite respectable, and has five children, and lets lodgings. There's a lady here now, and has gone away with her just for one night down to Southend. They'll be back this evening, and I've the children to mind, with the servant girl. I'm quite respectable here, Mr. Montague, and nobody need be a bit afraid about me."

"Mrs. Hurtle has gone down to Southend?"

"Yes, Mr. Montague; she wasn't quite well, and wanted a breath of air, she said. And aunt didn't like she should go alone, as Mrs. Hurtle is such a stranger. And Mrs. Hurtle said as she didn't mind paying for two, and so they've gone, and the baby with them. Mrs. Pipkin said as the baby shouldn't be no trouble. And Mrs. Hurtle,—she's most as fond of the baby as aunt. Do you know Mrs. Hurtle, sir?"

"Yes; she's a friend of mine."

"Oh; I didn't know. I did know as there was some friend as was expected and as didn't come. Be I to say, sir, as you was here?"

Paul thought it might be as well to shift the subject and to ask Ruby a few questions about herself while he made up his mind what message he would leave for Mrs. Hurtle. "I'm afraid they are very unhappy about you down at Bungay, Miss Ruggles."

"Then they've got to be unhappy; that's all about it, Mr. Montague. Grandfather is that provoking as a young woman can't live with him, nor yet I won't try never again. He lugged me all about
the room by my hair, Mr. Montague. How is a young woman to put up with that? And I did everything for him,—that careful that no one won't do it again;—did his linen, and his victuals, and even cleaned his boots of a Sunday, 'cause he was that mean he wouldn't have anybody about the place only me and the girl who had to milk the cows. There wasn't nobody to do anything, only me. And then he went to drag me about by the hairs of my head. You won't see me again at Sheep's Acre, Mr. Montague;—nor yet won't the Squire.'

"But I thought there was somebody else was to give you a home."

"John Crumb! Oh, yes, there's John Crumb. There's plenty of people to give me a home, Mr. Montague."

"You were to have been married to John Crumb, I thought."

"Ladies is to change their minds if they like it, Mr. Montague. I'm sure you've heard that before. Grandfather made me say I'd have him,—but I never cared that for him."

"I'm afraid, Miss Ruggles, you won't find a better man up here in London."

"I didn't come here to look for a man, Mr. Montague; I can tell you that. They has to look for me, if they want me. But I am looked after; and that by one as John Crumb ain't fit to touch." That told the whole story. Paul when he heard the little boast was quite sure that Roger's fear about Felix was well founded. And as for John Crumb's fitness to touch Sir Felix, Paul felt that the Bungay mealman might have an opinion of his own on that matter. "But there's Betsy a crying up-stairs, and I promised not to leave them children for one minute."

"I will tell the Squire that I saw you, Miss Ruggles."

"What does the Squire want o' me? I ain't nothing to the Squire,—except that I respects him. You can tell if you please, Mr. Montague, of course. I'm a coming, my darling."

Paul made his way into Mrs. Hurtle's sitting-room and wrote a note for her in pencil. He had come, he said, immediately on his return from Liverpool, and was sorry to find that she was away for the day. When should he call again? If she would make an appointment he would attend to it. He felt as he wrote this that he might very safely have himself made an appointment for the morrow; but he cheated himself into half believing that the suggestion he now made was the more gracious and civil. At any rate it would certainly give him another day. Mrs. Hurtle would not return till late in the evening, and as the following day was Sunday there would be no delivery by post. When the note was finished he left it on the table, and called to Ruby to tell her that he was going. "Mr. Montague," she said in a confidential whisper, as she tripped down the stairs, "I don't see why you need be saying anything about me, you know."

"Mr. Carbury is up in town looking after you."

"What 'm I to Mr. Carbury?"

"Your grandfather is very anxious about you?"

"Not a bit of it, Mr. Montague. Grandfather knows very well where I am. There! Grandfather doesn't want me back, and I
ain't a going. Why should the Squire bother himself about me?
don't bother myself about him."

"He's afraid, Miss Ruggles, that you are trusting yourself to a
young man who is not trustworthy."

"I can mind myself very well, Mr. Montague."

"Tell me this. Have you seen Sir Felix Carbury since you've
been in town?" Ruby, whose blushes came very easily, now flushed
up to her forehead. "You may be sure that he means no good to
you. What can come of an intimacy between you and such a one as
he?"

"I don't see why I shouldn't have my friend, Mr. Montague, as
well as you. Howsoever, if you'll not tell, I'll be ever so much
obliged."

"But I must tell Mr. Carbury."

"Then I ain't obliged to you one bit," said Ruby, shutting the
door.

Paul as he walked away could not help thinking of the justice of
Ruby's reproach to him. What business had he to take upon himself
to be a Mentor to any one in regard to an affair of love;—he, who
had engaged himself to marry Mrs. Hurtle, and who the evening before
had for the first time declared his love to Hetta Carbury?

In regard to Mrs. Hurtle he had got a reprieve, as he thought, for
two days;—but it did not make him happy or even comfortable. As
he walked back to his lodgings he knew it would have been better for
him to have had the interview over. But, at any rate, he could now
think of Hetta Carbury, and the words he had spoken to her. Had
he heard that declaration which she had made to her mother, he would
have been able for the hour to have forgotten Mrs. Hurtle.

CHAPTER XL.

UNANIMITY IS THE VERY SOUL OF THESE THINGS.

THAT evening Montague was surprised to receive at the Beargarden
a note from Mr. Melmotte, which had been brought thither by a
messenger from the city,—who had expected to have an immediate
answer, as though Montague lived at the club.

"Dear Sir," said the letter,

"If not inconvenient would you call on me in Grosvenor
Square to-morrow, Sunday, at half past eleven. If you are going to
church, perhaps you will make an appointment in the afternoon; if
not, the morning will suit best. I want to have a few words with
you in private about the Company. My messenger will wait for
answer if you are at the club.

"Yours truly,

"Paul Montague, Esq.,

"The Beargarden."

"Augustus Melmotte."
Paul immediately wrote to say that he would call at Grosvenor Square at the hour appointed,—abandoning any intentions which he might have had in reference to Sunday morning service. But this was not the only letter he received that evening. On his return to his lodgings he found a note, containing only one line, which Mrs. Hurtie had found the means of sending to him after her return from Southend. "I am so sorry to have been away. I will expect you all to-morrow. W. H." The period of the reprieve was thus curtailed to less than a day.

On the Sunday morning he breakfasted late and then walked up to Grosvenor Square, much pondering what the great man could have to say to him. The great man had declared himself very plainly in the Board-room,—especially plainly after the Board had risen. Paul had understood that war was declared, and had understood also that he was to fight the battle single-handed, knowing nothing of such strategy as would be required, while his antagonist was a great master of financial tactics. He was prepared to go to the wall in reference to his money, only hoping that in doing so he might save his character and keep the reputation of an honest man. He was quite resolved to be guided altogether by Mr. Ramsbottom, and intended to ask Mr. Ramsbottom to draw up for him such a statement as would be fitting for him to publish. But it was manifest now that Mr. Meltomote would make some proposition, and it was impossible that he should have Mr. Ramsbottom at his elbow to help him.

He had been in Meltomote's house on the night of the ball, but had contented himself after that with leaving a card. He had heard much of the splendour of the place, but remembered simply the crush and the crowd, and that he had danced there more than once or twice with Hetia Carbury. When he was shown into the hall he was astonished to find that it was not only stripped, but was full of planks, and ladders, and trussels, and mortar. The preparations for the great dinner had been already commenced. Through all this he made his way to the stairs, and was taken up to a small room on the second floor, where the servant told him that Mr. Meltomote would come to him. Here he waited a quarter of an hour looking out into the yard at the back. There was not a book in the room, or even a picture with which he could amuse himself. He was beginning to think whether his own personal dignity would not be best consulted by taking his departure, when Meltomote himself, with slippers on his feet and enveloped in a magnificent dressing-gown, bustled into the room. "My dear sir, I am so sorry. You are a punctual man I see. So am I. A man of business should be punctual. But they ain't always. Brehgert,—from the house of Todd, Brehgert, and Goldsheiner, you know,—has just been with me. We had to settle something about the Moldavian loan. He came a quarter late, and of course he went a quarter late. And how is a man to catch a quarter of an hour? I never could do it." Montague assured the great man that the delay was of no consequence. "And I am so sorry to ask you into such a place as this. I had Brehgert in my room down-stairs, and then the house is so knocked about! We get into a furnished house a little way off in Bruton Street to-morrow. Longestaffe lets
me his house for a month till this affair of the dinner is over. By-
the-bye, Montague, if you'd like to come to the dinner, I've got a
ticket I can let you have. You know how they're run after." Mont-
tague had heard of the dinner, but had perhaps heard as little of it as
any man frequenting a club at the west end of London. He did not
in the least want to be at the dinner, and certainly did not wish to
receive any extraordinary civility from Mr. Melmotte's hands. But
he was very anxious to know why Mr. Melmotte should offer it. He
excused himself saying that he was not particularly fond of big
dinners, and that he did not like standing in the way of other people.
"Ah, indeed," said Melmotte. "There are ever so many people of
title would give anything for a ticket. You'd be astonished at the
persons who have asked. We've had to squeeze in a chair on one
side for the Master of the Buckhounds, and on another for the Bishop
of ---; I forget what bishop it is, but we had the two archbishops
before. They say he must come because he has something to do with
getting up the missionaries for Thibet. But I've got the ticket, if
you'll have it." This was the ticket which was to have taken in
Georgiana Longestaffe as one of the Melmotte family, had not Mel-
motte perceived that it might be useful to him as a bribe. But Paul
would not take the bribe. "You're the only man in London then,"
said Melmotte, somewhat offended. "But at any rate you'll come in
the evening, and I'll have one of Madame Melmotte's tickets sent to
you." Paul, not knowing how to escape, said that he would come in
the evening. "I am particularly anxious," continued he, "to be
civil to those who are connected with our great Railway, and of course,
in this country, your name stands first,—next to my own."

Then the great man paused, and Paul began to wonder whether it
could be possible that he had been sent for to Grosvenor Square on a
Sunday morning in order that he might be asked to dine in the same
house a fortnight later. But that was impossible. "Have you any-
thing special to say about the Railway?" he asked.

"Well, yes. It is so hard to get things said at the Board. Of
course there are some there who do not understand matters."

"I doubt if there be any one there who does understand this
matter," said Paul.

Melmotte affected to laugh. "Well, well; I am not prepared to go
quite so far as that. My friend Cohenlupé has had great experience in
these affairs, and of course you are aware that he is in Parliament.
And Lord Alfred sees farther into them than perhaps you give him
credit for."

"He may easily do that."

"Well, well. Perhaps you don't know him quite as well as I do."
The scowl began to appear on Mr. Melmotte's brow. Hitherto it
had been banished as well as he knew how to banish it. "What I
wanted to say to you was this. We didn't quite agree at the last
meeting."

"No; we did not."

"I was very sorry for it. Unanimity is everything in the direction
of such an undertaking as this. With unanimity we can do—every-
thing." Mr. Melmotte in the ecstasy of his enthusiasm lifted up both
his hands over his head. "Without unanimity we can do—nothing."
And the two hands fell. "Unanimity should be printed everywhere
about a Board-room. It should, indeed, Mr. Montague."
"But suppose the directors are not unanimous."
"They should be unanimous. They should make themselves unani-
mous. God bless my soul! You don't want to see the thing fall to
pieces!"
"Not if it can be carried on honestly."
"Honestly! Who says that anything is dishonest?" Again the
brow became very heavy. "Look here, Mr. Montague. If you and
I quarrel in that Board-room, there is no knowing the amount of evil
we may do to every individual shareholder in the Company. I find
the responsibility on my own shoulders so great that I say the thing
must be stopped. Damme, Mr. Montague, it must be stopped. We
mustn't ruin widows and children, Mr. Montague. We mustn't let
those shares run down 20 below par for a mere chimera. I've known
a fine property blasted, Mr. Montague, sent straight to the dogs,—
annihilated, sir;—so that it all vanished into thin air, and widows
and children past counting were sent out to starve about the streets,
—just because one director sat in another director's chair. I did, by
G—! What do you think of that, Mr. Montague? Gentlemen who
don't know the nature of credit, how strong it is,—as the air,—to
buoy you up; how slight it is,—as a mere vapour,—when roughly
touched, can do an amount of mischief of which they themselves don't
in the least understand the extent! What is it you want, Mr. Mon-
tague?"
"What do I want?" Melmotte's description of the peculiar sus-
cceptibility of great mercantile speculations had not been given without
some effect on Montague, but this direct appeal to himself almost
drove that effect out of his mind. "I only want justice."
"But you should know what justice is before you demand it at the
expense of other people. Look here, Mr. Montague. I suppose you
are like the rest of us, in this matter. You want to make money out
of it."
"For myself, I want interest for my capital; that is all. But I am
not thinking of myself."
"You are getting very good interest. If I understand the matter,"
—and here Melmotte pulled out a little book, showing thereby how
careful he was in mastering details,—"you had about £6,000 embarked
in the business when Fisker joined your firm. You imagine yourself
to have that still."
"I don't know what I've got."
"I can tell you then. You have that, and you've drawn nearly a
thousand pounds since Fisker came over, in one shape or another.
That's not bad interest on your money."
"There was back interest due to me."
"If so, it's due still. I've nothing to do with that. Look here,
Mr. Montague. I am most anxious that you should remain with us.
I was about to propose, only for that little rumpus the other day,
that, as you're an unmarried man, and have time on your hands, you
should go out to California and probably across to Mexico, in order
to get necessary information for the Company. Were I of your age, unmarried, and without impediment, it is just the thing I should like. Of course you'd go at the Company's expense. I would see to your own personal interests while you were away;—or you could appoint any one by power of attorney. Your seat at the Board would be kept for you; but, should anything occur amiss,—which it won't, for the thing is as sound as anything I know,—of course you, as absent, would not share the responsibility. That's what I was thinking. It would be a delightful trip;—but if you don't like it, you can of course remain at the Board, and be of the greatest use to me. Indeed, after a bit I could devolve nearly the whole management on you;—and I must do something of the kind, as I really haven't the time for it. But,—if it is to be that way,—do be unanimous. Unanimity is the very soul of these things;—the very soul, Mr. Montague."

"But if I can't be unanimous?"

"Well;—if you can't, and if you won't take my advice about going out;—which, pray, think about, for you would be most useful. It might be the very making of the railway;—then I can only suggest that you should take your £6,000 and leave us. I, myself, should be greatly distressed; but if you are determined that way I will see that you have your money. I will make myself personally responsible for the payment of it,—some time before the end of the year."

Paul Montague told the great man that he would consider the whole matter, and see him in Abchurch Lane before the next Board day.

"And now, good-bye," said Mr. Melmotte, as he bade his young friend adieu in a hurry. "I'm afraid that I'm keeping Sir Gregory Grice, the Bank Director, waiting down-stairs."
CHAPTER XLI.

ALL PREPARED.

DURING all these days Miss Melmotte was by no means contented with her lover's prowess, though she would not allow herself to doubt his sincerity. She had not only assured him of her undying affection in the presence of her father and mother, had not only offered to be chopped in pieces on his behalf, but had also written to him, telling how she had a large sum of her father's money within her power, and how willing she was to make it her own, to throw over her father and mother, and give herself and her fortune to her lover. She felt that she had been very gracious to her lover, and that her lover was a little slow in acknowledging the favours conferred upon him. But, nevertheless, she was true to her lover, and believed that he was true to her. Didon had been hitherto faithful. Marie had written various letters to Sir Felix, and had received two or three very short notes in reply, containing hardly more than a word or two each. But now she was told that a day was absolutely fixed for her marriage with Lord Nidderdale, and that her things were to be got ready. She was to be married in the middle of August; and here they were, approaching the end of June. "You may buy what you like, mamma," she said; "and if papa agrees about Felix, why then I suppose they'll do. But they'll never be of any use about Lord Nidderdale. If you were to sew me up in the things by main force, I wouldn't have him." Madame Melmotte groaned, and scolded in English, French, and German, and wished that she were dead; she told Marie that she was a pig, and ass, and a toad, and a dog. And ended, as she always did end, by swearing that Melmotte must manage the matter himself. "Nobody shall manage this matter for me," said Marie. "I know what I'm about now, and I won't marry anybody just because it will suit papa." "Que nous étions encore à Francfort, ou New York," said the elder lady, remembering the humbler but less troubled times of her earlier life. Marie did not care for Francfort or New York; for Paris or for London;—but she did care for Sir Felix Carbury.

While her father on Sunday morning was transacting business in his own house with Paul Montague and the great commercial magnates of the city,—though it may be doubted whether that very respectable gentleman Sir Gregory Gripe was really in Grosvenor Square when his name was mentioned,—Marie was walking inside the gardens; Didon was also there at some distance from her; and Sir Felix Carbury was there also close along side of her. Marie had the key of the gardens for her own use; and had already learned that her neighbours in the square did not much frequent the place during church time on Sunday morning. Her lover's letter to her father had of course been shown to her, and she had taxed him with it
immediately. Sir Felix, who had thought much of the letter as he came from Welbeck Street to keep his appointment,—having been assured by Didon that the gate should be left unlocked, and that she would be there to close it after he had come in,—was of course ready with a lie. "It was the only thing to do, Marie;—it was indeed."

"But you said you had accepted some offer."
"You don't suppose I wrote the letter?"
"It was your handwriting, Felix."
"Of course it was. I copied just what he put down. He'd have sent you clean away where I couldn't have got near you if I hadn't written it."
"And you have accepted nothing?"
"Not at all. As it is, he owes me money. Is not that odd? I gave him a thousand pounds to buy shares, and I haven't got anything from him yet." Sir Felix, no doubt, forgot the cheque for £200.
"Nobody ever does who gives papa money," said the observant daughter.
"Don't they? Dear me! But I just wrote it because I thought anything better than a downright quarrel."
"I wouldn't have written it, if it had been ever so."
"It's no good scolding, Marie. I did it for the best. What do you think we'd best do now?" Marie looked at him, almost with scorn. Surely it was for him to propose and for her to yield. "I wonder whether you're sure you're right about that money which you say is settled."
"I'm quite sure. Mamma told me in Paris,—just when we were coming away,—that it was done so that there might be something if things went wrong. And papa told me that he should want me to sign something from time to time; and of course I said I would. But of course I won't,—if I should have a husband of my own." Felix walked along, pondering the matter, with his hands in his trousers pockets. He entertained those very fears which had latterly fallen upon Lord Nidderdale. There would be no "cropper" which a man could "come" so bad as would be his cropper were he to marry Marie Melmotte, and then find that he was not to have a shilling! And, were he now to run off with Marie, after having written that letter, the father would certainly not forgive him. This assurance of Marie's as to the settled money was too doubtful! The game to be played was too full of danger! And in that case he would certainly get neither his £800, nor the shares. And if he were true to Melmotte, Melmotte would probably supply him with ready money. But then here was the girl at his elbow, and he no more dared to tell her to her face that he meant to give her up, than he dared to tell Melmotte that he intended to stick to his engagement. Some half promise would be the only escape for the present. "What are you thinking of, Felix?" she asked.
"It's difficult to know what to do."
"But you do love me?"
"Of course I do. If I didn't love you why should I be here
"It's no good scolding."
walking round this stupid place? They talk of your being married to Nidderdale about the end of August."

"Some day in August. But that's all nonsense, you know. They can't take me up and marry me, as they used to do the girls ever so long ago. I won't marry him. He don't care a bit for me, and never did. I don't think you care much, Felix."

"Yes, I do. A fellow can't go on saying so over and over again in a beastly place like this. If we were anywhere jolly together, then I could say it often enough."

"I wish we were, Felix. I wonder whether we ever shall be."

"Upon my word I hardly see my way as yet."

"You're not going to give it up!"

"Oh no;—not give it up; certainly not. But the bother is a fellow doesn't know what to do."

"You've heard of young Mr. Goldsheimer, haven't you?" suggested Marie.

"He's one of those city chaps."

"And Lady Julia Start?"

"She's old Lady Catchboy's daughter. Yes; I've heard of them. They got spliced last winter."

"Yes,—somewhere in Switzerland, I think. At any rate they went to Switzerland, and now they've got a house close to Albert Gate."

"How jolly for them! He is awfully rich, isn't he?"

"I don't suppose he's half so rich as papa. They did all they could to prevent her going, but she met him down at Folkestone just as the tidal boat was starting. Didon says that nothing was easier."

"Oh;—ah. Didon knows all about it."

"That she does."

"But she'd lose her place."

"There are plenty of places. She could come and live with us, and be my maid. If you would give her £50 for herself, she'd arrange it all."

"And would you come to Folkestone?"

"I think that would be stupid, because Lady Julia did that. We should make it a little different. If you liked I wouldn't mind going to—New York. And then, perhaps, we might—get—married, you know, on board. That's what Didon thinks."

"And would Didon go too?"

"That's what she proposes. She could go as my aunt, and I'd call myself by her name;—any French name you know. I should go as a French girl. And you could call yourself Smith, and be an American. We wouldn't go together, but we'd get on board just at the last moment. If they wouldn't—marry us on board, they would at New York, instantly."

"That's Didon's plan?"

"That's what she thinks best,—and she'll do it, if you'll give her £50 for herself, you know. The 'Adriatic,'—that's a White Star boat, goes on Thursday week at noon. There's an early train that would take us down that morning. You had better go and sleep at Liverpool, and take no notice of us at all till we meet on board. We
could be back in a month,—and then papa would be obliged to make the best of it."

Sir Felix at once felt that it would be quite unnecessary for him to go to Herr Vossner or to any other male counsellor for advice as to the best means of carrying off his love. The young lady had it all at her fingers’ ends,—even to the amount of the fee required by the female counsellor. But Thursday week was very near, and the whole thing was taking uncomfortably defined proportions. Where was he to get funds if he were to resolve that he would do this thing? He had been fool enough to intrust his ready money to Melmotte, and now he was told that when Melmotte got hold of ready money he was not apt to release it. And he had nothing to show;—no security that he could offer to Vossner. And then,—this idea of starting to New York with Melmotte’s daughter immediately after he had written to Melmotte renouncing the girl, frightened him.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune."

Sir Felix did not know these lines, but the lesson taught by them came home to him at this moment. Now was the tide in his affairs at which he might make himself, or utterly mar himself. "It’s deuced important," he said at last with a groan.

"It’s not more important for you than me," said Marie.

"If you’re wrong about the money, and he shouldn’t come round, where should we be then?"

"Nothing venture, nothing have," said the heiress.

"That’s all very well; but one might venture everything and get nothing after all."

"You’d get me," said Marie with a pout.

"Yes;—and I’m awfully fond of you. Of course I should get you! But—"

"Very well then;—if that’s your love," said Marie, turning back from him.

Sir Felix gave a great sigh, and then announced his resolution.

"I’ll venture it."

"Oh, Felix, how grand it will be!"

"There’s a great deal to do, you know. I don’t know whether it can be Thursday week." He was putting in the coward’s plea for a reprieve.

"I shall be afraid of Didon if it’s delayed long."

"There’s the money to get, and all that."

"I can get some money. Mamma has money in the house."

"How much?" asked the baronet eagerly.

"A hundred pounds, perhaps;—perhaps two hundred."

"That would help certainly. I must go to your father for money. Won’t that be a sell? To get it from him, to take you away!"

It was decided that they were to go to New York, on a Thursday,—on Thursday week if possible, but as to that he was to let her know in a day or two. Didon was to pack up the clothes and get it sent out of the house. Didon was to have £50 before she went on board; and as one of the men must know about it, and must assist
in having the trunks smuggled out of the house, he was to have £10. All had been settled beforehand, so that Sir Felix really had no need to think about anything. "And now," said Marie, "there's Didon. Nobody's looking and she can open that gate for you. When we're gone, do you creep out. The gate can be left, you know. Then we'll get out on the other side." Marie Melmotte was certainly a clever girl.

CHAPTER XLII.

CAN YOU BE READY IN TEN MINUTES?

AFTER leaving Melmotte's house on Sunday morning Paul Montague went to Roger Carbury's hotel and found his friend just returning from church. He was bound to go to Islington on that day, but had made up his mind that he would defer his visit till the evening. He would dine early and be with Mrs. Hurtle about seven o'clock. But it was necessary that Roger should hear the news about Ruby Ruggles. "It's not so bad as you thought," said he, "as she is living with her aunt."

"I never heard of such an aunt."

"She says her grandfather knows where she is, and that he doesn't want her back again."

"Does she see Felix Carbury?"

"I think she does," said Paul.

"Then it doesn't matter whether the woman's her aunt or not. I'll go and see her and try to get her back to Bungay."

"Why not send for John Crumb?"

Roger hesitated for a moment, and then answered, "He'd give Felix such a thrashing as no man ever had before. My cousin deserves it as well as any man ever deserved a thrashing; but there are reasons why I should not like it. And he could not force her back with him. I don't suppose the girl is all bad,—if she could see the truth."

"I don't think she's bad at all."

"At any rate I'll go and see her," said Roger. "Perhaps I shall see your widow at the same time," Paul sighed, but said nothing more about his widow at that moment. "I'll walk up to Welbeck Street now," said Roger, taking his hat. "Perhaps I shall see you to-morrow." Paul felt that he could not go to Welbeck Street with his friend.

He dined in solitude at the Beargarden, and then again made that journey to Islington in a cab. As he went he thought of the proposal that had been made to him by Melmotte. If he could do it with a clear conscience, if he could really make himself believe in the railway, such an expedition would not be displeasing to him. He had said already more than he had intended to say to Hetta Carbury; and though he was by no means disposed to flatter himself, yet he almost thought that what he had said had been well received. At the moment they had been disturbed, but she, as she heard the sound of
her mother coming, had at any rate expressed no anger. He had almost been betrayed into breaking a promise. Were he to start now on this journey, the period of the promise would have passed by before his return. Of course he would take care that she should know that he had gone in the performance of a duty. And then he would escape from Mrs. hurtle, and would be able to make those inquiries which had been suggested to him. It was possible that Mrs. Hurtle should offer to go with him,—an arrangement which would not at all suit him. That at any rate must be avoided. But then how could he do this without a belief in the railway generally? And how was it possible that he should have such belief? Mr. Ramsbottom did not believe in it, nor did Roger Carbury. He himself did not in the least believe in Fisker, and Fisker had originated the railway. Then, would it not be best that he should take the Chairman's offer as to his own money? If he could get his £6,000 back and have done with the railway, he would certainly think himself a lucky man. But he did not know how far he could with honesty lay aside his responsibility; and then he doubted whether he could put implicit trust in Melomote's personal guarantee for the amount. This at any rate was clear to him,—that Melomote was very anxious to secure his absence from the meetings of the Board.

Now he was again at Mrs. Pipkin's door, and again it was opened by Ruby Ruggles. His heart was in his mouth as he thought of the things he had to say. "The ladies have come back from Southend, Miss Ruggles?"

"Oh yes, sir, and Mrs. Hurtle is expecting you all the day." Then she put in a whisper on her own account. "You didn't tell him as you'd seen me, Mr. Montague?"

"Indeed I did, Miss Ruggles."

"Then you might as well have left it alone, and not have been ill-natured,—that's all," said Ruby as she opened the door of Mrs. Hurtle's room.

Mrs. Hurtle got up to receive him with her sweetest smile,—and her smile could be very sweet. She was a witch of a woman, and, as like most witches she could be terrible, so like most witches she could charm. "Only fancy," she said, "that you should have come the only day I have been two hundred yards from the house, except that evening when you took me to the play. I was so sorry."

"Why should you be sorry? It is easy to come again."

"Because I don't like to miss you, even for a day. But I wasn't well, and I fancied that the house was stuffy, and Mrs. Pipkin took a bright idea and proposed to carry me off to Southend. She was dying to go herself. She declared that Southend was Paradise."

"A cockney Paradise."

"Oh, what a place it is! Do your people really go to Southend and fancy that that is the sea?"

"I believe they do. I never went to Southend myself,—so that you know more about it than I do."

"How very English it is,—a little yellow river,—and you call it the sea! Ah;—you never were at Newport!"

"But I've been at San Francisco."
"Yes; you've been at San Francisco, and heard the seals howling. Well; that's better than Southend."

"I suppose we do have the sea here in England. It's generally supposed we're an island."

"Of course;—but things are so small. If you choose to go to the west of Ireland, I suppose you'd find the Atlantic. But nobody ever does go there for fear of being murdered." Paul thought of the gentleman in Oregon, but said nothing;—thought, perhaps, of his own condition, and remembered that a man might be murdered without going either to Oregon or the west of Ireland. "But we went to Southend, I, and Mrs. Pipkin and the baby, and upon my word I enjoyed it. She was so afraid that the baby would annoy me, and I thought the baby was so much the best of it. And then we ate shrimps, and she was so humble. You must acknowledge that with us nobody would be so humble. Of course I paid. She has got all her children, and nothing but what she can make out of these lodgings. People are just as poor with us;—and other people who happen to be a little better off, pay for them. But nobody is humble to another, as you are here. Of course we like to have money as well as you do, but it doesn't make so much difference."

"He who wants to receive, all the world over, will make himself as agreeable as he can to him who can give."

"But Mrs. Pipkin was so humble. However we got back all right yesterday evening, and then I found that you had been here,—at last."

"You knew that I had to go to Liverpool."

"I'm not going to scold. Did you get your business done at Liverpool?"

"Yes;—one generally gets something done, but never anything very satisfactorily. Of course it's about this railway."

"I should have thought that that was satisfactory. Everybody talks of it as being the greatest thing ever invented. I wish I was a man that I might be concerned with a really great thing like that. I hate little peddling things. I should like to manage the greatest bank in the world, or to be Captain of the biggest fleet, or to make the largest railway. It would be better even than being President of a Republic, because one would have more of one's own way. What is it that you do in it, Paul?"

"They want me now to go out to Mexico about it," said he slowly.

"Shall you go?" said she, throwing herself forward and asking the question with manifest anxiety.

"I think not."

"Why not? Do go. Oh, Paul, I would go with you. Why should you not go? It is just the thing for such a one as you to do. The railway will make Mexico a new country, and then you would be the man who had done it. Why should you throw away such a chance as that? It will never come again. Emperors and kings have tried their hands at Mexico and have been able to do nothing. Emperors and kings never can do anything. Think what it would be to be the regenerator of Mexico!"
"Think what it would be to find one's self there without the means of doing anything, and to feel that one had been sent there merely that one might be out of the way."

"I would make the means of doing something."

"Means are money. How can I make that?"

"There is money going. There must be money where there is all this buying and selling of shares. Where does your uncle get the money with which he is living like a prince at San Francisco? Where does Fisker get the money with which he is speculating in New York? Where does Malmotte get the money which makes him the richest man in the world? Why should not you get it as well as the others?"

"If I were anxious to rob on my own account perhaps I might do it."

"Why should it be robbery? I do not want you to live in a palace and spend millions of dollars on yourself. But I want you to have ambition. Go to Mexico, and chance it. Take San Francisco in your way, and get across the country. I will go every yard with you. Make people there believe that you are in earnest, and there will be no difficulty about the money."

He felt that he was taking no steps to approach the subject which he should have to discuss before he left her,—or rather the statement which he had resolved that he would make. Indeed every word which he allowed her to say respecting this Mexican project carried him farther away from it. He was giving reasons why the journey should not be made; but was tacitly admitting that if it were to be made she might be one of the travellers. The very offer on her part implied an understanding that his former abnegation of his engagement had been withdrawn, and yet he shrank from the cruelty of telling her, in a side-way fashion, that he would not submit to her companionship either for the purpose of such a journey or for any other purpose. The thing must be said in a solemn manner, and must be introduced on its own basis. But such preliminary conversation as this made the introduction of it infinitely more difficult.

"You are not in a hurry?" she said.

"Oh no."

"You're going to spend the evening with me like a good man? Then I'll ask them to let us have tea." She rang the bell and Ruby came in, and the tea was ordered. "That young lady tells me that you are an old friend of hers."

"I've known about her down in the country, and was astonished to find her here yesterday."

"There's some lover, isn't there;—some would-be husband whom she does not like?"

"And some won't-be husband, I fear, whom she does like."

"That's quite of course, if the other is true. Miss Ruby isn't the girl to have come to her time of life without a preference. The natural liking of a young woman for a man in a station above her, because he is softer and cleaner and has better parts of speech,—just as we keep a pretty dog if we keep a dog at all,—is one of the evils of the inequality of mankind. The girl is content with the love with-
out having the love justified, because the object is more desirable. She can only have her love justified with an object less desirable. If all men wore coats of the same fabric, and had to share the soil of the work of the world equally between them, that evil would come to an end. A woman here and there might go wrong from fantasy and diseased passions, but the ever-existing temptation to go wrong would be at an end."

"If men were equal to-morrow and all wore the same coats, they would wear different coats the next day."

"Slightly different. But there would be no more purple and fine linen, and no more blue woof. It isn't to be done in a day of course, nor yet in a century,—nor in a decade of centuries; but every human being who looks into it honestly will see that his efforts should be made in that direction. I remember; you never take sugar; give me that."

Neither had he come here to discuss the deeply interesting questions of women's difficulties and immediate or progressive equality. But having got on to these rocks,—having, as the reader may perceive, been taken on to them wilfully by the skill of the woman,—he did not know how to get his bark out again into clear waters. But having his own subject before him, with all its dangers, the wild-cat's claws, and the possible fate of the gentleman in Oregon, he could not talk freely on the subjects which she introduced, as had been his wont in former years. "Thanks," he said, changing his cup. "How well you remember!"

"Do you think I shall ever forget your preferences and dislikes? Do you recollect telling me about that blue scarf of mine, that I should never wear blue?"

She stretched herself out towards him, waiting for an answer, so that he was obliged to speak. "Of course I do. Black is your colour;—black and grey; or white,—and perhaps yellow when you choose to be gorgeous; crimson possibly. But not blue or green."

"I never thought much of it before, but I have taken your word for gospel. It is very good to have an eye for such things,—as you have, Paul. But I fancy that taste comes with, or at any rate forbodes, an effete civilisation."

"I am sorry that mine should be effete," he said smiling.

"You know what I mean, Paul. I speak of nations, not individuals. Civilisation was becoming effete, or at any rate men were, in the time of the great painters; but Savanarola and Galileo were individuals. You should throw your lot in with a new people. This railway to Mexico gives you the chance."

"Are the Mexicans a new people?"

"They who will rule the Mexicans are. All American women I dare say have bad taste in gowns,—and so the vain ones and rich ones send to Paris for their finery; but I think our taste in men is generally good. We like our philosophers; we like our poets; we like our genuine workmen;—but we love our heroes. I would have you a hero, Paul." He got up from his chair and walked about the room in an agony of despair. To be told that he was expected to be a hero at the very moment in his life in which he felt more devoid of
heroism, more thoroughly given up to cowardice than he had ever been before, was not to be endured! And yet, with what utmost stretch of courage,—even though he were willing to devote himself certainly and instantly to the worst fate that he had pictured to himself,—could he immediately rush away from these abstract speculations, encumbered as they were with personal flattery, into his own most unpleasant, most tragic matter? It was the unfitness that deterred him and not the possible tragedy. Nevertheless, through it all, he was sure,—nearly sure,—that she was playing her game, and playing it in direct antagonism to the game which she knew that he wanted to play. Would it not be better that he should go away and write another letter? In a letter he could at any rate say what he had to say;—and having said it he would then strengthen himself to adhere to it. "What makes you so uneasy?" she asked; still speaking in her most winning way, caressing him with the tones of her voice.

"Do you not like me to say that I would have you be a hero?"

"Winifrid," he said, "I came here with a purpose, and I had better carry it out."

"What purpose?" She still leaned forward, but now supported her face on her two hands with her elbows resting on her knees, looking at him intently. But one would have said that there was only love in her eyes;—love which might be disappointed, but still love. The wild cat, if there, was all within, still hidden from sight. Paul stood with his hands on the back of a chair, propping himself up and trying to find fitting words for the occasion. "Stop, my dear," she said. "Must the purpose be told to-night?"

"Why not to-night?"

"Paul, I am not well;—I am weak now. I am a coward. You do not know the delight to me of having a few words of pleasant talk to an old friend after the desolation of the last weeks. Mrs. Pipkin is not very charming. Even her baby cannot supply all the social wants of my life. I had intended that everything should be sweet to-night. Oh, Paul, if it was your purpose to tell me of your love, to assure me that you are still my dear, dear friend, to speak with hope of future days, or with pleasure of those that are past,—then carry out your purpose. But if it be cruel, or harsh, or painful; if you had come to speak daggers;—then drop your purpose for to-night. Try and think what my solitude must have been to me, and let me have one hour of comfort."

Of course he was conquered for that night, and could only have that solace which a most injurious reprieve could give him. "I will not harass you, if you are ill," he said.

"I am ill. It was because I was afraid that I should be really ill that I went to Southend. The weather is hot, though of course the sun here is not as we have it. But the air is heavy,—what Mrs. Pipkin calls muggy. I was thinking if I were to go somewhere for a week, it would do me good. Where had I better go?" Paul suggested Brighton. "That is full of people; is it not?—a fashionable place?"

"Not at this time of the year."

"But it is a big place. I want some little place that would be
pretty. You could take me down; could you not? Not very far, you know;—not that any place can be very far from here.” Paul, in his John Bull displeasure, suggested Penzance, telling her, untruly, that it would take twenty-four hours. “Not Penzance then, which I know is your very Ultima Thule;—not Penzance, nor yet Orkney. Is there no other place,—except Southend?”

“Is there Cromer in Norfolk,—perhaps ten hours.”

“Is Cromer by the sea?”

“Yes;—what we call the sea?”

“I mean really the sea, Paul.”

“If you start from Cromer right away, a hundred miles would perhaps take you across to Holland. A ditch of that kind wouldn’t do perhaps.”

“Ah,—now I see you are laughing at me. Is Cromer pretty?”

“Well, yes;—I think it is. I was there once, but I don’t remember much. There’s Ramsgate.”

“Mrs. Pipkin told me of Ramsgate. I don’t think I should like Ramsgate.”

“There’s the Isle of Wight. The Isle of Wight is very pretty.”

“That’s the Queen’s place. There would not be room for her and me too.”

“Or Lowestoffe. Lowestoffe is not so far as Cromer, and there is a railway all the distance.”

“And sea?”

“Sea enough for anything. If you can’t see across it, and if there are waves, and wind enough to knock you down, and shipwrecks every other day, I don’t see why a hundred miles isn’t as good as a thousand.”

“A hundred miles is just as good as a thousand. But, Paul, at Southend it isn’t a hundred miles across to the other side of the river. You must admit that. But you will be a better guide than Mrs. Pipkin. You would not have taken me to Southend when I expressed a wish for the ocean;—would you? Let it be Lowestoffe. Is there an hotel?”

“A small little place.”

“Very small? uncomfortably small? But almost any place would do for me.”

“They make up, I believe, about a hundred beds; but in the States it would be very small.”

“Paul,” said she, delighted to have brought him back to this humour, “if I were to throw the tea things at you, it would serve you right. This is all because I did not lose myself in awe at the sight of the Southend ocean. It shall be Lowestoffe.” Then she rose up and came to him, and took his arm. “You will take me down, will you not? It is desolate for a woman to go into such a place all alone. I will not ask you to stay. And I can return by myself.” She had put both hands on one arm, and turned herself round, and looked into his face. “You will do that for old acquaintance sake?” For a moment or two he made no answer, and his face was troubled, and his brow was black. He was endeavouring to think;—but he was only aware of his danger, and could see no way through it.
"I don't think you will let me ask in vain for such a favour as that," she said.

"No;" he replied. "I will take you down. When will you go?"

He had cockered himself up with some vain idea that the railway carriage would be a good place for the declaration of his purpose, or perhaps the sands at Lowestoffe.

"When will I go? when will you take me? You have Boards to attend, and shares to look to, and Mexico to regenerate. I am a poor woman with nothing on hand but Mrs. Pipkin's baby. Can you be ready in ten minutes?—because I could." Paul shook his head and laughed. "I've named a time and that doesn't suit. Now, sir, you name another, and I'll promise it shall suit." Paul suggested Saturday, the 29th. He must attend the next Board, and had promised to see Melmotte before the Board day. Saturday of course would do for Mrs. Hurtle. Should she meet him at the railway station? Of course he undertook to come and fetch her.

Then, as he took his leave, she stood close against him, and put her cheek up for him to kiss. There are moments in which a man finds it utterly impossible that he should be prudent,—as to which, when he thought of them afterwards, he could never forgive himself for prudence, let the danger have been what it may. Of course he took her in his arms, and kissed her lips as well as her cheeks.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE CITY ROAD.

The statement made by Ruby as to her connection with Mrs. Pipkin was quite true. Ruby's father had married a Pipkin whose brother had died leaving a widow behind him at Islington. The old man at Sheep's Acre farm had greatly resented this marriage, had never spoken to his daughter-in-law,—or to his son after the marriage, and had steeled himself against the whole Pipkin race. When he undertook the charge of Ruby he had made it matter of agreement that she should have no intercourse with the Pipkins. This agreement Ruby had broken, corresponding on the sly with her uncle's widow at Islington. When therefore she ran away from Suffolk she did the best she could with herself in going to her aunt's house. Mrs. Pipkin was a poor woman, and could not offer a permanent home to Ruby; but she was good-natured, and came to terms. Ruby was to be allowed to stay at any rate for a month, and was to work in the house for her bread. But she made it a part of her bargain that she should be allowed to go out occasionally. Mrs. Pipkin immediately asked after a lover. "I'm all right," said Ruby. If the lover was what he ought to be, had he not better come and see her? This was Mrs. Pipkin's suggestion. Mrs. Pipkin thought that scandal might in this way be avoided. "That's as it may be, by-and-by," said Ruby. Then she told all the story of John Crumb:—how she hated
John Crumb; how resolved she was that nothing should make her marry John Crumb. And she gave her own account of that night on which John Crumb and Mr. Mixet ate their supper at the farm, and of the manner in which her grandfather had treated her because she would not have John Crumb. Mrs. Pipkin was a respectable woman in her way, always preferring respectable lodgers if she could get them;—but bound to live. She gave Ruby very good advice. Of course if she was "dead-set" against John Crumb, that was one thing! But then there was nothing a young woman should look to so much as a decent house over her head,—and victuals. "What's all the love in the world, Ruby, if a man can't do for you?" Ruby declared that she knew somebody who could do for her, and could do very well for her. She knew what she was about, and wasn't going to be put off it. Mrs. Pipkin's morals were good wearing morals, but she was not strait-laced. If Ruby chose to manage in her own way about her lover she must. Mrs. Pipkin had an idea that young women in these days did have, and would have, and must have more liberty than was allowed when she was young. The world was being changed very fast. Mrs. Pipkin knew that as well as others. And therefore when Ruby went to the theatre once and again,—by herself as far as Mrs. Pipkin knew, but probably in company with her lover, —and did not get home till past midnight, Mrs. Pipkin said very little about it, attributing such novel circumstances to the altered condition of her country. She had not been allowed to go to the theatre with a young man when she had been a girl,—but that had been in the earlier days of Queen Victoria, fifteen years ago, before the new dispensation had come. Ruby had never yet told the name of her lover to Mrs. Pipkin, having answered all inquiries by saying that she was all right. Sir Felix's name had never even been mentioned in Islington till Paul Montague had mentioned it. She had been managing her own affairs after her own fashion,—not altogether with satisfaction, but still without interruption; but now she knew that interference would come. Mr. Montague had found her out, and had told her grandfather's landlord. The Squire would be after her, and then John Crumb would come, accompanied of course by Mr. Mixet, —and after that, as she said to herself on retiring to the couch which she shared with two little Pipkins, "the fat would be in the fire."

"Who do you think was at our place yesterday," said Ruby one evening to her lover. They were sitting together at a music-hall,—half music-hall, half theatre, which pleasantly combined the allurements of the gin-palace, the theatre, and the ball-room, trenching hard on those of other places. Sir Felix was smoking, dressed, as he himself called it, "incognito," with a Tom-and-Jerry hat, and a blue silk cravat, and a green coat. Ruby thought it was charming. Felix entertained an idea that were his West End friends to see him in this attire they would not know him. He was smoking, and had before him a glass of hot brandy and water, which was common to himself and Ruby. He was enjoying life. Poor Ruby! She was half-ashamed of herself, half-frightened, and yet supported by a feeling that it was a grand thing to have got rid of restraints, and be able to
be with her young man. Why not? The Miss Longestaffes were
allowed to sit and dance and walk about with their young men,—
when they had any. Why was she to be given up to a great mass of
stupid dust like John Crumb, without seeing anything of the world?
But yet as she sat sipping her lover’s brandy and water between eleven
and twelve at the music-hall in the City Road, she was not altogether
comfortable. She saw things which she did not like to see. And
she heard things which she did not like to hear. And her lover,
though he was beautiful,—oh, so beautiful!—was not all that a lover
should be. She was still a little afraid of him, and did not dare as
yet to ask him for the promise which she expected him to make to
her. Her mind was set upon—marriage, but the word had hardly
passed between them. To have his arm round her waist was heaven
to her! Could it be possible that he and John Crumb were of the
same order of human beings? But how was this to go on? Even
Mrs. Pipkin made disagreeable allusions, and she could not live always
with Mrs. Pipkin, coming out at nights to drink brandy and water
and hear music with Sir Felix Carbury. She was glad therefore to
take the first opportunity of telling her lover that something was
going to happen. "Who do you suppose was at our place
yesterday?"

Sir Felix changed colour, thinking of Marie Melmotte, thinking that
perhaps some emissary from Marie Melmotte had been there; perhaps
Didon herself. He was amusement himself during these last evenings
of his in London; but the business of his life was about to take him
to New York. That project was still being elaborated. He had had
an interview with Didon, and nothing was wanting but the money.
Didon had heard of the funds which had been intrusted by him to
Melmotte, and had been very urgent with him to recover them.
Therefore, though his body was not unfrequently present, late in the
night, at the City Road Music-Hall, his mind was ever in Grosvenor
Square. "Who was it, Ruby?"

"A friend of the Squire’s, a Mr. Montague. I used to see him
about in Bungay and Beccles."

"Paul Montague?"

"Do you know him, Felix?"

"Well;—rather. He’s a member of our club, and I see him con-
stantly in the city—and I know him at home."

"Is he nice?"

"Well;—that depends on what you call nice. He’s a prig of a
fellow."

"He’s got a lady friend where I live."

"The devil he has!" Sir Felix of course had heard of Roger
Carbury’s suit to his sister, and of the opposition to this suit on the
part of Hetta, which was supposed to have been occasioned by her
preference for Paul Montague. "Who is she, Ruby?"

"Well;—she’s a Mrs. Hurtle. Such a stunning woman! Aunt says
she’s an American. She’s got lots of money."

"Is Montague going to marry her?"

"Oh dear yes. It’s all arranged. Mr. Montague comes quite
regular to see her;—not so regular as he ought, though. When
gentlemen are fixed as they're to be married, they never are regular afterwards. I wonder whether it'll be the same with you?"

"Wasn't John Crumb regular, Ruby?"

"Bother John Crumb! That wasn't none of my doings. Oh, he'd been regular enough, if I'd let him; he'd been like clockwork,—only the slowest clock out. But Mr. Montague has been and told the Squire as he saw me. He told me so himself. The Squire's coming about John Crumb. I know that. What am I to tell him, Felix?"

"Tell him to mind his own business. He can't do anything to you."

"No;—he can't do nothing. I ain't done nothing wrong, and he can't send for the police to have me took back to Sheep's Acre. But he can talk,—and he can look. I ain't one of those, Felix, as don't mind about their characters,—so don't you think it. Shall I tell him as I'm with you?"

"Gracious goodness, no! What would you say that for?"

"I didn't know. I must say something."

"Tell him you're nothing to him."

"But aunt will be letting on about my being out late o'nights; I know she will. And who am I with? He'll be asking that."

"Your aunt does not know?"

"No;—I've told nobody yet. But it won't do to go on like that, you know,—will it? You don't want it to go on always like that;—do you?"

"It's very jolly, I think."

"It ain't jolly for me. Of course, Felix, I like to be with you. That's jolly. But I have to mind them brats all the day, and to be doing the bedrooms. And that's not the worst of it."

"What is the worst of it?"

"I'm pretty nigh ashamed of myself. Yes, I am." And now Ruby burst out into tears. "Because I wouldn't have John Crumb, I didn't mean to be a bad girl. Nor yet I won't. But what'll I do, if everybody turns again me? Aunt won't go on for ever in this way. She said last night that—"

"Bother what she says!" Felix was not at all anxious to hear what aunt Pipkin might have to say upon such an occasion.

"She's right too. Of course she knows there's somebody. She ain't such a fool as to think that I'm out at these hours to sing psalms with a lot of young women. She says that whoever it is ought to speak out his mind. There;—that's what she says. And she's right. A girl has to mind herself, though she's ever so fond of a young man."

Sir Felix sucked his cigar and then took a long drink of brandy and water. Having emptied the beaker before him, he rapped for the waiter and called for another. He intended to avoid the necessity of making any direct reply to Ruby's importunities. He was going to New York very shortly, and looked on his journey thither as an horizon in his future beyond which it was unnecessary to speculate as to any farther distance. He had not troubled himself to think how it might be with Ruby when he was gone. He had not even considered whether he would or would not tell her that he was going, before he
started. It was not his fault that she had come up to London. She was an "awfully jolly girl," and he liked the feeling of the intrigue better perhaps than the girl herself. But he assured himself that he wasn't going to give himself any "d—d trouble." The idea of John Crumb coming up to London in his wrath had never occurred to him,—or he would probably have hurried on his journey to New York instead of delaying it, as he was doing now. "Let's go in and have a dance," he said.

Ruby was very fond of dancing,—perhaps liked it better than anything in the world. It was heaven to her to be spinning round the big room with her lover's arm tight round her waist, with one hand in his and her other hanging over his back. She loved the music, and loved the motion. Her ear was good, and her strength was great, and she never lacked breath. She could spin along and dance a whole room down, and feel at the time that the world could have nothing to give better worth having than that;—and such moments were too precious to be lost. She went and danced, resolving as she did so that she would have some answer to her question before she left her lover on that night.

"And now I must go," she said at last. "You'll see me as far as the Angel, won't you?" Of course he was ready to see her as far as the Angel. "What am I to say to the Squire?"

"Say nothing."

"And what am I to say to aunt?"

"Say to her? Just say what you have said all along."

"I've said nothing all along,—just to oblige you, Felix. I must say something. A girl has got herself to mind. What have you got to say to me, Felix?"

He was silent for about a minute, meditating his answer. "If you bother me I shall cut it, you know."

"Cut it!"

"Yes;—cut it. Can't you wait till I am ready to say something?"

"Waiting will be the ruin o' me, if I wait much longer. Where am I to go, if Mrs. Pipkin won't have me no more?"

"I'll find a place for you."

"You find a place! No; that won't do. I've told you all that before. I'd sooner go into service, or—"

"Go back to John Crumb."

"John Crumb has more respect for me nor you. He'd make me his wife to-morrow, and only be too happy."

"I didn't tell you to come away from him," said Sir Felix.

"Yes, you did. You told me as I was to come up to London when I saw you at Sheepstone Beeches;—didn't you? And you told me you loved me;—didn't you? And that if I wanted anything you'd get it done for me;—didn't you?"

"So I will. What do you want? I can give you a couple of sovereigns, if that's what it is."

"No it isn't;—and I won't have your money. I'd sooner work my fingers off. I want you to say whether you mean to marry me. There!"

As to the additional lie which Sir Felix might now have told, that
would have been nothing to him. He was going to New York, and would be out of the way of any trouble; and he thought that lies of that kind to young women never went for anything. Young women, he thought, didn't believe them, but liked to be able to believe afterwards that they had been deceived. It wasn't the lie that stuck in his throat, but the fact that he was a baronet. It was in his estimation "confounded impudence" on the part of Ruby Ruggles to ask to be his wife. He did not care for the lie, but he did not like to seem to lower himself by telling such a lie as that at her dictation. "Marry, Ruby! No, I don't ever mean to marry. It's the greatest bore out. I know a trick worth two of that."

She stopped in the street and looked at him. This was a state of things of which she had never dreamed. She could imagine that a man should wish to put it off, but that he should have the face to declare to his young woman that he never meant to marry at all, was a thing that she could not understand. What business had such a man to go after any young woman? "And what do you mean that I'm to do, Sir Felix?" she said.

"Just go easy, and not make yourself a bother."

"Not make myself a bother! Oh, but I will; I will. I'm to be carrying on with you, and nothing to come of it; but for you to tell me that you don't mean to marry, never at all! Never?"

"Don't you see lots of old bachelors about, Ruby?"

"Of course I does. There's the Squire. But he don't come asking girls to keep him company."

"That's more than you know, Ruby."

"If he did he'd marry her out of hand,—because he's a gentleman. That's what he is, every inch of him. He never said a word to a girl,—not to do her any harm, I'm sure," and Ruby began to cry.

"You mustn't come no further now, and I'll never see you again—never! I think you're the falsest young man, and the basest, and the lowest-minded that I ever heard tell of. I know there are them as don't keep their words. Things turn up, and they can't. Or they gets to like others better; or there ain't nothing to live on. But for a young man to come after a young woman, and then say, right out, as he never means to marry at all, is the lowest-spirited fellow that ever was. I never read of such a one in none of the books. No, I won't. You go your way, and I'll go mine." In her passion she was as good as her word, and escaped from him, running all the way to her aunt's door. There was in her mind a feeling of anger against the man, which she did not herself understand, in that he would incur no risk on her behalf. He would not even make a lover's easy promise, in order that the present hour might be made pleasant. Ruby let herself into her aunt's house, and cried herself to sleep with a child on each side of her.

On the next day Roger called. She had begged Mrs. Pipkin to attend the door, and had asked her to declare, should any gentleman ask for Ruby Ruggles, that Ruby Ruggles was out. Mrs. Pipkin had not refused to do so; but, having heard sufficient of Roger Carbury to imagine the cause which might possibly bring him to the house, and having made up her mind that Ruby's present condition of indepen-
dence was equally unfavourable to the lodging-house and to Ruby herself; she determined that the Squire, if he did come, should see the young lady. When therefore Ruby was called into the little back parlour and found Roger Carbury there, she thought that she had been caught in a trap. She had been very cross all the morning. Though in her rage she had been able on the previous evening to dismiss her titled lover, and to imply that she never meant to see him again, now, when the remembrance of the loss came upon her amidst her daily work,—when she could no longer console herself in her drudgery by thinking of the beautiful things that were in store for her, and by flattering herself that though at this moment she was little better than a maid of all work in a lodging-house, the time was soon coming in which she would bloom forth as a baronet's bride,—now in her solitude she almost regretted the precipitancy of her own conduct. Could it be that she would never see him again;—that she would dance no more in that gilded bright saloon? And might it not be possible that she had pressed him too hard? A baronet of course would not like to be brought to book, as she could bring to book such a one as John Crumb. But yet,—that he should have said never;—that he would never marry! Looking at it in any light, she was very unhappy, and this coming of the Squire did not serve to cure her misery.

Roger was very kind to her, taking her by the hand, and bidding her sit down, and telling her how glad he was to find that she was comfortably settled with her aunt. "We were all alarmed, of course, when you went away without telling anybody where you were going."

"Grandfather 'd been that cruel to me that I couldn't tell him."

"He wanted you to keep your word to an old friend of yours."

"To pull me all about by the hairs of my head wasn't the way to make a girl keep her word;—was it, Mr. Carbury? That's what he did, then;—and Sally Hockett, who is there, heard it. I've been good to grandfather, whatever I may have been to John Crumb; and he shouldn't have treated me like that. No girl 'd like to be pulled about the room by the hairs of her head, and she with her things all off, just getting into bed."

The Squire had no answer to make to this. That old Ruggles should be a violent brute under the influence of gin and water did not surprise him. And the girl, when driven away from her home by such usage, had not done amiss in coming to her aunt. But Roger had already heard a few words from Mrs. Pipkin as to Ruby's late hours, had heard also that there was a lover, and knew very well who that lover was. He also was quite familiar with John Crumb's state of mind. John Crumb was a gallant, loving fellow who might be induced to forgive everything, if Ruby would only go back to him; but would certainly persevere, after some slow fashion of his own, and "see the matter out," as he would say himself, if she did not go back. "As you found yourself obliged to run away," said Roger, "I'm glad that you should be here; but you don't mean to stay here always?"

"I don't know," said Ruby.
"I don't care about any man's coat."
THE CITY ROAD.

"You must think of your future life. You don't want to be always your aunt's maid."
"Oh dear, no."
"It would be very odd if you did, when you may be the wife of such a man as Mr. Crumb."
"Oh, Mr. Crumb! Everybody is going on about Mr. Crumb. I don't like Mr. Crumb, and I never will like him."
"Now look here, Ruby; I have come to speak to you very seriously, and I expect you to hear me. Nobody can make you marry Mr. Crumb, unless you please."
"Nobody can't, of course, sir."
"But I fear you have given him up for somebody else, who certainly won't marry you, and who can only mean to ruin you."
"Nobody won't ruin me," said Ruby. "A girl has to look to herself, and I mean to look to myself."
"I'm glad to hear you say so, but being out at night with such a one as Sir Felix Carbury is not looking to yourself. That means going to the devil head foremost."
"I ain't a going to the devil," said Ruby, sobbing and blushing.
"But you will, if you put yourself into the hands of that young man. He's as bad as bad can be. He's my own cousin, and yet I'm obliged to tell you so. He has no more idea of marrying you than I have; but were he to marry you, he could not support you. He is ruined himself, and would ruin any young woman who trusted him. I'm almost old enough to be your father, and in all my experience I never came across so vile a young man as he is. He would ruin you and cast you from him without a pang of remorse. He has no heart in his bosom;—none." Ruby had now given way altogether, and was sobbing with her apron to her eyes in one corner of the room. "That's what Sir Felix Carbury is," said the Squire, standing up so that he might speak with the more energy, and talk her down more thoroughly. "And if I understand it rightly," he continued, "it is for a vile thing such as he, that you have left a man who is as much above him in character, as the sun is above the earth. You think little of John Crumb because he does not wear a fine coat."
"I don't care about any man's coat," said Ruby; "but John hasn't ever a word to say, was it ever so."
"Words to say! what do words matter? He loves you. He loves you after that fashion that he wants to make you happy and respectable, not to make you a bye-word and a disgrace." Ruby struggled hard to make some opposition to the suggestion, but found herself to be incapable of speech at the moment. "He thinks more of you than of himself, and would give you all that he has. What would that other man give you? If you were once married to John Crumb, would any one then pull you by the hairs of your head? Would there be any want then, or any disgrace?"
"There ain't no disgrace, Mr. Carbury."
"No disgrace in going about at midnight with such a one as Felix Carbury? You are not a fool, and you know that it is disgraceful. If you are not unfit to be an honest man's wife, go back and beg that man's pardon."
"John Crumb's pardon! No!"

"Oh, Ruby, if you knew how highly I respect that man, and how lowly I think of the other; how I look on the one as a noble fellow, and regard the other as dust beneath my feet, you would perhaps change your mind a little."

Her mind was being changed. His words did have their effect, though the poor girl struggled against the conviction that was borne in upon her. She had never expected to hear any one call John Crumb noble. But she had never respected any one more highly than Squire Carbury, and he said that John Crumb was noble. Amidst all her misery and trouble she still told herself that it was but a dusty, mealy,—and also a dumb nobility.

"I'll tell you what will take place," continued Roger. "Mr. Crumb won't put up with this you know."

"He can't do nothing to me, sir."

"That's true enough. Unless it be to take you in his arms and press you to his heart, he wants to do nothing to you. Do you think he'd injure you if he could? You don't know what a man's love really means, Ruby. But he could do something to somebody else. How do you think it would be with Felix Carbury, if they two were in a room together and nobody else by."

"John's mortal strong, Mr. Carbury."

"If two men have equal pluck, strength isn't much needed. One is a brave man, and the other—a coward. Which do you think is which?"

"He's your own cousin, and I don't know why you should say everything again him."

"You know I'm telling you the truth. You know it as well as I do myself;—and you're throwing yourself away, and throwing the man who loves you over,—for such a fellow as that! Go back to him, Ruby, and beg his pardon."

"I never will;—never."

"I've spoken to Mrs. Pipkin, and while you're here she will see that you don't keep such hours any longer. You tell me that you're not disgraced, and yet you are out at midnight with a young blackguard like that! I've said what I've got to say, and I'm going away. But I'll let your grandfather know."

"Grandfather don't want me no more."

"And I'll come again. If you want money to go home, I will let you have it. Take my advice at least in this;—do not see Sir Felix Carbury any more." Then he took his leave. If he had failed to impress her with admiration for John Crumb, he had certainly been efficacious in lessening that which she had entertained for Sir Felix.
CHAPTER XLIV.

THE COMING ELECTION.

THE very greatness of Mr. Melfote's popularity, the extent of the admiration which was accorded by the public at large to his commercial enterprise and financial sagacity, created a peculiar bitterness in the opposition that was organised against him at Westminster. As the high mountains are intersected by deep valleys, as puritanism in one age begets infidelity in the next, as in many countries the thickness of the winter's ice will be in proportion to the number of the summer musquitoes, so was the keenness of the hostility displayed on this occasion in proportion to the warmth of the support which was manifested. As the great man was praised, so also was he abused. As he was a demigod to some, so was he a fiend to others. And indeed there was hardly any other way in which it was possible to carry on the contest against him. From the moment in which Mr. Melfote had declared his purpose of standing for Westminster in the Conservative interest, an attempt was made to drive him down the throats of the electors by clamorous assertions of his unprecedented commercial greatness. It seemed that there was but one virtue in the world, commercial enterprise,—and that Melfote was its prophet. It seemed, too, that the orators and writers of the day intended all Westminster to believe that Melfote treated his great affairs in a spirit very different from that which animates the bosoms of merchants in general. He had risen above any feeling of personal profit. His wealth was so immense that there was no longer place for anxiety on that score. He already possessed,—so it was said,—enough to found a dozen families, and he had but one daughter! But by carrying on the enormous affairs which he held in his hands, he would be able to open up new worlds, to afford relief to the oppressed nationalities of the over-populated old countries. He had seen how small was the good done by the Peabodys and the Bairds, and, resolving to lend no ear to charities and religions, was intent on projects for enabling young nations to earn plentiful bread by the moderate sweat of their brows. He was the head and front of the railway which was to regenerate Mexico. It was presumed that the contemplated line from ocean to ocean across British America would become a fact in his hands. It was he who was to enter into terms with the Emperor of China for farming the tea-fields of that vast country. He was already in treaty with Russia for a railway from Moscow to Khiva. He had a fleet,—or soon would have a fleet of emigrant ships,—ready to carry every discontented Irishman out of Ireland to whatever quarter of the globe the Milesian might choose for the exercise of his political principles. It was known that he had already floated a company for laying down a
submarine wire from Penzance to Point de Galles, round the Cape of Good Hope,—so that, in the event of general wars, England need be dependent on no other country for its communications with India. And then there was the philanthropic scheme for buying the liberty of the Arabian fellahs from the Khedive of Egypt for thirty millions sterling,—the compensation to consist of the cession of a territory about four times as big as Great Britain in the lately annexed country on the great African lakes. It may have been the case that some of these things were as yet only matters of conversation,—speculations as to which Mr. Melmotte’s mind and imagination had been at work, rather than his pocket or even his credit; but they were all sufficiently matured to find their way into the public press, and to be used as strong arguments why Melmotte should become member of Parliament for Westminster.

All this praise was of course gall to those who found themselves called upon by the demands of their political position to oppose Mr. Melmotte. You can run down a demi-god only by making him out to be a demi-devil. These very persons, the leading Liberals of the leading borough in England as they called themselves, would perhaps have cared little about Melmotte’s antecedents had it not become their duty to fight him as a Conservative. Had the great man found at the last moment that his own British politics had been liberal in their nature, these very enemies would have been on his committee. It was their business to secure the seat. And as Melmotte’s supporters began the battle with an attempt at what the Liberals called “bounce,”—to carry the borough with a rush by an overwhelming assertion of their candidate’s virtues,—the other party was driven to make some enquiries as to that candidate’s antecedents. They quickly warmed to the work, and were not less loud in exposing the Satan of speculation, than had been the Conservatives in declaring the commercial Jove. Emissaries were sent to Paris and Frankfort, and the wires were used to Vienna and New York. It was not difficult to collect stories,—true or false; and some quiet men, who merely looked on at the game, expressed an opinion that Melmotte might have wisely abstained from the glories of Parliament.

Nevertheless there was at first some difficulty in finding a proper Liberal candidate to run against him. The nobleman who had been elevated out of his seat by the death of his father had been a great Whig magnate, whose family was possessed of immense wealth and of popularity equal to its possessions. One of that family might have contested the borough at a much less expense than any other person,—and to them the expense would have mattered but little. But there was no such member of it forthcoming. Lord This and Lord That,—and the Honourable This and the Honourable That, sons of other cognate Lords,—already had seats which they were unwilling to vacate in the present state of affairs. There was but one other session for the existing Parliament; and the odds were held to be very greatly in Melmotte’s favour. Many an outsider was tried, but the outsiders were either afraid of Melmotte’s purse or his influence. Lord Buntingford was asked, and he and his family were good old Whigs. But he was nephew to Lord Alfred Grendall, first cousin to
Miles Grendall, and abstained on behalf of his relatives. An overture was made to Sir Damask Monogram, who certainly could afford the contest. But Sir Damask did not see his way. Melmotte was a working bee, while he was a drone,—and he did not wish to have the difference pointed out by Mr. Melmotte's supporters. Moreover, he preferred his yacht and his four-in-hand.

At last a candidate was selected, whose nomination and whose consent to occupy the position, created very great surprise in the London world. The press had of course taken up the matter very strongly. The "Morning Breakfast Table" supported Mr. Melmotte with all its weight. There were people who said that this support was given by Mr. Broune under the influence of Lady Carbury, and that Lady Carbury in this way endeavoured to reconcile the great man to a marriage between his daughter and Sir Felix. But it is more probable that Mr. Broune saw,—or thought that he saw,—which way the wind sat, and that he supported the commercial hero because he felt that the hero would be supported by the country at large. In praising a book, or putting foremost the merits of some official or military claimant, or writing up a charity,—in some small matter of merely personal interest,—the Editor of the "Morning Breakfast Table" might perhaps allow himself to listen to a lady whom he loved. But he knew his work too well to jeopardize his paper by such influences in any matter which might probably become interesting to the world of his readers. There was a strong belief in Melmotte. The clubs thought that he would be returned for Westminster. The dukes and duchesses fêted him. The city,—even the city was showing a wavering disposition to come round. Bishops begged for his name on the list of promoters of their pet schemes. Royalty without stint was to dine at his table. Melmotte himself was to sit at the right hand of the brother of the Sun and of the uncle of the Moon, and British Royalty was to be arranged opposite, so that every one might seem to have the place of most honour. How could a conscientious Editor of a "Morning Breakfast Table," seeing how things were going, do other than support Mr. Melmotte? In fair justice it may be well doubted whether Lady Carbury had exercised any influence in the matter.

But the "Evening Pulpit" took the other side. Now this was the more remarkable, the more sure to attract attention, inasmuch as the "Evening Pulpit" had never supported the Conservative interest. As was said in the first chapter of this work, the motto of that newspaper implied that it was to be conducted on principles of absolute independence. Had the "Evening Pulpit," like some of its contemporaries, lived by declaring from day to day that all Conservative elements were godlike, and all their opposites satanic, as a matter of course the same line of argument would have prevailed as to the Westminster election. But as it had not been so, the vigour of the "Evening Pulpit" on this occasion was the more alarming and the more noticeable,—so that the short articles which appeared almost daily in reference to Mr. Melmotte were read by everybody. Now they who are concerned in the manufacture of newspapers are well aware that censure is infinitely more attractive than eulogy,—but they
are quite as well aware that it is more dangerous. No proprietor or editor was ever brought before the courts at the cost of ever so many hundred pounds,—which if things go badly may rise to thousands,—because he had attributed all but divinity to some very poor specimen of mortality. No man was ever called upon for damages because he had attributed grand motives. It might be well for politics and literature and art,—and for truth in general, if it was possible to do so. But a new law of libel must be enacted before such salutary proceedings can take place. Censure on the other hand is open to very grave perils. Let the Editor have been ever so conscientious, ever so beneficent,—even ever so true,—let it be ever so clear that what he has written has been written on behalf of virtue, and that he has misstated no fact, exaggerated no fault, never for a moment been allured from public to private matters,—and he may still be in danger of ruin. A very long purse, or else a very high courage is needed for the exposure of such conduct as the "Evening Pulpit" attributed to Mr. Melmotte. The paper took up this line suddenly. After the second article Mr. Alf sent back to Mr. Miles Grendall, who in the matter was acting as Mr. Melmotte's secretary, the ticket of invitation for the dinner, with a note from Mr. Alf stating that circumstances connected with the forthcoming election for Westminster could not permit him to have the great honour of dining at Mr. Melmotte's table in the presence of the Emperor of China. Miles Grendall showed the note to the dinner committee, and, without consultation with Mr. Melmotte, it was decided that the ticket should be sent to the Editor of a thorough-going Conservative journal. This conduct on the part of the "Evening Pulpit" astonished the world considerably; but the world was more astonished when it was declared that Mr. Ferdinand Alf himself was going to stand for Westminster on the Liberal interest.

Various suggestions were made. Some said that as Mr. Alf had a large share in the newspaper, and as its success was now an established fact, he himself intended to retire from the laborious position which he filled, and was therefore free to go into Parliament. Others were of opinion that this was the beginning of a new era in literature, of a new order of things, and that from this time forward editors would frequently be found in Parliament, if editors were employed of sufficient influence in the world to find constituencies. Mr. Broune whispered confidentially to Lady Carbury that the man was a fool for his pains, and that he was carried away by pride. "Very clever,—and dashing," said Mr. Broune, "but he never had ballast." Lady Carbury shook her head. She did not want to give up Mr. Alf if she could help it. He had never said a civil word of her in his paper;—but still she had idea that it was well to be on good terms with so great a power. She entertained a mysterious awe for Mr. Alf,—much in excess of any similar feeling excited by Mr. Broune, in regard to whom her awe had been much diminished since he had made her an offer of marriage. Her sympathies as to the election of course were with Mr. Melmotte. She believed in him thoroughly. She still thought that his nod might be the means of making Felix,—or if not his nod, then his money without the nod.
"I suppose he is very rich," she said, speaking to Mr. Bronte respecting Mr. Alf.

"I dare say he has put by something. But this election will cost him £10,000;—and if he goes on as he is doing now, he had better allow another £10,000 for action for libel. They've already declared that they will indict the paper."

"Do you believe about the Austrian Insurance Company?" This was a matter as to which Mr. Melmotte was supposed to have retired from Paris not with clean hands.

"I don't believe the 'Evening Pulpit' can prove it,—and I'm sure that they can't attempt to prove it without an expense of three or four thousand pounds. That's a game in which nobody wins but the lawyers. I wonder at Alf. I should have thought that he would have known better. He said that he had a lot of money and that he wanted to have said without running with his head into the lion's mouth. He has been so clever up to this! God knows he has been bitter enough, but he has always sailed within the wind."

Mr. Alf had a powerful committee. By this time an animus in regard to the election had been created strong enough to bring out the men on both sides, and to produce heat, when otherwise there might only have been a warmth, or, possibly, frigidity. The Whig Marquises and the Whig Barons came forward, and with them the liberal professional men, and the tradesmen who had found that party to answer best, and the democratical mechanics. If Melmotte's money did not, at last, utterly demoralise the lower class of voters, there would still be a good fight. And there was a strong hope that, under the ballot, Melmotte's money might be taken without a corresponding effect upon the voting. It was found upon trial that Mr. Alf was a good speaker. And though he still conducted the "Evening Pulpit," he made time for addressing meetings of the constituency almost daily. And in his speeches he never spared Melmotte. No one, he said, had a greater reverence for mercantile grandeur than himself. But let them take care that the grandeur was grand. How great would be the disgrace to such a borough as that of Westminster if it should find that it had been taken in by a false spirit of speculation and that it had surrendered itself to gambling when it had thought to do honour to honest commerce. This, connected as of course it was, with the articles in the paper, was regarded as very open speaking. And it had its effect. Some men began to say that Melmotte had not been known long enough to deserve confidence in his riches, and the Lord Mayor was already beginning to think that it might be wise to escape the dinner by some excuse.

Melmotte's committee was also very grand. If Alf was supported by Marquises and Barons, he was supported by Dukes and Earls. But his speaking in public did not of itself inspire much confidence. He had very little to say when he attempted to explain the political principles on which he intended to act. After a little he confined himself to remarks on the personal attacks made on him by the other side, and even in doing that was reiterative rather than diffusive. Let them prove it. He defied them to prove it. Englishmen were too great, too generous, too honest, too noble,—the men of West-
minster especially were a great deal too high-minded to pay any attention to such charges as these till they were proved. Then he began again. Let them prove it. Such accusations as these were mere lies till they were proved. He did not say much himself in public as to actions for libel,—but assurances were made on his behalf to the electors, especially by Lord Alfred Grendall and his son, that as soon as the election was over all speakers and writers would be indicted for libel, who should be declared by proper legal advice to have made themselves liable to such action. The "Evening Pulpit" and Mr. Alf would of course be the first victims.

The dinner was fixed for Monday, July the 8th. The election for the borough was to be held on Tuesday the 9th. It was generally thought that the proximity of the two days had been arranged with the view of enhancing Melmotte's expected triumph. But such in truth was not the case. It had been an accident, and an accident that was distressing to some of the Melmotites. There was much to be done about the dinner,—which could not be omitted; and much also as to the election,—which was imperative. The two Grendalls, father and son, found themselves to be so driven that the world seemed for them to be turned topsy-turvy. The elder had in old days been accustomed to electioneering in the interest of his own family, and had declared himself willing to make himself useful on behalf of Mr. Melmotte. But he found Westminster to be almost too much for him. He was called here and sent there, till he was very near rebellion. "If this goes on much longer I shall cut it," he said to his son.

"Think of me, governor," said the son. "I have to be in the city four or five times a week."

"You've a regular salary."

"Come, governor; you've done pretty well for that. What's my salary to the shares you've had. The thing is;—will it last?"

"How last?"

"There are a good many who say that Melmotte will burst up."

"I don't believe it," said Lord Alfred. "They don't know what they're talking about. There are too many in the same boat to let him burst up. It would be the bursting up of half London. But I shall tell him after this that he must make it easier. He wants to know who's to have every ticket for the dinner, and there's nobody to tell him except me. And I've got to arrange all the places, and nobody to help me except that fellow from the Herald's office. I don't know about people's rank. Which ought to come first; a director of the bank or a fellow who writes books?" Miles suggested that the fellow from the Herald's office would know all about that, and that his father need not trouble himself with petty details.

"And you shall come to us for three days,—after it's over," said Lady Monogram to Miss Longestaffe; a proposition to which Miss Longestaffe acceded, willingly indeed, but not by any means as though a favour had been conferred upon her. Now the reason why Lady Monogram had changed her mind as to inviting her old friend, and thus threw open her hospitality for three whole days to the poor young lady who had disgraced herself by staying with the Melmottes,
was as follows. Miss Longestaffe had the disposal of two evening tickets for Madame Melmotte's grand reception; and, so greatly had the Melmottes risen in general appreciation, that Lady Monogram had found that she was bound, on behalf of her own position in society, to be present on that occasion. It would not do that her name should not be in the printed list of the guests. Therefore she had made a serviceable bargain with her old friend Miss Longestaffe. She was to have her two tickets for the reception, and Miss Longestaffe was to be received for three days as a guest by Lady Monogram. It had also been conceded that at any rate on one of these nights Lady Monogram should take Miss Longestaffe out with her, and that she should herself receive company on another. There was perhaps something slightly painful at the commencement of the negotiation; but such feelings soon fade away, and Lady Monogram was quite a woman of the world.

CHAPTER XLV.

MR. MELMOTTE IS PRESSED FOR TIME.

ABOUT this time, a fortnight or nearly so before the election, Mr. Longestaffe came up to town and saw Mr. Melmotte very frequently. He could not go into his own house, as he had let that for a month to the great financier, nor had he any establishment in town; but he slept at an hotel and lived at the Carlton. He was quite delighted to find that his new friend was an honest Conservative, and he himself proposed the honest Conservative at the club. There was some idea of electing Mr. Melmotte out of hand, but it was decided that the club could not go beyond its rule, and could only admit Mr. Melmotte out of his regular turn as soon as he should occupy a seat in the House of Commons. Mr. Melmotte, who was becoming somewhat arrogant, was heard to declare that if the club did not take him when he was willing to be taken, it might do without him. If not elected at once, he should withdraw his name. So great was his prestige at this moment with his own party that there were some, Mr. Longestaffe among the number, who pressed the thing on the committee. Mr. Melmotte was not like other men. It was a great thing to have Mr. Melmotte in the party. Mr. Melmotte's financial capabilities would in themselves be a tower of strength. Rules were not made to control the club in a matter of such importance as this. A noble lord, one among seven who had been named as a fit leader of the Upper House on the Conservative side in the next session, was asked to take the matter up; and men thought that the thing might have been done had he complied. But he was old-fashioned, perhaps pig-headed; and the club for the time lost the honour of entertaining Mr. Melmotte.

It may be remembered that Mr. Longestaffe had been anxious to become one of the directors of the Mexican Railway, and that he was rather snubbed than encouraged when he expressed his wish to Mr.
Melmotte. Like other great men, Mr. Melmotte liked to choose his own time for bestowing favours. Since that request was made the proper time had come, and he had now intimated to Mr. Longstaffe that in a somewhat altered condition of things there would be a place for him at the Board, and that he and his brother directors would be delighted to avail themselves of his assistance. The alliance between Mr. Melmotte and Mr. Longstaffe had become very close. The Melmottes had visited the Longstaffes at Caversham. Georgiana Longstaffe was staying with Madame Melmotte in London. The Melmottes were living in Mr. Longstaffe's town house, having taken it for a month at a very high rent. Mr. Longstaffe now had a seat at Mr. Melmotte's board. And, Mr. Melmotte had bought Mr. Longstaffe's estate at Pickering on terms very favourable to the Longstaffes. It had been suggested to Mr. Longstaffe by Mr. Melmotte that he had better qualify for his seat at the Board by taking shares in the Company to the amount of—perhaps two or three thousand pounds, and Mr. Longstaffe had of course consented. There would be no need of any transaction in absolute cash. The shares could of course be paid for out of Mr. Longstaffe's half of the purchase money for Pickering Park, and could remain for the present in Mr. Melmotte's hands. To this also Mr. Longstaffe had consented, not quite understanding why the scrip should not be made over to him at once.

It was a part of the charm of all dealings with this great man that no ready money seemed ever to be necessary for anything. Great purchases were made and great transactions apparently completed without the signing even of a cheque. Mr. Longstaffe found himself to be afraid even to give a hint to Mr. Melmotte about ready money. In speaking of all such matters Melmotte seemed to imply that everything necessary had been done, when he had said that it was done. Pickering had been purchased and the title deeds made over to Mr. Melmotte; but the £80,000 had not been paid,—had not been absolutely paid, though of course Mr. Melmotte's note assenting to the terms was security sufficient for any reasonable man. The property had been mortgaged, though not heavily, and Mr. Melmotte had no doubt satisfied the mortgagee; but there was still a sum of £50,000 to come, of which Dolly was to have one half and the other was to be employed in paying off Mr. Longstaffe's debts to tradesmen and debts to the bank. It would have been very pleasant to have had this at once,—but Mr. Longstaffe felt the absurdity of pressing such a man as Mr. Melmotte, and was partly conscious of the gradual consummation of a new era in money matters. "If your banker is pressing you, refer him to me," Mr. Melmotte had said. As for many years past we have exchanged paper instead of actual money for our commodities, so now it seemed that, under the new Melmotte régime, an exchange of words was to suffice.

But Dolly wanted his money. Dolly, idle as he was, foolish as he was, dissipated as he was and generally indifferent to his debts, liked to have what belonged to him. It had all been arranged. £5,000 would pay off all his tradesmen's debts and leave him comfortably possessed of money in hand, while the other £20,000 would make his own property free. There was a charm in this which awakened even Dolly, and
for the time almost reconciled him to his father's society. But now a shade of impatience was coming over him. He had actually gone down to Caversham to arrange the terms with his father,—and had in fact made his own terms. His father had been unable to move him, and had consequently suffered much in spirit. Dolly had been almost triumphant,—thinking that the money would come on the next day, or at any rate during the next week. Now he came to his father early in the morning,—at about two o'clock,—to enquire what was being done. He had not as yet been made blessed with a single ten-pound note in his hand, as the result of the sale.

"Are you going to see Melmotte, sir?" he asked somewhat abruptly.

"Yes;—I'm to be with him to-morrow, and he is to introduce me to the Board."

"You're going in for that, are you, sir? Do they pay anything?"

"I believe not."

"Nidderdale and young Carbury belong to it. It's a sort of Bear-garden affair."

"A bear-garden affair, Adolphus. How so?"

"I mean the club. We had them all there for dinner one day, and a jolly dinner we gave them. Miles Grendall and old Alfred belong to it. I don't think they'd go in for it, if there was no money going. I'd make them fork out something if I took the trouble of going all that way."

"I think that perhaps, Adolphus, you hardly understand these things."

"No, I don't. I don't understand much about business, I know. What I want to understand is, when Melmotte is going to pay up this money."

"I suppose he'll arrange it with the banks," said the father.

"I beg that he won't arrange my money with the banks, sir. You'd better tell him not. A cheque upon his bank which I can pay in to mine is about the best thing going. You'll be in the city to-morrow, and you'd better tell him. If you don't like, you know, I'll get Squeercum to do it." Mr. Squeercum was a lawyer whom Dolly had employed of late years much to the annoyance of his parent. Mr. Squeercum's name was odious to Mr. Longstaffe.

"I beg you'll do nothing of the kind. It will be very foolish if you do;—perhaps ruinous."

"Then he'd better pay up, like anybody else," said Dolly as he left the room. The father knew the son, and was quite sure that Squeercum would have his finger in the pie unless the money were paid quickly. When Dolly had taken an idea into his head, no power on earth,—no power at least of which the father could avail himself,—would turn him.

On that same day Melmotte received two visits in the city from two of his fellow directors. At the time he was very busy. Though his electioneering speeches were neither long nor pithy, still he had to think of them beforehand. Members of his Committee were always trying to see him. Orders as to the dinner and the preparation of the house could not be given by Lord Alfred without some
reference to him. And then those gigantic commercial affairs which were enumerated in the last chapter could not be adjusted without much labour on his part. His hands were not empty, but still he saw each of these young men,—for a few minutes. "My dear young friend, what can I do for you?" he said to Sir Felix, not sitting down, so that Sir Felix also should remain standing.

"About that money, Mr. Melmotte?"

"What money, my dear fellow? You see that a good many money matters pass through my hands."

"The thousand pounds I gave you for shares. If you don't mind, and as the shares seem to be a bother, I'll take the money back."

"It was only the other day you had £200," said Melmotte, showing that he could apply his memory to small transactions when he pleased.

"Exactly;—and you might as well let me have the £200."

"I've ordered the shares;—gave the order to my broker the other day."

"Then I'd better take the shares," said Sir Felix, feeling that it might very probably be that day fortnight before he could start for New York. "Could I get them, Mr. Melmotte?"

"My dear fellow, I really think you hardly calculate the value of my time when you come to me about such an affair as this."

"I'd like to have the money or the shares," said Sir Felix, who was not specially averse to quarrelling with Mr. Melmotte now that he had resolved upon taking that gentleman's daughter to New York in direct opposition to his written promise. Their quarrel would be so thoroughly internecine when the departure should be discovered, that any present anger could hardly increase its bitterness. What Felix thought of now was simply his money, and the best means of getting it out of Melmotte's hands.

"You're a spendthrift," said Melmotte, apparently relenting, "and I'm afraid a gambler. I suppose I must give you £200 more on account."

Sir Felix could not resist the touch of ready money, and consented to take the sum offered. As he pocketed the cheque he asked for the name of the brokers who were employed to buy the shares. But here Melmotte demurred. "No, my friend," said Melmotte; "you are only entitled to shares for £600 pounds now. I will see that the thing is put right." So Sir Felix departed with £200 only. Marie had said that she could get £200. Perhaps if he bestirred himself and wrote to some of Miles's big relations he could obtain payment of a part of that gentleman's debt to him.

Sir Felix going down the stairs in Abchurch Lane met Paul Montague coming up. Carbury, on the spur of the moment, thought that he would "take a rise" as he called it out of Montague.

"What's this I hear about a lady at Islington?" he asked.

"Who has told you anything about a lady at Islington?"

"A little bird. There are always little birds about telling of ladies. I'm told that I'm to congratulate you on your coming marriage."

"Then you've been told an infernal falsehood," said Montague passing on. He paused a moment and added, "I don't know who
can have told you, but if you hear it again, I'll trouble you to contradict it." As he was waiting in Melmotte's outer room while the Duke's nephew went in to see whether it was the great man's pleasure to see him, he remembered whence Carbury must have heard tidings of Mrs. Hurtle. Of course the rumour had come through Ruby Ruggles.

Miles Grendall brought out word that the great man would see Mr. Montague; but he added a caution. "He's awfully full of work just now,—you won't forget that;—will you?" Montague assured the duke's nephew that he would be concise, and was shown in.

"I should not have troubled you," said Paul, "only that I understood that I was to see you before the Board met."

"Exactly;—of course. It was quite necessary,—only you see I am a little busy. If this d—d dinner were over I shouldn't mind. It's a deal easier to make a treaty with an Emperor, than to give him a dinner; I can tell you that. Well;—let me see. Oh;—I was proposing that you should go out to Pekin?"

"To Mexico."

"Yes, yes;—to Mexico. I've so many things running in my head! Well;—if you'll say when you're ready to start, we'll draw up something of instructions. You'd know better, however, than we can tell you what to do. You'll see Fisker, of course. You and Fisker will manage it. The chief thing will be a cheque for the expenses; eh? We must get that passed at the next Board."

Mr. Melmotte had been so quick that Montague had been unable to interrupt him. "There need be no trouble about that, Mr. Melmotte, as I have made up my mind that it would not be fit that I should go."

"Oh, indeed!"

There had been a shade of doubt on Montague's mind, till the tone in which Melmotte had spoken of the embassy grated on his ears. The reference to the expenses disgusted him altogether.

"No;—even did I see my way to do any good in America my duties here would not be compatible with the undertaking."

"I don't see that at all. What duties have you got here? What good are you doing the Company? If you do stay, I hope you'll be unanimous; that's all;—or perhaps you intend to go out. If that's it, I'll look to your money. I think I told you that before."

"That, Mr. Melmotte, is what I should prefer."

"Very well,—very well. I'll arrange it. Sorry to lose you,—that's all. Miles, isn't Mr. Goldsheiner waiting to see me?"

"You're a little too quick, Mr. Melmotte," said Paul.

"A man with my business on his hands is bound to be quick, sir."

"But I must be precise, I cannot tell you as a fact that I shall withdraw from the Board till I receive the advice of a friend with whom I am consulting. I hardly yet know what my duty may be."

"I'll tell you, sir, what can not be your duty. It cannot be your duty to make known out of that Board-room any of the affairs of the Company which you have learned in that Board-room. It cannot be your duty to divulge the circumstances of the Company or any differences which may exist between Directors of the Company, to any gentleman who is a stranger to the Company. It cannot be your duty——."

"Thank you, Mr. Melmotte. On matters such as that I think that I can see my own way. I have been in fault in coming in to the Board without understanding what duties I should have to perform——."

"Very much in fault, I should say," replied Melmotte, whose arrogance in the midst of his inflated glory was overcoming him.

"But in reference to what I may or may not say to any friend, or how far I should be restricted by the scruples of a gentleman, I do not want advice from you."

"Very well;—very well. I can't ask you to stay, because a partner from the house of Todd, Brehgert, and Goldscheiner is waiting to see me, about matters which are rather more important than this of yours." Montague had said what he had to say, and departed.

On the following day, three-quarters of an hour before the meeting of the Board of Directors, old Mr. Longestaffe called in Abchurch Lane. He was received very civilly by Miles Grendall, and asked to sit down. Mr. Melmotte quite expected him, and would walk with him over to the offices of the railway, and introduce him to the Board. Mr. Longestaffe, with some shyness, intimated his desire to have a few moments conversation with the chairman before the Board met. Fearing his son, especially fearing Squercum, he had made up his mind to suggest that the little matter about Pickering Park should be settled. Miles assured him that the opportunity should be given him, but that at the present moment the chief secretary of the Russian Legation was with Mr. Melmotte. Either the chief secretary was very tedious with his business, or else other big men must have come in, for Mr. Longestaffe was not relieved till he was summoned to walk off to the Board five minutes after the hour at which the Board should have met. He thought that he could explain his views in the street; but on the stairs they were joined by Mr. Cohenlupe, and in three minutes they were in the Board room. Mr. Longestaffe was then presented, and took the chair opposite to Miles Grendall. Montague was not there, but had sent a letter to the secretary explaining that for reasons with which the chairman was acquainted he should absent himself from the present meeting. "All right," said Melmotte. "I know all about it. Go on. I'm not sure but that Mr. Montague's retirement from among us may be an advantage. He could not be made to understand that unanimity in such an enterprise as this is essential. I am confident that the new director whom I have had the pleasure of introducing to you to-day will not sin in the same direction." Then Mr. Melmotte bowed and smiled very sweetly on Mr. Longestaffe.

Mr. Longestaffe was astonished to find how soon the business was done, and how very little he had been called on to do. Miles Grendall had read something out of a book which he had been unable to follow. Then the chairman had read some figures. Mr. Cohenlupe had declared that their prosperity was unprecedented;—and the Board was over. When Mr. Longestaffe explained to Miles Grendall that he still wished to speak to Mr. Melmotte, Miles explained to him that the chairman had been obliged to run off to a meeting of gentlemen connected with the interior of Africa, which was now being held at the Cannon Street Hotel.
CHAPTER XLVI.

ROGER CARBURY AND HIS TWO FRIENDS.

ROGER CARBURY having found Ruby Ruggles, and having ascertained that she was at any rate living in a respectable house with her aunt, returned to Carbury. He had given the girl his advice, and had done so in a manner that was not altogether ineffectual. He had frightened her, and had also frightened Mrs. Pipkin. He had taught Mrs. Pipkin to believe that the new dispensation was not yet so completely established as to clear her from all responsibility as to her niece's conduct. Having done so much, and feeling that there was no more to be done, he returned home. It was out of the question that he should take Ruby with him. In the first place she would not have gone. And then,—had she gone,—he would not have known where to bestow her. For it was now understood throughout Bungay,—and the news had spread to Beccles,—that old Farmer Ruggles had sworn that his granddaughter should never again be received at Sheep's Acre Farm. The squire on his return home heard all the news from his own housekeeper. John Crumb had been at the farm and there had been a fierce quarrel between him and the old man. The old man had called Ruby by every name that is most distasteful to a woman, and John had stormed and had sworn that he would have punched the old man's head but for his age. He wouldn't believe any harm of Ruby,—or if he did he was ready to forgive that harm. But as for the Baro-nite;—the Baro-nite had better look to himself! Old Ruggles had declared that Ruby should never have a shilling of his money;—whereupon Crumb had anathematised old Ruggles and his money too, telling him that he was an old hunx, and that he had driven the girl away by his cruelty. Roger at once sent over to Bungay for the dealer in meal, who was with him early on the following morning.

"Did ye find her, squire?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Crumb, I found her. She's living with her aunt, Mrs. Pipkin, at Islington."

"Eh, now;—look at that."

"You knew she had an aunt of that name up in London."

"Ye-es; I knew'd it, squire. I a' heard tell of Mrs. Pipkin, but I never see'd her."

"I wonder it did not occur to you that Ruby would go there."

John Crumb scratched his head, as though acknowledging the shortcoming of his own intellect. "Of course if she was to go to London it was the proper thing for her to do."

"I knew she'd do the thing as was right. I said that all along. Darned if I didn't. You ask Mixet, squire,—him as is baker down Barsey Lane. I allays guv' it her that she'd do the thing as was right. But how about she and the Baro-nite?"
Roger did not wish to speak of the Baronet just at present. "I suppose the old man down here did ill use her?"

"Oh, dreadful;—there ain't no manner of doubt o' that. Dragged her about awful—as he ought to be took up, only for the rumpus like. D'ya think she's see'd the Baro-nite since she's been in Lon'on, Muster Carbury?"

"I think she's a good girl, if you mean that."

"I'm sure she be. I don't want none to tell me that, squoire. Tho', squoire, it's better to me nor a ten pun' note to hear you say so. I allays had a leaning to you, squoire; but I'll more nor lean to you, now. I've said all through she was good, and if e'er a man in Bungay said she warn't——; well, I was there, and ready."

"I hope nobody has said so."

"You can't stop them women, squoire. There ain't no dropping into them. But, Lord love 'eo, she shall come and be missus of my house to-morrow, and what'll it matter her then what they say? But, squoire,—did ye hear if the Baro-nite had been a' hanging about that place?"

"About Islington, you mean."

"He goes a hanging about; he do. He don't come out straight forrard, and tell a girl as he loves her afore all the parish. There ain't one in Bungay, nor yet in Mettingham, nor yet in all the Ilksteals and all the Elmhams, as don't know as I'm set on Ruby Ruggles. Huggery-Muggery is pi'son to me, squoire."

"We all know that when you've made up your mind, you have made up your mind."

"I love. It's made up ever so as to Ruby. What sort of a one is her aunt now, squoire?"

"She keeps lodgings;—a very decent sort of a woman I should say."

"She won't let the Baro-nite come there?"

"Certainly not," said Roger, who felt that he was hardly dealing sincerely with this most sincere of mealmen. Hitherto he had shuffled off every question that had been asked him about Felix, though he knew that Ruby had spent many hours with her fashionable lover. "Mrs. Pipkin won't let him come there."

"If I was to give her a ge'own now,—or a blue cloak;—them lodging-house women is mostly hard put to it;—or a chest of drawers like, for her best bedroom, wouldn't that make her more o' my side, squoire?"

"I think she'll try to do her duty without that."

"They do like things the like o' that; any ways I'll go up, squoire, arter Sax'nam market, and see how things is lying."

"I wouldn't go just yet, Mr. Crumb, if I were you. She hasn't forgotten the scene at the farm yet."

"I said nothing as warn't as kind as kind."

"But her own perversity runs in her own head. If you had been unkind she could have forgivén that; but as you were good-natured and she was cross, she can't forgive that." John Crumb again scratched his head, and felt that the depths of a woman's character required more gauging than he had yet given to it. "And to tell
you the truth, my friend, I think that a little hardship up at Mrs. Pipkin's will do her good."

"Don't she have a bellyful o' vittels?" asked John Crumb, with intense anxiety.

"I don't quite mean that. I dare say she has enough to eat. But of course she has to work for it with her aunt. She has three or four children to look after."

"That mought come in handy by-and-by;—moightn't it, squoire?" said John Crumb grinning.

"As you say, she'll be learning something that may be useful to her in another sphere. Of course there is a good deal to do, and I should not be surprised if she were to think after a bit that your house in Bungay was more comfortable than Mrs. Pipkin's kitchen in London."

"My little back parlour;—oh, squoire! And I've got a four-poster, most as big as any in Bungay."

"I am sure you have everything comfortable for her, and she knows it herself. Let her think about all that,—and do you go and tell her again in a month's time. She'll be more willing to settle matters then than she is now.

"But,—the Baro-nite!"

"Mrs. Pipkin will allow nothing of that."

"Girls is so 'cute. Ruby is awful 'cute. It makes me feel as though I had two hun'erd weight o' meal on my stomach, lying awake o' nights and thinking as how he is, may be,——pulling of her about! If I thought that she'd let him——; oh! I'd swing for it, Muster Carbury. They'd have to make an end o' me at Bury, if it was that way. They would then."

Roger assured him again and again that he believed Ruby to be a good girl, and promised that further steps should be taken to induce Mrs. Pipkin to keep a close watch upon her niece. John Crumb made no promise that he would abstain from his journey to London after Saxmundham fair; but left the squire with a conviction that his purpose of doing so was shaken. He was still however resolved to send Mrs. Pipkin the price of a new blue cloak, and declared his purpose of getting Mixet to write the letter and enclose the money order. John Crumb had no delicacy as to declaring his own deficiency in literary acquirements. He was able to make out a bill for meal or pollards, but did little beyond that in the way of writing letters.

This happened on a Saturday morning, and on that afternoon Roger Carbury rode over to Lowestoffe, to a meeting there on church matters at which his friend the bishop presided. After the meeting was over he dined at the inn with half a dozen clergymen and two or three neighbouring gentlemen, and then walked down by himself on to the long strand which has made Lowestoffe what it is. It was now just the end of June, and the weather was delightful;—but people were not as yet flocking to the sea-shore. Every shopkeeper in every little town through the country now follows the fashion set by Parliament and abstains from his annual holiday till August or September. The place therefore was by no means full. Here and
there a few of the townspeople, who at a bathing place are generally indifferent to the sea, were strolling about; and another few, indifferent to fashion, had come out from the lodging-houses and from the hotel, which had been described as being small and insignificant,—and making up only a hundred beds. Roger Carbury, whose house was not many miles distant from Lowestoffe, was fond of the sea-shore, and always came to loiter there for a while when any cause brought him into the town. Now he was walking close down upon the marge of the tide,—so that the last little roll of the rising water should touch his feet,—with his hands joined behind his back, and his face turned down towards the shore, when he came upon a couple who were standing with their backs to the land, looking forth together upon the waves. He was close to them before he saw them, and before they had seen him. Then he perceived that the man was his friend Paul Montague. Leaning on Paul's arm a lady stood, dressed very simply in black, with a dark straw hat on her head;—very simple in her attire, but yet a woman whom it would be impossible to pass without notice. The lady of course was Mrs. Hurtle.

Paul Montague had been a fool to suggest Lowestoffe, but his folly had been natural. It was not the first place he had named; but when fault had been found with others, he had fallen back upon the sea sands which were best known to himself. Lowestoffe was just the spot which Mrs. Hurtle required. When she had been shown her room, and taken down out of the hotel on to the strand, she had declared herself to be charmed. She acknowledged with many smiles that of course she had had no right to expect that Mrs. Pipkin should understand what sort of place she needed. But Paul would understand,—and had understood. "I think the hotel charming," she said. "I don't know what you mean by your fun about the American hotels, but I think this quite gorgeous, and the people so civil!" Hotel people always are civil before the crowds come. Of course it was impossible that Paul should return to London by the mail train which started about an hour after his arrival. He would have reached London at four or five in the morning, and have been very uncomfortable. The following day was Sunday, and of course he promised to stay till Monday. Of course he had said nothing in the train of those stern things which he had resolved to say. Of course he was not saying them when Roger Carbury came upon him; but was indulging in some poetical nonsense, some probably very trite raptures as to the expanse of the ocean, and the endless ripples which connected shore with shore. Mrs. Hurtle, too, as she leaned with friendly weight upon his arm, indulged also in moonshine and romance. Though at the back of the heart of each of them there was a devouring care, still they enjoyed the hour. We know that the man who is to be hung likes to have his breakfast well cooked. And so did Paul like the companionship of Mrs. Hurtle because her attire, though simple, was becoming; because the colour glowed in her dark face; because of the brightness of her eyes, and the happy sharpness of her words, and the dangerous smile which played upon her lips. He liked the warmth of her close vicinity, and the softness of her
arm, and the perfume from her hair,—though he would have given all that he possessed that she had been removed from him by some impassable gulf. As he had to be hanged,—and this woman's continued presence would be as bad as death to him,—he liked to have his meal well dressed.

He certainly had been foolish to bring her to Lowestoffe, and the close neighbourhood of Carbury Manor;—and now he felt his folly. As soon as he saw Roger Carbury he blushed up to his forehead, and then leaving Mrs. Hurtle's arm he came forward, and shook hands with his friend. "It is Mrs. Hurtle," he said, "I must introduce you," and the introduction was made. Roger took off his hat and bowed, but he did so with the coldest ceremony. Mrs. Hurtle, who was quick enough at gathering the minds of people from their looks, was just as cold in her acknowledgment of the courtesy. In former days she had heard much of Roger Carbury, and surmised that he was no friend to her. "I did not know that you were thinking of coming to Lowestoffe," said Roger in a voice that was needlessly severe. But his mind at the present moment was severe, and he could not hide his mind.

"I was not thinking of it. Mrs. Hurtle wished to get to the sea, and as she knew no one else here in England, I brought her."

"Mr. Montague and I have travelled so many miles together before now," she said, "that a few additional will not make much difference."

"Do you stay long?" asked Roger in the same voice.

"I go back probably on Monday," said Montague.

"As I shall be here a whole week, and shall not speak a word to any one after he has left me, he has consented to bestow his company on me for two days. Will you join us at dinner, Mr. Carbury, this evening?"

"Thank you, madam;—I have dined."

"Then Mr. Montague I will leave you with your friend. My toilet, though it will be very slight, will take longer than yours. We dine you know in twenty minutes. I wish you could get your friend to join us." So saying, Mrs. Hurtle tripped back across the sand towards the hotel.

"Is this wise?" demanded Roger in a voice that was almost sepulchral, as soon as the lady was out of hearing.

"You may well ask that, Carbury. Nobody knows the folly of it so thoroughly as I do."

"Then why do you do it? Do you mean to marry her?"

"No; certainly not."

"Is it honest then, or like a gentleman, that you should be with her in this way? Does she think that you intend to marry her?"

"I have told her that I would not. I have told her——." Then he stopped. He was going on to declare that he had told her that he loved another woman, but he felt that he could hardly touch that matter in speaking to Roger Carbury.

"What does she mean then? Has she no regard for her own character?"
"I would explain it to you all, Carbury, if I could. But you would never have the patience to hear me."

"I am not naturally impatient."

"But this would drive you mad. I wrote to her assuring her that it must be all over. Then she came here and sent for me. Was I not bound to go to her?"

"Yes;—to go to her and repeat what you had said in your letter."

"I did do so. I went with that very purpose, and did repeat it."

"Then you should have left her."

"Ah; but you do not understand. She begged that I would not desert her in her loneliness. We have been so much together that I could not desert her."

"I certainly do not understand that, Paul. You have allowed yourself to be entrapped into a promise of marriage; and then, for reasons which we will not go into now but which we both thought to be adequate, you resolved to break your promise, thinking that you would be justified in doing so. But nothing can justify you in living with the lady afterwards on such terms as to induce her to suppose that your old promise holds good."

"She does not think so. She cannot think so."

"Then what must she be, to be here with you? And what must you be, to be here, in public, with such a one as she is? I don’t know why I should trouble you or myself about it. People live now in a way that I don’t comprehend. If this be your way of living, I have no right to complain."

"For God’s sake, Carbury, do not speak in that way. It sounds as though you meant to throw me over."

"I should have said that you had thrown me over. You come down here to this hotel, where we are both known, with this lady whom you are not going to marry;—and I meet you, just by chance. Had I known it, of course I could have turned the other way. But coming on you by accident, as I did, how am I not to speak to you. And if I speak, what am I to say. Of course I think that the lady will succeed in marrying you."

"Never."

"And that such a marriage will be your destruction. Doubtless she is good-looking."

"Yes, and clever. And you must remember that the manners of her country are not as the manners of this country."

"Then if I marry at all," said Roger, with all his prejudice expressed strongly in his voice, "I trust I may not marry a lady of her country. She does not think that she is to marry you, and yet she comes down here and stays with you. Paul, I don’t believe it. I believe you, but I don’t believe her. She is here with you in order that she may marry you. She is cunning and strong. You are foolish and weak. Believing as I do that marriage with her would be destruction, I should tell her my mind,—and leave her." Paul at the moment thought of the gentleman in Oregon, and of certain difficulties in leaving. "That’s what I should do. You must go in now, I suppose, and eat your dinner."

"I may come to the hall as I go back home?"
“Certainly you may come if you please,” said Roger. Then he bethought himself that his welcome had not been cordial. “I mean that I shall be delighted to see you,” he added, marching away along the strand. Paul did go into the hotel, and did eat his dinner. In the mean time Roger Carbury marched far away along the strand. In all that he had said to Montague he had spoken the truth, or that which appeared to him to be the truth. He had not been influenced for a moment by any reference to his own affairs. And yet he feared, he almost knew, that this man,—who had promised to marry a strange American woman and who was at this very moment living in close intercourse with the woman after he had told her that he would not keep his promise,—was the chief barrier between himself and the girl that he loved. As he had listened to John Crumb while John spoke of Ruby Ruggles, he had told himself that he and John Crumb were alike. With an honest, true, heart-felt desire they both panted for the companionship of a fellow-creature whom each had chosen. And each was to be thwarted by the make-believe regard of unworthy youth and fatuous good looks! Crumb, by dogged perseverance and indifference to many things, would probably be successful at last. But what chance was there of success for him? Ruby, as soon as want or hardship told upon her, would return to the strong arm that could be trusted to provide her with plenty and comparative ease. But Hetta Carbury, if once her heart had passed from her own dominion into the possession of another, would never change her love. It was possible, no doubt,—nay, how probable,—that her heart was still vacillating. Roger thought that he knew that at any rate she had not as yet declared her love. If she were now to know,—if she could now learn,—of what nature was the love of this other man; if she could be instructed that he was living alone with a lady whom not long since he had promised to marry,—if she could be made to understand this whole story of Mrs. Hurtle, would not that open her eyes? Would she not then see where she could trust her happiness, and where, by so trusting it, she would certainly be shipwrecked?

“Never,” said Roger to himself, hitting at the stones on the beach with his stick. “Never.” Then he got his horse and rode back to Carbury Manor.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MRS. HURTLE AT LOWESTOFFE.

When Paul got down into the dining-room Mrs. Hurtle was already there, and the waiter was standing by the side of the table ready to take the cover off the soup. She was radiant with smiles and made herself especially pleasant during dinner, but Paul felt sure that everything was not well with her. Though she smiled, and talked and laughed, there was something forced in her manner. He almost knew that she was only waiting till the man should have left the room to speak in a different strain. And so it
was. As soon as the last lingering dish had been removed, and when
the door was finally shut behind the retreating waiter, she asked the
question which no doubt had been on her mind since she had walked
across the strand to the hotel. "Your friend was hardly civil; was
he, Paul?"

"Do you mean that he should have come in? I have no doubt it
was true that he had dined."

"I am quite indifferent about his dinner,—but there are two ways
of declining as there are of accepting. I suppose he is on very
intimate terms with you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then his want of courtesy was the more evidently intended for me.
In point of fact he disapproves of me. Is not that it?" To this
question Montague did not feel himself called upon to make any
immediate answer. "I can well understand that it should be so.
An intimate friend may like or dislike the friend of his friend, without
offence. But unless there be strong reason he is bound to be civil to
his friend's friend, when accident brings them together. You have
told me that Mr. Carbury was your beau ideal of an English
gentleman."

"So he is."

"Then why didn't he behave as such?" and Mrs. Hurtle again
smiled. "Did not you yourself feel that you were rebuked for
coming here with me, when he expressed surprise at your journey?
Has he authority over you?"

"Of course he has. What authority could he have?"

"Nay, I do not know. He may be your guardian. In this safe-
going country young men perhaps are not their own masters till they
are past thirty. I should have said that he was your guardian, and
that he intended to rebuke you for being in bad company. I dare say
he did after I had gone."

This was so true that Montague did not know how to deny it. Nor
was he sure that it would be well that he should deny it. The time
must come, and why not now as well as at any future moment. He
had to make her understand that he could not join his lot with her,
—chiefly indeed because his heart was elsewhere, a reason on which
he could hardly insist because she could allege that she had a prior
right to his heart;—but also because her antecedents had been such
as to cause all his friends to warn him against such a marriage. So
he plucked up courage for the battle. "It was nearly that," he said.

There are many,—and probably the greater portion of my readers
will be among the number,—who will declare to themselves that Paul
Montague was a poor creature, in that he felt so great a repugnance to
face this woman with the truth. His folly in falling at first under the
battery of her charms will be forgiven him. His engagement, unwise as
it was, and his subsequent determination to break his engagement, will
be pardoned. Women, and perhaps some men also, will feel that it
was natural that he should have been charmed, natural that he should
have expressed his admiration in the form which unmarried ladies
expect from unmarried men when any such expression is to be made
at all;—natural also that he should endeavour to escape from the
dilemma when he found the manifold dangers of the step which he had proposed to take. No woman, I think, will be hard upon him because of his breach of faith to Mrs. Hurtle. But they will be very hard on him on the score of his cowardice,—as, I think, unjustly. In social life we hardly stop to consider how much of that daring spirit which gives mastery comes from hardness of heart rather than from high purpose, or true courage. The man who succumbs to his wife, the mother who succumbs to her daughter, the master who succumbs to his servant, is as often brought to servility by a continual aversion to the giving of pain, by a softness which causes the fretfulness of others to be an agony to himself,—as by any actual fear which the firmness of the imperious one may have produced. There is an inner softness, a thinness of the mind’s skin, an incapability of seeing or even thinking of the troubles of others with equanimity, which produces a feeling akin to fear; but which is compatible not only with courage, but with absolute firmness of purpose, when the demand for firmness arises so strongly as to assert itself. With this man it was not really that. He feared the woman;—or at least such fears did not prevail upon him to be silent; but he shrank from subjecting her to the blank misery of utter desertion. After what had passed between them he could hardly bring himself to tell her that he wanted her no further and to bid her go. But that was what he had to do. And for that his answer to her last question prepared the way. “It was nearly that,” he said.

“Mr. Carbury did take it upon himself to rebuke you for showing yourself on the sands at Lowestoffe with such a one as I am?”

“He knew of the letter which I wrote to you.”

“You have canvassed me between you?”

“Of course we have. Is that unnatural? Would you have had me be silent about you to the oldest and the best friend I have in the world?”

“No, I would not have had you be silent to your oldest and best friend. I presume you would declare your purpose. But I should not have supposed you would have asked his leave. When I was travelling with you, I thought you were a man capable of managing your own actions. I had heard that in your country girls sometimes hold themselves at the disposal of their friends,—but I did not dream that such could be the case with a man who had gone out into the world to make his fortune.”

Paul Montague did not like it. The punishment to be endured was being commenced. “Of course you can say bitter things,” he replied.

“Is it my nature to say bitter things? Have I usually said bitter things to you? When I have hung round your neck and have sworn that you should be my God upon earth, was that bitter? I am alone and I have to fight my own battles. A woman’s weapon is her tongue. Say but one word to me, Paul, as you know how to say it, and there will be soon an end to that bitterness. What shall I care for Mr. Carbury, except to make him the cause of some innocent joke, if you will speak but that one word. And think what it is I am asking. Do you remember how urgent were once your own prayers
to me;—how you swore that your happiness could only be secured
by one word of mine? Though I loved you, I doubted. There were
considerations of money, which have now vanished. But I spoke it,
—because I loved you, and because I believed you. Give me that
which you swore you had given before I made my gift to you."

"I cannot say that word."

"Do you mean that, after all, I am to be thrown off like an old
glove? I have had many dealings with men and have found them to
be false, cruel, unworthy, and selfish. But I have met nothing like
that. No man has ever dared to treat me like that. No man shall
dare."

"I wrote to you."

"Wrote to me;—yes! And I was to take that as sufficient! No.
I think but little of my life and have but little for which to live. But
while I do live I will travel over the world's surface to face injustice
and to expose it, before I will put up with it. You wrote to me! Heaven
and earth;—I can hardly control myself when I hear such
impudence!" She clenched her fist upon the knife that lay on the
table as she looked at him, and raising it, dropped it again at a further
distance. "Wrote to me! Could any mere letter of your writing
break the bond by which we were bound together? Had not the
distance between us seemed to have made you safe would you have
dared to write that letter? The letter must be unwritten. It has
already been contradicted by your conduct to me since I have been
in this country."

"I am sorry to hear you say that."

"Am I not justified in saying it?"

"I hope not. When I first saw you I told you everything. If I
have been wrong in attending to your wishes since, I regret it."

"This comes from your seeing your master for two minutes on the
beach. You are acting now under his orders. No doubt he came
with the purpose. Had you told him you were to be here?"

"His coming was an accident."

"It was very opportune at any rate. Well;—what have you to
say to me? Or am I to understand that you suppose yourself to
have said all that is required of you? Perhaps you would prefer
that I should argue the matter out with your—friend, Mr. Carbury."

"What has to be said, I believe I can say myself."

"Say it then. Or are you so ashamed of it, that the words stick
in your throat?"

"There is some truth in that. I am ashamed of it. I must say
that which will be painful, and which would not have been to be said,
had I been fairly careful."

Then he paused. "Don't spare me," she said. "I know what it
all is as well as though it were already told. I know the lies with
which they have crammed you at San Francisco. You have heard
that up in Oregon—I shot a man. That is no lie. I did: I brought
him down dead at my feet." Then she paused, and rose from her
chair, and looked at him. "Do you wonder that that is a story
that a woman should hesitate to tell? But not from shame. Do
you suppose that the sight of that dying wretch does not haunt me?
that I do not daily hear his drunken screech, and see him bound from
the earth, and then fall in a heap just below my hand? But did they
tell you also that it was thus alone that I could save myself,—and
that had I spared him, I must afterwards have destroyed myself?
If I were wrong, why did they not try me for his murder? Why did
the women flock around me and kiss the very hems of my garments?
In this soft civilization of yours you know nothing of such necessity.
A woman here is protected,—unless it be from lies.''

"It was not that only," he whispered.

"No; they told you other things," she continued, still standing
over him. "They told you of quarrels with my husband. I know
the lies, and who made them, and why. Did I conceal from you the
character of my former husband? Did I not tell you that he was a
drunkard and a scoundrel? How should I not quarrel with such a
one? Ah, Paul; you can hardly know what my life has been.''

"They told me that—you fought him.''

"Psha;—fought him! Yes;—I was always fighting him. What
are you to do but to fight cruelty, and fight falsehood, and fight fraud
and treachery,—when they come upon you and would overwhelm
you but for fighting. You have not been fool enough to believe that
fable about a duel? I did stand once, armed, and guarded my bed-
room door from him, and told him that he should only enter it over
my body. He went away to the tavern and I did not see him for a
week afterwards. That was the duel. And they have told you that
he is not dead.''

"Yes;—they have told me that.''

"Who has seen him alive? I never said to you that I had seen
him dead. How should I?''

"There would be a certificate.''

"Certificate;—in the back of Texas;—five hundred miles from
Galveston! And what would it matter to you? I was divorced
from him according to the law of the State of Kansas. Does not the
law make a woman free here to marry again,—and why not with us?
I sued for a divorce on the score of cruelty and drunkenness. He
made no appearance, and the Court granted it me. Am I disgraced
by that?''

"I heard nothing of the divorce.''

"I do not remember. When we were talking of these old days
before, you did not care how short I was in telling my story. You
wanted to hear little or nothing then of Caradoc Hurtle. Now you
have become more particular. I told you that he was dead,—as I
believed myself, and do believe. Whether the other story was told
or not I do not know.''

"It was not told.''

"Then it was your own fault,—because you would not listen.
And they have made you believe I suppose that I have failed in
getting back my property?''

"I have heard nothing about your property but what you yourself
have said unmasked. I have asked no question about your property.''

"You are welcome. At last I have made it again my own. And
now, sir, what else is there? I think I have been open with you.
Is it because I protected myself from drunken violence that I am to be rejected? Am I to be cast aside because I saved my life while in the hands of a reprobate husband, and escaped from him by means provided by law—or because by my own energy I have secured my own property? If I am not to be condemned for these things, then say why am I condemned?"

She had at any rate saved him the trouble of telling the story, but in doing so had left him without a word to say. She had owned to shooting the man. Well; it certainly may be necessary that a woman should shoot a man—especially in Oregon. As to the duel with her husband,—she had half denied and half confessed it. He presumed that she had been armed with a pistol when she refused Mr. Hurtle admittance into the nuptial chamber. As to the question of Hurtle's death,—she had confessed that perhaps he was not dead. But then,—as she had asked,—why should not a divorce for the purpose in hand be considered as good as a death? He could not say that she had not washed herself clean;—and yet, from the story as told by herself, what man would wish to marry her? She had seen so much of drunkenness, had become so handy with pistols, and had done so much of a man's work, that any ordinary man might well hesitate before he assumed to be her master. "I do not condemn you," he replied.

"At any rate, Paul, do not lie," she answered. "If you tell me that you will not be my husband, you do condemn me. Is it not so?"

"I will not lie if I can help it. I did ask you to be my wife——"

"Well;—rather. How often before I consented?"

"It matters little; at any rate, till you did consent. I have since satisfied myself that such a marriage would be miserable for both of us."

"You have."

"I have. Of course, you can speak of me as you please and think of me as you please. I can hardly defend myself."

"Hardly, I think."

"But, with whatever result, I know that I shall now be acting for the best in declaring that I will not become—your husband."

"You will not?" She was still standing, and stretched out her right hand as though again to grasp something.

He also now rose from his chair. "If I speak with abruptness it is only to avoid a show of indecision. I will not."

"Oh, God! what have I done that it should be my lot to meet man after man false and cruel as this! You tell me to my face that I am to bear it! Who is the jade that has done it? Has she money—or rank? Or is it that you are afraid to have by your side a woman who can speak for herself,—and even act for herself if some action be necessary? Perhaps you think that I am—old." He was looking at her intently as she spoke, and it did seem to him that many years had been added to her face. It was full of lines round the mouth, and the light play of drollery was gone, and the colour was fixed,—and her eyes seemed to be deep in her head. "Speak man,—is it that you want a younger wife?"
"You know it is not."

"Know! How should any one know anything from a liar? From what you tell me I know nothing. I have to gather what I can from your character. I see that you are a coward. It is that man that came to you, and who is your master, that has forced you to this. Between me and him you tremble, and are a thing to be pitied. As for knowing what you would be at, from anything that you would say,—that is impossible. Once again I have come across a mean wretch. Oh, fool!—that men should be so vile, and think themselves masters of the world! My last word to you is, that you are—a liar. Now for the present you can go. Ten minutes since, had I had a weapon in my hand I should have shot another man."

Paul Montague, as he looked round the room for his hat, could not but think that perhaps Mr. Hurte might have had some excuse. It seemed at any rate to be her custom to have a pistol with her,—though luckily, for his comfort, she had left it in her bedroom on the present occasion. "I will say good-bye to you," he said, when he had found his hat.

"Say no such thing. Tell me that you have triumphed and got rid of me. Pluck up your spirits, if you have any, and show me your joy. Tell me that an Englishman has dared to ill-treat an American woman. You would,—were you not afraid to indulge yourself." He was now standing in the doorway, and before he escaped she gave him an imperative command. "I shall not stay here now," she said—"I shall return on Monday. I must think of what you have said, and must resolve what I myself will do. I shall not bear this without seeking a means of punishing you for your treachery. I shall expect you to come to me on Monday."

He closed the door as he answered her. "I do not see that it will serve any purpose."

"It is for me, sir, to judge of that. I suppose you are not so much a coward that you are afraid to come to me. If so, I shall come to you; and you may be assured that I shall not be too timid to show myself and to tell my story." He ended by saying that if she desired it he would wait upon her, but that he would not at present fix a day. On his return to town he would write to her.

When he was gone she went to the door and listened awhile. Then she closed it, and turning the lock, stood with her back against the door and with her hands clasped. After a few moments she ran forward, and falling on her knees, buried her face in her hands upon the table. Then she gave way to a flood of tears, and at last lay rolling upon the floor.

Was this to be the end of it? Should she never know rest;—never have one draught of cool water between her lips? Was there to be no end to the storms and turmoils and misery of her life? In almost all that she had said she had spoken the truth, though doubtless not all the truth,—as which among us would in giving the story of his life? She had endured violence, and had been violent. She had been schemed against, and had schemed. She had fitted herself to the life which had befallen her. But in regard to money, she had been honest and she had been loving of heart. With her heart of
hearts she had loved this young Englishman;—and now, after all her
scheming, all her daring, with all her charms, this was to be the end
of it! Oh, what a journey would this be which she must now make
back to her own country, all alone!

But the strongest feeling which raged within her bosom was that
of disappointed love. Full as had been the vials of wrath which she
had poured forth over Montague's head, violent as had been the storm
of abuse with which she had assailed him, there had been after all
something counterfeit in her indignation. But her love was no
counterfeit. At any moment if he would have returned to her and
taken her in his arms, she would not only have forgiven him but have
blessed him also for his kindness. She was in truth sick at heart of
violence and rough living and unfeminine words. When driven by
wrongs the old habit came back upon her. But if she could only
escape the wrongs, if she could find some niche in the world which
would be bearable to her, in which, free from harsh treatment, she
could pour forth all the genuine kindness of her woman's nature,—
then, she thought she could put away violence and be gentle as a
young girl. When she first met this Englishman and found that he
took delight in being near her, she had ventured to hope that a
haven would at last be open to her. But the reek of the gunpowder
from that first pistol shot still clung to her, and she now told herself
again, as she had often told herself before, that it would have been
better for her to have turned the muzzle against her own bosom.

After receiving his letter she had run over on what she had told
herself was a vain chance. Though angry enough when that letter
first reached her, she had, with that force of character which marked
her, declared to herself that such a resolution on his part was natural.
In marrying her he must give up all his old allies, all his old haunts.
The whole world must be changed to him. She knew enough of
herself, and enough of Englishwomen, to be sure that when her past
life should be known, as it would be known, she would be avoided in
England. With all the little ridicule she was wont to exercise in
speaking of the old country there was ever mixed, as is so often the
case in the minds of American men and women, an almost envious
admiration of English excellence. To have been allowed to forget
the past and to live the life of an English lady would have been
heaven to her. But she, who was sometimes scorned and sometimes
feared in the eastern cities of her own country, whose name had
become almost a proverb for violence out in the far West,—how could
she dare to hope that her lot should be so changed for her?

She had reminded Paul that she had required to be asked often
before she had consented to be his wife; but she did not tell him that
that hesitation had arisen from her own conviction of her own unfit-
ness. But it had been so. Circumstances had made her what she
was. Circumstances had been cruel to her. But she could not now
alter them. Then gradually, as she came to believe in his love, as
she lost herself in love for him, she told herself that she would be
changed. She had, however, almost known that it could not be so.
But this man had relatives, had business, had property in her own
country. Though she could not be made happy in England, might
not a prosperous life be opened for him in the far West? Then had risen the offer of that journey to Mexico with much probability that work of no ordinary kind might detain him there for years. With what joy would she have accompanied him as his wife! For that at any rate she would have been fit.

She was conscious,—perhaps too conscious of her own beauty. That at any rate, she felt, had not deserted her. She was hardly aware that time was touching it. And she knew herself to be clever, capable of causing happiness, and mirth and comfort. She had the qualities of a good comrade—which are so much in a woman. She knew all this of herself. If he and she could be together in some country in which those stories of her past life would be matter of indifference, could she not make him happy? But what was she that a man should give up everything and go away and spend his days in some half-barbarous country for her alone? She knew it all and was hardly angry with him in that he had decided against her. But treated as she had been she must play her game with such weapons as she possessed. It was consonant with her old character, it was consonant with her present plans that she should at any rate seem to be angry.

Sitting there alone late into the night she made many plans, but the plan that seemed best to suit the present frame of her mind was the writing of a letter to Paul bidding him adieu, sending him her fondest love, and telling him that he was right. She did write the letter, but wrote it with a conviction that she would not have the strength to send it to him. The reader may judge with what feeling she wrote the following words;—

"Dear Paul,—

"You are right and I am wrong. Our marriage would not have been fitting. I do not blame you. I attracted you when we were together; but you have learned and have learned truly that you should not give up your life for such attractions. If I have been violent with you, forgive me. You will acknowledge that I have suffered.

"Always know that there is one woman who will love you better than any one else. I think too that you will love me even when some other woman is by your side. God bless you, and make you happy. Write me the shortest, shortest word of adieu. Not to do so would make you think yourself heartless. But do not come to me.

"For ever,

W. H."

This she wrote on a small slip of paper, and then having read it twice, she put it into her pocket-book. She told herself that she ought to send it; but told herself as plainly that she could not bring herself to do so. It was early in the morning before she went to bed but she had admitted no one into the room after Montague had left her.

Paul, when he escaped from her presence, roamed out on to the sea-shore, and then took himself to bed, having ordered a conveyance to take him to Carbury Manor early in the morning. At breakfast
he presented himself to the squire. "I have come earlier than you expected," he said.

"Yes, indeed;—much earlier. Are you going back to Lowestoffe?"

Then he told the whole story. Roger expressed his satisfaction, recalling however the pledge which he had given as to his return. "Let her follow you, and bear it," he said. "Of course you must suffer the effects of your own imprudence." On that evening Paul Montague returned to London by the mail train, being sure that he would thus avoid a meeting with Mrs. Hurtle in the railway-carriage.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

RUBY A PRISONER.

Ruby had run away from her lover in great dudgeon after the dance at the Music Hall, and had declared that she never wanted to see him again. But when reflection came with the morning her misery was stronger than her wrath. What would life be to her now without her lover? When she escaped from her grandfather's house she certainly had not intended to become nurse and assistant maid-of-all-work at a London lodging-house. The daily toil she could endure, and the hard life, as long as she was supported by the prospect of some coming delight. A dance with Felix at the Music Hall, though it were three days distant from her, would so occupy her mind that she could wash and dress all the children without complaint. Mrs. Pipkin was forced to own to herself that Ruby did earn her bread. But when she had parted with her lover almost on an understanding that they were never to meet again, things were very different with her. And perhaps she had been wrong. A gentleman like Sir Felix did not of course like to be told about marriage. If she gave him another chance, perhaps he would speak. At any rate she could not live without another dance. And so she wrote him a letter.

Ruby was glib enough with her pen, though what she wrote will hardly bear repeating. She underscored all her loves to him. She underscored the expression of her regret if she had vexed him. She did not want to hurry a gentleman. But she did want to have another dance at the Music Hall. Would he be there next Saturday? Sir Felix sent her a very short reply to say that he would be at the Music Hall on the Tuesday. As at this time he proposed to leave London on the Wednesday on his way to New York, he was proposing to devote his very last night to the companionship of Ruby Ruggles.

Mrs. Pipkin had never interfered with her niece's letters. It is certainly a part of the new dispensation that young women shall send and receive letters without inspection. But since Roger Carbury's visit Mrs. Pipkin had watched the postman, and had also watched her niece. For nearly a week Ruby said not a word of going out at
night. She took the children for an airing in a broken perambulator,
never as far as Hollowway, with exemplary care, and washed up the
cups and saucers as though her mind was intent upon them. But
Mrs. Pipkin’s mind was intent on obeying Mr. Carbury’s behests.
She had already hinted something as to which Ruby had made no
answer. It was her purpose to tell her and to swear to her most
solemnly,—should she find her preparing herself to leave the house
after six in the evening,—that she should be kept out the whole
night, having a purpose equally clear in her own mind that she would
break her oath should she be unsuccessful in her effort to keep Ruby
at home. But on the Tuesday, when Ruby went up to her room to
deck herself, a bright idea as to a better precaution struck Mrs.
Pipkin’s mind. Ruby had been careless,—had left her lover’s scrap of
a note in an old pocket when she went out with the children, and
Mrs. Pipkin knew all about it. It was nine o’clock when Ruby went
upstairs,—and then Mrs. Pipkin locked both the front door and the
area gate. Mrs. Hurtle had come home on the previous day. “You
won’t be wanting to go out to-night;—will you, Mrs. Hurtle?” said
Mrs. Pipkin, knocking at her lodger’s door. Mrs. Hurtle declared her
purpose of remaining at home all the evening. “If you should hear
words between me and my niece, don’t you mind, ma’am.”

“I hope there’s nothing wrong, Mrs. Pipkin?”

“She’ll be wanting to go out, and I won’t have it. It isn’t
right; is it, ma’am? She’s a good girl; but they’ve got such
a way nowadays of doing just as they pleases, that one doesn’t
know what’s going to come next.” Mrs. Pipkin must have
feared downright rebellion when she thus took her lodger into her
confidence.

Ruby came down in her silk frock, as she had done before, and
made her usual little speech. “I’m just going to step out, aunt, for a
little time to-night. I’ve got the key, and I’ll let myself in quite
quiet.”

“Indeed, Ruby, you won’t,” said Mrs. Pipkin.

“Won’t what, aunt?”

“Won’t let yourself in, if you go out. If you go out to-night
you’ll stay out. That’s all about it. If you go out to-night you
won’t come back here any more. I won’t have it, and it isn’t right
that I should. You’re going after that young man that they tell me
is the greatest scamp in all England.”

“They tell you lies then, Aunt Pipkin.”

“Very well. No girl is going out any more at nights out of my
house; so that’s all about it. If you had told me you was going
before, you needn’t have gone up and bedizened yourself. For now
it’s all to take off again.”

Ruby could hardly believe it. She had expected some opposition,—what she would have called a few words; but she had never
imagined that her aunt would threaten to keep her in the streets all
night. It seemed to her that she had bought the privilege of
amusing herself by hard work. Nor did she believe now that her
aunt would be as hard as her threat. “I’ve a right to go if I like,”
she said.
"That's as you think. You haven't a right to come back again, any way."
"Yes, I have. I've worked for you a deal harder than the girl down-stairs, and I don't want no wages. I've a right to go out, and a right to come back;—and go I shall."
"You'll be no better than you should be, if you do."
"Am I to work my very nails off, and push that perambulator about all day till my legs won't carry me,—and then I ain't to go out, not once in a week?"
"Not unless I know more about it, Ruby. I won't have you go and throw yourself into the gutter;—not while you're with me."
"Who's throwing themselves into the gutter? I've thrown myself into no gutter. I know what I'm about."
"There's two of us that way, Ruby;—for I know what I'm about."
"I shall just go then." And Ruby walked off towards the door.
"You won't get out that way, any way, for the door's locked;—and the area gate. You'd better be said, Ruby, and just take your things off."

Poor Ruby for the moment was struck dumb with mortification.

Mrs. Pipkin had given her credit for more outrageous perseverance than she possessed, and had feared that she would rattle at the front door, or attempt to climb over the area gate. She was a little afraid of Ruby, not feeling herself justified in holding absolute dominion over her as over a servant. And though she was now determined in her conduct,—being fully resolved to surrender neither of the keys which she hold in her pocket,—still she feared that she might so far collapse as to fall away into tears, should Ruby be violent. But Ruby was crushed. Her lover would be there to meet her, and the appointment would be broken by her! "Aunt Pipkin," she said, "let me go just this once."
"No, Ruby;—it ain't proper."
"You don't know what you're a' doing of, aunt; you don't. You'll ruin me,—you will. Dear Aunt Pipkin, do, do! I'll never ask again, if you don't like."

Mrs. Pipkin had not expected this, and was almost willing to yield. But Mr. Carbury had spoken so very plainly! "It ain't the thing, Ruby; and I won't do it."
"And I'm to be—a prisoner! What have I done to be—a prisoner? I don't believe as you've any right to lock me up."
"I've a right to lock my own doors."
"Then I shall go away to-morrow."
"I can't help that, my dear. The door will be open to-morrow, if you choose to go out."
"Then why not open it to-night. Where's the difference?" But Mrs. Pipkin was stern, and Ruby, in a flood of tears, took herself up to her garret.

Mrs. Pipkin knocked at Mrs. Hurtle's door again. "She's gone to bed," she said.
"I'm glad to hear it. There wasn't any noise about it;—was there?"
"Not as I expected, Mrs. Hurtle, certainly. But she was put out a bit. Poor girl! I've been a girl too, and used to like a bit of outing as well as any one—and a dance too; only it was always when mother knew. She ain't got a mother, poor dear! and as good as no father. And she's got it into her head that she's that pretty that a great gentleman will marry her."

"She is pretty!"

"But what's beauty, Mrs. Hurtle? It's no more nor skin deep, as the scriptures tell us. And what 'd a grand gentleman see in Ruby to marry her? She says she'll leave to-morrow."

"And where will she go?"

"Just nowhere. After this gentleman,—and you know what that means! You're going to be married yourself, Mrs. Hurtle."

"We won't mind about that now, Mrs. Pipkin."

"And this 'll be your second, and you know how these things are managed. No gentleman 'll marry her because she runs after him. Girls as knows what they're about should let the gentlemen run after them. That's my way of looking at it."

"Don't you think they should be equal in that respect?"

"Anyways the girls shouldn't let on as they are running after the gentlemen. A gentleman goes here and he goes there, and he speaks up free, of course. In my time, girls usen't to do that. But then, maybe, I'm old-fashioned," added Mrs. Pipkin, thinking of the new dispensation.

"I suppose girls do speak for themselves more than they did formerly."

"A deal more, Mrs. Hurtle; quite different. You hear them talk of spooning with this fellow, and spooning with that fellow,—and that before their very fathers and mothers! When I was young we used to do it, I suppose,—only not like that."

"You did it on the sly."

"I think we got married quicker than they do, any way. When the gentlemen had to take more trouble they thought more about it. But if you wouldn't mind speaking to Ruby to-morrow, Mrs. Hurtle, she'd listen to you when she wouldn't mind a word I said to her. I don't want her to go away from this, out into the street, till she knows where she's to go to, decent. As for going to her young man,—that's just walking the streets."

Mrs. Hurtle promised that she would speak to Ruby, though when making the promise she could not but think of her unfitness for the task. She knew nothing of the country. She had not a single friend in it, but Paul Montague,—and she had run after him with as little discretion as Ruby Ruggles was showing in running after her lover. Who was she that she should take upon herself to give advice to any female?

She had not sent her letter to Paul, but she still kept it in her pocket-book. At some moments she thought that she would send it; and at others she told herself that she would never surrender this last hope till every stone had been turned. It might still be possible to shame him into a marriage. She had returned from Lowestoffe on the Monday, and had made some trivial excuse to Mrs. Pipkin in her
mildest voice. The place had been windy, and too cold for her;—and she had not liked the hotel. Mrs. Pipkin was very glad to see her back again.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SIR FELIX MAKES HIMSELF READY.

SIR FELIX, when he promised to meet Ruby at the Music Hall on the Tuesday, was under an engagement to start with Marie Melmotte for New York on the Thursday following, and to go down to Liverpool on the Wednesday. There was no reason, he thought, why he should not enjoy himself to the last, and he would say a parting word to poor little Ruby. The details of his journey were settled between him and Marie, with no inconsiderable assistance from Didon, in the garden of Grosvenor Square, on the previous Sunday,—where the lovers had again met during the hours of morning service. Sir Felix had been astonished at the completion of the preparations which had been made. "Mind you go by the 5 p.m. train," Marie said. "That will take you into Liverpool at 10.15. There's an hotel at the railway-station. Didon has got our tickets under the names of Madame and Mademoiselle Racine. We are to have one cabin between us. You must get yours to-morrow. She has found out that there is plenty of room."

"I'll be all right."

"Pray don't miss the train that afternoon. Somebody would be sure to suspect something if we were seen together in the same train. We leave at 7 a.m. I shan't go to bed all night, so as to be sure to be in time. Robert,—he's the man, —will start a little earlier in the cab with my heavy box. What do you think is in it?"

"Clothes," suggested Felix.

"Yes, but what clothes?—my wedding dresses. Think of that! What a job to get them and nobody to know anything about it except Didon and Madame Craik at the shop in Mount Street! They haven't come yet, but I shall be there whether they come or not. And I shall have all my jewels. I'm not going to leave them behind. They'll go off in our cab. We can get the things out behind the house into the mews. Then Didon and I follow in another cab. Nobody ever is up before near nine, and I don't think we shall be interrupted."

"If the servants were to hear."

"I don't think they'd tell. But if I was to be brought back again, I should only tell papa that it was no good. He can't prevent me marrying."

"Won't your mother find out?"

"She never looks after anything. I don't think she'd tell if she knew. Papa leads her such a life! Felix! I hope you won't be like that."—And she looked up into his face, and thought that it would be impossible that he should be.

"I'm all right," said Felix, feeling very uncomfortable at the time. This great effort of his life was drawing very near. There had been
a pleasurable excitement in talking of running away with the great heiress of the day, but now that the deed had to be executed,—and executed after so novel and stupendous a fashion, he almost wished that he had not undertaken it. It must have been much nicer when men ran away with their heiresses only as far as Gretna Green. And even Goldsheiner with Lady Julia had nothing of a job in comparison with this which he was expected to perform. And then if they should be wrong about the girl’s fortune! He almost repented. He did repent, but he had not the courage to recede. “How about money though,” he said hoarsely.

“You have got some?”

“I have just the two hundred pounds which your father paid me, and not a shilling more. I don’t see why he should keep my money, and not let me have it back.”

“Look here,” said Marie, and she put her hand into her pocket.

“I told you I thought I could get some. There is a cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds. I had money of my own enough for the tickets.”

“And whose is this?” said Felix, taking the bit of paper with much trepidation.

“It is papa’s cheque. Mamma gets ever so many of them to carry on the house and pay for things. But she gets so muddled about it that she doesn’t know what she pays and what she doesn’t. Felix looked at the cheque and saw that it was payable to House or Bearer, and that it was signed by Augustus Melmotte. If you take it to the bank you’ll get the money,” said Marie. “Or shall I send Didon, and give you the money on board the ship?”

Felix thought over the matter very anxiously. If he did go on the journey he would much prefer to have the money in his own pocket. He liked the feeling of having money in his pocket. Perhaps if Didon were entrusted with the cheque she also would like the feeling. But then might it not be possible that if he presented the cheque himself he might be arrested for stealing Melmotte’s money? “I think Didon had better get the money,” he said, “and bring it to me to-morrow, at four o’clock in the afternoon, to the club.” If the money did not come he would not go down to Liverpool, nor would he be at the expense of his ticket for New York. “You see,” he said, “I’m so much in the City that they might know me at the bank.” To this arrangement Marie assented and took back the cheque. “And then I’ll come on board on Thursday morning,” he said, “without looking for you.”

“Oh dear, yes;—without looking for us. And don’t know us even till we are out at sea. Won’t it be fun when we shall be walking about on the deck and not speaking to one another! And, Felix;—what do you think? Didon has found out that there is to be an American clergyman on board. I wonder whether he’d marry us.”

“Of course he will.”

“Won’t that be jolly? I wish it was all done. Then, directly it’s done, and when we get to New York, we’ll telegraph and write to papa, and we’ll be ever so penitent and good; won’t we? Of course he’ll make the best of it.”
"But he's so savage; isn't he?"

"When there's anything to get;—or just at the moment. But I don't think he minds afterwards. He's always for making the best of everything;—misfortunes and all. Things go wrong so often that if he was to go on thinking of them always they'd be too many for anybody. It'll be all right in a month's time. I wonder how Lord Nidderdale will look when he hears that we've gone off. I should so like to see him. He never can say that I've behaved bad to him. We were engaged, but it was he broke it. Do you know, Felix, that though we were engaged to be married, and everybody knew it, he never once kissed me!" Felix at this moment almost wished that he had never done so. As to what the other man had done, he cared nothing at all.

Then they parted with the understanding that they were not to see each other again till they met on board the boat. All arrangements were made. But Felix was determined that he would not stir in the matter unless Didon brought him the full sum of £250; and he almost thought, and indeed hoped, that she would not. Either she would be suspected at the bank and apprehended, or she would run off with the money on her own account when she got it;—or the cheque would have been missed and the payment stopped. Some accident would occur, and then he would be able to recede from his undertaking. He would do nothing till after Monday afternoon.

Should he tell his mother that he was going? His mother had clearly recommended him to run away with the girl, and must therefore approve of the measure. His mother would understand how great would be the expense of such a trip, and might perhaps add something to his stock of money. He determined that he would tell his mother;—that is, if Didon should bring him full change for the cheque.

He walked into the Beargarden exactly at four o'clock on the Monday, and there he found Didon standing in the hall. His heart sank within him as he saw her. Now must he certainly go to New York. She made him a little curtsey, and without a word handed him an envelope, soft and fat with rich enclosures. He bade her wait a moment, and going into a little waiting-room counted the notes. The money was all there;—the full sum of £250. He must certainly go to New York. "C'est tout en règle?" said Didon in a whisper as he returned to the hall. Sir Felix nodded his head, and Didon took her departure.

"Yes; he must go now. He had Melmotte's money in his pocket, and was therefore bound to run away with Melmotte's daughter. It was a great trouble to him as he reflected that Melmotte had more of his money than he had of Melmotte's. And now how should he dispose of his time before he went. Gambling was too dangerous. Even he felt that. Where would he be were he to lose his ready money? He would dine that night at the club, and in the evening go up to his mother. On the Tuesday he would take his place for New York in the City, and would spend the evening with Ruby at the Music Hall. On the Wednesday, he would start for Liverpool,—according to his instructions. He felt annoyed that he had been so
fully instructed. But should the affair turn out well nobody would
know that. All the fellows would give him credit for the audacity
with which he had carried off the heiress to America.
At ten o'clock he found his mother and Hetta in Welbeck Street—
“What; Felix?” exclaimed Lady Carbury.
“You’re surprised; are you not?” Then he threw himself into a
chair. “Mother,” he said, “would you mind coming into the other
room?” Lady Carbury of course went with him. “I’ve got
something to tell you,” he said.
“Good news?” she asked, clasping her hands together. From
his manner she thought that it was good news. Money had in some
way come into his hands,—or at any rate a prospect of money.
“That’s as may be,” he said, and then he paused.
“Don’t keep me in suspense, Felix.”
“The long and the short of it is that I’m going to take Marie
off.”
“Oh, Felix.”
“You said you thought it was the right thing to do;—and therefore
I’m going to do it. The worst of it is that one wants such a lot of
money for this kind of thing.”
“But when?”
“Immediately. I wouldn’t tell you till I had arranged everything.
I’ve had it in my mind for the last fortnight.”
“And how is it to be? Oh, Felix, I hope it may succeed.”
“It was your own idea, you know. We’re going to;—where do
you think?”
“How can I think;—Boulogne.”
“You say that just because Goldsheiner went there. That
wouldn’t have done at all for us. We’re going to—New York.”
“To New York! But when will you be married?”
“There will be a clergyman on board. It’s all fixed. I wouldn’t
go without telling you.”
“Oh; I wish you hadn’t told me.”
“Come now;—that’s kind. You don’t mean to say it wasn’t you
that put me up to it. I’ve got to get my things ready.”
“Of course, if you tell me that you are going on a journey, I will
have your clothes got ready for you. When do you start?”
“Wednesday afternoon.”
“For New York! We must get some things ready-made. Oh,
Felix, how will it be if he does not forgive her?” He attempted to
laugh. “When I spoke of such a thing as possible he had not sworn
then that he would never give her a shilling.”
“They always say that.”
“You are going to risk it?”
“I am going to take your advice.” This was dreadful to the poor
mother. “There is money settled on her.”
“Settled on whom?”
“On Marie;—money which he can’t get back again.”
“How much?”
“She doesn’t know;—but a great deal; enough for them all to
live upon if things went amiss with them.”
"But that's only a form, Felix. That money can't be her own, is
give to her husband."
"Melmotte will find that it is, unless he comes to terms. That's
the pull we've got over him. Marie knows what she's about. She's
a great deal sharper than any one would take her to be. What do
you do for me about money, mother?"
"I have none, Felix."
"I thought you'd be sure to help me, as you wanted me so much
to do it."
"That's not true, Felix. I didn't want you to do it. Oh, I am so
sorry that that word ever passed my mouth! I have no money.
There isn't £20 at the bank altogether."
"They would let you overdraw for £50 or £60."
"I will not do it. I will not starve myself and Hetta. You had
ever so much money only lately. I will get some things for you, and
pay for them as I can if you cannot pay for them after your marriage;
—but I have not money to give you."
"That's a blue look out," said he, turning himself in his chair,—
"just when £60 or £70 might make a fellow for life! You could
borrow it from your friend Broune."
"I will do no such thing, Felix. £50 or £60 would make very
little difference in the expense of such a trip as this. I suppose you
have some money?"
"Some,—yes, some. But I'm so short that any little thing
would help me." Before the evening was over she absolutely did
give him a cheque for £30, although she had spoken the truth in
saying that she had not so much at her banker's.
After this he went back to his club, although he himself understood
the danger. He could not bear the idea of going to bed quietly at
home at half-past ten. He got into a cab, and was very soon up in the
card-room. He found nobody there, and went to the smoking-room,
where Dolly Longstaffo and Miles Grendall were sitting silently
together, with pipes in their mouths. "Here's Carbury," said Dolly,
waking suddenly into life. "Now we can have a game at three-
handed loo."
"Thank yo; not for me," said Sir Felix. "I hate three-handed
loo."
"Dummy," suggested Dolly.
"I don't think I'll play to-night, old fellow. I hate three fellows
sticking down together." Miles sat silent, smoking his pipe, conscious
of the baronet's dislike to play with him. "By-the-bye, Grendall,—
look here." And Sir Felix in his most friendly tone whispered into
his enemy's ear a petition that some of the I O U's might be converted
into cash.
"Pon my word, I must ask you to wait till next week," said
Miles.
"It's always waiting till next week with you," said Sir Felix,
getting up and standing with his back to the fireplace. There were
other men in the room, and this was said so that every one should
hear it. "I wonder whether any fellow would buy these for five
shillings in the pound?" And he held up the scraps of paper in his
hand. He had been drinking freely before he went up to Welbeck Street, and had taken a glass of brandy on re-entering the club.

"Don't let's have any of that kind of thing down here," said Dolly. "If there is to be a row about cards, let it be in the card-room."

"Of course," said Miles. "I won't say a word about the matter down here. It isn't the proper thing."

"Come up into the card-room, then," said Sir Felix, getting up from his chair. "It seems to me that it makes no difference to you, what room you're in. Come up, now; and Dolly Longstaffe shall come and hear what you say." But Miles Gren dall objected to this arrangement. He was not going up into the card-room that night, as no one was going to play. He would be there to-morrow, and then if Sir Felix Carbury had anything to say, he could say it.

"How I do hate a row!" said Dolly. "One has to have rows with one's own people, but there ought not to be rows at a club."

"He likes a row,—Carbury does," said Miles.

"I should like my money, if I could get it," said Sir Felix, walking out of the room.

On the next day he went into the City, and changed his mother's cheque. This was done after a little hesitation. The money was given to him, but a gentleman from behind the desks begged him to remind Lady Carbury that she was over-drawing her account. "Dear, dear," said Sir Felix, as he pocketed the notes, "I'm sure she was unaware of it." Then he paid for his passage from Liverpool to New York under the name of Walter Jones, and felt as he did so that the intrigue was becoming very deep. This was on Tuesday. He dined again at the club, alone, and in the evening went to the Music Hall. There he remained from ten till nearly twelve, very angry at the non-appearance of Ruby Ruggles. As he smoked and drank in solitude, he almost made up his mind that he had intended to tell her of his departure for New York. Of course he would have done no such thing. But now, should she ever complain on that head he would have his answer ready. He had devoted his last night in England to the purpose of telling her, and she had broken her appointment. Everything would now be her fault. Whatever might happen to her she could not blame him.

Having waited till he was sick of the Music Hall,—for a music hall without ladies' society must be somewhat dull,—he went back to his club. He was very cross, as brave as brandy could make him, and well inclined to expose Miles Gren dall if he could find an opportunity. Up in the card-room he found all the accustomed men,—with the exception of Miles Gren dall. Nidderdale, Grasslough, Dolly, Paul Montague, and one or two others were there. There was, at any rate, comfort in the idea of playing without having to encounter the dead weight of Miles Gren dall. Ready money was on the table,—and there was none of the peculiar Beargarden paper flying about. Indeed the men at the Beargarden had become sick of paper, and there had been formed a half-expressed resolution that the play should be somewhat lower, but the payments punctual. The I O U's had been nearly all converted into money,—with the assistance of
Herr Vossner,—excepting those of Miles Gren dall. The resolution mentioned did not refer back to Gren dall's former indebtedness, but was intended to include a clause that he must in future pay ready money. Nidderdale had communicated to him the determination of the committee. "Bygones are bygones, old fellow; but you really must stump up, you know, after this." Miles had declared that he would "stump up." But on this occasion Miles was absent.

At three o'clock in the morning, Sir Felix had lost over a hundred pounds in ready money. On the following night about one he had lost a further sum of two hundred pounds. The reader will remember that he should at that time have been in the hotel at Liverpool.

But Sir Felix, as he played on in the almost desperate hope of recovering the money which he so greatly needed, remembered how Fisker had played all night, and how he had gone off from the club to catch the early train for Liverpool, and how he had gone on to New York without delay.

CHAPTER I.

THE JOURNEY TO LIVERPOOL.

Marie Melmotte, as she had promised, sat up all night, as did also the faithful Didon. I think that to Marie the night was full of pleasure,—or at any rate of pleasurable excitement. With her door locked, she packed and unpacked and repacked her treasures,—having more than once laid out on the bed the dress in which she purposed to be married. She asked Didon her opinion whether that American clergyman of whom they had heard would marry them on board, and whether in that event the dress would be fit for the occasion. Didon thought that the man, if sufficiently paid, would marry them, and that the dress would not much signify. She scolded her young mistress very often during the night for what she called nonsense; but was true to her, and worked hard for her. They determined to go without food in the morning, so that no suspicion should be raised by the use of cups and plates. They could get refreshment at the railway-station.

At six they started. Robert went first with the big boxes, having his ten pounds already in his pocket,—and Marie and Didon with smaller luggage followed in a second cab. No one interfered with them and nothing went wrong. The very civil man at Euston Square gave them their tickets, and even attempted to speak to them in French. They had quite determined that not a word of English was to be spoken by Marie till the ship was out at sea. At the station they got some very bad tea and almost unearable food,—but Marie's restrained excitement was so great that food was almost unnecessary to her. They took their seats without any impediment,—and then they were off.

During a great part of the journey they were alone, and then Marie gabbled to Didon about her hopes and her future career, and all the
"You, I think, are Miss Melmotte."
things she would do;—how she had hated Lord Nidderdale;—especially when, after she had been awed into accepting him, he had given her no token of love;—"pas un baiser!" Didon suggested that such was the way with English lords. She herself had preferred Lord Nidderdale, but had been willing to join in the present plan,—as she said, from devoted affection to Marie. Marie went on to say that Nidderdale was ugly, and that Sir Felix was as beautiful as the morning. "Bah!" exclaimed Didon, who was really disgusted that such considerations should prevail. Didon had learned in some indistinct way that Lord Nidderdale would be a marquis and would have a castle, whereas Sir Felix would never be more than Sir Felix, and, of his own, would never have anything at all. She had striven with her mistress, but her mistress liked to have a will of her own. Didon no doubt had thought that New York, with £50 and other perquisites in hand, might offer her a new career. She had therefore yielded, but even now could hardly forbear from expressing disgust at the folly of her mistress. Marie bore it with imperturbable good humour. She was running away,—and was running to a distant continent,—and her lover would be with her! She gave Didon to understand that she cared nothing for marquises.

As they drew near to Liverpool Didon explained that they must still be very careful. It would not do for them to declare at once their destination on the platform,—so that every one about the station should know that they were going on board the packet for New York. They had time enough. They must leisurely look for the big boxes and other things, and need say nothing about the steam packet till they were in a cab. Marie's big box was directed simply "Madame Racine, Passenger to Liverpool;"—so also was directed a second box, nearly as big, which was Didon's property. Didon declared that her anxiety would not be over till she found the ship moving under her. Marie was sure that all their dangers were over,—if only Sir Felix was safe on board. Poor Marie! Sir Felix was at this moment in Walbeck Street, striving to find temporary oblivion for his distressing situation and loss of money, and some alleviation for his racketing temples, beneath the bedclothes.

When the train ran into the station at Liverpool the two women sat for a few moments quite quiet. They would not seek remark by any hurry or noise. The door was opened, and a well-mannered porter offered to take their luggage. Didon handed out the various packages, keeping however the jewel-case in her own hands. She left the carriage first, and then Marie. But Marie had hardly put her foot on the platform, before a gentleman addressed her, touching his hat, "You, I think, are Miss Melmotte." Marie was struck dumb, but said nothing. Didon immediately became voluble in French. No; the young lady was not Miss Melmotte; the young lady was Mademoiselle Racine, her niece. She was Madame Racine. Melmotte! What was Melmotte? They knew nothing about Melmottes. Would the gentleman kindly allow them to pass on to their cab?

But the gentleman would by no means kindly allow them to pass on to their cab. With the gentleman was another gentleman,—who did not seem to be quite so much of a gentleman;—and again, not far in
the distance Didon quickly espied a policeman, who did not at present connect himself with the affair, but who seemed to have his time very much at command, and to be quite ready if he were wanted. Didon at once gave up the game,—as regarded her mistress.

"I am afraid I must persist in asserting that you are Miss Melmotto," said the gentleman, "and that this other—person is your servant, Elise Didon. You speak English, Miss Melmotte." Marie declared that she spoke French. "And English too," said the gentleman. "I think you had better make up your minds to go back to London. I will accompany you."

"Ah, Didon, nous sommes perdues!" exclaimed Marie. Didon, plucking up her courage for the moment, asserted the legality of her own position and of that of her mistress. They had both a right to come to Liverpool. They had both a right to get into the cab with their luggage. Nobody had a right to stop them. They had done nothing against the laws. Why were they to be stopped in this way? What was it to anybody whether they called themselves Melmotte or Racine?

The gentleman understood the French oratory, but did not commit himself to reply in the same language. "You had better trust yourself to me; you had indeed," said the gentleman.

"But why?" demanded Marie.

Then the gentleman spoke in a very low voice. "A cheque has been changed which you took from your father's house. No doubt your father will pardon that when you are once with him. But in order that we may bring you back safely we can arrest you on the score of the cheque,—if you force us to do so. We certainly shall not let you go on board. If you will travel back to London with me, you shall be subjected to no inconvenience which can be avoided."

There was certainly no help to be found anywhere. It may be well doubted whether upon the whole the telegraph has not added more to the annoyances than to the comforts of life, and whether the gentlemen who spent all the public money without authority ought not to have been punished with special severity in that they had injured humanity, rather than pardoned because of the good they had produced. Who is benefited by telegrams? The newspapers are robbed of all their old interest, and the very soul of intrigue is destroyed. Poor Marie, when she heard her fate, would certainly have gladly hanged Mr. Scudamore.

When the gentleman had made his speech, she offered no further opposition. Looking into Didon's face and bursting into tears, she sat down on one of the boxes. But Didon became very clamorous on her own behalf,—and her clamour was successful. "Who was going to stop her? What had she done? Why should not she go where she pleased? Did anybody mean to take her up for stealing anybody's money? If anybody did, that person had better look to himself. She knew the law. She would go where she pleased." So saying she began to tug the rope of her box as though she intended to drag it by her own force out of the station. The gentleman looked at his telegram,—looked at another document which he now held in his hand, ready prepared, should it be wanted. Elise
Didon had been accused of nothing that brought her within the law. The gentleman in imperfect French suggested that Didon had better return with her mistress. But Didon clamoured only the more. No; she would go to New York. She would go wherever she pleased,—all the world over. Nobody should stop her. Then she addressed herself in what little English she could command to half-a-dozen cabmen who were standing round and enjoying the scene. They were to take her trunk at once. She had money and she could pay. She started off to the nearest cab, and no one stopped her. "But the box in her hand is mine," said Marie, not forgetting her trinkets in her misery. Didon surrendered the jewel-case, and ensconced herself in the cab without a word of farewell; and her trunk was hoisted on to the roof. Then she was driven away out of the station,—and out of our story. She had a first-class cabin all to herself as far as New York, but what may have been her fate after that it matters not to us to enquire.

Poor Marie! We who know how recreant a knight Sir Felix had proved himself, who are aware that had Miss Melmotte succeeded in getting on board the ship she would have passed an hour of miserable suspense, looking everywhere for her lover, and would then at last have been carried to New York without his love! But in one matter she made up her mind steadfastly. She would be true to him! They might chop her in pieces! Yes;—she had said it before, and she would say it again. There was, however, doubt on her mind from time to time, whether one course might not be better even than constancy. If she could contrive to throw herself out of the carriage and to be killed,—would not that be the best termination to her present disappointment? Would not that be the best punishment for her father? But how then would it be with poor Felix? "After all I don't know that he cares for me," she said to herself, thinking over it all.

The gentleman was very kind to her, not treating her at all as though she were disgraced. As they got near town he ventured to give her a little advice. "Put a good face on it," he said, "and don't be cast down."

"Oh, I won't," she answered. "I don't mean."

"Your mother will be delighted to have you back again."

"I don't think that mamma cares. It's papa. I'd do it again to- morrow if I had the chance." The gentleman looked at her, not having expected so much determination. "I would. Why is a girl to be made to marry to please any one but herself? I won't. And it's very mean saying that I stole the money. I always take what I want, and papa never says anything about it."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds is a large sum, Miss Melmotte."

"It is nothing in our house. It isn't about the money. It's
because papa wants me to marry another man;—and I won't. It was downright mean to send and have me taken up before all the people."
"You wouldn't have come back if he hadn't done that."
"Of course I wouldn't," said Marie.

The gentleman had telegraphed up to Grosvenor Square while on the journey, and at Euston Square they were met by one of the Melmotte carriages. Marie was to be taken home in the carriage, and the box was to follow in a cab;—to follow at some interval so that Grosvenor Square might not be aware of what had taken place. Grosvenor Square, of course, very soon knew all about it. "And are you to come?" Marie asked, speaking to the gentleman. The gentleman replied that he had been requested to see Miss Melmotte home. "All the people will wonder who you are," said Marie laughing. Then the gentleman thought that Miss Melmotte would be able to get through her troubles without much suffering.

When she got home she was hurried up at once to her mother's room,—and there she found her father, alone. "This is your game, is it?" said he, looking down at her.
"Well, papa;—yes. You made me do it."
"You fool you! You were going to New York,—were you?"
To this she vouchsafed no reply. "As if I hadn't found out all about it. Who was going with you?"
"If you have found out all about it, you know, papa."
"Of course I know;—but you don't know all about it, you little idiot."
"No doubt I'm a fool and an idiot. You always say so."
"Where do you suppose Sir Felix Carbury is now?" Then she opened her eyes and looked at him. "An hour ago he was in bed at his mother's house in Welbeck Street."
"I don't believe it, papa."
"You don't, don't you? You'll find it true. If you had gone to New York, you'd have gone alone. If I'd known at first that he had stayed behind, I think I'd have let you go."
"I'm sure he didn't stay behind."
"If you contradict me, I'll box your ears, you jade. He is in London at this moment. What has become of the woman that went with you?"
"She's gone on board the ship."
"And where is the money you took from your mother?" Marie was silent. "Who got the cheque changed?"
"Dido did."
"And has she got the money?"
"No, papa."
"Have you got it?"
"No, papa."
"Did you give it to Sir Felix Carbury?"
"Yes, papa."
"Then I'll be hanged if I don't prosecute him for stealing it."
"Oh, papa, don't do that;—pray don't do that. He didn't steal it. I only gave it him to take care of for us. He'll give it you back again."
"I shouldn’t wonder if he lost it at cards, and therefore didn’t go to Liverpool. Will you give me your word that you’ll never attempt to marry him again if I don’t prosecute him?" Marie considered. "Unless you do that I shall go to a magistrate at once."

"I don’t believe you can do anything to him. He didn’t steal it. I gave it to him."

"Will you promise me?"

"No, papa, I won’t. What’s the good of promising when I should only break it. Why can’t you let me have the man I love? What’s the good of all the money if people don’t have what they like?"

"All the money!—What do you know about the money? Look here," and he took her by the arm. "I’ve been very good to you. You’ve had your share of everything that has been going;—carriages and horses, bracelets and brooches, silks and gloves, and every thing else." He held her very hard and shook her as he spoke.

"Let me go, papa; you hurt me. I never asked for such things. I don’t care a straw about bracelets and brooches."

"What do you care for?"

"Only for somebody to love me," said Marie, looking down.

"You’ll soon have nobody to love you, if you go on this fashion. You’ve had everything done for you, and if you don’t do something for me in return, by G—you shall have a hard time of it. If you weren’t such a fool you’d believe me when I say that I know more than you do."

"You can’t know better than me what’ll make me happy."

"Do you think only of yourself? If you’ll marry Lord Nidderdale you’ll have a position in the world which nothing can take from you."

"Then I won’t," said Marie firmly. Upon this he shook her till she cried, and calling for Madame Melmotte desired his wife not to let the girl for one minute out of her presence.

The condition of Sir Felix was I think worse than that of the lady with whom he was to have run away. He had played at the Bear-garden till four in the morning and had then left the club, on the breaking up of the card-table, intoxicated and almost penniless. During the last half hour he had made himself very unpleasant at the club, saying all manner of harsh things of Miles Grendall;—of whom, indeed, it was almost impossible to say things too hard, had they been said in a proper form and at a proper time. He declared that Grendall would not pay his debts, that he had cheated when playing loo,—as to which Sir Felix appealed to Dolly Longestaffe; and he ended by asserting that Grendall ought to be turned out of the club. They had a desperate row. Dolly of course had said that he knew nothing about it, and Lord Grasslough had expressed an opinion that perhaps more than one person ought to be turned out. At four o’clock the party was broken up and Sir Felix wandered forth into the streets, with nothing more than the change of a ten pound note in his pocket. All his luggage was lying in the hall of the club, and there he left it.

There could hardly have been a more miserable wretch than Sir
Felix wandering about the streets of London that night. Though he was nearly drunk, he was not drunk enough to forget the condition of his affairs. There is an intoxication that makes merry in the midst of affliction;—and there is an intoxication that banishes affliction by producing oblivion. But again there is an intoxication which is conscious of itself though it makes the feet unsteady, and the voice thick, and the brain foolish; and which brings neither mirth nor oblivion. Sir Felix trying to make his way to Welbeck Street and losing it at every turn, feeling himself to be an object of ridicule to every wanderer, and of dangerous suspicion to every policeman, got no good at all out of his intoxication. What had he better do with himself? He fumbled in his pocket, and managed to get hold of his ticket for New York. Should he still make the journey? Then he thought of his luggage, and could not remember where it was. At last, as he steadied himself against a letter-post, he was able to call to mind that his portmanteaus were at the club. By this time he had wandered into Marylebone Lane, but did not in the least know where he was. But he made an attempt to get back to his club, and stumbled half down Bond Street. Then a policeman enquired into his purposes, and when he said that he lived in Welbeck Street, walked back with him as far as Oxford Street. Having once mentioned the place where he lived, he had not strength of will left to go back to his purpose of getting his luggage and starting for Liverpool.

Between six and seven he was knocking at the door in Welbeck Street. He had tried his latch-key, but had found it inefficient. As he was supposed to be at Liverpool, the door had in fact been locked. At last it was opened by Lady Carbury herself. He had fallen more than once, and was soiled with the gutter. Most of my readers will not probably know how a man looks when he comes home drunk at six in the morning; but they who have seen the thing will acknowledge that a sorrier sight can not meet a mother’s eye than that of a son in such a condition. “Oh, Felix!” she exclaimed.

“It’s all up,” he said, stumbling in.

“What has happened, Felix?”

“Discovered, and be d—— to it! The old shap’sh stopped ush.” Drunk as he was, he was able to lie. At that moment the “old shap” was fast asleep in Grosvenor Square, altogether ignorant of the plot; and Marie, joyful with excitement, was getting into the cab in the mews. “Better sh go to bed.” And so he stumbled upstairs by daylight, the wretched mother helping him. She took off his clothes for him and his boots, and having left him already asleep, she went down to her own room, a miserable woman.

END OF VOL. I.
“You, I think, are Miss Melmotte.”