THE PRIME MINISTER

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BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

Ferdinand Lopez

It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society, and also of service to be able to speak of them as of persons who were themselves somebodies in their time. No doubt we all entertain great respect for those who by their own energies have raised themselves in the world; and when we hear that the son of a washerwoman has become Lord Chancellor or Archbishop of Canterbury we do, theoretically and abstractedly, feel a higher reverence for such self-made magnate than for one who has been as it were born into forensic or ecclesiastical purple. But not the less must the offspring of the washerwoman have had very much trouble on the subject of his birth, unless he has been, when young as well as when old, a very great man indeed. After the goal has been absolutely reached, and the honour and the titles and the wealth actually won, a man may talk with some humour, even with some affection, of the maternal tub;—but while the struggle is going on, with the conviction strong upon the struggler that he cannot be altogether successful unless he be esteemed a gentleman, not to be ashamed, not to conceal the old family circumstances, not at any rate to be silent, is difficult. And the difficulty is certainly not less if fortunate circumstances rather than hard work and intrinsic merit have raised above his natural place an aspirant to high social position. Can it be expected that such a one when dining with a duchess shall speak of his father's small shop, or bring into the light of day his grandfather's cobbler's awl? And yet it is difficult to be altogether

silent! It may not be necessary for any of us to be always talking of our own parentage. We may be generally reticent as to our uncles and aunts, and may drop even our brothers and sisters in our ordinary conversation. But if a man never mentions his belongings among those with whom he lives, he becomes mysterious, and almost open to suspicion. It begins to be known that nobody knows anything of such a man, and even friends become afraid. It is certainly convenient to be able to allude, if it be but once in a year, to some blood relation.

Ferdinand Lopez, who in other respects had much in his circumstances on which to congratulate himself, suffered trouble in his mind respecting his ancestors such as I have endeavoured to describe. He did not know very much himself, but what little he did know he kept altogether to himself. He had no father or mother, no uncle, aunt, brother or sister, no cousin even whom he could mention in a cursory way to his dearest friend. He suffered, no doubt;—but with Spartan consistency he so hid his trouble from the world that no one knew that he suffered. Those with whom he lived, and who speculated often and wondered much as to who he was, never dreamed that the silent man's reticence was a burden to himself. At no special conjuncture of his life, at no period which could be marked with the finger of the observer, did he glaringly abstain from any statement which at the moment might be natural. He never hesitated, blushed, or palpably laboured at concealment; but the fact remained that though a great many men and not a few women knew Ferdinand Lopez very well, none of them knew whence he had come, or what was his family.

He was a man, however, naturally reticent, who never alluded to his own affairs unless in pursuit of some object the way to which was clear before his eyes. Silence therefore on a matter which is common in the mouths of most men was less difficult to him than to another, and the result less embarrassing. Dear old Jones, who tells his friends at the club of every pound that he loses or wins at the races, who boasts of Mary's favours and mourns over Lucy's coldness almost in public, who issues bulletins on the state of his purse, his stomach, his stable, and his debts, could not with any amount of care keep from us the fact that his father was an

attorney's clerk, and made his first money by discounting small bills. Everybody knows it, and Jones, who likes popularity, grieves at the unfortunate publicity. But Jones is relieved from a burden which would have broken his poor shoulders, and which even Ferdinand Lopez, who is a strong man, often finds it hard to bear without wincing.

It was admitted on all sides that Ferdinand Lopez was a "gentleman." Johnson says that any other derivation of this difficult word than that which causes it to signify "a man of ancestry" is whimsical. There are many, who in defining the term for their own use, still adhere to Johnson's dictum;—but they adhere to it with certain unexpressed allowances for possible exceptions. The chances are very much in favour of the well-born man, but exceptions may exist. It was not generally believed that Ferdinand Lopez was well born;—but he was a gentleman. And this most precious rank was acceded to him although he was employed,—or at least had been employed,—on business which does not of itself give such a warrant of position as is supposed to be afforded by the bar and the church, by the military services and by physic. He had been on the Stock Exchange, and still in some manner, not clearly understood by his friends, did business in the City.

At the time with which we are now concerned Ferdinand Lopez was thirty-three years old, and as he had begun life early he had been long before the world. It was known of him that he had been at a good English private school, and it was reported, on the solitary evidence of one who had there been his schoolfellow, that a rumour was current in the school that his school bills were paid by an old gentleman who was not related to him. Thence at the age of seventeen he had been sent to a German University, and at the age of twenty-one had appeared in London, in a stockbroker's office, where he was soon known as an accomplished linguist, and as a very clever fellow,—precocious, not given to many pleasures, apt for work, but hardly trustworthy by employers, not as being dishonest, but as having a taste for being a master rather than a servant. Indeed his period of servitude was very short. It was not in his nature to be active on behalf of others. He was soon active for

himself, and at one time it was supposed that he was making a fortune. Then it was known that he had left his regular business, and it was supposed that he had lost all that he had ever made or had ever possessed. But nobody, not even his own bankers or his own lawyer,—not even the old woman who looked after his linen,—ever really knew the state of his affairs.

He was certainly a handsome man,—his beauty being of a sort which men are apt to deny and women to admit lavishly. He was nearly six feet tall, very dark, and very thin, with regular, well-cut features indicating little to the physiognomist unless it be the great gift of self-possession. His hair was cut short, and he wore no beard beyond an absolutely black moustache. His teeth were perfect in form and whiteness,—a characteristic which, though it may be a valued item in a general catalogue of personal attraction, does not generally recommend a man to the unconscious judgment of his acquaintance. But about the mouth and chin of this man there was a something of softness, perhaps in the play of the lips, perhaps in the dimple, which in some degree lessened the feeling of hardness which was produced by the square brow and bold, unflinching, combative eyes. They who knew him and liked him were reconciled by the lower face. The greater number who knew him and did not like him felt and resented,—even though in nine cases out of ten they might express no resentment even to themselves,—the pugnacity of his steady glance.

For he was essentially one of those men who are always, in the inner workings of their minds, defending themselves and attacking others. He could not give a penny to a woman at a crossing without a look which argued at full length her injustice in making her demand, and his freedom from all liability let him walk the crossing as often as he might. He could not seat himself in a railway carriage without a lesson to his opposite neighbour that in all the mutual affairs of travelling, arrangement of feet, disposition of bags, and opening of windows, it would be that neighbour's duty to submit and his to exact. It was, however, for the spirit rather than for the thing itself that he combatted. The woman with the broom got her penny. The opposite gentleman when once by a glance he had expressed submission was allowed his own way with

his legs and with the window. I would not say that Ferdinand Lopez was prone to do ill-natured things; but he was imperious, and he had learned to carry his empire in his eye.

The reader must submit to be told one or two further and still smaller details respecting the man, and then the man shall be allowed to make his own way. No one of those around him knew how much care he took to dress himself well, or how careful he was that no one should know it. His very tailor regarded him as being simply extravagant in the number of his coats and trousers, and his friends looked upon him as one of those fortunate beings to whose nature belongs a facility of being well dressed, or almost an impossibility of being ill dressed. We all know the man,—a little man generally who moves seldom and softly,—who looks always as though he had just been sent home in a bandbox. Ferdinand Lopez was not a little man, and moved freely enough; but never, at any moment,—going into the city or coming out of it, on horseback or on foot, at home over his book or after the mazes of the dance,—was he dressed otherwise than with perfect care. Money and time did it, but folk thought that it grew with him, as did his hair and his nails. And he always rode a horse which charmed good judges of what a park nag should be;—not a prancing, restless, giggling, sideway-going, useless garran, but an animal well made, well bitted, with perfect paces, on whom a rider if it pleased him could be as quiet as a statue on a monument. It often did please Ferdinand Lopez to be quiet on horseback; and yet he did not look like a statue, for it was acknowledged through all London that he was a good horseman. He lived luxuriously too,—though whether at his ease or not nobody knew,—for he kept a brougham of his own, and during the hunting season he had two horses down at Leighton. There had once been a belief abroad that he was ruined, but they who interest themselves in such matters had found out,—or at any rate believed that they had found out,—that he paid his tailor regularly: and now there prevailed an opinion that Ferdinand Lopez was a monied man.

It was known to some few that he occupied rooms in a flat at Westminster,—but to very few exactly where the rooms were situate. Among all his friends no one was known to have entered

them. In a moderate way he was given to hospitality,—that is to infrequent but, when the occasion came, to graceful hospitality. Some club, however, or tavern, or perhaps, in the summer, some river bank would be chosen as the scene of these festivities. To a few,—if, as suggested, amidst summer flowers on the water's edge to men and women mixed,—he would be a courtly and efficient host; for he had the rare gift of doing such things well.

Hunting was over, and the east wind was still blowing, and a great portion of the London world was out of town taking its Easter holiday, when, on an unpleasant morning, Ferdinand Lopez travelled into the city by the Metropolitan railway from Westminster Bridge. It was his custom to go thither when he did go,—not daily like a man of business, but as chance might require, like a capitalist or a man of pleasure,—in his own brougham. But on this occasion he walked down to the river side, and then walked from the Mansion House into a dingy little court called Little Tankard Yard, near the Bank of England, and going through a narrow dark long passage got into a little office at the back of a building, in which there sat at a desk a greasy gentleman with a new hat on one side of his head, who might perhaps be about forty years old. The place was very dark, and the man was turning over the leaves of a ledger. A stranger to city ways might probably have said that he was idle, but he was no doubt filling his mind with that erudition which would enable him to earn his bread. On the other side of the desk there was a little boy copying letters. These were Mr. Sextus Parker,—commonly called Sexty Parker,—and his clerk. Mr. Parker was a gentleman very well known and at the present moment favourably esteemed on the Stock Exchange. "What, Lopez!" said he. "Uncommon glad to see you. What can I do for you?"

"Just come inside,—will you?" said Lopez. Now within Mr. Parker's very small office there was a smaller office in which there were a safe, a small rickety Pembroke table, two chairs, and an old washing-stand with a tumbled towel. Lopez led the way into this sanctum as though he knew the place well, and Sexty Parker followed him.

"Beastly day, isn't it?" said Sexty.

"Yes,—a nasty east wind."

"Cutting one in two, with a hot sun at the same time. One ought to hybernate at this time of the year."

"Then why don't you hybernate?" said Lopez.

"Business is too good. That's about it. A man has to stick to it when it does come. Everybody can't do like you;—give up regular work, and make a better thing of an hour now and an hour then, just as it pleases you. I shouldn't dare go in for that kind of thing."

"I don't suppose you or any one else know what I go in for," said Lopez, with a look that indicated offence.

"Nor don't care," said Sexty;—"only hope it's something good for your sake." Sexty Parker had known Mr. Lopez well, now for some years, and being an overbearing man himself,—somewhat even of a bully if the truth be spoken,—and by no means apt to give way unless hard pressed, had often tried his "hand" on his friend, as he himself would have said. But I doubt whether he could remember any instance in which he could congratulate himself on success. He was trying his hand again now, but did it with a faltering voice, having caught a glance of his friend's eye.

"I dare say not," said Lopez. Then he continued without changing his voice or the nature of the glance of his eye, "I'll tell you what I want you to do now. I want your name to this bill for three months."

Sexty Parker opened his mouth and his eyes, and took the bit of paper that was tendered to him. It was a promissory note for £750, which, if signed by him, would at the end of the specified period make him liable for that sum were it not otherwise paid. His friend Mr. Lopez was indeed applying to him for the assistance of his name in raising a loan to the amount of the sum named. This was a kind of favour which a man should ask almost on his knees,—and which, if so asked, Mr. Sextus Parker would certainly refuse. And here was Ferdinand Lopez asking it,—whom Sextus Parker had latterly regarded as an opulent man,—and asking it not at all on his

knees, but, as one might say, at the muzzle of a pistol. "Accommodation bill!" said Sexty. "Why, you ain't hard up; are you?"

"I'm not going just at present to tell you much about my affairs, and yet I expect you to do what I ask you. I don't suppose you doubt my ability to raise £750."

"Oh, dear, no," said Sexty, who had been looked at and who had not borne the inspection well.

"And I don't suppose you would refuse me even if I were hard up, as you call it." There had been affairs before between the two men in which Lopez had probably been the stronger, and the memory of them, added to the inspection which was still going on, was heavy upon poor Sexty.

"Oh, dear, no;—I wasn't thinking of refusing. I suppose a fellow may be a little surprised at such a thing."

"I don't know why you need be surprised, as such things are very common. I happen to have taken a share in a loan a little beyond my immediate means, and therefore want a few hundreds. There is no one I can ask with a better grace than you. If you ain't—afraid about it, just sign it."

"Oh, I ain't afraid," said Sexty, taking his pen and writing his name across the bill. But even before the signature was finished, when his eye was taken away from the face of his companion and fixed upon the disagreeable piece of paper beneath his hand, he repented of what he was doing. He almost arrested his signature half-way. He did hesitate, but had not pluck enough to stop his hand. "It does seem to be a d––––d odd transaction all the same," he said as he leaned back in his chair.

"It's the commonest thing in the world," said Lopez picking up the bill in a leisurely way, folding it and putting it into his pocket-book. "Have our names never been together on a bit of paper before?"

"When we both had something to make by it."

"You've nothing to make and nothing to lose by this. Good day and many thanks;—though I don't think so much of the affair as you seem to do." Then Ferdinand Lopez took his departure and Sexty Parker was left alone in his bewilderment.

"By George,—that's queer," he said to himself. "Who'd have thought of Lopez being hard up for a few hundred pounds? But it must be all right. He wouldn't have come in that fashion, if it hadn't been all right. I oughtn't to have done it though! A man ought never to do that kind of thing;—never,—never!" And Mr. Sextus Parker was much discontented with himself, so that when he got home that evening to the wife of his bosom and his little family at Ponders End, he by no means made himself agreeable to them. For that sum of £750 sat upon his bosom as he ate his supper, and lay upon his chest as he slept,—like a nightmare.

CHAPTER II

Everett Wharton

On that same day Lopez dined with his friend Everett Wharton at a new club called the Progress, of which they were both members. The Progress was certainly a new club, having as yet been open hardly more than three years; but still it was old enough to have seen many of the hopes of its early youth become dim with age and inaction. For the Progress had intended to do great things for the Liberal party,—or rather for political liberality in general,—and had in truth done little or nothing. It had been got up with considerable enthusiasm, and for a while certain fiery politicians had believed that through the instrumentality of this institution men of genius, and spirit, and natural power, but without wealth,—meaning always themselves,—would be supplied with sure seats in Parliament and a probable share in the Government. But no such results had been achieved. There had been a want of something,—some deficiency felt but not yet defined,—which had hitherto been fatal. The young men said it was because no old stager who knew the way of pulling the wires would come forward and put the club in the proper groove. The old men said it was because the young men were pretentious puppies. It was, however, not to be doubted that the party of Progress had become slack, and that the Liberal politicians of the country, although a special new club had been opened for the furtherance of their views, were not at present making much way. "What we want is organization," said one of the leading young men. But the organization was not as yet forthcoming.

The club, nevertheless, went on its way, like other clubs, and men dined and smoked and played billiards and pretended to read. Some few energetic members still hoped that a good day would come in which their grand ideas might be realised,—but as regarded the members generally, they were content to eat and

drink and play billiards. It was a fairly good club,—with a sprinkling of Liberal lordlings, a couple of dozen of members of Parliament who had been made to believe that they would neglect their party duties unless they paid their money, and the usual assortment of barristers, attorneys, city merchants and idle men. It was good enough at any rate for Ferdinand Lopez, who was particular about his dinner, and had an opinion of his own about wines. He had been heard to assert that, for real quiet comfort, there was not a club in London equal to it; but his hearers were not aware that in past days he had been blackballed at the T–––– and the G––––. These were accidents which Lopez had a gift of keeping in the background. His present companion, Everett Wharton, had, as well as himself, been an original member;—and Wharton had been one of those who had hoped to find in the club a stepping-stone to high political life, and who now talked often with idle energy of the need of organization.

"For myself," said Lopez, "I can conceive no vainer object of ambition than a seat in the British Parliament. What does any man gain by it? The few who are successful work very hard for little pay and no thanks,—or nearly equally hard for no pay and as little thanks. The many who fail sit idly for hours, undergoing the weary task of listening to platitudes, and enjoy in return the now absolutely valueless privilege of having M.P. written on their letters."

"Somebody must make laws for the country."

"I don't see the necessity. I think the country would do uncommonly well if it were to know that no old law would be altered or new law made for the next twenty years."

"You wouldn't have repealed the corn laws?"

"There are no corn laws to repeal now."

"Nor modify the income tax?"

"I would modify nothing. But at any rate, whether laws are to be altered or to be left, it is a comfort to me that I need not put my finger into that pie. There is one benefit indeed in being in the House."

"You can't be arrested."

"Well;—that, as far as it goes; and one other. It assists a man in getting a seat as the director of certain Companies. People are still such asses that they trust a Board of Directors made up of members of Parliament, and therefore of course members are made welcome. But if you want to get into the House why don't you arrange it with your father, instead of waiting for what the club may do for you?"

"My father wouldn't pay a shilling for such a purpose. He was never in the House himself."

"And therefore despises it."

"A little of that, perhaps. No man ever worked harder than he did, or, in his way, more successfully; and having seen one after another of his juniors become members of Parliament, while he stuck to the attorneys, there is perhaps a little jealousy about it."

"From what I see of the way you live at home, I should think your father would do anything for you,—with proper management. There is no doubt, I suppose, that he could afford it?"

"My father never in his life said anything to me about his own money affairs, though he says a great deal about mine. No man ever was closer than my father. But I believe that he could afford almost anything."

"I wish I had such a father," said Ferdinand Lopez. "I think that I should succeed in ascertaining the extent of his capabilities, and in making some use of them too."

Wharton nearly asked his friend,—almost summoned courage to ask him,—whether his father had done much for him. They were very intimate; and on one subject, in which Lopez was much interested, their confidence had been very close. But the younger and the weaker man of the two could not quite bring himself to the point of making an inquiry which he thought would be disagreeable. Lopez had never before, in all their intercourse, hinted at the possibility of his having or having had filial aspirations. He had been as though he had been created self-

sufficient, independent of mother's milk or father's money. Now the question might have been asked almost naturally. But it was not asked.

Everett Wharton was a trouble to his father,—but not an agonizing trouble, as are some sons. His faults were not of a nature to rob his father's cup of all its sweetness and to bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Old Wharton had never had to ask himself whether he should now, at length, let his son fall into the lowest abysses, or whether he should yet again struggle to put him on his legs, again forgive him, again pay his debts, again endeavour to forget dishonour, and place it all to the score of thoughtless youth. Had it been so, I think that, if not on the first or second fall, certainly on the third, the young man would have gone into the abyss; for Mr. Wharton was a stern man, and capable of coming to a clear conclusion on things that were nearest and even dearest to himself. But Everett Wharton had simply shown himself to be inefficient to earn his own bread. He had never declined even to do this,—but had simply been inefficient. He had not declared either by words or actions that as his father was a rich man, and as he was an only son, he would therefore do nothing. But he had tried his hand thrice, and in each case, after but short trial, had assured his father and his friends that the thing had not suited him. Leaving Oxford without a degree,—for the reading of the schools did not suit him,—he had gone into a banking-house, by no means as a mere clerk, but with an expressed proposition from his father, backed by the assent of a partner, that he should work his way up to wealth and a great commercial position. But six months taught him that banking was "an abomination," and he at once went into a course of reading with a barrister. He remained at this till he was called,—for a man may be called with very little continuous work. But after he was called the solitude of his chambers was too much for him, and at twenty-five he found that the Stock Exchange was the mart in the world for such talents and energies as he possessed. What was the nature of his failure during the year that he went into the city, was known only to himself and his father,—unless Ferdinand Lopez knew something of it also. But at six-and-twenty the Stock Exchange was also abandoned; and now, at eight-and-

twenty, Everett Wharton had discovered that a parliamentary career was that for which nature and his special genius had intended him. He had probably suggested this to his father, and had met with some cold rebuff.

Everett Wharton was a good-looking, manly fellow, six feet high, with broad shoulders, with light hair, wearing a large silky bushy beard, which made him look older than his years, who neither by his speech nor by his appearance would ever be taken for a fool, but who showed by the very actions of his body as well as by the play of his face, that he lacked firmness of purpose. He certainly was no fool. He had read much, and, though he generally forgot what he read, there were left with him from his readings certain nebulous lights, begotten by other men's thinking, which enabled him to talk on most subjects. It cannot be said of him that he did much thinking for himself;—but he thought that he thought. He believed of himself that he had gone rather deep into politics, and that he was entitled to call many statesmen asses because they did not see the things which he saw. He had the great question of labour, and all that refers to unions, strikes, and lock-outs, quite at his fingers' ends. He knew how the Church of England should be disestablished and recomposed. He was quite clear on questions of finance, and saw to a "t" how progress should be made towards communism, so that no violence should disturb that progress, and that in the due course of centuries all desire for personal property should be conquered and annihilated by a philanthropy so general as hardly to be accounted a virtue. In the meantime he could never contrive to pay his tailor's bill regularly out of the allowance of £400 a year which his father made him, and was always dreaming of the comforts of a handsome income.

He was a popular man certainly,—very popular with women, to whom he was always courteous, and generally liked by men, to whom he was genial and good-natured. Though he was not himself aware of the fact, he was very dear to his father, who in his own silent way almost admired and certainly liked the openness and guileless freedom of a character which was very opposite to his own. The father, though he had never said a word to flatter the son, did in truth give his offspring credit for greater talent than he

possessed, and, even when appearing to scorn them, would listen to the young man's diatribes almost with satisfaction. And Everett was very dear also to a sister, who was the only other living member of this branch of the Wharton family. Much will be said of her in these pages, and it is hoped that the reader may take an interest in her fate. But here, in speaking of the brother, it may suffice to say, that the sister, who was endowed with infinitely finer gifts than his, did give credit to the somewhat pretentious claims of her less noble brother.

Indeed it had been perhaps a misfortune with Everett Wharton that some people had believed in him,—and a further misfortune that some others had thought it worth their while to pretend to believe in him. Among the latter might probably be reckoned the friend with whom he was now dining at the Progress. A man may flatter another, as Lopez occasionally did flatter Wharton, without preconcerted falsehood. It suits one man to be well with another, and the one learns gradually and perhaps unconsciously the way to take advantage of the foibles of the other. Now it was most material to Lopez that he should stand well with all the members of the Wharton family, as he aspired to the hand of the daughter of the house. Of her regard he had already thought himself nearly sure. Of the father's sanction to such a marriage he had reason to be almost more than doubtful. But the brother was his friend,—and in such circumstances a man is almost justified in flattering a brother.

"I'll tell you what it is, Lopez," said Wharton, as they strolled out of the club together, a little after ten o'clock, "the men of the present day won't give themselves the trouble to occupy their minds with matters which have, or should have, real interest. Pope knew all about it when he said that 'The proper study of mankind is man.' But people don't read Pope now, or if they do they don't take the trouble to understand him."

"Men are too busy making money, my dear fellow."

"That's just it. Money's a very nice thing."

"Very nice," said Lopez.

"But the search after it is debasing. If a man could make money for four, or six, or even eight hours a day, and then wash his mind of the pursuit, as a clerk in an office washes the copies and ledgers out of his mind, then—"

"He would never make money in that way,—and keep it."

"And therefore the whole thing is debasing. A man ceases to care for the great interests of the world, or even to be aware of their existence, when his whole soul is in Spanish bonds. They wanted to make a banker of me, but I found that it would kill me."

"It would kill me, I think, if I had to confine myself to Spanish bonds."

"You know what I mean. You at any rate can understand me, though I fear you are too far gone to abandon the idea of making a fortune."

"I would abandon it to-morrow if I could come into a fortune ready made. A man must at any rate eat."

"Yes;—he must eat. But I am not quite sure," said Wharton thoughtfully, "that he need think about what he eats."

"Unless the beef is sent up without horse radish!" It had happened that when the two men sat down to their dinner the insufficient quantity of that vegetable supplied by the steward of the club had been all consumed, and Wharton had complained of the grievance.

"A man has a right to that for which he has paid," said Wharton, with mock solemnity, "and if he passes over laches of that nature without observation he does an injury to humanity at large. I'm not going to be caught in a trap, you know, because I like horse radish with my beef. Well, I can't go farther out of my way, as I have a deal of reading to do before I court my Morpheus. If you'll take my advice you'll go straight to the governor. Whatever Emily may feel I don't think she'll say much to encourage you unless you go about it after that fashion. She has prim notions of her own, which perhaps are not after all so much amiss when a man wants to marry a girl."

"God forbid that I should think that anything about your sister was amiss!"

"I don't think there is much myself. Women are generally superficial,—but some are honestly superficial and some dishonestly. Emily at any rate is honest."

"Stop half a moment." Then they sauntered arm in arm down the broad pavement leading from Pall Mall to the Duke of York's column. "I wish I could make out your father more clearly. He is always civil to me, but he has a cold way of looking at me which makes me think I am not in his good books."

"He is like that to everybody."

"I never seem to get beyond the skin with him. You must have heard him speak of me in my absence?"

"He never says very much about anybody."

"But a word would let me know how the land lies. You know me well enough to be aware that I am the last man to be curious as to what others think of me. Indeed I do not care about it as much as a man should do. I am utterly indifferent to the opinion of the world at large, and would never object to the company of a pleasant person because the pleasant person abused me behind my back. What I value is the pleasantness of the man and not his liking or disliking for myself. But here the dearest aim of my life is concerned, and I might be guided either this way or that, to my great advantage, by knowing whether I stand well or ill with him."

"You have dined three times within the last three months in Manchester Square, and I don't know any other man,—certainly no other young man,—who has had such strong proof of intimacy from my father."

"Yes, and I know my advantages. But I have been there as your friend, not as his."

"He doesn't care twopence about my friends. I wanted to give Charlie Skate a dinner, but my father wouldn't have him at any price."

"Charlie Skate is out at elbows, and bets at billiards. I am respectable,—or at any rate your father thinks so. Your father is more anxious about you than you are aware of, and wishes to make his house pleasant to you as long as he can do so to your advantage. As far as you are concerned he rather approves of me, fancying that my turn for making money is stronger than my turn for spending it. Nevertheless, he looks upon me as a friend of yours rather than his own. Though he has given me three dinners in three months,—and I own the greatness of his hospitality,—I don't suppose he ever said a word in my favour. I wish I knew what he does say."

"He says he knows nothing about you."

"Oh;—that's it, is it? Then he can know no harm. When next he says so ask him of how many of the men who dine at his house he can say as much. Good night;—I won't keep you any longer. But I can tell you this;—if between us we can manage to handle him rightly, you may get your seat in Parliament and I may get my wife;—that is, of course, if she will have me."

Then they parted, but Lopez remained in the pathway, walking up and down by the side of the old military club, thinking of things. He certainly knew his friend, the younger Wharton, intimately, appreciating the man's good qualities, and being fully aware of the man's weakness. By his questions he had extracted quite enough to assure himself that Emily's father would be adverse to his proposition. He had not felt much doubt before, but now he was certain. "He doesn't know much about me," he said, musing to himself. "Well, no; he doesn't;—and there isn't very much that I can tell him. Of course he's wise,—as wisdom goes. But then, wise men do do foolish things at intervals. The discreetest of city bankers are talked out of their money; the most scrupulous of matrons are talked out of their virtue; the most experienced of statesmen are talked out of their principles. And who can really calculate chances? Men who lead forlorn hopes generally push through without being wounded;—and the fifth or sixth heir comes to a title." So much he said, palpably, though to himself, with his inner voice. Then,—impalpably, with no even inner voice,—he asked himself what chance he might have of prevailing with the girl

herself; and he almost ventured to tell himself that in that direction he need not despair.

In very truth he loved the girl and reverenced her, believing her to be better and higher and nobler than other human beings,—as a man does when he is in love; and so believing, he had those doubts as to his own success which such reverence produces.

CHAPTER III
Mr. Abel Wharton, Q.C.

Lopez was not a man to let grass grow under his feet when he had anything to do. When he was tired of walking backwards and forwards over the same bit of pavement, subject all the while to a cold east wind, he went home and thought of the same matter while he lay in bed. Even were he to get the girl's assurances of love, without the father's consent he might find himself farther from his object than ever. Mr. Wharton was a man of old fashions, who would think himself ill-used and his daughter ill-used, and who would think also that a general offence would have been committed against good social manners, if his daughter were to be asked for her hand without his previous consent. Should he absolutely refuse,—why then the battle, though it would be a desperate battle, might perhaps be fought with other strategy; but, giving to the matter his best consideration, Lopez thought it expedient to go at once to the father. In doing this he would have no silly tremors. Whatever he might feel in speaking to the girl, he had sufficient self-confidence to be able to ask the father, if not with assurance, at any rate without trepidation. It was, he thought, probable that the father, at the first attack, would neither altogether accede, or altogether refuse. The disposition of the man was averse to the probability of an absolute reply at the first moment. The lover imagined that it might be possible for him to take advantage of the period of doubt which would thus be created.

Mr. Wharton was and had for a great many years been a barrister practising in the Equity Courts,—or rather in one Equity Court, for throughout a life's work now extending to nearly fifty years, he had hardly ever gone out of the single Vice-Chancellor's Court which was much better known by Mr. Wharton's name than by that of the less eminent judge who now sat there. His had been a very peculiar, a very toilsome, but yet probably a very satisfactory

life. He had begun his practice early, and had worked in a stuff gown till he was nearly sixty. At that time he had amassed a large fortune, mainly from his profession, but partly also by the careful use of his own small patrimony and by his wife's money. Men knew that he was rich, but no one knew the extent of his wealth. When he submitted to take a silk gown, he declared among his friends that he did so as a step preparatory to his retirement. The altered method of work would not suit him at his age, nor,—as he said,—would it be profitable. He would take his silk as an honour for his declining years, so that he might become a bencher at his Inn. But he had now been working for the last twelve or fourteen years with his silk gown,—almost as hard as in younger days, and with pecuniary results almost as serviceable; and though from month to month he declared his intention of taking no fresh briefs, and though he did now occasionally refuse work, still he was there with his mind as clear as ever, and with his body apparently as little affected by fatigue.

Mr. Wharton had not married till he was forty, and his wife had now been two years dead. He had had six children,—of whom but two were now left to make a household for his old age. He had been nearly fifty when his youngest daughter was born, and was therefore now an old father of a young child. But he was one of those men who, as in youth they are never very young, so in age are they never very old. He could still ride his cob in the park jauntily; and did so carefully every morning in his life, after an early cup of tea and before his breakfast. And he could walk home from his chambers every day, and on Sundays could do the round of the parks on foot. Twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, he dined at that old law club, the Eldon, and played whist after dinner till twelve o'clock. This was the great dissipation and, I think, the chief charm of his life. In the middle of August he and his daughter usually went for a month to Wharton Hall in Herefordshire, the seat of his cousin Sir Alured Wharton;—and this was the one duty of his life which was a burthen to him. But he had been made to believe that it was essential to his health, and to his wife's, and then to his girl's health, that he should every summer leave town for a time,—and where else was he to go? Sir Alured was a relation and a

gentleman. Emily liked Wharton Hall. It was the proper thing. He hated Wharton Hall, but then he did not know any place out of London that he would not hate worse. He had once been induced to go up the Rhine, but had never repeated the experiment of foreign travel. Emily sometimes went abroad with her cousins, during which periods it was supposed that the old lawyer spent a good deal of his time at the Eldon. He was a spare, thin, strongly made man, with spare light brown hair, hardly yet grizzled, with small grey whiskers, clear eyes, bushy eyebrows, with a long ugly nose, on which young barristers had been heard to declare that you might hang a small kettle, and with considerable vehemence of talk when he was opposed in argument. For, with all his well-known coolness of temper, Mr. Wharton could become very hot in an argument, when the nature of the case in hand required heat. On one subject all who knew him were agreed. He was a thorough lawyer. Many doubted his eloquence, and some declared that he had known well the extent of his own powers in abstaining from seeking the higher honours of his profession; but no one doubted his law. He had once written a book,—on the mortgage of stocks in trade; but that had been in early life, and he had never since dabbled in literature.

He was certainly a man of whom men were generally afraid. At the whist-table no one would venture to scold him. In the court no one ever contradicted him. In his own house, though he was very quiet, the servants dreaded to offend him, and were attentive to his slightest behests. When he condescended to ride with any acquaintance in the park, it was always acknowledged that old Wharton was to regulate the pace. His name was Abel, and all his life he had been known as able Abe;—a silent, far-seeing, close-fisted, just old man, who was not, however, by any means deficient in sympathy either with the sufferings or with the joys of humanity.

It was Easter time and the courts were not sitting, but Mr. Wharton was in his chamber as a matter of course at ten o'clock. He knew no real homely comforts elsewhere,—unless at the whist-table at the Eldon. He ate and drank and slept in his own house in Manchester Square, but he could hardly be said to live there. It was not there that his mind was awake, and that the powers of the man

were exercised. When he came up from the dining-room to join his daughter after dinner he would get her to sing him a song, and would then seat himself with a book. But he never read in his own house, invariably falling into a sweet and placid slumber, from which he was never disturbed till his daughter kissed him as she went to bed. Then he would walk about the room, and look at his watch, and shuffle uneasily through half-an-hour till his conscience allowed him to take himself to his chamber. He was a man of no pursuits in his own house. But from ten in the morning till five, or often till six, in the evening, his mind was active in some work. It was not now all law, as it used to be. In the drawer of the old piece of furniture which stood just at the right hand of his own arm-chair there were various books hidden away, which he was sometimes ashamed to have seen by his clients,—poetry and novels and even fairy tales. For there was nothing Mr. Wharton could not read in his chambers, though there was nothing that he could read in his own house. He had a large pleasant room in which to sit, looking out from the ground floor of Stone Buildings on to the gardens belonging to the Inn,—and here, in the centre of the metropolis, but in perfect quiet as far as the outside world was concerned, he had lived and still lived his life.

At about noon on the day following that on which Lopez had made his sudden swoop on Mr. Parker and had then dined with Everett Wharton, he called at Stone Buildings and was shown into the lawyer's room. His quick eye at once discovered the book which Mr. Wharton half hid away, and saw upon it Mr. Mudie's suspicious ticket. Barristers certainly never get their law books from Mudie, and Lopez at once knew that his hoped-for father-in-law had been reading a novel. He had not suspected such weakness, but argued well from it for the business he had in hand. There must be a soft spot to be found about the heart of an old lawyer who spent his mornings in such occupation. "How do you do, sir?" said Mr. Wharton rising from his seat. "I hope I see you well, sir." Though he had been reading a novel his tone and manner were very cold. Lopez had never been in Stone Buildings before, and was not quite sure that he might not have committed some

offence in coming there. "Take a seat, Mr. Lopez. Is there anything I can do for you in my way?"

There was a great deal that could be done "in his way" as father;—but how was it to be introduced and the case made clear? Lopez did not know whether the old man had as yet ever suspected such a feeling as that which he now intended to declare. He had been intimate at the house in Manchester Square, and had certainly ingratiated himself very closely with a certain Mrs. Roby, who had been Mrs. Wharton's sister and constant companion, who lived in Berkeley Street, close round the corner from Manchester Square, and spent very much of her time with Emily Wharton. They were together daily, as though Mrs. Roby had assumed the part of a second mother, and Lopez was well aware that Mrs. Roby knew of his love. If there was real confidence between Mrs. Roby and the old lawyer, the old lawyer must know it also;—but as to that Lopez felt that he was in the dark.

The task of speaking to an old father is not unpleasant when the lover knows that he has been smiled upon, and, in fact, approved for the last six months. He is going to be patted on the back, and made much of, and received into the family. He is to be told that his Mary or his Augusta has been the best daughter in the world and will therefore certainly be the best wife, and he himself will probably on that special occasion be spoken of with unqualified praise,—and all will be pleasant. But the subject is one very difficult to broach when no previous light has been thrown on it. Ferdinand Lopez, however, was not the man to stand shivering on the brink when a plunge was necessary,—and therefore he made his plunge. "Mr. Wharton, I have taken the liberty to call upon you here, because I want to speak to you about your daughter."

"About my daughter!" The old man's surprise was quite genuine. Of course when he had given himself a moment to think, he knew what must be the nature of his visitor's communication. But up to that moment he had never mixed his daughter and Ferdinand Lopez in his thoughts together. And now, the idea having come upon him, he looked at the aspirant with severe and unpleasant

eyes. It was manifest to the aspirant that the first flash of the thing was painful to the father.

"Yes, sir. I know how great is my presumption. But, yet, having ventured, I will hardly say to entertain a hope, but to have come to such a state that I can only be happy by hoping, I have thought it best to come to you at once."

"Does she know anything of this?"

"Of my visit to you? Nothing."

"Of your intentions;—of your suit generally? Am I to understand that this has any sanction from her?"

"None at all."

"Have you told her anything of it?"

"Not a word. I come to ask you for your permission to address her."

"You mean that she has no knowledge whatever of your—your preference for her."

"I cannot say that. It is hardly possible that I should have learned to love her as I do without some consciousness on her part that it is so."

"What I mean is, without any beating about the bush,—have you been making love to her?"

"Who is to say in what making love consists, Mr. Wharton?"

"D———— it, sir, a gentleman knows. A gentleman knows whether he has been playing on a girl's feelings, and a gentleman, when he is asked as I have asked you, will at any rate tell the truth. I don't want any definitions. Have you been making love to her?"

"I think, Mr. Wharton, that I have behaved like a gentleman; and that you will acknowledge at least so much when you come to know exactly what I have done and what I have not done. I have endeavoured to commend myself to your daughter, but I have never spoken a word of love to her."

"Does Everett know of all this?"

"Yes."

"And has he encouraged it?"

"He knows of it, because he is my most intimate friend. Whoever the lady might have been, I should have told him. He is attached to me, and would not, I think, on his own account, object to call me his brother. I spoke to him yesterday on the matter very plainly, and he told me that I ought certainly to see you first. I quite agreed with him, and therefore I am here. There has certainly been nothing in his conduct to make you angry, and I do not think that there has been anything in mine."

There was a dignity of demeanour and a quiet assured courage which had its effect upon the old lawyer. He felt that he could not storm and talk in ambiguous language of what a "gentleman" would or would not do. He might disapprove of this man altogether as a son-in-law,—and at the present moment he thought that he did,—but still the man was entitled to a civil answer. How were lovers to approach the ladies of their love in any manner more respectful than this? "Mr. Lopez," he said, "you must forgive me if I say that you are comparatively a stranger to us."

"That is an accident which would be easily cured if your will in that direction were as good as mine."

"But, perhaps, it isn't. One has to be explicit in these matters. A daughter's happiness is a very serious consideration,—and some people, among whom I confess that I am one, consider that like should marry like. I should wish to see my daughter marry,—not only in my own sphere, neither higher nor lower,—but with some one of my own class."

"I hardly know, Mr. Wharton, whether that is intended to exclude me."

"Well,—to tell you the truth I know nothing about you. I don't know who your father was,—whether he was an Englishman, whether he was a Christian, whether he was a Protestant,—not even whether he was a gentleman. These are questions which I should not dream of asking under any other circumstances;—would be matters with which I should have no possible concern, if

you were simply an acquaintance. But when you talk to a man about his daughter—!"

"I acknowledge freely your right of inquiry."

"And I know nothing of your means;—nothing whatever. I understand that you live as a man of fortune, but I presume that you earn your bread. I know nothing of the way in which you earn it, nothing of the certainty or amount of your means."

"Those things are of course matters for inquiry; but may I presume that you have no objection which satisfactory answers to such questions may not remove?"

"I shall never willingly give my daughter to any one who is not the son of an English gentleman. It may be a prejudice, but that is my feeling."

"My father was certainly not an English gentleman. He was a Portuguese." In admitting this, and in thus subjecting himself at once to one clearly-stated ground of objection,—the objection being one which, though admitted, carried with itself neither fault nor disgrace,—Lopez felt that he had got a certain advantage. He could not get over the fact that he was the son of a Portuguese parent, but by admitting that openly he thought he might avoid present discussion on matters which might, perhaps, be more disagreeable, but to which he need not allude if the accident of his birth were to be taken by the father as settling the question. "My mother was an English lady," he added, "but my father certainly was not an Englishman. I never had the common happiness of knowing either of them. I was an orphan before I understood what it was to have a parent."

This was said with a pathos which for the moment stopped the expression of any further harsh criticism from the lawyer. Mr. Wharton could not instantly repeat his objection to a parentage which was matter for such melancholy reflections; but he felt at the same time that as he had luckily landed himself on a positive and undeniable ground of objection to a match which was distasteful to him, it would be unwise for him to go to other matters in which he might be less successful. By doing so, he would seem to abandon

the ground which he had already made good. He thought it probable that the man might have an adequate income, and yet he did not wish to welcome him as a son-in-law. He thought it possible that the Portuguese father might be a Portuguese nobleman, and therefore one whom he would be driven to admit to have been in some sort a gentleman;—but yet this man who was now in his presence and whom he continued to scan with the closest observation, was not what he called a gentleman. The foreign blood was proved, and that would suffice. As he looked at Lopez he thought that he detected Jewish signs, but he was afraid to make any allusion to religion, lest Lopez should declare that his ancestors had been noted as Christians since St. James first preached in the Peninsula.

"I was educated altogether in England," continued Lopez, "till I was sent to a German university in the idea that the languages of the continent are not generally well learned in this country. I can never be sufficiently thankful to my guardian for doing so."

"I dare say;—I dare say. French and German are very useful. I have a prejudice of my own in favour of Greek and Latin."

"But I rather fancy I picked up more Greek and Latin at Bohn than I should have got here, had I stuck to nothing else."

"I dare say;—I dare say. You may be an Admirable Crichton for what I know."

"I have not intended to make any boast, sir, but simply to vindicate those who had the care of my education. If you have no objection except that founded on my birth, which is an accident—"

"When one man is a peer and another a ploughman, that is an accident. One doesn't find fault with the ploughman, but one doesn't ask him to dinner."

"But my accident," said Lopez smiling, "is one which you would hardly discover unless you were told. Had I called myself Talbot you would not know but that I was as good an Englishman as yourself."

"A man of course may be taken in by falsehoods," said the lawyer.

"If you have no other objection than that raised, I hope you will allow me to visit in Manchester Square."

"There may be ten thousand other objections, Mr. Lopez, but I really think that the one is enough. Of course I know nothing of my daughter's feelings. I should imagine that the matter is as strange to her as it is to me. But I cannot give you anything like encouragement. If I am ever to have a son-in-law I should wish to have an English son-in-law. I do not even know what your profession is."

"I am engaged in foreign loans."

"Very precarious I should think. A sort of gambling; isn't it?"

"It is the business by which many of the greatest mercantile houses in the city have been made."

"I dare say;—I dare say;—and by which they come to ruin. I have the greatest respect in the world for mercantile enterprise, and have had as much to do as most men with mercantile questions. But I ain't sure that I wish to marry my daughter in the City. Of course it's all prejudice. I won't deny that on general subjects I can give as much latitude as any man; but when one's own hearth is attacked—"

"Surely such a proposition as mine, Mr. Wharton, is no attack!"

"In my sense it is. When a man proposes to assault and invade the very kernel of another man's heart, to share with him, and indeed to take from him, the very dearest of his possessions, to become part and parcel with him either for infinite good or infinite evil, then a man has a right to guard even his prejudices as precious bulwarks." Mr. Wharton as he said this was walking about the room with his hands in his trowsers pockets. "I have always been for absolute toleration in matters of religion,—have always advocated admission of Roman Catholics and Jews into Parliament, and even to the Bench. In ordinary life I never question a man's religion. It is nothing to me whether he believes in

Mahomet, or has no belief at all. But when a man comes to me for my daughter—"

"I have always belonged to the Church of England," said Ferdinand Lopez.

"Lopez is at any rate a bad name to go to a Protestant church with, and I don't want my daughter to bear it. I am very frank with you, as in such a matter men ought to understand each other. Personally I have liked you well enough and have been glad to see you at my house. Everett and you have seemed to be friends, and I have had no objection to make. But marrying into a family is a very serious thing indeed."

"No man feels that more strongly than I do, Mr. Wharton."

"There had better be an end of it."

"Even though I should be happy enough to obtain her favour?"

"I can't think that she cares about you. I don't think it for a moment. You say you haven't spoken to her, and I am sure she's not a girl to throw herself at a man's head. I don't approve it, and I think it had better fall to the ground. It must fall to the ground."

"I wish you would give me a reason."

"Because you are not English."

"But I am English. My father was a foreigner."

"It doesn't suit my ideas. I suppose I may have my own ideas about my own family, Mr. Lopez? I feel perfectly certain that my child will do nothing to displease me, and this would displease me. If we were to talk for an hour I could say nothing further."

"I hope that I may be able to present things to you in an aspect so altered," said Lopez as he prepared to take his leave, "as to make you change your mind."

"Possibly;—possibly," said Wharton, "but I do not think it probable. Good morning to you, sir. If I have said anything that has seemed to be unkind, put it down to my anxiety as a father and not to my conduct as a man." Then the door was closed behind his visitor, and Mr. Wharton was left walking up and down his room

alone. He was by no means satisfied with himself. He felt that he had been rude and at the same time not decisive. He had not explained to the man as he would wish to have done, that it was monstrous and out of the question that a daughter of the Whartons, one of the oldest families in England, should be given to a friendless Portuguese,—a probable Jew,—about whom nobody knew anything. Then he remembered that sooner or later his girl would have at least £60,000, a fact of which no human being but himself was aware. Would it not be well that somebody should be made aware of it, so that his girl might have the chance of suitors preferable to this swarthy son of Judah? He began to be afraid, as he thought of it, that he was not managing his matters well. How would it be with him if he should find that the girl was really in love with this swarthy son of Judah? He had never inquired about his girl's heart, though there was one to whom he hoped that his girl's heart might some day be given. He almost made up his mind to go home at once, so anxious was he. But the prospect of having to spend an entire afternoon in Manchester Square was too much for him, and he remained in his chamber till the usual hour.

Lopez, as he returned from Lincoln's Inn, westward to his club, was, on the whole, contented with the interview. He had expected opposition. He had not thought that the cherry would fall easily into his mouth. But the conversation generally had not taken those turns which he had thought would be most detrimental to him.

CHAPTER IV

Mrs. Roby

Mr. Wharton, as he walked home, remembered that Mrs. Roby was to dine at his house on that evening. During the remainder of the day, after the departure of Lopez, he had been unable to take his mind from the consideration of the proposition made to him. He had tried the novel, and he had tried Huggins *v.* the Trustees of the Charity of St. Ambox, a case of undeniable importance in which he was engaged on the part of Huggins, but neither was sufficiently powerful to divert his thoughts. Throughout the morning he was imagining what he would say to Emily about this lover of hers,—in what way he would commence the conversation, and how he would express his own opinion should he find that she was in any degree favourable to the man. Should she altogether ignore the man's pretensions, there would be no difficulty. But if she hesitated,—if, as was certainly possible, she should show any partiality for the man, then there would be a knot which would require untying. Hitherto the intercourse between the father and daughter had been simple and pleasant. He had given her everything she asked for, and she had obeyed him in all the very few matters as to which he had demanded obedience. Questions of discipline, as far as there had been any discipline, had generally been left to Mrs. Roby. Mrs. Roby was to dine in Manchester Square to-day, and perhaps it would be well that he should have a few words with Mrs. Roby before he spoke to his daughter.

Mrs. Roby had a husband, but Mr. Roby had not been asked to dine in the Square on this occasion. Mrs. Roby dined in the Square very often, but Mr. Roby very seldom,—not probably above once a year, on some special occasion. He and Mr. Wharton had married sisters, but they were quite unlike in character and had never become friends. Mrs. Wharton had been nearly twenty years

younger than her husband; Mrs. Roby had been six or seven years younger than her sister; and Mr. Roby was a year or two younger than his wife. The two men therefore belonged to different periods of life, Mr. Roby at the present time being a florid youth of forty. He had a moderate fortune, inherited from his mother, of which he was sufficiently careful; but he loved races, and read sporting papers; he was addicted to hunting and billiards; he shot pigeons, and,—so Mr. Wharton had declared calumniously more than once to an intimate friend,—had not an H in his vocabulary. The poor man did drop an aspirate now and again; but he knew his defect and strove hard, and with fair average success, to overcome it. But Mr. Wharton did not love him, and they were not friends. Perhaps neither did Mrs. Roby love him very ardently. She was at any rate almost always willing to leave her own house to come to the Square, and on such occasions Mr. Roby was always willing to dine at the Nimrod, the club which it delighted him to frequent.

Mr. Wharton, on entering his own house, met his son on the staircase. "Do you dine at home to-day, Everett?"

"Well, sir; no, sir. I don't think I do. I think I half promised to dine with a fellow at the club."

"Don't you think you'd make things meet more easily about the end of the year if you dined oftener here, where you have nothing to pay, and less frequently at the club, where you pay for everything?"

"But what I should save you would lose, sir. That's the way I look at it."

"Then I advise you to look at it the other way, and leave me to take care of myself. Come in here, I want to speak to you." Everett followed his father into a dingy back parlour, which was fitted up with book shelves and was generally called the study, but which was gloomy and comfortless because it was seldom used. "I have had your friend Lopez with me at my chambers to-day. I don't like your friend Lopez."

"I am sorry for that, sir."

"He is a man as to whom I should wish to have a good deal of evidence before I would trust him to be what he seems to be. I dare say he's clever."

"I think he's more than clever."

"I dare say;—and well instructed in some respects."

"I believe him to be a thorough linguist, sir."

"I dare say. I remember a waiter at an hotel in Holborn who could speak seven languages. It's an accomplishment very necessary for a Courier or a Queen's Messenger."

"You don't mean to say, sir, that you disregard foreign languages?"

"I have said nothing of the kind. But in my estimation they don't stand in the place of principles, or a profession, or birth, or country. I fancy there has been some conversation between you about your sister."

"Certainly there has."

"A young man should be very chary how he speaks to another man, to a stranger, about his sister. A sister's name should be too sacred for club talk."

"Club talk! Good heavens, sir; you don't think that I have spoken of Emily in that way? There isn't a man in London has a higher respect for his sister than I have for mine. This man, by no means in a light way but with all seriousness, has told me that he was attached to Emily; and I, believing him to be a gentleman and well to do in the world, have referred him to you. Can that have been wrong?"

"I don't know how he's 'to do', as you call it. I haven't asked, and I don't mean to ask. But I doubt his being a gentleman. He is not an English gentleman. What was his father?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Or his mother?"

"He has never mentioned her to me."

"Nor his family; nor anything of their antecedents? He is a man fallen out of the moon. All that is nothing to us as passing acquaintances. Between men such ignorance should I think bar absolute intimacy;—but that may be a matter of taste. But it should be held to be utterly antagonistic to any such alliance as that of marriage. He seems to be a friend of yours. You had better make him understand that it is quite out of the question. I have told him so, and you had better repeat it." So saying, Mr. Wharton went upstairs to dress, and Everett, having received his father's instructions, went away to the club.

When Mr. Wharton reached the drawing-room, he found Mrs. Roby alone, and he at once resolved to discuss the matter with her before he spoke to his daughter. "Harriet," he said abruptly, "do you know anything of one Mr. Lopez?"

"Mr. Lopez! Oh yes, I know him."

"Do you mean that he is an intimate friend?"

"As friends go in London, he is. He comes to our house, and I think that he hunts with Dick." Dick was Mr. Roby.

"That's a recommendation."

"Well, Mr. Wharton, I hardly know what you mean by that," said Mrs. Roby, smiling. "I don't think, my husband will do Mr. Lopez any harm; and I am sure Mr. Lopez won't do my husband any."

"I dare say not. But that's not the question. Roby can take care of himself."

"Quite so."

"And so I dare say can Mr. Lopez." At this moment Emily entered the room. "My dear," said her father, "I am speaking to your aunt. Would you mind going downstairs and waiting for us? Tell them we shall be ready for dinner in ten minutes." Then Emily passed out of the room, and Mrs. Roby assumed a grave demeanour. "The man we are speaking of has been to me and has made an offer for Emily." As he said this he looked anxiously into his sister-in-law's face, in order that he might tell from that how far she favoured the idea of such a marriage,—and he thought that he

perceived at once that she was not averse to it. "You know it is quite out of the question," he continued.

"I don't know why it should be out of the question. But of course your opinion would have great weight with Emily."

"Great weight! Well;—I should hope so. If not, I do not know whose opinion is to have weight. In the first place the man is a foreigner."

"Oh, no;—he is English. But if he were a foreigner: many English girls marry foreigners."

"My daughter shall not;—not with my permission. You have not encouraged him, I hope."

"I have not interfered at all," said Mrs. Roby. But this was a lie. Mrs. Roby had interfered. Mrs. Roby, in discussing the merits and character of the lover with the young lady, had always lent herself to the lover's aid,—and had condescended to accept from the lover various presents which she could hardly have taken had she been hostile to him.

"And now tell me about herself. Has she seen him often?"

"Why, Mr. Wharton, he has dined here, in the house, over and over again. I thought that you were encouraging him."

"Heavens and earth!"

"Of course she has seen him. When a man dines at a house he is bound to call. Of course he has called,—I don't know how often. And she has met him round the corner."—"Round the corner," in Manchester Square, meant Mrs. Roby's house in Berkeley Street.—"Last Sunday they were at the Zoo together. Dick got them tickets. I thought you knew all about it."

"Do you mean that my daughter went to the Zoological Gardens alone with this man?" the father asked in dismay.

"Dick was with them. I should have gone, only I had a headache. Did you not know she went?"

"Yes;—I heard about the Gardens. But I heard nothing of the man."

"I thought, Mr. Wharton, you were all in his favour."

"I am not at all in his favour. I dislike him particularly. For anything I know he may have sold pencils about the streets like any other Jew-boy."

"He goes to church just as you do,—that is, if he goes anywhere; which I dare say he does about as often as yourself, Mr. Wharton." Now Mr. Wharton, though he was a thorough and perhaps a bigoted member of the Church of England, was not fond of going to church.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, pressing his hands together, and looking very seriously into his sister-in-law's face; "do you mean to tell me that she—likes him?"

"Yes;—I think she does like him."

"You don't mean to say—she's in love with him?"

"She has never told me that she is. Young ladies are shy of making such assertions as to their own feelings before the due time for doing so has come. I think she prefers him to anybody else; and that were he to propose to herself, she would give him her consent to go to you."

"He shall never enter this house again," said Mr. Wharton passionately.

"You must arrange that with her. If you have so strong an objection to him, I wonder that you should have had him here at all."

"How was I to know? God bless my soul!—just because a man was allowed to dine here once or twice! Upon my word, it's too bad!"

"Papa, won't you and aunt come down to dinner?" said Emily, opening the door gently. Then they went down to dinner, and during the meal nothing was said about Mr. Lopez. But they were not very merry together, and poor Emily felt sure that her own affairs had been discussed in a troublesome manner.

CHAPTER V

"No One Knows Anything About Him"

Neither at dinner, on that evening at Manchester Square, nor after dinner, as long as Mrs. Roby remained in the house, was a word said about Lopez by Mr. Wharton. He remained longer than usual with his bottle of port wine in the dining-room; and when he went upstairs, he sat himself down and fell asleep, almost without a sign. He did not ask for a song, nor did Emily offer to sing. But as soon as Mrs. Roby was gone,—and Mrs. Roby went home, round the corner, somewhat earlier than usual,—then Mr. Wharton woke up instantly and made inquiry of his daughter.

There had, however, been a few words spoken on the subject between Mrs. Roby and her niece which had served to prepare Emily for what was coming. "Lopez has been to your father," said Mrs. Roby, in a voice not specially encouraging for such an occasion. Then she paused a moment; but her niece said nothing, and she continued, "Yes,—and your father has been blaming me,—as if I had done anything! If he did not mean you to choose for yourself, why didn't he keep a closer look-out?"

"I haven't chosen any one, Aunt Harriet."

"Well;—to speak fairly, I thought you had; and I have nothing to say against your choice. As young men go, I think Mr. Lopez is as good as the best of them. I don't know why you shouldn't have him. Of course you'll have money, but then I suppose he makes a large income himself. As to Mr. Fletcher, you don't care a bit about him."

"Not in that way, certainly."

"No doubt your papa will have it out with you just now; so you had better make up your mind what you will say to him. If you really like the man, I don't see why you shouldn't say so, and stick

to it. He has made a regular offer, and girls in these days are not expected to be their father's slaves." Emily said nothing further to her aunt on that occasion, but finding that she must in truth "have it out" with her father presently, gave herself up to reflection. It might probably be the case that the whole condition of her future life would depend on the way in which she might now "have it out" with her father.

I would not wish the reader to be prejudiced against Miss Wharton by the not unnatural feeling which may perhaps be felt in regard to the aunt. Mrs. Roby was pleased with little intrigues, was addicted to the amusement of fostering love affairs, was fond of being thought to be useful in such matters, and was not averse to having presents given to her. She had married a vulgar man; and, though she had not become like the man, she had become vulgar. She was not an eligible companion for Mr. Wharton's daughter,—a matter as to which the father had not given himself proper opportunities of learning the facts. An aunt in his close neighbourhood was so great a comfort to him,—so ready and so natural an assistance to him in his difficulties! But Emily Wharton was not in the least like her aunt, nor had Mrs. Wharton been at all like Mrs. Roby. No doubt the contact was dangerous. Injury had perhaps already been done. It may be that some slightest soil had already marred the pure white of the girl's natural character. But if so, the stain was as yet too impalpable to be visible to ordinary eyes.

Emily Wharton was a tall, fair girl, with grey eyes, rather exceeding the average proportions as well as height of women. Her features were regular and handsome, and her form was perfect; but it was by her manner and her voice that she conquered, rather than by her beauty,—by those gifts and by a clearness of intellect joined with that feminine sweetness which has its most frequent foundation in self-denial. Those who knew her well, and had become attached to her, were apt to endow her with all virtues, and to give her credit for a loveliness which strangers did not find on her face. But as we do not light up our houses with our brightest lamps for all comers, so neither did she emit from her eyes their brightest sparks till special occasion for such shining had arisen. To

those who were allowed to love her no woman was more lovable. There was innate in her an appreciation of her own position as a woman, and with it a principle of self-denial as a human being, which it was beyond the power of any Mrs. Roby to destroy or even to defile by small stains.

Like other girls she had been taught to presume that it was her destiny to be married, and like other girls she had thought much about her destiny. A young man generally regards it as his destiny either to succeed or to fail in the world, and he thinks about that. To him marriage, when it comes, is an accident to which he has hardly as yet given a thought. But to the girl the matrimony which is or is not to be her destiny contains within itself the only success or failure which she anticipates. The young man may become Lord Chancellor, or at any rate earn his bread comfortably as a county court judge. But the girl can look forward to little else than the chance of having a good man for her husband;—a good man, or if her tastes lie in that direction, a rich man. Emily Wharton had doubtless thought about these things, and she sincerely believed that she had found the good man in Ferdinand Lopez.

The man, certainly, was one strangely endowed with the power of creating a belief. When going to Mr. Wharton at his chambers he had not intended to cheat the lawyer into any erroneous idea about his family, but he had resolved that he would so discuss the questions of his own condition, which would probably be raised, as to leave upon the old man's mind an unfounded conviction that in regard to money and income he had no reason to fear question. Not a word had been said about his money or his income. And Mr. Wharton had felt himself bound to abstain from allusion to such matters from an assured feeling that he could not in that direction plant an enduring objection. In this way Lopez had carried his point with Mr. Wharton. He had convinced Mrs. Roby that among all the girl's attractions the greatest attraction for him was the fact that she was Mrs. Roby's niece. He had made Emily herself believe that the one strong passion of his life was his love for her, and this he had done without ever having asked for her love. And he had even taken the trouble to allure Dick, and had listened to and had talked whole pages out of *Bell's Life*. On his own behalf it must be

acknowledged that he did love the girl, as well perhaps as he was capable of loving any one;—but he had found out many particulars as to Mr. Wharton's money before he had allowed himself to love her.

As soon as Mrs. Roby had gathered up her knitting, and declared, as she always did on such occasions, that she could go round the corner without having any one to look after her, Mr. Wharton began. "Emily, my dear, come here." Then she came and sat on a footstool at his feet, and looked up into his face. "Do you know what I am going to speak to you about, my darling?"

"Yes, papa; I think I do. It is about—Mr. Lopez."

"Your aunt has told you, I suppose. Yes; it is about Mr. Lopez. I have been very much astonished to-day by Mr. Lopez,—a man of whom I have seen very little and know less. He came to me to-day and asked for my permission—to address you." She sat perfectly quiet, still looking at him, but she did not say a word. "Of course I did not give him permission."

"Why of course, papa?"

"Because he is a stranger and a foreigner. Would you have wished me to tell him that he might come?"

"Yes, papa." He was sitting on a sofa and shrank back a little from her as she made this free avowal. "In that case I could have judged for myself. I suppose every girl would like to do that."

"But should you have accepted him?"

"I think I should have consulted you before I did that. But I should have wished to accept him. Papa, I do love him. I have never said so before to any one. I would not say so to you now, if he had not—spoken to you as he has done."

"Emily, it must not be."

"Why not, papa? If you say it shall not be so, it shall not. I will do as you bid me." Then he put out his hand and caressed her, stroking down her hair. "But I think you ought to tell me why it must not be,—as I do love him."

"He is a foreigner."

"But is he? And why should not a foreigner be as good as an Englishman? His name is foreign, but he talks English and lives as an Englishman."

"He has no relatives, no family, no belongings. He is what we call an adventurer. Marriage, my dear, is a most serious thing."

"Yes, papa, I know that."

"One is bound to be very careful. How can I give you to a man I know nothing about,—an adventurer? What would they say in Herefordshire?"

"I don't know why they should say anything, but if they did I shouldn't much care."

"I should, my dear. I should care very much. One is bound to think of one's family. Suppose it should turn out afterwards that he was—disreputable!"

"You may say that of any man, papa."

"But when a man has connexions, a father and mother, or uncles and aunts, people that everybody knows about, then there is some guarantee of security. Did you ever hear this man speak of his father?"

"I don't know that I ever did."

"Or his mother,—or his family? Don't you think that is suspicious?"

"I will ask him, papa, if you wish."

"No, I would have you ask him nothing. I would not wish that there should be opportunity for such asking. If there has been intimacy between you, such information should have come naturally,—as a thing of course. You have made him no promise?"

"Oh no, papa."

"Nor spoken to him—of your regard for him?"

"Never;—not a word. Nor he to me,—except in such words as one understands even though they say nothing."

"I wish he had never seen you."

"Is he a bad man, papa?"

"Who knows? I cannot tell. He may be ever so bad. How is one to know whether a man be bad or good when one knows nothing about him?" At this point the father got up and walked about the room. "The long and the short of it is that you must not see him any more."

"Did you tell him so?"

"Yes;—well; I don't know whether I said exactly that, but I told him that the whole thing must come to an end. And it must. Luckily it seems that nothing has been said on either side."

"But, papa—; is there to be no reason?"

"Haven't I given reasons? I will not have my daughter encourage an adventurer,—a man of whom nobody knows anything. That is reason sufficient."

"He has a business, and he lives with gentlemen. He is Everett's friend. He is well educated;—oh, so much better than most men that one meets. And he is clever. Papa, I wish you knew him better than you do."

"I do not want to know him better."

"Is not that prejudice, papa?"

"My dear Emily," said Mr. Wharton, striving to wax into anger that he might be firm against her, "I don't think that it becomes you to ask your father such a question as that. You ought to believe that it is the chief object of my life to do the best I can for my children."

"I am sure it is."

"And you ought to feel that, as I have had a long experience in the world, my judgment about a young man might be trusted."

That was a statement which Miss Wharton was not prepared to admit. She had already professed herself willing to submit to her father's judgment, and did not now by any means contemplate rebellion against parental authority. But she did feel that on a

matter so vital to her she had a right to plead her cause before judgment should be given, and she was not slow to assure herself, even as this interview went on, that her love for the man was strong enough to entitle her to assure her father that her happiness depended on his reversal of the sentence already pronounced. "You know, papa, that I trust you," she said. "And I have promised you that I will not disobey you. If you tell me that I am never to see Mr. Lopez again, I will not see him."

"You are a good girl. You were always a good girl."

"But I think that you ought to hear me." Then he stood still with his hands in his trowsers pockets looking at her. He did not want to hear a word, but he felt that he would be a tyrant if he refused. "If you tell me that I am not to see him, I shall not see him. But I shall be very unhappy. I do love him, and I shall never love any one else in the same way."

"That is nonsense, Emily. There is Arthur Fletcher."

"I am sure you will never ask me to marry a man I do not love, and I shall never love Arthur Fletcher. If this is to be as you say, it will make me very, very wretched. It is right that you should know the truth. If it is only because Mr. Lopez has a foreign name—"

"It isn't only that; no one knows anything about him, or where to inquire even."

"I think you should inquire, papa, and be quite certain before you pronounce such a sentence against me. It will be a crushing blow." He looked at her, and saw that there was a fixed purpose in her countenance of which he had never before seen similar signs. "You claim a right to my obedience, and I acknowledge it. I am sure you believe me when I promise not to see him without your permission."

"I do believe you. Of course I believe you."

"But if I do that for you, papa, I think that you ought to be very sure, on my account, that I haven't to bear such unhappiness for nothing. You'll think about it, papa,—will you not, before you quite

decide?" She leaned against him as she spoke, and he kissed her. "Good night, now, papa. You will think about it?"

"I will. I will. Of course I will."

And he began the process of thinking about it immediately,—before the door was closed behind her. But what was there to think about? Nothing that she had said altered in the least his idea about the man. He was as convinced as ever that unless there was much to conceal there would not be so much concealment. But a feeling began to grow upon him already that his daughter had a mode of pleading with him which he would not ultimately be able to resist. He had the power, he knew, of putting an end to the thing altogether. He had only to say resolutely and unchangeably that the thing shouldn't be, and it wouldn't be. If he could steel his heart against his daughter's sorrow for, say, a twelvemonth, the victory would be won. But he already began to fear that he lacked the power to steel his heart against his daughter.

CHAPTER VI
An Old Friend Goes to Windsor

"And what are they going to make you now?"

This question was asked of her husband by a lady with whom perhaps the readers of this volume may have already formed some acquaintance. Chronicles of her early life have been written, at any rate copiously. The lady was the Duchess of Omnium, and her husband was of course the Duke. In order that the nature of the question asked by the duchess may be explained, it must be stated that just at this time the political affairs of the nation had got themselves tied up into one of those truly desperate knots from which even the wisdom and experience of septuagenarian statesmen can see no unravelment. The heads of parties were at a standstill. In the House of Commons there was, so to say, no majority on either side. The minds of members were so astray that, according to the best calculation that could be made, there would be a majority of about ten against any possible Cabinet. There would certainly be a majority against either of those well-tried but, at this moment, little-trusted Prime Ministers, Mr. Gresham and Mr. Daubeny. There were certain men, nominally belonging to this or to the other party, who would certainly within a week of the nomination of a Cabinet in the House, oppose the Cabinet which they ought to support. Mr. Daubeny had been in power,—nay, was in power, though he had twice resigned. Mr. Gresham had been twice sent for to Windsor, and had on one occasion undertaken and on another had refused to undertake to form a Ministry. Mr. Daubeny had tried two or three combinations, and had been at his wits' end. He was no doubt still in power,—could appoint bishops, and make peers, and give away ribbons. But he couldn't pass a law, and certainly continued to hold his present uncomfortable position by no will of his own. But a Prime Minister cannot escape till he has succeeded in finding a successor; and though the successor be found and consents to make an attempt, the old unfortunate cannot be allowed to go free when that attempt is shown to be a

failure. He has not absolutely given up the keys of his boxes, and no one will take them from him. Even a sovereign can abdicate; but the Prime Minister of a constitutional government is in bonds. The reader may therefore understand that the Duchess was asking her husband what place among the political rulers of the country had been offered to him by the last aspirant to the leadership of the Government.

But the reader should understand more than this, and may perhaps do so, if he has ever seen those former chronicles to which allusion has been made. The Duke, before he became a duke, had held very high office, having been Chancellor of the Exchequer. When he was transferred, perforce, to the House of Lords, he had,—as is not uncommon in such cases,—accepted a lower political station. This had displeased the Duchess, who was ambitious both on her own behalf and that of her lord,—and who thought that a Duke of Omnium should be nothing in the Government if not at any rate near the top. But after that, with the simple and single object of doing some special piece of work for the nation,—something which he fancied that nobody else would do if he didn't do it,—his Grace, of his own motion, at his own solicitation, had encountered further official degradation, very much to the disgust of the Duchess. And it was not the way with her Grace to hide such sorrows in the depth of her bosom. When affronted she would speak out, whether to her husband, or to another,—using irony rather than argument to support her cause and to vindicate her ways. The shafts of ridicule hurled by her against her husband in regard to his voluntary abasement had been many and sharp. They stung him, but never for a moment influenced him. And though they stung him, they did not even anger him. It was her nature to say such things,—and he knew that they came rather from her uncontrolled spirit than from any malice. She was his wife too, and he had an idea that of little injuries of that sort there should be no end of bearing on the part of a husband. Sometimes he would endeavour to explain to her the motives which actuated him; but he had come to fear that they were and must ever be unintelligible to her. But he credited her with less than her real intelligence. She did understand the nature

of his work and his reasons for doing it; and, after her own fashion, did what she conceived to be her own work in endeavouring to create within his bosom a desire for higher things. "Surely," she said to herself, "if a man of his rank is to be a minister he should be a great minister;—at any rate as great as his circumstances will make him. A man never can save his country by degrading himself." In this he would probably have agreed; but his idea of degradation and hers hardly tallied.

When therefore she asked him what they were going to make him, it was as though some sarcastic housekeeper in a great establishment should ask the butler,—some butler too prone to yield in such matters,—whether the master had appointed him lately to the cleaning of shoes or the carrying of coals. Since these knots had become so very tight, and since the journeys to Windsor had become so very frequent, her Grace had asked many such questions, and had received but very indifferent replies. The Duke had sometimes declared that the matter was not ripe enough to allow him to make any answer. "Of course," said the Duchess, "you should keep the secret. The editors of the evening papers haven't known it for above an hour." At another time he told her that he had undertaken to give Mr. Gresham his assistance in any way in which it might be asked. "Joint Under-Secretary with Lord Fawn, I should say," answered the Duchess. Then he told her that he believed an attempt would be made at a mixed ministry, but that he did not in the least know to whom the work of doing so would be confided. "You will be about the last man who will be told," replied the Duchess. Now, at this moment, he had, as she knew, come direct from the house of Mr. Gresham, and she asked her question in her usual spirit. "And what are they going to make you now?"

But he did not answer the question in his usual manner. He would customarily smile gently at her badinage, and perhaps say a word intended to show that he was not in the least moved by her raillery. But in this instance he was very grave, and stood before her a moment making no answer at all, looking at her in a sad and almost solemn manner. "They have told you that they can do without you," she said, breaking out almost into a passion. "I knew

how it would be. Men are always valued by others as they value themselves."

"I wish it were so," he replied. "I should sleep easier to-night."

"What is it, Plantagenet?" she exclaimed, jumping up from her chair.

"I never cared for your ridicule hitherto, Cora; but now I feel that I want your sympathy."

"If you are going to do anything,—to do really anything, you shall have it. Oh, how you shall have it!"

"I have received her Majesty's orders to go down to Windsor at once. I must start within half-an-hour."

"You are going to be Prime Minister!" she exclaimed. As she spoke she threw her arms up, and then rushed into his embrace. Never since their first union had she been so demonstrative either of love or admiration. "Oh, Plantagenet," she said, "if I can only do anything I will slave for you." As he put his arm round her waist he already felt the pleasantness of her altered way to him. She had never worshipped him yet, and therefore her worship when it did come had all the delight to him which it ordinarily has to the newly married hero.

"Stop a moment, Cora. I do not know how it may be yet. But this I know, that if without cowardice I could avoid this task, I would certainly avoid it."

"Oh no! And there would be cowardice; of course there would," said the Duchess, not much caring what might be the bonds which bound him to the task so long as he should certainly feel himself to be bound.

"He has told me that he thinks it my duty to make the attempt."

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Gresham. I do not know that I should have felt myself bound by him, but the Duke said so also." This duke was our duke's old friend, the Duke of St. Bungay.

"Was he there? And who else?"

"No one else. It is no case for exultation, Cora, for the chances are that I shall fail. The Duke has promised to help me, on condition that one or two he has named are included, and that one or two whom he has also named are not. In each case I should myself have done exactly as he proposes."

"And Mr. Gresham?"

"He will retire. That is a matter of course. He will intend to support us; but all that is veiled in the obscurity which is always, I think, darker as to the future of politics than any other future. Clouds arise, one knows not why or whence, and create darkness when one expected light. But as yet, you must understand, nothing is settled. I cannot even say what answer I may make to her Majesty, till I know what commands her Majesty may lay upon me."

"You must keep a hold of it now, Plantagenet," said the Duchess, clenching her own fist.

"I will not even close a finger on it with any personal ambition," said the Duke. "If I could be relieved from the burden this moment it would be an ease to my heart. I remember once," he said,—and as he spoke he again put his arm around her waist, "when I was debarred from taking office by a domestic circumstance."

"I remember that too," she said, speaking very gently and looking up at him.

"It was a grief to me at the time, though it turned out so well,—because the office then suggested to me was one which I thought I could fill with credit to the country. I believed in myself then as far as that work went. But for this attempt I have no belief in myself. I doubt whether I have any gift for governing men."

"It will come."

"It may be that I must try;—and it may be that I must break my heart because I fail. But I shall make the attempt if I am directed to do so in any manner that shall seem feasible. I must be off now. The Duke is to be here this evening. They had better have dinner

ready for me whenever I may be able to eat it." Then he took his departure before she could say another word.

When the Duchess was alone she took to thinking of the whole thing in a manner which they who best knew her would have thought to be very unusual with her. She already possessed all that rank and wealth could give her, and together with those good things a peculiar position of her own, of which she was proud, and which she had made her own not by her wealth or rank, but by a certain fearless energy and power of raillery which never deserted her. Many feared her and she was afraid of none, and many also loved her,—whom she also loved, for her nature was affectionate. She was happy with her children, happy with her friends, in the enjoyment of perfect health, and capable of taking an exaggerated interest in anything that might come uppermost for the moment. One would have been inclined to say that politics were altogether unnecessary to her, and that as Duchess of Omnium, lately known as Lady Glencora Palliser, she had a wider and a pleasanter influence than could belong to any woman as wife of a Prime Minister. And she was essentially one of those women who are not contented to be known simply as the wives of their husbands. She had a celebrity of her own, quite independent of his position, and which could not be enhanced by any glory or any power added to him. Nevertheless, when he left her to go down to the Queen with the prospect of being called upon to act as chief of the incoming ministry, her heart throbbed with excitement. It had come at last, and he would be, to her thinking, the leading man in the greatest kingdom in the world.

But she felt in regard to him somewhat as did Lady Macbeth towards her lord.

"What thou would'st highly,

That would'st thou holily."

She knew him to be full of scruples, unable to bend when aught was to be got by bending, unwilling to domineer when men might

be brought to subjection only by domination. The first duty never could be taught to him. To win support by smiles when his heart was bitter within him would never be within the power of her husband. He could never be brought to buy an enemy by political gifts,—would never be prone to silence his keenest opponent by making him his right hand supporter. But the other lesson was easier and might she thought be learned. Power is so pleasant that men quickly learn to be greedy in the enjoyment of it, and to flatter themselves that patriotism requires them to be imperious. She would be constant with him day and night to make him understand that his duty to his country required him to be in very truth its chief ruler. And then with some knowledge of things as they are,—and also with much ignorance,—she reflected that he had at his command a means of obtaining popularity and securing power, which had not belonged to his immediate predecessors, and had perhaps never to the same extent been at the command of any minister in England. His wealth as Duke of Omnium had been great; but hers, as available for immediate purposes, had been greater even than his. After some fashion, of which she was profoundly ignorant, her own property was separated from his and reserved to herself and her children. Since her marriage she had never said a word to him about her money,—unless it were to ask that something out of the common course might be spent on some, generally absurd, object. But now had come the time for squandering money. She was not only rich but she had a popularity that was exclusively her own. The new Prime Minister and the new Prime Minister's wife should entertain after a fashion that had never yet been known even among the nobility of England. Both in town and country those great mansions should be kept open which were now rarely much used because she had found them dull, cold, and comfortless. In London there should not be a Member of Parliament whom she would not herself know and influence by her flattery and grace,—or if there were men whom she could not influence, they should live as men tabooed and unfortunate. Money mattered nothing. Their income was enormous, and for a series of years,—for half-a-dozen years if the game could be kept up so long,—they could spend treble what they called their income without real injury to their children. Visions passed through her

brain of wondrous things which might be done,—if only her husband would be true to his own greatness.

The Duke had left her about two. She did not stir out of the house that day, but in the course of the afternoon she wrote a line to a friend who lived not very far from her. The Duchess dwelt in Carlton Terrace, and her friend in Park Lane. The note was as follows:—

DEAR M.,

Come to me at once. I am too excited to go to you.

Yours, G.

This was addressed to one Mrs. Finn, a lady as to whom chronicles also have been written, and who has been known to the readers of such chronicles as a friend dearly loved by the Duchess. As quickly as she could put on her carriage garments and get herself taken to Carlton Terrace, Mrs. Finn was there. "Well, my dear, how do you think it's all settled at last?" said the Duchess. It will probably be felt that the new Prime Minister's wife was indiscreet, and hardly worthy of the confidence placed in her by her husband. But surely we all have some one friend to whom we tell everything, and with the Duchess Mrs. Finn was that one friend.

"Is the Duke to be Prime Minister?"

"How on earth should you have guessed that?"

"What else could make you so excited? Besides, it is by no means strange. I understand that they have gone on trying the two old stagers till it is useless to try them any longer; and if there is to be a fresh man, no one would be more likely than the Duke."

"Do you think so?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"He has frittered away his political position by such meaningless concessions. And then he had never done anything to put himself

forward,—at any rate since he left the House of Commons. Perhaps I haven't read things right,—but I was surprised, very much surprised."

"And gratified?"

"Oh yes. I can tell you everything, because you will neither misunderstand me nor tell tales of me. Yes,—I shall like him to be Prime Minister, though I know that I shall have a bad time of it myself."

"Why a bad time?"

"He is so hard to manage. Of course I don't mean about politics. Of course it must be a mixed kind of thing at first, and I don't care a straw whether it run to Radicalism or Toryism. The country goes on its own way, either for better or for worse, whichever of them are in. I don't think it makes any difference as to what sort of laws are passed. But among ourselves, in our set, it makes a deal of difference who gets the garters, and the counties, who are made barons and then earls, and whose name stands at the head of everything."

"That is your way of looking at politics?"

"I own it to you;—and I must teach it to him."

"You never will do that, Lady Glen."

"Never is a long word. I mean to try. For look back and tell me of any Prime Minister who has become sick of his power. They become sick of the want of power when it's falling away from them,—and then they affect to disdain and put aside the thing they can no longer enjoy. Love of power is a kind of feeling which comes to a man as he grows older."

"Politics with the Duke have been simple patriotism," said Mrs. Finn.

"The patriotism may remain, my dear, but not the simplicity. I don't want him to sell his country to Germany, or to turn it into an American republic in order that he may be president. But when he gets the reins in his hands, I want him to keep them there. If he's so much honester than other people, of course he's the best man for

the place. We must make him believe that the very existence of the country depends on his firmness."

"To tell you the truth, Lady Glen, I don't think you'll ever make the Duke believe anything. What he believes, he believes either from very old habit, or from the working of his own mind."

"You're always singing his praises, Marie."

"I don't know that there is any special praise in what I say; but as far as I can see, it is the man's character."

"Mr. Finn will come in, of course," said the Duchess.

"Mr. Finn will be like the Duke in one thing. He'll take his own way as to being in or out quite independently of his wife."

"You'd like him to be in office?"

"No, indeed! Why should I? He would be more often at the House, and keep later hours, and be always away all the morning into the bargain. But I shall like him to do as he likes himself."

"Fancy thinking of all that. I'd sit up all night every night of my life.—I'd listen to every debate in the House myself,—to have Plantagenet Prime Minister. I like to be busy. Well now, if it does come off—"

"It isn't settled, then?"

"How can one hope that a single journey will settle it, when those other men have been going backwards and forwards between Windsor and London, like buckets in a well, for the last three weeks? But if it is settled, I mean to have a cabinet of my own, and I mean that you shall do the foreign affairs."

"You'd better let me be at the exchequer. I'm very good at accounts."

"I'll do that myself. The accounts that I intend to set a-going would frighten any one less audacious. And I mean to be my own home secretary, and to keep my own conscience,—and to be my own master of the ceremonies certainly. I think a small cabinet gets on best. Do you know,—I should like to put the Queen down."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"No treason; nothing of that kind. But I should like to make Buckingham Palace second-rate; and I'm not quite sure but I can. I dare say you don't quite understand me."

"I don't think that I do, Lady Glen."

"You will some of these days. Come in to-morrow before lunch. I suppose I shall know all about it then, and shall have found that my basket of crockery has been kicked over and every thing smashed."

CHAPTER VII
Another Old Friend

At about nine the Duke had returned, and was eating his very simple dinner in the breakfast-room,—a beefsteak and a potato, with a glass of sherry and Apollinaris water. No man more easily satisfied as to what he eat and drank lived in London in those days. As regarded the eating and drinking he dined alone, but his wife sat with him and waited on him, having sent the servant out of the room. "I have told her Majesty that I would do the best I could," said the Duke.

"Then you are Prime Minister."

"Not at all. Mr. Daubeny is Prime Minister. I have undertaken to form a ministry, if I find it practicable, with the assistance of such friends as I possess. I never felt before that I had to lean so entirely on others as I do now."

"Lean on yourself only. Be enough for yourself."

"Those are empty words, Cora;—words that are quite empty. In one sense a man should always be enough for himself. He should have enough of principle and enough of conscience to restrain him from doing what he knows to be wrong. But can a ship-builder build his ship single-handed, or the watchmaker make his watch without assistance? On former occasions such as this, I could say, with little or no help from without, whether I would or would not undertake the work that was proposed to me, because I had only a bit of the ship to build, or a wheel of the watch to make. My own efficacy for my present task depends entirely on the co-operation of others, and unfortunately upon that of some others with whom I have no sympathy, nor have they with me."

"Leave them out," said the Duchess boldly.

"But they are men who will not be left out, and whose services the country has a right to expect."

"Then bring them in, and think no more about it. It is no good crying for pain that cannot be cured."

"Co-operation is difficult without community of feeling. I find myself to be too stubborn-hearted for the place. It was nothing to me to sit in the same Cabinet with a man I disliked when I had not put him there myself. But now—. As I have travelled up I have almost felt that I could not do it! I did not know before how much I might dislike a man."

"Who is the one man?"

"Nay;—whoever he be, he will have to be a friend now, and therefore I will not name him, even to you. But it is not one only. If it were one, absolutely marked and recognised, I might avoid him. But my friends, real friends, are so few! Who is there besides the Duke on whom I can lean with both confidence and love?"

"Lord Cantrip."

"Hardly so, Cora. But Lord Cantrip goes out with Mr. Gresham. They will always cling together."

"You used to like Mr. Mildmay."

"Mr. Mildmay,—yes! If there could be a Mr. Mildmay in the Cabinet, this trouble would not come upon my shoulders."

"Then I'm very glad that there can't be a Mr. Mildmay. Why shouldn't there be as good fish in the sea as ever were caught out of it?"

"When you've got a good fish you like to make as much of it as you can."

"I suppose Mr. Monk will join you."

"I think we shall ask him. But I am not prepared to discuss men's names as yet."

"You must discuss them with the Duke immediately."

"Probably;—but I had better discuss them with him before I fix my own mind by naming them even to you."

"You'll bring Mr. Finn in, Plantagenet?"

"Mr. Finn!"

"Yes;—Phineas Finn,—the man who was tried."

"My dear Cora, we haven't come down to that yet. We need not at any rate trouble ourselves about the small fishes till we are sure that we can get big fishes to join us."

"I don't know why he should be a small fish. No man has done better than he has; and if you want a man to stick to you—"

"I don't want a man to stick to me. I want a man to stick to his country."

"You were talking about sympathy."

"Well, yes;—I was. But do not name any one else just at present. The Duke will be here soon, and I would be alone till he comes."

"There is one thing I want to say, Plantagenet."

"What is it?"

"One favour I want to ask."

"Pray do not ask anything for any man just at present."

"It is not anything for any man."

"Nor for any woman."

"It is for a woman,—but one whom I think you would wish to oblige."

"Who is it?" Then she curtseyed, smiling at him drolly, and put her hand upon her breast. "Something for you! What on earth can you want that I can do for you?"

"Will you do it,—if it be reasonable?"

"If I think it reasonable, I certainly will do it."

Then her manner changed altogether, and she became serious and almost solemn. "If, as I suppose, all the great places about her Majesty be changed, I should like to be Mistress of the Robes."

"You!" said he, almost startled out of his usual quiet demeanour.

"Why not I? Is not my rank high enough?"

"You burden yourself with the intricacies and subserviences, with the tedium and pomposities of Court life! Cora, you do not know what you are talking about, or what you are proposing for yourself."

"If I am willing to try to undertake a duty, why should I be debarred from it any more than you?"

"Because I have put myself into a groove, and ground myself into a mould, and clipped and pared and pinched myself all round,—very ineffectually, as I fear,—to fit myself for this thing. You have lived as free as air. You have disdained,—and though I may have grumbled I have still been proud to see you disdain,—to wrap yourself in the swaddling bandages of Court life. You have ridiculed all those who have been near her Majesty as Court ladies."

"The individuals, Plantagenet, perhaps; but not the office. I am getting older now, and I do not see why I should not begin a new life." She had been somewhat quelled by his unexpected energy, and was at the moment hardly able to answer him with her usual spirit.

"Do not think of it, my dear. You asked whether your rank was high enough. It must be so, as there is, as it happens, none higher. But your position, should it come to pass that your husband is the head of the Government, will be too high. I may say that in no condition should I wish my wife to be subject to other restraint than that which is common to all married women. I should not choose that she should have any duties unconnected with our joint family and home. But as First Minister of the Crown I would altogether object to her holding an office believed to be at my disposal." She looked at him with her large eyes wide open, and then left him without a word. She had no other way of showing her

displeasure, for she knew that when he spoke as he had spoken now all argument was unavailing.

The Duke remained an hour alone before he was joined by the other Duke, during which he did not for a moment apply his mind to the subject which might be thought to be most prominent in his thoughts,—the filling up, namely, of a list of his new government. All that he could do in that direction without further assistance had been already done very easily. There were four or five certain names,—names that is of certain political friends, and three or four almost equally certain of men who had been political enemies, but who would now clearly be asked to join the ministry. Sir Gregory Grogram, the late Attorney-General, would of course be asked to resume his place; but Sir Timothy Beeswax, who was up to this moment Solicitor-General for the Conservatives, would also be invited to retain that which he held. Many details were known, not only to the two dukes who were about to patch up the ministry between them, but to the political world at large,—and were facts upon which the newspapers were able to display their wonderful foresight and general omniscience with their usual confidence. And as to the points which were in doubt,—whether or not, for instance, that consistent old Tory Sir Orlando Drought should be asked to put up with the Post-office or should be allowed to remain at the Colonies,—the younger Duke did not care to trouble himself till the elder should have come to his assistance. But his own position and his questionable capacity for filling it,—that occupied all his mind. If nominally first he would be really first. Of so much it seemed to him that his honour required him to assure himself. To be a *fainéant* ruler was in direct antagonism both to his conscience and his predilections. To call himself by a great name before the world, and then to be something infinitely less than that name, would be to him a degradation. But though he felt fixed as to that, he was by no means assured as to that other point, which to most men firm in their resolves as he was, and backed up as he had been by the confidence of others, would be cause of small hesitation. He did doubt his ability to fill that place which it would now be his duty to occupy. He more than doubted. He told himself again and again that there was wanting to him a certain noble capacity for

commanding support and homage from other men. With things and facts he could deal, but human beings had not opened themselves to him. But now it was too late! and yet,—as he said to his wife,—to fail would break his heart! No ambition had prompted him. He was sure of himself there. One only consideration had forced him into this great danger, and that had been the assurance of others that it was his manifest duty to encounter it. And now there was clearly no escape,—no escape compatible with that clean-handed truth from which it was not possible for him to swerve. He might create difficulties in order that through them a way might still be opened to him of restoring to the Queen the commission which had been entrusted to him. He might insist on this or that impossible concession. But the memory of escape such as that would break his heart as surely as the failure.

When the Duke was announced he rose to greet his old friend almost with fervour. "It is a shame," he said, "to bring you out so late. I ought to have gone to you."

"Not at all. It is always the rule in these cases that the man who has most to do should fix himself as well as he can where others may be able to find him." The Duke of St. Bungay was an old man, between seventy and eighty, with hair nearly white, and who on entering the room had to unfold himself out of various coats and comforters. But he was in full possession not only of his intellects but of his bodily power, showing, as many politicians do show, that the cares of the nation may sit upon a man's shoulders for many years without breaking or even bending them. For the Duke had belonged to ministries for nearly the last half century. As the chronicles have also dealt with him, no further records of his past life shall now be given.

He had said something about the Queen, expressing gracious wishes for the comfort of her Majesty in all these matters, something of the inconvenience of these political journeys to and fro, something also of the delicacy and difficulty of the operations on hand which were enhanced by the necessity of bringing men together as cordial allies who had hitherto acted with bitter animosity one to another, before the younger Duke said a word.

"We may as well," said the elder, "make out some small provisional list, and you can ask those you name to be with you early to-morrow. But perhaps you have already made a list."

"No indeed. I have not even had a pencil in my hand."

"We may as well begin then," said the elder, facing the table when he saw that his less-experienced companion made no attempt at beginning.

"There is something horrible to me in the idea of writing down men's names for such a work as this, just as boys at school used to draw out the elevens for a cricket match." The old stager turned round and stared at the younger politician. "The thing itself is so momentous that one ought to have aid from heaven."

Plantagenet Palliser was the last man from whom the Duke of St. Bungay would have expected romance at any time, and, least of all, at such a time as this. "Aid from heaven you may have," he said, "by saying your prayers; and I don't doubt you ask it for this and all other things generally. But an angel won't come to tell you who ought to be Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"No angel will, and therefore I wish that I could wash my hands of it." His old friend still stared at him. "It is like sacrilege to me, attempting this without feeling one's own fitness for the work. It unmans me,—this necessity of doing that which I know I cannot do with fitting judgment."

"Your mind has been a little too hard at work to-day."

"It hasn't been at work at all. I've had nothing to do, and have been unable really to think of work. But I feel that chance circumstances have put me into a position for which I am unfit, and which yet I have been unable to avoid. How much better would it be that you should do this alone,—you yourself."

"Utterly out of the question. I do know and think that I always have known my own powers. Neither has my aptitude in debate nor my capacity for work justified me in looking to the premiership. But that, forgive me, is now not worthy of consideration. It is because you do work and can work, and because you have fitted

yourself for that continued course of lucid explanation which we now call debate, that men on both sides have called upon you as the best man to come forward in this difficulty. Excuse me, my friend, again, if I say that I expect to find your manliness equal to your capacity."

"If I could only escape from it!"

"Psha;—nonsense!" said the old Duke, getting up. "There is such a thing as a conscience with so fine an edge that it will allow a man to do nothing. You've got to serve your country. On such assistance as I can give you you know that you may depend with absolute assurance. Now let us get to work. I suppose you would wish that I should take the chair at the Council."

"Certainly;—of course," said the Duke of Omnium, turning to the table. The one practical suggestion had fixed him, and from that moment he gave himself to the work in hand with all his energies. It was not very difficult, nor did it take them a very long time. If the future Prime Minister had not his names at his fingers' ends, the future President of the Council had them. Eight men were soon named whom it was thought well that the Duke of Omnium should consult early in the morning as to their willingness to fill certain places.

"Each one of them may have some other one or some two whom he may insist on bringing with him," said the elder Duke; "and though of course you cannot yield to the pressure in every such case, it will be wise to allow yourself scope for some amount of concession. You'll find they'll shake down after the usual amount of resistance and compliance. No;—don't you leave your house to-morrow to see anybody unless it be Mr. Daubeny or her Majesty. I'll come to you at two, and if her Grace will give me luncheon, I'll lunch with her. Good night, and don't think too much of the bigness of the thing. I remember dear old Lord Brock telling me how much more difficult it was to find a good coachman than a good Secretary of State." The Duke of Omnium, as he sat thinking of things for the next hour in his chair, succeeded only in proving to himself that Lord Brock never ought to have been Prime

Minister of England after having ventured to make so poor a joke on so solemn a subject.

CHAPTER VIII
The Beginning of a New Career

By the time that the Easter holidays were over,—holidays which had been used so conveniently for the making of a new government,—the work of getting a team together had been accomplished by the united energy of the two dukes and other friends. The filling up of the great places had been by no means so difficult or so tedious,—nor indeed the cause of half so many heartburns,—as the completion of the list of the subordinates. *Noblesse oblige*. The Secretaries of State, and the Chancellors, and the First Lords, selected from this or the other party, felt that the eyes of mankind were upon them, and that it behoved them to assume a virtue if they had it not. They were habitually indifferent to self-exaltation, and allowed themselves to be thrust into this or that unfitting role, professing that the Queen's Government and the good of the country were their only considerations. Lord Thrift made way for Sir Orlando Drought at the Admiralty, because it was felt on all sides that Sir Orlando could not join the new composite party without high place. And the same grace was shown in regard to Lord Drummond, who remained at the Colonies, keeping the office to which he had been lately transferred under Mr. Daubeny. And Sir Gregory Grogram said not a word, whatever he may have thought, when he was told that Mr. Daubeny's Lord Chancellor, Lord Ramsden, was to keep the seals. Sir Gregory did, no doubt, think very much about it; for legal offices have a signification differing much from that which attaches itself to places simply political. A Lord Chancellor becomes a peer, and on going out of office enjoys a large pension. When the woolsack has been reached there comes an end of doubt, and a beginning of ease. Sir Gregory was not a young man, and this was a terrible blow. But he bore it manfully, saying not a word when the Duke spoke to him; but he became convinced from that moment that no more inefficient

lawyer ever sat upon the English bench, or a more presumptuous politician in the British Parliament, than Lord Ramsden.

The real struggle, however, lay in the appropriate distribution of the Rattlers and the Robys, the Fitzgibbons and the Macphersons among the subordinate offices of State. Mr. Macpherson and Mr. Roby, with a host of others who had belonged to Mr. Daubeny, were prepared, as they declared from the first, to lend their assistance to the Duke. They had consulted Mr. Daubeny on the subject, and Mr. Daubeny told them that their duty lay in that direction. At the first blush of the matter the arrangement took the form of a gracious tender from themselves to a statesman called upon to act in very difficult circumstances,—and they were thanked accordingly by the Duke, with something of real cordial gratitude. But when the actual adjustment of things was in hand, the Duke, having but little power of assuming a soft countenance and using soft words while his heart was bitter, felt on more than one occasion inclined to withdraw his thanks. He was astounded not so much by the pretensions as by the unblushing assertion of these pretensions in reference to places which he had been innocent enough to think were always bestowed at any rate without direct application. He had measured himself rightly when he told the older duke in one of those anxious conversations which had been held before the attempt was made, that long as he had been in office himself he did not know what was the way of bestowing office. "Two gentlemen have been here this morning," he said one day to the Duke of St. Bungay, "one on the heels of the other, each assuring me not only that the whole stability of the enterprise depends on my giving a certain office to him,—but actually telling me to my face that I had promised it to him!" The old statesman laughed. "To be told within the same half-hour by two men that I had made promises to each of them inconsistent with each other!"

"Who were the two men?"

"Mr. Rattler and Mr. Roby."

"I am assured that they are inseparable since the work was begun. They always had a leaning to each other, and now I hear

they pass their time between the steps of the Carlton and Reform Clubs."

"But what am I to do? One must be Patronage Secretary, no doubt."

"They're both good, men in their way, you know."

"But why do they come to me with their mouths open, like dogs craving a bone? It used not to be so. Of course men were always anxious for office as they are now."

"Well; yes. We've heard of that before to-day, I think."

"But I don't think any man ever ventured to ask Mr. Mildmay."

"Time had done much for him in consolidating his authority, and perhaps the present world is less reticent in its eagerness than it was in his younger days. I doubt, however, whether it is more dishonest, and whether struggles were not made quite as disgraceful to the strugglers as anything that is done now. You can't alter the men, and you must use them." The younger Duke sat down and sighed over the degenerate patriotism of the age.

But at last even the Rattlers and Robys were fixed, if not satisfied, and a complete list of the ministry appeared in all the newspapers. Though the thing had been long a-doing, still it had come suddenly,—so that at the first proposition to form a coalition ministry, the newspapers had hardly known whether to assist or to oppose the scheme. There was no doubt, in the minds of all these editors and contributors, the teaching of a tradition that coalitions of this kind have been generally feeble, sometimes disastrous, and on occasions even disgraceful. When a man, perhaps through a long political life, has bound himself to a certain code of opinions, how can he change that code at a moment? And when at the same moment, together with the change, he secures power, patronage, and pay, how shall the public voice absolve him? But then again men, who have by the work of their lives grown into a certain position in the country, and have unconsciously but not therefore less actually made themselves indispensable either to this side in politics or to that, cannot free themselves altogether from the responsibility of managing them when a period comes such as that

now reached. This also the newspapers perceived; and having, since the commencement of the Session, been very loud in exposing the disgraceful collapse of government affairs, could hardly refuse their support to any attempt at a feasible arrangement. When it was first known that the Duke of Omnium had consented to make the attempt, they had both on one side and the other been loud in his praise, going so far as to say that he was the only man in England who could do the work. It was probably this encouragement which had enabled the new Premier to go on with an undertaking which was personally distasteful to him, and for which from day to day he believed himself to be less and less fit. But when the newspapers told him that he was the only man for the occasion, how could he be justified in crediting himself in preference to them?

The work in Parliament began under the new auspices with great tranquillity. That there would soon come causes of hot blood,—the English Church, the county suffrage, the income tax, and further education questions,—all men knew who knew anything. But for the moment, for the month even, perhaps for the Session, there was to be peace, with full latitude for the performance of routine duties. There was so to say no opposition, and at first it seemed that one special bench in the House of Commons would remain unoccupied. But after a day or two,—on one of which Mr. Daubeny had been seen sitting just below the gangway,—that gentleman returned to the place usually held by the Prime Minister's rival, saying with a smile that it might be for the convenience of the House that the seat should be utilised. Mr. Gresham at this time had, with declared purpose, asked and obtained the Speaker's leave of absence and was abroad. Who should lead the House? That had been a great question, caused by the fact that the Prime Minister was in the House of Lords;—and what office should the Leader hold? Mr. Monk had consented to take the Exchequer, but the right to sit opposite to the Treasury Box and to consider himself for the time the principal spirit in that chamber was at last assigned to Sir Orlando Drought. "It will never do," said Mr. Rattler to Mr. Roby. "I don't mean to say anything against Drought, who has always

been a very useful man to your party;—but he lacks something of the position."

"The fact is," said Roby, "that we've trusted to two men so long that we don't know how to suppose any one else big enough to fill their places. Monk wouldn't have done. The House doesn't care about Monk."

"I always thought it should be Wilson, and so I told the Duke. He had an idea that it should be one of your men."

"I think he's right there," said Roby. "There ought to be something like a fair division. Individuals might be content, but the party would be dissatisfied. For myself, I'd have sooner stayed out as an independent member, but Daubeny said that he thought I was bound to make myself useful."

"I told the Duke from the beginning," said Rattler, "that I didn't think that I could be of any service to him. Of course, I would support him, but I had been too thoroughly a party man for a new movement of this kind. But he said just the same!—that he considered I was bound to join him. I asked Gresham, and when Gresham said so too, of course I had no help for it."

Neither of these excellent public servants had told a lie in this. Some such conversations as those reported had passed;—but a man doesn't lie when he exaggerates an emphasis, or even when he gives by a tone a meaning to a man's words exactly opposite to that which another tone would convey. Or, if he does lie in doing so, he does not know that he lies. Mr. Rattler had gone back to his old office at the Treasury and Mr. Roby had been forced to content himself with the Secretaryship at the Admiralty. But, as the old Duke had said, they were close friends, and prepared to fight together any battle which might keep them in their present position.

Many of the cares of office the Prime Minister did succeed in shuffling off altogether on to the shoulders of his elder friend. He would not concern himself with the appointment of ladies, about whom he said he knew nothing, and as to whose fitness and claims he professed himself to be as ignorant as the office messenger. The

offers were of course made in the usual form, as though coming direct from the Queen, through the Prime Minister;—but the selections were in truth effected by the old Duke in council with—an illustrious personage. The matter affected our Duke,—only in so far that he could not get out of his mind that strange application from his own wife. "That she should have even dreamed of it!" he would say to himself, not yet having acquired sufficient experience of his fellow creatures to be aware how wonderfully temptations will affect even those who appear to be least subject to them. The town horse, used to gaudy trappings, no doubt despises the work of his country brother; but yet, now and again, there comes upon him a sudden desire to plough. The desire for ploughing had come upon the Duchess, but the Duke could not understand it.

He perceived, however, in spite of the multiplicity of his official work, that his refusal sat heavily on his wife's breast, and that, though she spoke no further word, she brooded over her injury. And his heart was sad within him when he thought that he had vexed her,—loving her as he did with all his heart, but with a heart that was never demonstrative. When she was unhappy he was miserable, though he would hardly know the cause of his misery. Her ridicule and raillery he could bear, though they stung him; but her sorrow, if ever she were sorrowful, or her sullenness, if ever she were sullen, upset him altogether. He was in truth so soft of heart that he could not bear the discomfort of the one person in the world who seemed to him to be near to him. He had expressly asked her for her sympathy in the business he had on hand,—thereby going much beyond his usual coldness of manner. She, with an eagerness which might have been expected from her, had promised that she would slave for him, if slavery were necessary. Then she had made her request, had been refused, and was now moody. "The Duchess of ———— is to be Mistress of the Robes," he said to her one day. He had gone to her, up to her own room, before he dressed for dinner, having devoted much more time than as Prime Minister he ought to have done to a resolution that he would make things straight with her, and to the best way of doing it.

"So I am told. She ought to know her way about the place, as I remember she was at the same work when I was a girl of eleven."

"That's not so very long ago, Cora."

"Silverbridge is older now than I was then, and I think that makes it a very long time ago." Lord Silverbridge was the Duke's eldest son.

"But what does it matter? If she began her career in the time of George the Fourth, what is it to you?"

"Nothing on earth,—only that she did in truth begin her career in the time of George the Third. I'm sure she's nearer sixty than fifty."

"I'm glad to see you remember your dates so well."

"It's a pity she should not remember hers in the way she dresses," said the Duchess.

This was marvellous to him,—that his wife, who as Lady Glencora Palliser had been so conspicuous for a wild disregard of social rules as to be looked upon by many as an enemy of her own class, should be so depressed by not being allowed to be the Queen's head servant as to descend to personal invective! "I'm afraid," said he, attempting to smile, "that it won't come within the compass of my office to effect or even to propose any radical change in her Grace's apparel. But don't you think that you and I can afford to ignore all that?"

"I can certainly. She may be an antiquated Eve for me."

"I hope, Cora, you are not still disappointed because I did not agree with you when you spoke about the place for yourself."

"Not because you did not agree with me,—but because you did not think me fit to be trusted with any judgment of my own. I don't know why I'm always to be looked upon as different from other women,—as though I were half a savage."

"You are what you have made yourself, and I have always rejoiced that you are as you are, fresh, untrammelled, without many prejudices which afflict other ladies, and free from bonds by