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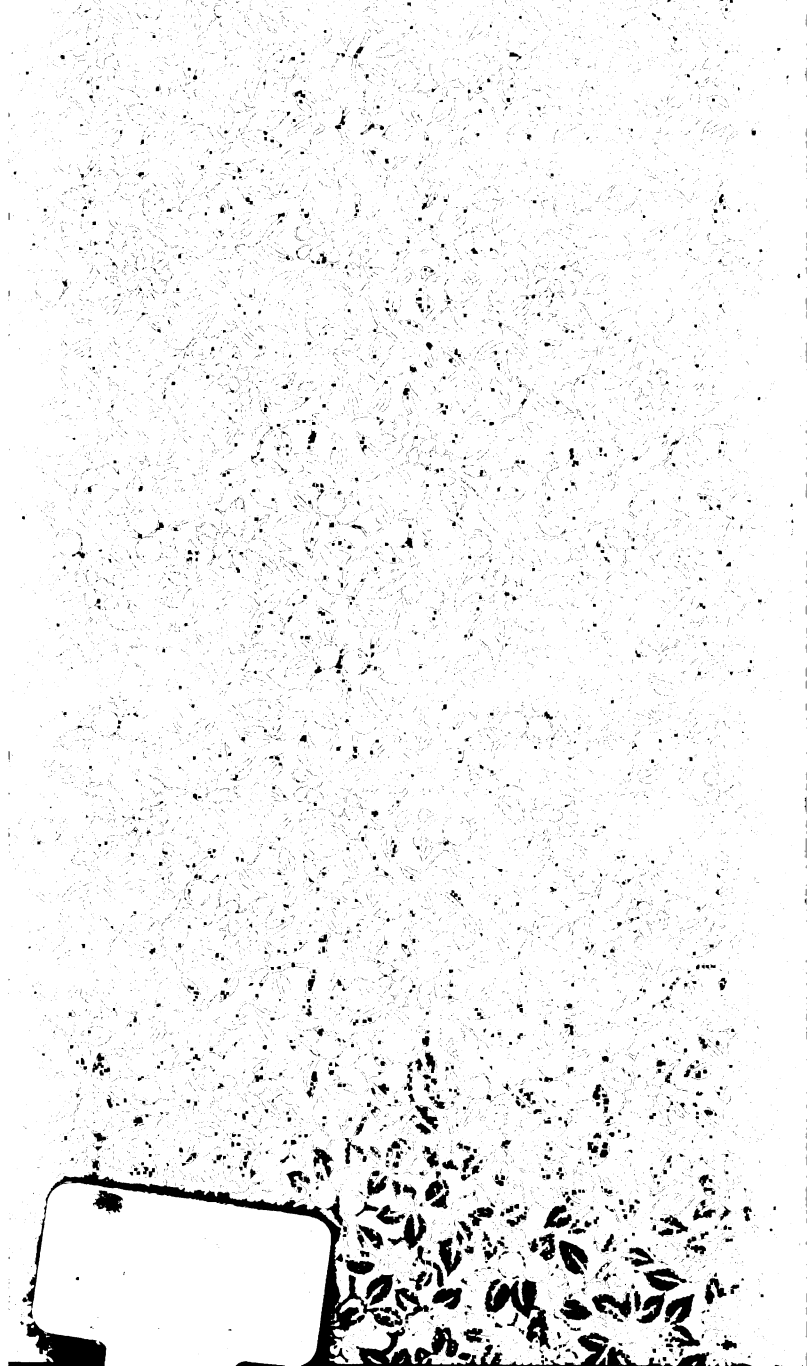
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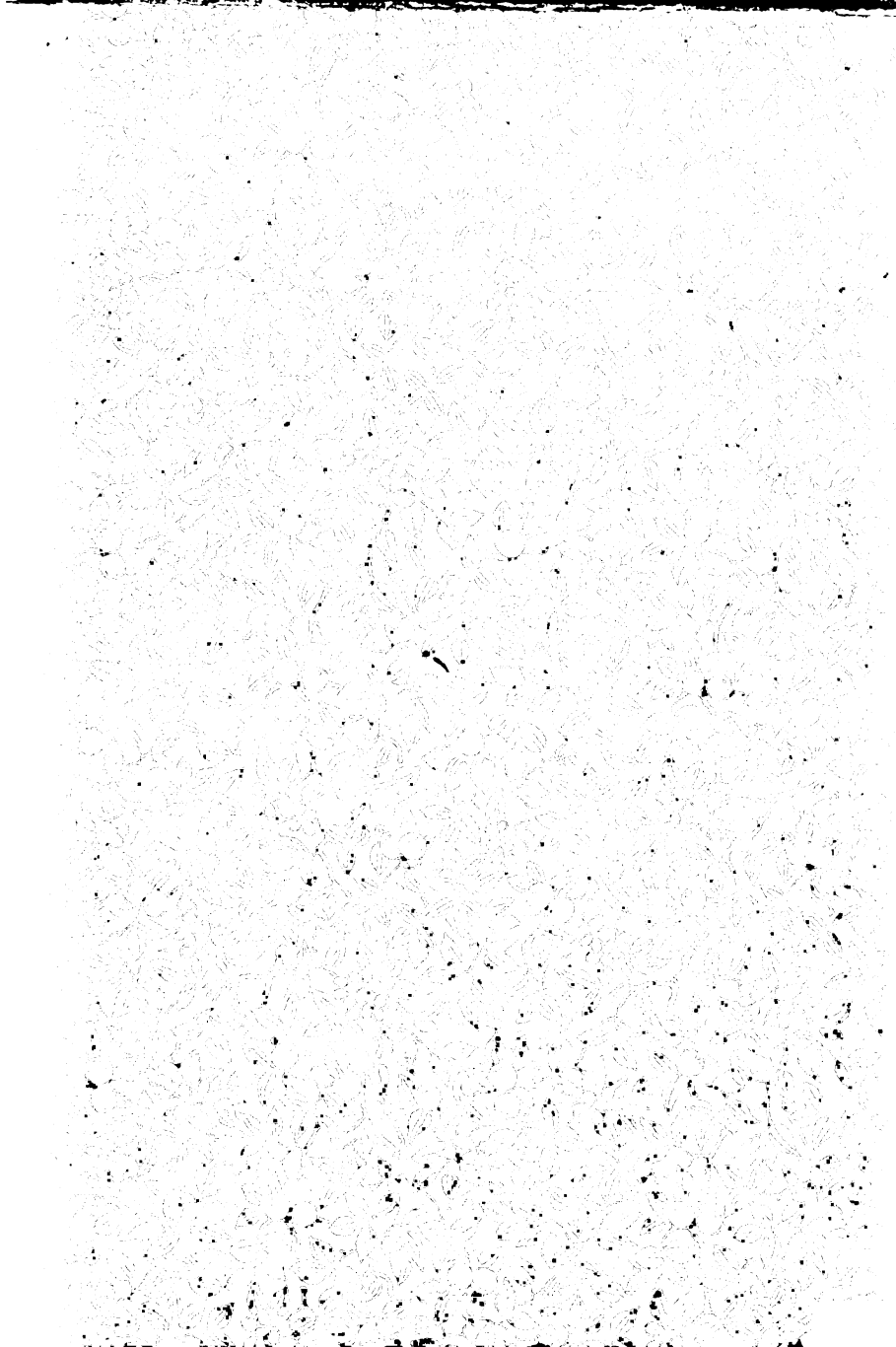
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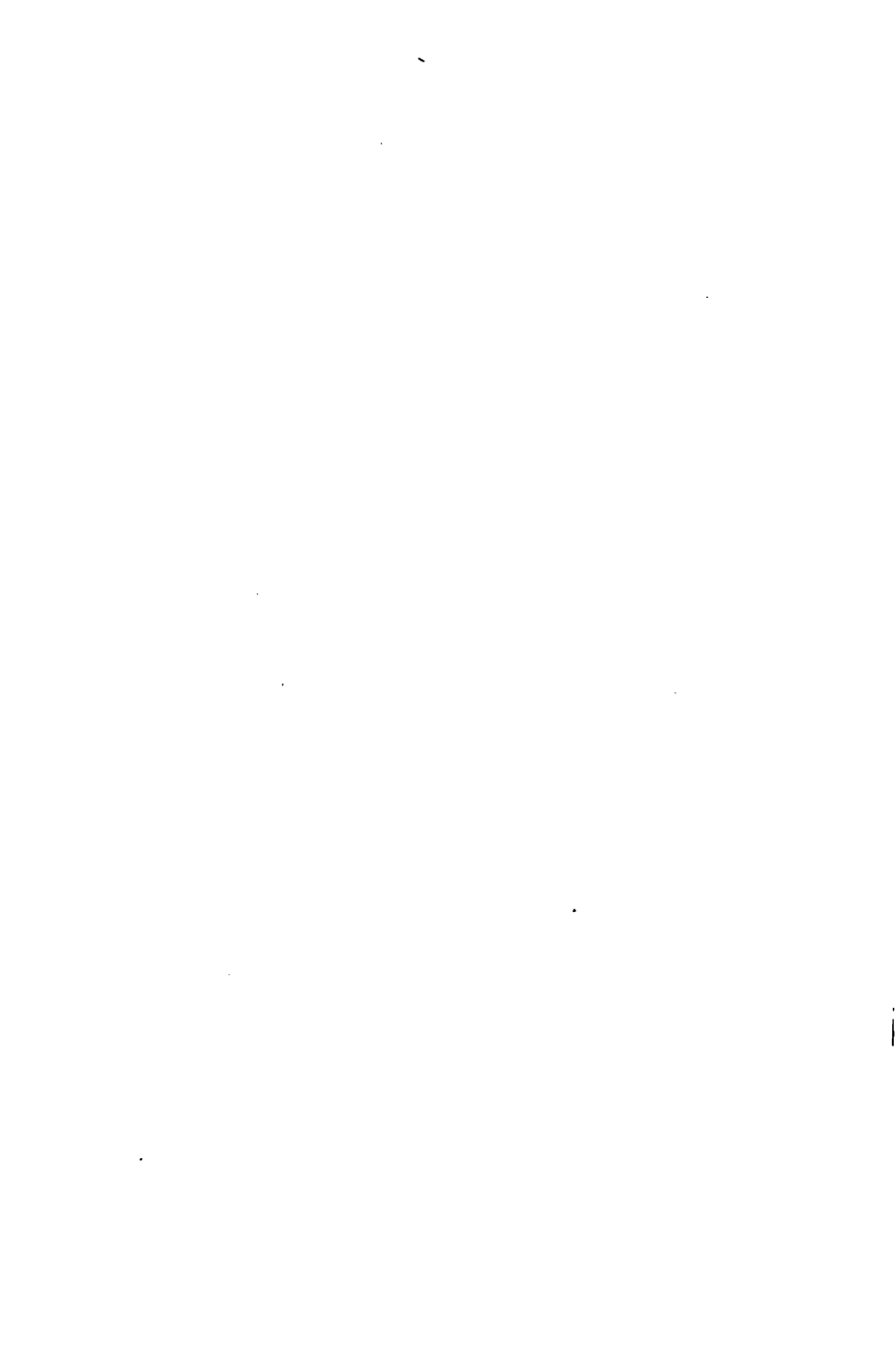






THE WAY OF THE WORLD

VOL. III.



THE
WAY OF THE WORLD

BY
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AUTHOR OF "HEARTS," "JOSEPH'S COAT," "COALS OF FIRE," ETC.



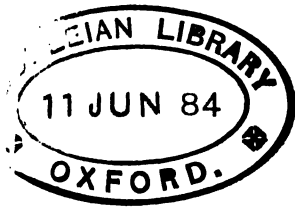
IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

BUT Kimberley was not the only man in the world who was breaking his heart for a woman. He was not even the only man in the world who was breaking his heart about Lady Ella Santerre. Jack Clare had had times as heavy as those through which the little millionaire had passed, with this added bitterness—that whereas Kimberley had only been forced to despise himself, Clare had been compelled to despise the woman he loved, and had once thought (as lovers have a knack of thinking) something scarcely mortal. Yet this bitter mood never lasted long with him,

and he oftener pitied than despised her. Sometimes he even arose to an understanding of the spirit of self-sacrifice which moved her, and then he had the relief of despising the father instead of the daughter.

He had made all his arrangements, and in ten days the ship to which he was to entrust himself and his fortunes would sail. The practical man he needed had been engaged with a dozen English labourers, the necessary machinery for farming operations was already bought and paid for, and was lying at the docks, and now, when the hurry and excitement of preparation were all over, he was left nothing to do but to make his farewell to the few people to whom he cared to say good-bye at all. His mother and Montacute were to say good-bye in London, and had arranged to spend two or three days in town before his departure. Major Heard had also undertaken to see him off. A rather small and exclusive military club to which he belonged had bidden

him to a farewell dinner, and he had written back, with almost the only pretence he had ever practised in his life, to say that every hour before his departure was already occupied by its own engagement. He had a full week upon his hands, and nothing whatever to occupy him,

It was natural that Ella should fill most of his thoughts, for it was she who was driving him away from England. Now that the time of farewell drew so near he began to be newly tender about her, and to be more eager than he had been to find excuses for her. She had been cajoled or besought into the engagement by her father—frightened into it by the family debts—persuaded into it by Alice—worried into it by needy and affectionate female cousins. For all the soreness of his heart, Jack acknowledged the severity of the temptation, but that Ella should have fallen into it sickened him with all the world.

And yet, now that he was going away for good

and all, his heart so yearned over her, that there was but one natural end to all his mental tossings to and fro. He was fully resolved never to return to England, and to part from her in silence and anger was more than he could bear. He must needs go to Gallowbay and say farewell.

“I have no right to go,” he told himself. “I have no right to be a reproach to her. But she never cared for me, or she wouldn’t have engaged herself to marry a fellow like that. What right had I ever to suppose she cared for me, except as a sister might? She never gave me any. And if I go away without seeing her she’ll think I despise her, or hate her. I’ll just go down and say good-bye, as I would to any other old friend.”

He packed his portmanteau, took cab to Euston, and train to Gallowbay, and arrived after a tormenting journey. He put up at the Windgall Arms, and wrote this letter:—

“MY DEAR ELLA,—

I am going to New Zealand next week, and shall not return to England. I should like to see you to say good-bye. I know we are finally apart, and I have nothing but farewell to say, but I want to see you when I say it.

“Yours very truly,

“JACK.”

When he had sealed this and addressed it, it occurred to him for the hundredth time that Windgall might not be pleased at his appearance, and for the hundredth time Jack answered that objection.

“It’s likely enough that he won’t want me to see her,” he said grimly. “But I’m going away, and I leave England in nine days from now, and if she’ll see me, I *will* see her.”

It seemed so probable to his mind that Windgall would intervene if he knew of the proposed leavetaking, that little as he liked clandestine

ways, he determined not to risk the father's interference, but to send his message privately to Ella. So, with the letter in his pocket, he strolled out of Gallowbay, and unconsciously quickening his pace in answer to the hurry of his thoughts, he swung on eagerly towards the Castle. When he came near to the lodge gates he felt a sudden inclination to go back again, and abandon his project. Overcoming that prompting of the spirit he pushed aside the lesser gate and entered, and there was the elderly lodge-keeper standing at his door. Now old Hine knew very well the story of Jack's attachment to his noble master's eldest daughter, and the young man's appearance here seemed, to his simple mind, to forebode a row. But Captain Clare had always been a prime favourite with him, as he had been with almost everybody who knew him, and especially with servants and dependants. He had had a jolly way with him, and a free hand in spite of his narrow income;

and, better still, a ready ear for any little tale of trouble. A smile for a housemaid, a friendly word for a groom or gamekeeper, a spare minute for a gossip with a housekeeper—a genial recognition of the kinship of flesh and blood—could always be counted on from Captain Clare. All sorts and conditions of men had liked the young fellow, and his smiling face had carried sunshine with it everywhere, but now he was quite pale and haggard, and to the lodge-keeper's eyes he looked dangerous.

“Ah, Hine!” said Jack, with a cheery voice. “How do you do?”

“How do you do, sir?” asked Hine in turn, touching his hat to him. “The sight of you *is* good for sore eyes, Captain Clare.”

“I'm going to New Zealand next week,” said Jack, walking into the front room of the lodge and looking about him.

“New Zealand?” said Hine. “Not to stay there, sir?”

“Yes, to stay there,” the youngster answered, flushing a little. “I’m leaving England for good and all. Where’s Mrs. Hine?”

“She’s laid up, sir,” said Hine, “with a baddish cold. It’s turned out a bit feverish. She’s been abed a week.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Jack. “You must say good-bye for me.”

“Thank you, sir, I will,” the lodge-keeper answered. “She’ll be grieved to have missed you, sir. New Zealand?” Jack’s news was an evident astonishment to him.

“Look here, Hine,” said Jack, producing the letter with a blush. “I want this to go up to the Castle. I want it to go privately. You understand. I don’t think his lordship particularly wants to see me here.”

“I understand, sir,” Hine answered, as he turned the letter over in his hands.

“Do you think you can manage to deliver it yourself?” All this was not very dignified,

and he could have wished that he had walked straight up to the Castle.

“ I can try, sir.”

“ If you can see her say I am in the King’s Avenue.” He put a sovereign into the half-reluctant hand.

“ Yes, sir,” said the old man. “ I’ll manage it if I can. You’ve growed a little thin, sir, if you’ll excuse me saying so. I’ll go up at once, sir. The poor young feller is hard hit,” said the ancient Hine to himself. “ The King’s Avenue? All right, sir,” he said aloud, and Jack with a nod swung out of the lodge and made at a rapid pace across the park.

The old man walked up to the Castle, and the mournful lover marched on to the King’s Avenue, where two great lines of elms, vast in girth and venerable, ran alongside each other for nearly a quarter of a mile. Here he paced up and down impatiently for an hour, and grew despairing, and full of rage and old tenderness

and unavailing yearning, insomuch that he felt a desire to smite his head against the tree which stood nearest. In this compound miserable mood he walked eagerly to every opening through which Ella might by any possibility approach, and glaring down each walked eagerly on to another. In his eager impatience he continued this wild ramble until he was hot and tired.

Now, as the destinies which ruled this business ordained events, Kimberley's resolve had failed him for the moment. Perhaps, to speak more truly, he failed to see his best way through the painful interview which lay before him, and in his incertitude he had turned aside and with bent head and a heart full of unhappy thoughts had wandered through the park for an hour or more until he came upon the identical avenue in which Jack Clare was raging up and down.

Kimberley stood between the boles of two great trees, and, himself unobserved, saw a

strange gentleman prowling up and down the avenue, in a mighty hurry, which at first looked altogether purposeless. Clare and he had never met, and, except by hearsay, were perfect strangers to each other. Kimberley had not even so much as seen Jack's portrait, but the unsuccessful rival had been made acquainted with the successful rival's features by Sylvester's lifelike caricature, and would have been pretty sure of him anywhere. Meeting him here he was bound to know him.

Without the remotest suspicion of the stranger's identity Kimberley watched his hurried and self-contradictory movements, and was at last awakened to the conclusion that the gentleman had lost his way and was in a hurry to find it. It was always at a cost of much nervous pain that he made up his mind to address a stranger, but he was one of the kindest-hearted men in the world, and so, with his usual tremors, he advanced. When he had followed

Clare a little way the younger man turned, caught sight of him and, stopping dead in his hurried walk, looked at him at first with amazement and then with scorn. The wild idea crossed him that the Earl might have intercepted the lodge-keeper, learned his errand, and then sent the accepted lover to warn a poacher from his domain.

“I beg your pardon,” said Kimberley, raising his white hat and speaking with a nervous blush and tremor, “I thought you might have lost your way.”

Jack stood still and eyed him from head to foot. His glance took in the whole of Kimberley's vulgar glories, and the extraordinary dog's head pin, with its ruby eyes and jewelled collar, would on another's figure have provoked him to inward laughter. As it was, he smiled with an exceedingly bitter aspect, eyed the little man from head to foot once more, and, turning short upon his heel, resumed his walk, with his

hands in the pockets of his shooting-jacket. He had not wanted any witness of his last farewell to Ella, and that this man, of all men in the world, should appear at this moment was savagely galling.

Kimberley thought the stranger's behaviour remarkable, and even insolent.

"I shall be very happy to direct you, sir," he said, notwithstanding.

Jack turned his head and looked at him once more with a face of unmistakable disdain, and then sauntered on a second time without a word. This unaccountable behaviour excited in Kimberley's breast as much ire as he was capable of feeling.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, following Jack's sauntering footsteps. "I did myself the honour to address you." This time Jack did not even turn his head, but walked on quietly, as if unconscious of the other's presence. Within he was boiling over, but he gave no sign. "Per-

haps, sir," said Kimberley, who had scarcely ever been so wrathful in his life as this curious reception of his politeness made him, "you are not aware that this is private property."

Now Jack, who was by nature a sweet-tempered man, had been sorely tried for many a day. He was expecting Ella all the more eagerly because he more than half despaired of her coming, and to have this witness of their meeting was simply and purely impossible. Would no scorn of manner give him a hint to be gone? He scarcely dared trust himself to speak, but he turned and looked a third time at the little millionaire, and again walked on in silence. There was nothing to be got out of a row with Bolsover Kimberley, and angry as he was his own sense of dignity made a scene unlikely.

"Perhaps, sir," repeated Kimberley, growing actually exasperated at the stranger's disdain, "you are not aware that this is private property."

Then Jack Clare turned upon him swiftly.

“Pardon the question,” he said with savage suavity, “but, pray sir, are you often mobbed?”

“No, sir,” retorted Kimberley, not being able just then to find a better answer, and half inclined to think he had a madman to deal with.

“Excuse me again,” said Jack, “but do you desire to be mobbed?”

“No, sir,” replied Kimberley, more fiercely than he had ever spoken in all his meek life, until that moment.

“Then why do you wear that scarf-pin and those clothes?” demanded Captain Clare. The downright insolence of the question soothed him. He did not wait for an answer, but walked on, as if once more sublimely unconscious of Kimberley’s presence.

“You are an insolent fellow, sir,” cried Kimberley, behind him. “You are an insolent fellow, sir.” Jack walked on regardless of his wrath. “Do you hear, sir?” said Kimberley, fairly enraged, and forgetting even to be aston-

ished at the courage he displayed. "I tell you that you are an insolent fellow, sir." He was small and shy, and meek enough, heaven knows, but even he could resent so bold an insult.

"You pestilential little cad," cried Jack, wheeling round upon him, and letting out all his wrath at once. "Go home!"

"Cad, sir!" answered Kimberley, facing him in ruffling indignation. "Whom do you call a cad, sir?"

"I call any man a cad," said Jack, "who goes about with a suit of clothes like that."

It was not a polished shaft, but it went home. Oh, it went home, and, as Carlyle said of Balaam, "an ice-taloned pang shot through brain and pericardium." Jack walked on, and Kimberley stood rooted to the ground. He had not a word to say in answer, and he had scarcely even a conscious thought, but he stood crushed and overwhelmed beneath the sense of his own humiliation. His fineries had been the one thing

on which he had relied to make himself look like a gentleman, and he knew now what they made him look like.

He could have wished the ground to open beneath his feet and hide him. He did not see that the stranger had hurriedly left the avenue for one of the spaces leading out of it, and he was so bitterly wounded that his heart had no room for anything but the feeling of this new mortification. He thought of Ella, and tears of shame and misery rose with a keen pang of pain to his eyes. Had she always seen him as a patent and transparent cad? Had she gone about with him knowing that he was thus labelled to the eye of every lady and every man of taste who beheld him? What else was he? Oh, what else was he? He gave one helpless look about him, seeing things all blurred in the sunshine through his tears, and walked down the avenue, with the thick-fallen leaves rustling about his feet. By-and-by he came upon a little

arbour'd seat, almost hidden by autumnal foliage of many colours, and pushing the luxuriant boughs aside he entered the arbour. Many and many a time he had reproached himself with his own unworthiness—that very day he had proclaimed himself a snob—but there is the widest difference between the contemptuous things a man may say of himself, and the contemptuous things another man may say of him. Shame, shame, shame, rag'd through his heart, gust after gust. He felt no resentment now. There was no room for resentment. He knew that the insult which had been flung at him had passed unspoken through the minds of scores of men in his presence, and could believe that it had many a time been spoken in his absence. The dreadful truth had been thrown at his head in a fashion downright brutal, but he knew it for the truth and it crushed him.

He had cried bitterly that morning to think of all he must surrender because of his own

unworthiness, and the passion of his self-sacrifice had opened a freer channel for his tears. And his heart being still sore and tender from that recent suffering there was nothing for it now but to sit in this little arbour'd retreat and to cry anew for this fresh misery. Bear with him for a minute, and with me, who tell the story of so weak a creature.

Jack Clare had scarcely spoken those savage and contemptuous words than he saw Ella approaching at a little distance, and moved swiftly away to meet her. The uppermost sentiment in his mind was one of rage, a sort of sick fury of contempt and wonder that his goddess should have stooped to such a man as he had just seen, and should have stooped for money. But as he drew nearer, and saw how pale and mournful her lovely face had grown his heart smote him, and he advanced gently. As he took her hand in his and looked at her, Bolsover Kimberley faded from his mind, and all anger vanished.

“You got my note,” he said; “you knew that I was here?”

“Yes,” she answered, “I could not refuse you, but you compromise me by coming in this way. Come to the Castle, and see papa, and say good-bye to him.”

“I was wrong to come at all, perhaps,” he answered. “But I couldn’t help it. And I couldn’t have you think I went away gloomy, or changed at all. If you hadn’t seen me you might have thought from what I said when I saw you last that I was going away with a broken heart, and that I was embittered against you.”

She was afraid of herself and of him, and with downcast eyes she walked on slowly, he moving at her side.

“You are going to New Zealand?” she said, lifting her eyes to his face for a mere instant. “You have given up your career in the army?”

“If anything had been stirring,” he answered, “I might have stayed, but in these piping times of peace I have grown tired of the army. I have bought land in New Zealand, and I am going out to work it. In a few generations it will be valuable—it’s absurdly small in cost at present, and I have bought five thousand acres. It will be something for Montacute’s descendants. There is no reason why the Montacutes should always be poor, but somebody must put his hand to the plough, and the Fates choose me. The old condition of things is getting a little worn here, and a new one is gradually growing. We must work like the rest of the world.”

These were not the things which were uppermost in his mind, but it was safer to speak of them than of his real thoughts.

“I am sure you are right,” she said. “I have often thought that if I had been a man I would have chosen such a career for myself.” They walked on a little further in silence, their

feet rustling in the dead leaves. There was a sense of something guilty and contraband in this meeting to both their minds. "You will say good-bye to papa," said Ella almost beseechingly.

"Don't ask me to do that, Ella," Jack answered. "He and I are best apart. I might have known—I did know well enough—that this was likely to be a painful meeting to both of us, and I might have spared you. But I was selfish, darling. I am going away. I shall never see you any more, and I wanted some memory of a last word."

The tears stood so thickly in her eyes that they half-blinded her, but she looked up at him in spite of them, and spoke simply and bravely. It was no time for pretences.

"I should have been grieved if you had gone away without a good-bye. I hope you will be prosperous and happy."

"Don't think," said Jack, beginning to see

that her burthen was heavier than his own, "don't think that I am going away to brood and to be unhappy. I had my dream. I shall never forget it, but I am not going to be unhappy about it. And you'll think of the Antipodean farmer at times, won't you?" The attempt he made to say this jollily was a failure so complete that it almost broke him down.

"I shall think of you always as if you were a brother." Cold comfort to Jack's breaking heart, yet something.

They stood in silence immediately in front of the arbour into which Kimberley had retired. He could see them, himself unseen, but there was no way of escape for him. He saw and heard and understood. The stranger who had so wantonly insulted him was Ella's lover.

"I won't say it isn't hard," said Jack. "One doesn't even see the same stars there. But it has to be borne, and I shall bear it. I shall

be a better man for having known you. I never loved another woman, and I never shall."

"Go now," she said, with silent but fast raining tears. "We shall always think of you." She scarcely knew what words she used. "You will come back again to England when the pain is over."

"That will be never," said Jack, groaning in his speech. "Never! No, my darling, its good-bye for good and all. We shall never see each other again in this world." Do what he would, his voice quivered. "I haven't the heart to go, yet go I must. Good-bye, dear. Good-bye."

He stretched out both hands, and she laid hers within them. They stood thus, scarcely seeing each other for their tears, and suddenly, with a passionate gesture, he drew her to his breast and kissed her. Her head fell back from his shoulder, and looking down upon her he saw that she had fainted. He held her in his arms and called her name, but she gave no

answer or sign of answer. The blue lips and colourless face frightened him, and he said stonily to himself, "I have killed her." He laid her gently down upon the grass, and supporting her head upon his arm, looked down upon her in an agony of fear and self-reproach.

Then his mood changed.

"Curse the money-bags that came between us," he cried wildly, and began to chafe her hands within his, and to moan above her. "Damn the man that broke her heart and mine. Darling, look up." He kissed her hands and chafed them, and his hot tears fell upon her unconscious face.

All this Bolsover Kimberley saw and heard. His were the money-bags that brought down that curse. He could almost have found it in his heart to curse them too. What had they done for him but make him wretched? He had been happier without them. And he loved her—he loved her as dearly as the man who knelt above her.

Love and money. They make and unmake most of the troubles of the world.

By-and-by Ella began to revive, and Jack to murmur soothing foolish words to her. When she realised the situation she tried to rise, and he helped her tenderly to her feet.

“You can’t walk yet, dear,” he said. “There is a seat near here somewhere, a little arbour of a place. You had better rest there for a time.” He took a step—he had need to take but one—and laid his hand upon a bough. “This is the place. Sit here a while, and I will go,” said Jack remorsefully. “Forgive me for the pain I have given you. I was a coward not to go without seeing you at all.”

Kimberley stood with clasped hands and in-drawn breath. He had never known anything like the agony of that moment. But all three were spared the discovery of his presence there.

“No,” said Ella feebly. “I am better here.

I am quite strong. Good-bye, dear. Leave me now. Good-bye."

"I can't leave you like this," he said. "You are not fit to be left alone. Let me help you back; if only for a little way, let me help you."

She yielded to his pleading, for in truth she could not walk unaided, and they left the place slowly, she leaning on his arm, and he bending protectingly over her.

They had scarce quitted the avenue when there came upon them no less a personage than the Earl of Windgall. He stood for one minute in the paralysis of astonishment, and then advanced swiftly.

"Captain Clare?" he said sternly, and looked from Jack's suddenly-lowering face to Ella's, with the trace of tears upon it still.

"Captain Clare, my lord," said Jack sardonically. "Lady Ella is unwell. I can surrender her to your care."

"May I ask," said his lordship, his grey face

much greyer than common, and his eyes glittering, "to what I am indebted for your presence here?"

"I am going to New Zealand—" Jack began.

"Oh!" said my lord, "is this the way?"

"I came here to say good-bye to your daughter, my lord. I leave England next week, and I do not propose to return. I will ask you to remember that we two were bred like brother and sister."

"We can part without more words, sir," said Windgall.

"Very well," responded Jack. "Good-bye, Ella, and God bless you always. Good-bye, my lord."

There were bitter words on the lips of both Clare and Windgall, but they parted then and there, and nothing more was said between them.

"Ella," cried the Earl when Jack's stalwart figure had disappeared, "was this meeting an accident on your part, or did you deliberately

endure the scandal of that man's presence here?"

"Pray choose another tone, papa!" she answered, with a manner gentler than the words. "I met him because he asked me to see him and to say good-bye."

Windgall, for excellent reasons of his own, forbore to say more just then.

CHAPTER II.

FOR a long time after the sound of the rustling footsteps had died away Kimberley stood in the little arbour, and surrendered himself to his own emotions. At length he wiped his eyes with an expression of new resolve, picked up his white hat, which had fallen upon the sward at his feet, and, pushing his hand through the leafy screen before him, surveyed the avenue. Finding that the coast was clear, he emerged from his shelter, and fixing his hat tightly with both hands, walked towards the Castle. His face was an epitome of all unhappy emotions, his eyes were red and swollen with tears, his features were besmeared and soiled from the same cause, and every now and again an involuntary sob escaped

him, but in spite of all these signs of weakness he walked like a man who knew his purpose and was resolutely bent upon it.

There were two or three roads between the King's Avenue and the Castle, but the nearest lay through the gardens, and he chose it, partly because it *was* the nearest, and partly because he felt himself less likely to be seen upon that way. He was in no fit state to be seen, but he was so filled with his own resolve as to be oblivious of his appearance, and his thoughts so galled him that he walked more and more rapidly.

Alice, who was pacing up and down a gravelled pathway with an unread book in her hand, thinking dismally of her sister's future, saw Kimberley at a distance, and guessed by his gait that he was in some way agitated. As he came nearer she saw the unmistakable signs of his recent tears, and wondered. Kimberley, catching sight of her in turn, bore down upon her swiftly, with an aspect so wild and unusual that the girl was

more than half afraid of him. When he reached the place where she stood, he was panting from the speed at which he had walked, and a great sob broke from his breast as he halted with clenched hands and disordered air before her.

“Mr. Kimberley,” she cried, “what has happened?”

Kimberley moved his head from side to side like one in extreme pain.

“I came here to-day,” he began, “to see Lord Windgall. I have found out what a mistake I have made, and I meant to tell him of it.”

Had he lost his fortune? Had he decided that he could not spare—or would not spare—that ninety thousands pounds of which Ella had spoken? The girl was as far from being mercenary as she well could be, and yet these guesses shot through her mind in an instant.

“I don’t want to speak ill of his lordship to you,” he continued less wildly, “but it was cruel not to let me know. It was cruel to her, ten

thousand times more cruel to her than it was to me, but I suppose he knew that if he had told me I should have gone away." The urgent misery of his voice, and the pained way in which his head moved from side to side, indicated to the girl such a depth of suffering, that she pitied him in advance with all her heart, but his words meant nothing to her.

"You alarm me, Mr. Kimberley," she said. "But I do not understand you. Pray, compose yourself. Can I help you in any way?"

"Miss Santerre," said Kimberley, "you were the very first I ever spoke to. Until that night on the lawn when I first told you, I had never said a word to any human being. You said, 'Go straight to her and ask her for a plain answer. That's what you'll do if you have the courage I give you credit for.' But you never knew where you were sending me? Tell me you never knew where you were sending me."

"I did not know it," she answered, suddenly

chilled and in arms against him. "I did not guess it."

"I'm glad of that," he said wretchedly. "I have never liked to think that you would have said it if you had known."

"You are speaking of your engagement to my sister, Mr. Kimberley?" she demanded. "I can see that you are greatly agitated, but you must surely know that you are speaking very strangely. You must know that this is a remarkable thing for you to say to me."

"I was such a fool," pursued the hapless Kimberley, "as to think I might be able to make her happy. Do you think I would ever have spoken a word to break her heart if I'd known what I was doing? I thought I could make her happy."

"And has she told you," Alice asked, with a sense almost of exultant hope, despite of his visible suffering, "that you never can?"

"No," returned Kimberley. "She hasn't told

me so, but I know it, I knew it before this afternoon. I knew it this morning, and I was coming here to say so. But I know it better than ever now."

"You were coming this morning to release Ella from her engagement?" If that were true, it was indeed a thing to be grateful for, for Ella's sake: but what of her father's embarrassments? Of course she would not stoop to speak one word of this to Kimberley, but the thought of the blow which his renunciation of his claim upon her sister's hand would deal her father, mingled a sense of terror with her feeling of relief.

"Yes," Kimberley answered. "I was a fool to think that I could ever make her happy."

That he had really and truly loved her, the girl had pity enough to see, and it broke his heart to surrender her. She understood that it was love which impelled him to this sacrifice, and a man with so good a heart, she thought, could scarcely be merciless to her father. This

hope had hardly entered her mind when she despised it.

“Mr. Kimberley,” she said, after a lengthy pause, “I am very inexperienced and young, and ignorant of the world. This is a matter of great delicacy, and I am quite unable to advise you. I am not quite sure that it is right in me to encourage you to speak of it. I feel as if I were eavesdropping, and had surprised a secret. Don’t you think you had better speak first to papa about it?”

“Did you know,” asked Kimberley, in a certain stony and uninterested way, “that Lady Ella had a sweetheart?”

“Mr. Kimberley!”

“Did you know,” he went on, in the same strange way, unchecked by her exclamation, “that there was somebody she cared for? Did you know that they were both breaking their hearts, and that he was going abroad for good and all, because she was going to be married?”

“If these things are true,” she answered him, with a hauteur that not all her pity could suppress, “there is all the more reason why you should not speak to me any further. You must see,” she continued, in answer to the troubled amazement with which he looked at her, “that I cannot listen to any story of my sister’s secrets, unless she herself tells them to me. I am afraid that you are the victim of some strange misunderstanding, Mr. Kimberley. You had better see papa at once.”

“I’m glad you didn’t know,” he answered. “I couldn’t help thinking that you’d have been kind enough to her to tell me if you’d known. I’ll go and see his lordship, now. I’m very glad you didn’t know.”

Alice stood looking after him as he walked to the Castle, and a score of conjectures passed through her mind. As for Kimberley, there was but one strand in him which was not broken for the time. Nothing but the unconscious sense

of honour held the rest of his senses together. Ella must be freed from the wretched obligation she had taken upon herself in obedience to the dictation of her father's needs.

At the entrance to the Castle a liveried servant met him and stared at him in so wild a fashion that even Kimberley noticed it, and bethought him of his own condition.

"Where is his lordship?" he asked stoutly, though there was a hint of breaking in his voice.

The obsequious flunky led the way to the library. They were not often visited by moneyed people at Shouldershott Castle, and Kimberley had been lavishly generous to the servants, who were therefore overwhelmingly polite to him, although, as a matter of course, they knew their place a great deal too well not to despise him.

"There's somethink hup," said this particular gentleman to his chum and companion, when he had parted from the millionaire. "Old Windgall's just come in with the millyinhairress

as is to be, lookink as black as the 'ob, and she a cryink, and now the lawyer's clerk have put in *his* appearance, and him a cryink also. Blubberink, by gad," the noble creature added, "like a bull-calf! Him and old Windgall's in the library. Before I could get out of the room his lordship sings out, 'My dear Kimbly' (says he), 'what in the name of Hevans is the matter with you?' I suppose the little snob had fell down and hurt hisself."

"Lady Ella wouldn't ha' cried at that, I fency," returned the other noble creature. "Not if he'd ha' broke his neck. *I* don't know what the aristocracy is a coming to."

"The erristaweracy?" cried number one, with a look of mingled pity and disdain. "The erristaweracy is going to the dayvil!"

It is hard to feel that one's Order (as a distinguished lady novelist always calls it) is deteriorating. One must belong to the Order to feel the full force of the grief.

The Earl was alone when the noble creature opened the door for Kimberley, and he arose in some amazement and disturbance at his prospective son-in-law's forlorn appearance.

"My dear Kimberley," cried his lordship, "what's the matter?"

"My lord!" said Kimberley, "I expected you to act to me like a man, to say nothing of a nobleman."

"Sir?" said his lordship, in such wrath and astonishment as he had rarely felt in his life.

"Perhaps," said Kimberley, "I am too hasty, and if I am I beg your pardon. But I don't think you could help knowing it, and if you did know it——"

"Know what, sir?" cried Windgall.

"Did you know, my lord," asked Kimberley, "that Lady Ella was breaking her heart because she was to marry me?"

"Really——" began his lordship in a tone of haughty expostulation, but he got no further.

“You didn’t know it?” demanded Kimberley. “I should be glad to think you didn’t know it. I should be glad to think it was all a blind mistake.”

“This is all very extraordinary,” said his lordship, angry, and humiliated, and almost despairing all at once. “May I ask what has inspired you with this extraordinary belief?”

“I can only tell you partly,” answered Kimberley. He had no feeling of shyness now. “I can only tell you partly, but I know it. I guessed it days ago, and now I know it.”

“Have you spoken of this strange supposition to Lady Ella—to my daughter?” Windgall asked him.

“No, my lord,” said Kimberley. “I was coming straight to you, but I met Miss Santerre on the way, and I spoke to her about it.”

“Great heaven!” exclaimed Windgall. “You spoke to a child like that upon so delicate a suspicion. I am amazed, Kimberley! I am amazed!”

“My lord,” said Kimberley, “when I first came and spoke to you about this I brought some papers, and asked you to take them from me as a friend, if I may use the word between a nobleman and a man like myself.”

“There has never been any doubt about your claim to use the word,” returned Windgall, “since we have known each other.”

He was a kindly man enough by nature, and had no wish to be cruel to his daughter, but it was hard to think that the wreck of all his hopes was near and unescapable. He could not think so altogether as yet.

“Thank you, my lord,” said Kimberley. To say “my lord” often fell in with his ideas of state, and some degree of stateliness seemed essential. “But I remember that you told me afterwards that though you might take them from a relative you could not take them from a friend. I’ve thought since then that, perhaps, in spite of all I said, you thought I had bought

those papers to have you in my grasp. I am not a gentleman, my lord, but I hope I am above that. I was very poorly reared, my lord, but I never did a cruel thing in my life. I couldn't. I was attached to Lady Ella long before I had any money, and I shall never care for anybody else. But I was a fool to think that I could ever make her happy, and I resign my claim upon her hand, my lord, and I must leave your roof for ever."

If there was something of a touch of melodrama in Kimberley's last words he did not know of it, and Windgall was too agitated to think of anything but the matter of his speech.

"Stop, sir," cried the Earl in a rage of embarrassment and despair, but tolerably cool outside in spite of all. "I have a right to a fuller explanation of this astonishing resolve on your part, and I must have it."

"The only explanation I can give, my lord,"

said Kimberley, "is that this engagement is breaking Lady Ella's heart."

An absurdly overdressed, meek little man, with his hair in ridiculous disorder and his face besmeared with tears, might well be supposed to cut a poor figure in the eyes of a man of Windgall's breeding and ways of thinking, but notwithstanding his disadvantages there was something almost dignified in Kimberley's aspect at this moment. His self-sacrifice and his inward sense of right lent him an air of simple manliness.

"This conversation is necessarily painful to both of us," said the Earl, who felt and saw the change. "But may I ask the foundation of your belief?"

"My lord," said Kimberley, "I'm afraid I can't tell you everything, but I have watched for days past, and I was sure before——"

"Before what?" Windgall's heart grew hot at the thought that Kimberley might have

known of Clare's visit, might even have seen that parting at which Ella had shed tears.

"I beg pardon," answered Kimberley. "But I can't answer you. But what I say is true. I am not fit for her, my lord, and all the money in the world could never make me worthy of her. If I had always been a lawyer's clerk it would have been better for everybody. I beg your pardon, my lord. I had no right to insult you by reminding you of that."

"Do you know, Kimberley," said his lordship, "that the breaking of an engagement like this, an engagement of which all the world is cognisant, is an insult to my daughter and to me; an insult on which the world may place any miserable interpretation which pleases it."

"My lord," returned Kimberley, "I am very sorry, but I can't break Lady Ella's heart."

"What did Alice say to you when you broached this fancy to her?" Windgall asked. "Did she confirm it?"

"No. She said it was a matter of great delicacy. She said she couldn't advise me. She said I was wrong to speak to anybody so young and inexperienced about it—perhaps I was."

"Surely you were wrong," said his lordship. "Kimberley, I cannot help believing that your supposition is altogether groundless and absurd. I know Ella too well to suppose that she would accept so serious an offer without having well weighed her own intentions, without having consulted her own heart. I declare to you, Kimberley, I swear to you, that no pressure was brought to bear upon her, that I was simply and purely your ambassador in the matter."

"My lord," answered Kimberley, "I don't charge you with wanting to sell your daughter's happiness. I hope you never saw how wretched the match made her. I hope——"

"How—how dare you, sir!" stammered Windgail, in an anguish of wrath and shame.

"I can't say what I want to say," said Kim-

berley. "If I had been clever and well-bred it might have been different. I was wrong to come here at all, my lord. It was no place for me. I was a fool. It was a shame to ask a lady like Lady Ella to marry a man like me. I won't help to break her heart, my lord. I can't. I won't do it. Not if I break my own a million times over."

The Earl sat down and beat his foot upon the carpet. It was true enough. It *had* been a shame to ask Ella to marry a man like this, and yet the man was a gentleman when all was said and done. It was plain he loved her. His very surrender of her with that tear-stained face was proof enough of that.

"By heaven, Kimberley!" cried his lordship, in spite of himself, "you are a noble-hearted fellow. And I never thought so highly of you as at this moment. Understand me! I am not pressing my daughter upon an unwilling suitor. I am only trying to heal a breach and to prevent

a dreadful scandal. I do not believe that my daughter would be unhappy as your wife."

"She would only break her heart, my lord," answered Kimberley. "That's all." He began to breathe hard again, and though he fought against it with all his might he could not repress a sob. "I sha'n't be in a fit state to speak at all if I stay here any longer," he added huskily, "and so, I'll ask you to excuse me for all the trouble I have caused you, and I'll say good-bye, my lord."

He bowed and he was gone. The Earl's visions crumbled, as he sat and looked at them. No gilded grandeur for his favourite daughter, no ease from debts and duns for him. No possibility of the acceptance of those papers now. He was bound in honour to send them back again, and Kimberley would feel, even if no resentment awoke in his mind as the final result of his self-sacrifice, that he had no right to refuse them. In point of fact, whatsoever Kimberley

might do, the Earl saw the absolute impossibility of an acceptance of the magnificent offer. He felt to the full how hard it was to have to make such a sacrifice to honour. He knew pretty surely that if he destroyed the papers Kimberley would make no claim against him. In a certain sordid way he had a full right to destroy them. But he knew that he had not acted too honourably already, and the temptation never had a second's real strength for him. Yet it was not an easy thing to part with the papers.

It was not easy either to know that he had to take the news to Ella, and he was in anything but a pleasant humour when he finally compelled himself to seek her.

“Ella,” he said, “I have forborne to speak to you as to one of the events of to-day, filled as I was with surprise and alarm. But another thing has happened of which, unfortunately, I am compelled to speak. Mr. Kimberley has become possessed of the idea that the engagement into

which you entered with him is utterly distasteful to you, and he has called upon me in a state of distress of which I can convey no idea, to release you from your engagement. You know best," he added desperately, "what ground there is for his belief."

She looked at him and could see that he was too keenly wounded by his own disappointment to be in a mood for justice.

"You know best what ground there is for his belief," his lordship repeated.

"I cannot tell," she answered wearily, "what ground he had. I tried never to afford him any."

"This match," he asked, "has been distasteful to you all along?"

She looked up at him as he stood before her, and he caught in her glance a weary surprise which stung him to the quick. For Ella's part, she was so sore-hearted, and he seemed so little to regard her, that for a moment she half despised

him. Then came the reaction, and she felt ashamed of that natural sentiment, and hastened to atone for it.

“I tried to show no distaste, papa,” she answered.

“But you felt it?” he demanded. “You yielded to his offer for my sake? You thought so ill of me as to believe that I was willing to sacrifice you altogether for the sake of Mr. Kimberley’s money?”

But after all Windgall was not cut out for the *rôle* he was trying to play, and his daughter’s submission smote him sorely.

“I had never thought it was what it seems to have been,” he said. “I never thought it possible or likely that you would form a romantic attachment.” He laughed, shortly and savagely, as he said this. “But I did think that you would find certain compensations, and that you could have been fairly happy. If I had thought you likely to be unhappy, I would

never have taken his offer into consideration for a moment." She was silent, and her silence was like an accusation to 'him. The events of the day had scarified his nerves, and he was more sensitive than common. "Do me the justice to believe that, Ella," he said, walking from the end of the room and pausing before her.

"I know it, papa," she answered. "I am sure of it."

In effect there was nothing more to say, though much more was said between them. The real wrench came to Windgall that night when he sat down in his library and packed up and sealed the papers Kimberley had given him.

"My dear Kimberley," he wrote, "you will understand the absolute impossibility of my acceptance of the documents which accompany this letter. Much as I regret the unhappy event of to-day, I must ask your permission

to say that you have acted throughout in a most magnanimous manner."

After all the Earl of Windgall could not help being a gentleman, though the rust of poverty had corroded spots about him.

The receipt of this letter added another drop to the bitterness of Kimberley's cup, which was full enough of distasteful ingredients already. He had cut himself off from the last chance of serving the woman he loved so dearly. What was his money worth to him? If Ella could have taken it, if she would have taken it, he could have handed over every penny without one thought, or chance of a thought, of regret. He would have gone back to his clerkship, and could have been almost happy if only she would have taken the money and been brilliant and bright and happy with it, even at a distance from him. These thoughts are not to be taken to the foot of the letter as here expressed, perhaps, but he honestly thought they were.

The one passionate longing of his soul was that Ella should be happy. As for him—the poor little hero—what did it matter about him? He had been a charity boy; he had been an errand boy in Blandy's office; he had been a clerk in Blandy's office for many a dreary year; people had been used to think little of him, and he had grown used to think little of himself. What right had he, of all men in the world, to be a millionaire, when that peerless lady, the daughter of a long line of people nobly bred and gently nurtured, could feel the pinch of poverty?

The proud man's contumely, and his own, and the pangs of despised love, rankled, how terribly, in the poor heart. He could well-nigh have died for shame; he could well-nigh have died for pity of himself. He was ashamed to show his bleared eyes and scalded cheeks, and the servants knew that something was amiss, and gossiped and wondered, as he knew they

would. Everything hurts the hurt ; everything, like the hand of the Irish schoolmaster in Hood's poem, " smites his scald head that is already sore."

But all on a sudden, in the midst of his tears, Kimberley stood up, in the astonishing dressing-gown and smoking-cap, and clutched the papers that lay on the table before him.

" I can do something for her after all," he said. " And I will. I will. I'll do it, if it breaks my heart."

CHAPTER III.

MR. AMELIA sat at luncheon in the revolving chair with a half-finished article by one of the specially retained and specially paid members of the staff of *The Way of the World* before him. He took his measured dose from his medicine bottle, and his regulated bite from his sandwich, and dangled his little legs with an air of genuine enjoyment. Even in the midst of his leisure he took up a pen at moments and added a casual sentence to the special article. He was seated alone, but in the next room the Scottish graduate, his private secretary, was busily engaged in writing out a lucubration which Mr. Amelia, in the person of another of the specially retained and specially paid, had just dictated

to him. These two non-existent people were worth ten guineas a week between them to the little editor, and to think that he was earning that ten guineas in a single day was like wine and meat to him. At times he smiled to himself, and once or twice he nodded with an almost exultant self-approval. So much could brains do in this world, when the owner of the brains knew his way about, and was ready to take advantage of the chances which his good fortune or his own shrewdness unearthed for him !

The sound of a knock at the door broke in upon his comfortable reflections.

“Come in ?” cried Mr. Amelia, and the office-boy thrust in his head. He was a boy of a confidential turn, and yet seemed always to guard himself as if to say that all his communications were made without prejudice.

“There’s a gentleman wants to see you, sir,” said the boy.

“Name and business ?” replied Mr. Amelia

curtly. The boy withdrew, and the editor, having first corked the medicine bottle, hid the half-finished materials of his feast beneath a little pile of loose proof-sheets. Before this was well done, and the proof-sheets were rearranged to Mr. Amelia's satisfaction to look as if nothing were beneath them, the boy returned, bearing a card of thick and dogseared pasteboard somewhat soiled. Upon this was written, in a painful hand, the name of Mr. Augustus Vidler, and the Editor glancing at it intimated that Mr. Vidler might enter.

"Good afternoon, sir," said Mr. Vidler, who wore the air of a man with a grievance. "I have got, sir, something of a complaint to make, and we thought we might as well, sir, come to the fountink-ed at once."

"Oh!" said Mr. Amelia, setting his hand upon the table, and turning himself in the revolving chair until he faced his visitor. "Something in the nature of a complaint?" His voice

and manner implied a humourous disdain, and Mr. Vidler responded to them with a laboured severity.

“We do not desire, sir,” he said, “to throw anything in the way of Mr. Webling’s prawsa-perity. Mr. Webling is an old and vallyhued friend of ours, and we wish him well. Nobody wishes Webling better than I do, sir.”

“I will ask you,” said Mr. Amelia, with more than his usual crispness, “to make whatever communications you have to offer me as brief as possible?” He moved a hand towards the papers on the table. “I am busily engaged.”

Mr. Vidler bowed with stately courtesy.

“This,” he answered, producing a crumpled paper from his pocket, “is a cawpy of your newspaper, sir. At our little social gethering, sir, where you once did us the honour to be present, there was several pieces of news from this paper discussed last evening, sir. It was observed that from the first the fashynibble

hitem in your newspaper was mostly the hitem discussed in our little circle. To make the story short, sir, Mr. Webling were taxed with a breach of confidence, and though he defended hisself with a degree of argument, he were evenchally overpowered."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Amelia coolly. "This is all very interesting to your friends and yourself, I have no doubt, but I don't quite see how it concerns me. Mr. Webling had certain information in his hands, and found a market for it. If all of you want to be paid as well as Mr. Webling, it is no doubt very natural, but you can't expect me to pay you."

"Sir," returned Mr. Vidler, "you are prodigious mistaken. That is not our object."

"Will you be so good as to come to your object?" demanded the little Editor. "I have told you already that I am busy."

"We consider, sir, that our confidence have been abused," said Mr. Vidler.

“Very well,” said Mr. Amelia, taking up a pen, and dipping it in the inkstand. “You must deal with Mr. Webling.”

“Mr. Webling have already made the amend honourable,” replied the visitor, “and have undertook to purchase a piano for the use of the club out of his misgot funds.”

“And that, I suppose, is why you don’t all want to be paid. Very considerate indeed. Will you kindly let me know at once why you come to me with this interesting history?”

“I was requested, sir, by the committee of the club,” said Mr. Vidler, “to call upon you, sir, and to complain of the way you have acted, sir. I was instructed to say, sir, as your conduct was uncalled for in a gentleman.”

“Very well, Mr. Vidler,” said the little man, smiling outright, “you have relieved your conscience. I admit that it is very hard upon you that Webling should have been employed, but then, you see, Webling was known to me

before you. If I had known you before I knew Webling you should have had the job. You know, from your own sense of wounded virtue, how much that would have saddened Webling. Good afternoon, Mr. Vidler." He arose from the revolving chair and opened the door. "George, show this gentleman out? You have expressed yourself with perfect clearness, Mr. Vidler, and I quite understand you. You needn't take the trouble to say another word, thank you. Good afternoon."

Mr. Vidler finding himself, much to his own surprise, outside the office, saw nothing for it but to go about whatever other business he might have in hand, and Mr. Amelia, returning to his seat in the revolving chair, disinterred the sandwich and the medicine bottle and proceeded to dose himself anew, with alternate carefully measured supplies of solid and liquid. He had received the news of the rebellion of the Retired Suvvants with creditable sang-froid, but he felt

very much as a general may be supposed to feel when he hears news of the loss of a cherished position. Since the first issue of the journal many means of acquiring news about the doings of the aristocracy had been put in his way, but Mr. Webling had been his principal fount of information, and since that fountain was cut off, his supplies bade fair to run unpleasantly short. In spite of his own brilliant editorship of the journal, and in spite even of the four or five special articles he contributed to it weekly, under as many aliases, *The Way of the World* seemed to take no great hold upon the people except by means of its fashionable gossip, which was universally admitted to be very intimate and interesting. He knew very well that he would suffer if the journal lost Mr. Webling's services before a substitute of some sort could be found for them.

“I must find somebody to take Webling's place at the Club meetings,” thought Mr. Amelia,

and he was just saying as much half aloud, when it occurred to him that possibly Mr. Webling himself might still be brought to deal with him for a week or two until new arrangements could be made. About last night's meeting, for instance, it was necessary to have something, to save the fashionable columns from almost absolute bareness.

So with no great hopes, but determined to try his best, the little man put on his little overcoat and gloves and his well-brushed tall hat, and set out on foot for Waverley Terrace. Mr. Webling looked guilty when he saw his sometime lodger, and admitted him with a stealthy air, as if he were under espionage.

“I am in a bit of a hurry for copy this week,” said Mr. Amelia, thinking it best to profess ignorance of all that had happened, and to throw the necessity for explanation altogether on Webling's shoulders, “and since I happened to be in the neighbourhood, I thought

I'd look you up and see if you had anything ready."

Mr. Webling mournfully rubbed his hands together and shook his head.

"The club have forbid any further correspondence, sir," he said.

"The club?" said Mr. Amelia, with natural surprise. "What do you mean?"

"It were from the club, sir," returned Mr. Webling, with a gentle melancholy, "that I received my infamation. There were a row last night, sir, so to speak, at Vidler's—preaps you may recollect Vidler, sir,—and I were called upon to retire from the sassayety."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Amelia, with a spice of satire in his voice, "but you don't express yourself with your usual clearness, Webling. Try to let me understand you, if you please. What was the row about—and who made it?"

"As for the row, it were Bordler—if you recollect Bordler, sir—as began it. Bordler

produced a copy of your paper, sir, and read out a number of hitemis which was undoubtedly the subject of discussion at our last week's meeting."

"Aha!" said Mr. Amelia, as if a light broke in upon him suddenly. "And the club objects to any member making public use of the conversation held at its meetings?"

"Parrycisyly," returned Mr. Webling.

"Aha!" said Mr. Amelia again; contemplatively this time. "And how much notice do you propose to give me before you break off your engagement?"

"Why, sir," said Mr. Webling, uncomfortably, "the thing is hevidently hat a hend, sir." He was so careful to be polite that he breathed on all the aspirates almost stertorously.

"Can't be," returned Mr. Amelia. "Must have something to go on with." The forbidden correspondent shook his head. "Nonsense," said the Editor in reply to this gesture. "The club

isn't your only source of information, you know, Webling."

"Why no, sir," said Mr. Webling, with a hopeful twinkle in his eye. "I can't exactly say it is, sir."

"You go about, you know," continued his employer. "You hear things outside the club. If some of the things you hear outside the club happened to be talked about in the club afterwards, is that your fault?"

"I dare not go so far as to say that, sir," replied Mr. Webling. "No, sir. Not so far as that, sir."

"Not so far as what?" demanded Mr. Amelia, with some asperity.

"My fellow-members would diskiver it, sir, if it was kerried on so far. Prehaps, sir, the cream of things," he suggested, bending forward with his arms depending before him as if he held a tray and proffered the cream of things to Mr. Amelia. "Prehaps, sir, the cream of

things skimmed off of the evening meeting, just a item here and there, sir, of the very best, and the rest put in next week when it had had time to get talked about, and so to speak be common property."

"Oh, dear, no," Mr. Amelia answered, decisively, "nothing of the kind would suit me. I don't want the buried bodies of old scandals dug up and brought to me. I want fresh information. Now what can you give me this week? Outside the Club, of course."

The greatest of men unbend at times, either from nature or for policy, and Mr. Amelia actually winked at Mr. Webling. Mr. Webling smiled a feeble smile in answer, and fell to rubbing his hands.

"It can't be much, sir," he said, with a sheepish look.

Mr. Amelia produced his note-book, and Mr. Webling guiltily whispered in his ear. The little man transmitted the substance of the

guilty whisper to Mr. Pitman's system of shorthand.

Suddenly the rapid pencil paused, and Mr. Amelia looked up with a start of surprise.

"What did you say?" he demanded.

"The millyinghair, sir," said Mr. Webling, "Kimbally—Bulsover Kimbally, sir, have quarrelled with the Hearl of Wingle, and have left the Castle. Shouldershott Castle, sir."

"Yes, yes," said the little Editor, "I know. At Gallowbay. What did they quarrel about?"

This, it appeared, was more than Mr. Webling knew with any degree of accuracy. But he poured into the ears of Mr. Amelia some garbled version of the story of the Honourable Captain Clare, and he knew that Captain Clare had had a farewell interview in the park with Lady Ella, and supposed that Kimberley had become aware of it.

"It came direct to Bordler," said Mr. Webling, "from Tollgett, the hearl's hown man. There's

no mistake about it. There have been a reg'lar shindy, and the nubble hearl is hup the spout this time beyond a doubt, sir."

"Ah!" said Mr. Amelia, thoughtfully. "I'd give an extra pound, Webling, to know the truth of this. Do you know—what's his name?—Tollgett?—the Earl's own man, as you call him?"

"Hintimate!" said Mr. Webling. "Bordler as good as said as Tollgett were coming to town at the close of the present week, and would be present at the Club's next meeting."

"Could you find him out and bring him to me?" asked Mr. Amelia. "I would make it worth your while. It would be worth a pound apiece to you."

It was natural for Mr. Amelia to suppose that if Kimberley had quarrelled with the Earl of Windgall he would like, in any reasonable and safe manner, to have a dig at the Earl of Windgall; and if the Honourable Captain Clare had

been courting the young lady to whom Mr. Kimberley had been engaged, it was natural for Mr. Amelia to suppose that Kimberley would like a dig at Captain Clare. If one could not laud oneself and damage one's enemies it was scarcely worth while to be proprietor of a journal at all. It never occurred to the little man that he would be doing anything but the one thing agreeable and desirable to his proprietor if he found out uncomfortable things to say about the Earl of Windgall and Captain Clare, provided always that the news of their quarrel was fairly confirmed.

Mr. Webling thought it possible that Mr. Tollgett, the Earl's own man, might be induced to visit Mr. Amelia, and promised to do his best to meet with him in the course of the week. The little Editor having milked Mr. Webling until that gentleman would yield no more, departed. The fashionable gossip was certainly attenuated that week, but Mr. Amelia was a journalist in

full practice by this time, and thoroughly understood the art of arranging the greatest possible number of words around the smallest possible modicum of meaning, so that the average number of columns got filled in one way or another.

It turned out eventually that Mr. Webling was unable to catch the precious repository of all the information Mr. Amelia desired to secure, and on the eve of the next meeting of the Club he waited upon the Editor to announce his failure. Something of the journalist's enthusiasm in the dissemination of news had touched the flunkey. It was a pity, he said, for as things were turning out the matter was growing more and more interesting. The Earl of Windgall was in town, and Tollgett was with him. Tollgett would undoubtedly be at the meeting next evening. As Mr. Webling understood matters, a devout understanding had been made to that effect.

"You'll be there as well?" said Mr. Amelia.

Mr. Webling admitted this, but he had run

to the end of his tether. He dare give no more information. He was again suspected, and the members were wrathful against him. The meeting was to be held at his own house, in the usual rotation, and he had received notice that he would be called upon for a solemn promise to supply no more news to *The Way of the World* from the Club. In brief, Mr. Webling dreaded the total loss of his social position, and though Mr. Amelia, in his zeal for his employer's interests, offered an extra sovereign, the Retired Suvvant stood firm.

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Amelia, brushing his upright hair into unusual disorder, as he took an agitated pace or two about the editorial room. "The meeting to-morrow night is in your own house, you say?"

"Yes, sir," assented Mr. Webling, "in my own house, sir."

"If you could let me get the news I want," said Mr. Amelia, deliberately and slowly, "and

could swear with a clear conscience that you had never seen me after the meeting, nor communicated with me after the meeting, either by writing or by messenger, and if I gave you forty shillings for it, would you do it?"

"I am not a miracle, sir," said Mr. Webling, humbly. "If I was, I would."

"I suppose," said Mr. Amelia, "that the conversation is bound to turn upon this question?"

"Suttin to," responded Mr. Webling.

"I remember"—Mr. Amelia approached Mr. Webling and took him thoughtfully by the coat—"I remember a china closet, or something of the kind, below the stairs. A little window opens into it from the room in which you meet. A window pretty high up in one corner of the room."

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Webling, obviously puzzled.

"If I were in the house," said his late lodger, impressively, "I could slip down from my old

room and take my place there without you knowing anything about it." Mr. Webling looked extremely doubtful. "You can swear you have not seen me," said Mr. Amelia, with his own nice sense of honour in full play, "and can speak the truth. You can swear you have not in any way communicated with me after the meeting, and speak the truth. Come, I'll make it fifty shillings. Three pounds. Beyond that I can't afford to go."

Mr. Webling hesitated, wavered, fell.

A good hour before the time fixed for the meeting on the following day, a little upright figure marched with assured step through the mist and slush of Waverley Terrace, Waverley Road, N., and pausing to tap at the door of No. 158, was admitted with something of a clandestine air.

"There is a fire up-stairs, sir," said Mrs. Webling, "and the daily papers."

Mr. Amelia nodded in response, and mounted

the staircase, and Mr. Webling, whose countenance was unusually pallid, and whose hands trembled perceptibly with apprehension and excitement, carried up a lamp, and pointed out to his visitor that the shutters were so secured that no light issuing from the chamber could apprise his later guests of the fact that it had an inmate.

“The risk is rely dreadful,” said the landlord, upon whose forehead stood a cold moisture which confirmed his own professed reckoning of the situation. “Three pound is dear at this price, sir, and it is only for a old lodger, and a person which always behaved handsome, that I would undergo it.”

“Pooh!” said Mr. Amelia scornfully. “Don’t be an ass, if you can help it, Webling. If you can’t help it, be an ass somewhere else.”

“For Evan’s sake, sir,” said Webling in a whisper, don’t speak so loud.” Mr. Amelia snorted disdainfully, and began to read the

paper. "I beg your pardon, sir," the wretched host went on a moment later, "but if I am not to hold any communication with you after this, perhaps you might like to let me have the three pound now, sir."

Mr. Amelia produced a purse and paid the three pounds at once, and then preserved a silence so obstinate, and read the paper so busily, that the landlord, having expended upon him many unnoticed adjurations to be careful, withdrew with burglarious stealth, and closed the door behind him.

In a while rappings and ringings at the front door began to announce the arrival of the guests, and the little man with his own door ajar listened for the name of Mr. Tollgett. It came at last, and he heard Tollgett hailed by a dozen voices, one after the other. It was evident that Tollgett was to be the *pièce de résistance* of the evening. At least as much as that was evident to Mr. Amelia, who had a knack of making up

his mind with some rapidity, and hated to lose time over anything.

When the time arrived for Mr. Amelia to steal down-stairs, and to take his place in the china closet, he experienced, in spite of himself, many qualms of fear, and could almost have wished that he had not undertaken the enterprise. If any one of the guests should emerge and should discover him, it would certainly be excessively unpleasant, and the thought that the Retired Suvvants, as a body, might even have recourse to personal violence sent an uncomfortable thrill through the little man's heart. But everybody knows (at least in theory) how strengthening an influence a sense of duty has it in its power to lend, and Mr. Amelia was bent upon doing his duty to his employer, and resolved to make the duty profitable to himself. When he had made things as unpleasant as he could for the gentleman with whom his employer had quarrelled, he would be able to tell that employer

with how much zeal and cunning he had worked in his behalf. It was not likely that Kimberley would grumble at having to pay pretty liberally for this service, and to be loyal and to make loyalty pay was comfortable.

No ill-timed exit on the part of any one of the guests led to Mr. Amelia's detection, and he gained his place in the china closet in safety.

"Next week, gentlemen," Mr. Bordler's voice was heard clearly through the little window-frame, "we shall meet on our own permanent premises, and our friend and host for the present evening have made the amend honourable by the purchase of a piano for our use. As appointed by the committee I have secured a young feller to attend regular for eighteen pence a evening, his smokes, and being a total abstainer, his ginger beers. Messyrs Hall and Snell and me has heard the young feller perform with the highest gratification."

“Where’s that draught come from?” said a gruff voice when the applause which followed this announcement had died away, and almost as soon as the words were spoken the window was somewhat roughly closed. The voices reached Mr. Amelia’s ear in an indistinct murmur, and he dreaded the frustration of his scheme. Carefully drawing a chair to the side of the dresser he mounted in the half-gloom of the place, and pushed the window open a little way with the tips of his fingers. The voices came back again in a gush of sound. The members of the Club were indulging in unrestrained converse for the moment, and nothing was clearly audible to the listener. An extraordinarily cold and searching air wandered about Mr. Amelia’s little legs, and crept about his neck and into his ears, and being but lately transported from the warm comfort of the fireside in the upper room he began to shiver. It was undeniable that the draught of which the gruff

voice had complained found its way through that small window.

Fearing lest it should again be closed he stood and shivered, and listened until the conversation grew more scattered, and by-and-by Mr. Vidler's voice was heard.

"Tollgett," said Mr. Vidler, "everybody is anxious to hear your news."

A murmur of subdued applause circulated about the chamber. Mr. Amelia strained his ears and stood on tiptoe.

"Well, gentlemen," said somebody, whom he rightly supposed to be Mr. Tollgett. "The proceedings at our house has certainly been peculiar. As everybody knows already——"

"Cuss that draught," the gruff voice broke in, and the window was slammed to with sudden violence. Mr. Amelia, whose fingers were resting on the ledge, was so severely pained that he could scarce repress a cry. For a minute he was so busily engaged in sucking the damaged places

and squeezing them under his arm to take the pain away that he forgot the purpose of his presence there, but recovering from the first extreme of anguish in a while, he pushed the window gingerly open once more. Mr. Tollgett still had possession of the ear of the house.

“Of course the gell is compromised, and though you might have fancied that Kimbly would ha’ put up with any sort of damaged goods to get into a family of title, he showed more spirit than I ever give him credit for, and threw her over then and there.”

“What sort of feller is he?” asked one of the listeners.

“Well,” said Mr. Tollgett, in a tone of high-bred refinement, “he’s a low feller, of course. He was a charity boy, and after that a clerk in a lawyer’s awfis. He’s freeish with his money, now he’s got it. Last time I see him in Gallowbay, he stopped me and give me a ten pound note—prob’ly mistook it for a fiver, but I did

not undeceive him." The assembled gentlemen laughed.

"I should think," said one, "as W. would be glad to let the Captain have her now, if he would take her."

"The Captain knows a trick worth two of that," replied Mr. Tollgett, whose voice spoke not only of a high-bred refinement, but of a certain half-tolerant weariness of the world and its ways. "The Captain is going to New Zealand."

"New Zealand?" said two or three together.

"Yas," said Mr. Tollgett. "He's bought land there, so they say, and he's agoing to farm it. It's time the Montacutes did something. They're as poor as Job, the whole kit of 'em."

"And what sort of a cove is the Captain?" demanded the person who had asked for a description of Kimberley.

"The Captain?" replied Mr. Tollgett, with a tolerant little laugh. "Well, gentlemen, the Captain——"

“Won’t this winder keep shut, Mr. Webling?” cried the gruff voice, angrily. “Rely, before the gentlemen of the club is invited to a member’s house, the member ought to see that the house is air-tight.”

Mr. Amelia withdrew his fingers hastily from the ledge. In his desire to hear he was standing on tiptoe and had need to hold on somewhere to support himself.

“I am afraid, gentlemen,” said Mr. Webling, in tremulous tones, “that the latch is broke inside. With your permission I will go and look at it. I am sure, gentlemen, that nothink has been undone on my part to make the proceedings comfortable.”

With this, Mr. Webling, after some difficulty, squeezed himself from the room and Mr. Tollgett continued, but the listener was confused between his expectation of the landlord and his attempt to catch the meaning of the speech, and so made out but little. By-and-by Mr. Webling, with a

shaking finger at his lips, came stealing in, and mounting on the dresser by Mr. Amelia's side made two or three pretences at an attempt to fasten the window.

"Won't it hold?" demanded the gruff-voiced man from within.

"No," said Webling, pushing a pale face through the orifice.

"That style five-and-six," said Mr. Vidler, beholding him thus framed, and the members of the club laughed readily, like men who are satisfied with a small dose of humour at a time.

Mr. Webling retired, and Mr. Amelia spent the rest of the evening in a prolonged and harassing warfare with the gruff-voiced man, who, whenever the listener pushed the window gently open, pushed it roughly to again with the point of a walking-stick, so that the Editor's mental notes of the meeting were necessarily somewhat scattered and mutilated. He made out enough for his purpose, however, and more

than enough, and he went home that night and wrote an article under the simple title, "An Episode in High Life." Nobody ever wrote an article more pungent or more satirical. He fully exposed all the villainies he had heard attributed to Captain Clare, and he chaffed the Earl of Windgall in the most airy and engaging manner. Though he named no names and drew no faces it was impossible for anybody with a knowledge of society to escape the meaning of the article, and when he came to see it in print, Mr. Amelia was delighted with it. It was undeniably brilliant, and so suavely caustic in its tone, that the writer felt he had gone beyond his own reputation and exceeded his own common powers.

The article appeared. It stirred the town. People talked about it everywhere, and Mr. Amelia heard a hundred allusions to it in omnibuses and railway-carriages. But before it was twenty-four hours old he received a visit from

Mr. Webling, who was paler and more perturbed than he had been even on the night of the meeting.

“Great Evans, sir!” cried Webling, wringing his hands when he beheld Mr. Amelia, “what a horror you have made. It was that dreadful winder that Jenner would keep on a closing.”

“What’s the matter?” asked Mr. Amelia, striving to preserve an air of calm.

“Matter?” cried Webling. “Good Lord, sir, it wasn’t Captain Clare who sold that broken-winded horse, nor him that forged the cheque. Nor him that run away with the undertaker’s daughter. Nor him that plucked young Roquefort at Baden-Baden. Nor him that had the duel with Count Petit-Pousit.”

“It wasn’t?” gasped the Editor, seizing the back of the revolving chair, and lurching with it like a man at sea.

“No!” gasped Webling in reply. “They’d stopped talking about Captain Clare before a

word was said of them things. It was Captain Stracey of the hundred and ninety-second regiment. I was afraid something would happen with that winder."

"Thank you, Webling," said the Editor, recovering his self-possession in some degree, though his head still spun with the shock of this intelligence. "I have pinched my fingers in more ways than one," he added, surveying his own bruised finger-tips.

"If I was you, sir," said Webling, "I should hook it. They'll make a criminal case of it, everybody says, and as likely as not it'll be a matter of five years."

CHAPTER IV.

KIMBERLEY, with the fateful legal papers arranged in a despatch-box, dared to drive over to Shouldershott Castle, but was met at the lodge-gates with the news that his lordship had that morning set out for London.

“Do you know when he will come back?” asked Kimberley meekly and confusedly, of the ancient Hine.

“It was understood, sir,” answered the lodge-keeper, “that he was to be away a fortnight.”

“Dear me!” cried the millionaire, in a startled voice. “A fortnight? I shall be too late.” His eyes and nose were red as if with influenza, but his cheeks were extremely pale, and his whole expression was tired and haggard.

He sat in indecision for a moment. "Is his lordship at Portman Square?" he asked in a little while.

"The town house is closed, sir," said Hine, and named the hotel in which his lordship was staying.

"Thank you," said Kimberley absently, and sat there still for a full minute. Then he turned round with a manner which bespoke a new resolve. "Drive to the railway station at Gallowbay."

The groom just touched the mare with his whip, and away she started.

"Looks worried, the poor little chap does," thought Hine, looking after the slashing dog-cart. "I thought no good could come out of Captain Clare's coming here. It's a pity money gets into such hands. If it had befallen to Captain Clare things might have been pleasant, now."

Kimberley did not know how nearly the

popular guesses hit the truth, or he might have been unhappier even than he was. There was one respect in which they never for an instant came near it. Nobody guessed the part that Kimberley himself had played, but then he did not look likely to play the hero, and popular opinion does not so often exalt gratuitously as it degrades without reason.

As it happened, the dog-cart reached the Gallowbay railway station in easy time for the second London express.

“Drive home, now,” said Kimberley to the groom, “and tell Weekes to pack a portmanteau and to come to London by the next train.” The groom drove off, and Kimberley, with the despatch-box in his hand, walked up and down the station platform. The manager of the Gallowbay Bank and the Vicar of the parish were there amongst others, and they and everybody else who knew him saluted the shy little man as he paced the flags. He was member

for the borough, and the local personification of money, and the respectful salutations were a thing of course, but somehow of late Kimberley's mind was always dwelling on the meanness of his earlier life, and these tokens of consideration from the people he had been used to look upon with awe, stung him as severely as they had done when he first began to receive them. It was an immense relief to him when the train reached the platform and he could hide himself in a first-class carriage in which no one else was travelling. He felt very wretched and cold and insignificant. The more he contemplated the amazing audacity of his own daring in respect to Lady Ella, the more humiliated and the more insignificant he felt, until his self-abasement amounted to an actual agony. His heart was ice and lead, and it ached persistently with a real physical pain.

He reached London at last, and drove to the hotel in which the Earl of Windgall was staying.

His lordship was abroad, and had left no word of the probable hour of his return. Kimberley surrendered his despatch-box to the care of the hotel manager, and wandered the streets dismally until long after nightfall, calling now and again to inquire if Windgall had yet returned. It was after ten o'clock when he caught sight of the Earl in the act of stepping from a hansom cab to the pavement.

“My lord,” said Kimberley, advancing. Windgall turned with almost a jump. “I called at the Castle this morning and they told me you had gone to town. I want very particularly to speak with you. Can you give me a few minutes?”

“Certainly,” said his lordship. “Certainly.” My lord’s heart was beating like a hammer, and he was asking himself already how he should yield to Kimberley’s persuasions. He had done his duty and had sent back the precious documents honourably, and he knew

that Kimberley was here to force them back upon him.

When they entered the vestibule of the hotel together, and Kimberley asked for and received his despatch-box, Windgall knew, without need of any faculty of clairvoyance, what its contents were. The manager led the way to the Earl's apartments and threw open the door of his sitting-room.

"A glass of wine, Kimberley?" said his lordship.

"Thank you," responded Kimberley, somewhat faintly, "I will take a glass of wine."

"You are not well?" cried his lordship, with solicitude, as Kimberley laid both hands on the upper rail of a chair and leaned upon it heavily.

"I am tired," said the little millionaire, wearily. "I am very tired."

Windgall placed a seat for him at the table and he fell into it with an air of profound dejection and fatigue. The grey nobleman,

anxiously regarding him meanwhile, gave his orders to the manager, and when they were left alone seated himself at the opposite side of the table and talked disjointedly until a waiter appeared, nursing a bottle of Burgundy in a wicker cradle. Kimberley emptied his glass twice before he spoke, and then began.

“I have something of the utmost importance to say to your lordship.”

“Yes,” said Windgall in a waiting tone. Kimberley drew the despatch-box towards him with both hands and slowly unlocked it. The Earl’s heart began to beat again, so that his pulses made in his own ears much such a confused noise as a paddle-wheel makes in water. Without the contents of that box his state was pitiful. With the contents of the box he was a free man.

“I gave these to your lordship,” said Kimberley, turning the case upside down and strewing the documents upon the table, “and begged you to accept them.”

“Your conduct has been marked throughout by a most perfect generosity,” replied Windgall. “I was fully sensible of that fact when I returned the papers.”

“You sent them back,” said Kimberley, with a remarkable stoniness of manner, “and told me that it was impossible for you to keep them.”

He sat staring at the table with a something dogged and even sulky in his look, his lordship thought. Had he felt the return of the papers as an insult?

“I felt it so,” returned his lordship. “Realise my position, Kimberley. Let me beg of you—realise my position. How could I have retained them?”

“And now,” said Kimberley, “they belong to me again, my lord?”

“Decidedly,” cried Windgall with an odd inward chill. “That, I take it, is beyond dispute.” He tried to say this laughingly, but the effort was not very successful. He looked

at Kimberley, and was at once alarmed and puzzled by what he saw.

“If I say anything,” said Bolsover, more doggedly and sullenly than before, “if I say anything to wound your lordship’s feelings I shall be very sorry.”

“I beg you,” said Windgall, “to use the utmost freedom.”

“You didn’t understand my meaning, my lord,” Kimberley went on, “when I first offered you these papers. Or, perhaps, you felt too proud to take them for nothing. Lady Ella was made the victim of your mistake, my lord.” Windgall sat miserably silent. It was not pleasant to be taken thus to task by a man he had always hitherto felt it easy to despise. “I don’t say anything about myself,” pursued Kimberley, “because there is nothing I don’t deserve for being such a fool. But we can never forgive ourselves, my lord, for our wickedness and cruelty.”

“Really, my dear Kimberley,” cried Windgall, “you survey things through a medium which distorts them strangely.”

“Did you know, my lord,” said Kimberley, panting in his speech, and shifting the scattered papers with tremulous fingers, “that Lady Ella——? It’s like—like blasphemy!” he said desperately, and for a little while he was silent. When he resumed his hands were trembling so that it discomposed the Earl to look at them, and his face changed from white to scarlet and from scarlet to white with an alarming alternation. “Did you know, my lord, that Lady Ella was in love?”

“No,” said his lordship, rising suddenly from the table and beginning to pace the room in great agitation. “I will be perfectly plain and honest with you, Kimberley. Years ago—three or four years ago—I became aware of an attachment to my daughter on the part of an almost penniless youngster, and for her sake, knowing

that nothing but misery could spring from a union between them, I saw the man and spoke to him. I represented things in their proper light to him. I saw his mother, a most estimable lady, whose means had long been unequal to the task her position imposed upon them. She, like myself—With those papers lying on the table between us any affectation of reserve on my part would be as futile as it would surely be absurd. She, like myself, knew the galling misery which is entailed on people in our station by insufficient means. She agreed with me. By her influence and mine the acquaintance between her younger son and my daughter was brought to a close. I had never any reason given me for believing that Lady Ella entertained one thought of regret for him. The young man, to my personal knowledge, is within a day or two of his departure for New Zealand, where, I am informed, on the most competent authority, he intends to settle permanently.

You know now," Windgall concluded, "as much as I know myself."

"I saw enough, my lord," said Kimberley, who, during the Earl's speech, had never lifted his eyes from the table, or ceased to toy nervously with the papers there, "I saw enough to tell me that Lady Ella was unhappy. I was coming to tell you so, when I saw the parting between Lady Ella and her sweetheart. My lord," cried the millionaire wildly, staring up at Windgall, and beating on the table with both hands with the gesture of one in extreme bodily pain, "it broke my heart! it broke my heart!"

He buried his face swiftly in his hands after this outburst, and sat in silence, quivering all over. The Earl, with one hand resting on the back of a chair, looked strickenly across at him.

"Kimberley," he said, scarce knowing what words he used, "this is very hard to bear. It is bitter to me to have to think that my child deceived me."

"Deceived you?" cried Kimberley, looking wildly up again. "She broke her heart in quiet for your sake, my lord! Oh, my lord, my lord, you can't let him go away after all she's suffered."

My lord took to pacing the room again, and answered nothing. He began more and more to understand Kimberley, and, for once in the world, completer understanding widened and deepened esteem. He was angry, too, and humiliated, and was strongly inclined in his own heart to fight against his new opinion of Bolsover Kimberley.

"My lord," said Kimberley, gathering up a double handful of the papers and stretching them towards him, "you agreed to take these once for a wedding gift." Windgall looked back at him and paused in his disturbed walk about the chamber. "Will you take 'em now? My lord, my lord, marry Lady Ella to the man she loves, and take these for a wedding gift."

“Kimberley,” said Windgall, stammering, “you are a noble-hearted fellow.”

“My lord,” said Kimberley, “I helped to torture her. I have a right to help to make her happy. Take them, my lord.” And he advanced with the papers in his hands. But Windgall’s self-possession was beaten down, and he was as wildly agitated as the millionaire himself. He recoiled and waved his hands against the proffered gift.

“How can I take them?” he demanded.

“If you don’t,” said Kimberley, “I’ll use them. I will. I’ll put them every one in force to-morrow. Oh no, my lord, I never meant to threaten you. Hasn’t there been trouble enough already? Take them, my lord, and make her happy. Take them—do take them—as a wedding gift.”

He thrust the papers into Windgall’s reluctant hands, and half of them fell about the floor. Both Kimberley and the Earl stooping

swiftly at the same instant to pick them up, their heads came into contact with ridiculous force, and they looked at each other more wildly than ever. Perhaps the physical shock did something towards sobering both of them. They picked up the scattered papers. Kimberley heaped them all in Windgall's hands, and he, standing thus burdened, said, with more gravity and self-possession than he had until then been able to secure——

“This is a most noble and most generous proposal on your part, my dear Kimberley, but I really do not see my way clearly. Believe me,” continued the grey little nobleman, with a lip that quivered in spite of all the self-restraint he imposed upon himself, “I value this magnificent offer to the full. I appreciate your self-sacrifice. I—I do not think, Kimberley, that I have ever known so noble an act before. It—it renews one's faith in human nature.”

He advanced to the table and laid the papers down.

“Let us talk soberly and quietly of this matter,” he said, again placing a chair for Kimberley, and drawing another near to it.

“I’m not quite well, my lord,” said Kimberley. The Earl looked keenly at him, for there was something exceedingly strange in his voice, and he lurched a little as he laid both hands on the chair which had been placed for him. “I haven’t been well for two or three days,” he murmured vaguely, and Windgall, putting an arm through one of his, led him to an arm-chair with much concern. He sat there two or three minutes in silence, and then passing his hands across his forehead and his eyes, looked about him with the air of a man awaking from a drugged or drunken sleep. He saw Windgall, and then the untidy pile of papers on the table, and recalled his wandering wits. “You won’t break Lady Ella’s heart, my lord,”

he said then. "You'll keep those things and let her marry the man she loves?"

"You are extremely unwell, Kimberley," said his lordship; and, indeed, it was easy to see, that either from malady or fatigue, the poor little millionaire was quite broken for the time.

"You'll take them?" said Kimberley, feebly.

"Yes," said his lordship, "I will do my best. I will find out Clare to-morrow. God bless you, Kimberley. But you are ill—you are really very ill."

"Tired," answered Kimberley.

"Worse than tired, I am afraid," said Windgall to himself, as he looked at his companion.

"If I die," said Kimberley in a loud voice, which quavered suddenly down into a murmur, "everything is to go to Lady Ella, with my dearest love and worship."

The loud tones fell into such an indistinctness that Windgall made out nothing beyond the first three words.

“Great Heaven?” he said to himself, as he tugged at the bell-pull. “The poor fellow is ill—seriously ill, I am afraid, already. Kimberley! The man doesn’t know me.” A waiter entered the room in answer to the Earl’s loud summons. “Run for a doctor,” cried his lordship. “This gentleman is unwell. Send up some one, meanwhile, to assist him to a bedroom. Be as quick as you can.”

The man hurried away, and having despatched a messenger in search of a doctor, himself returned with a fellow-servant.

“I’ve sent for a doctor, my lord,” said he. “Can we do anything, my lord?”

“Yes,” said his lordship, “you had better assist my friend into my room. It is near at hand, and there is a fire there already.”

Kimberley suffered himself to be taken by either arm, and was half led, half carried, into the adjoining apartment, where Windgall, with his own hands, unfastened his coat, waistcoat,

and shirt, whilst one of the waiters removed his boots. Kimberley, whose eyes were half closed and sleepy, as if with drink, made no movement of his own initiative, but submitted to everything that was done for him in apparent unconsciousness.

A medical man was readily found, and he, being but young in his West-end practice, was not sorry to be summoned to attend upon a millionaire in the apartments of the Earl of Windgall. Before his arrival Kimberley was put to bed, and when the doctor entered the sitting-room Windgall was in the act of stowing away the legal documents in the despatch box. He suspended his task, and accompanied the medico to Kimberley's bedside. A great change had come over the little man already. His face was hot and flushed, his eyes had lost the sleepy and drunken look, and shone unnaturally bright, and he was chattering to himself under his breath at a prodigious pace. The medico felt

his pulse, laid a hand upon his forehead, and examined the pupils of his eyes.

“To my personal knowledge,” said his lordship in a whisper, “he has been terribly agitated during the last two days. An hour ago he was talking seriously and sensibly, although in great agitation.”

“The fever,” said the doctor, “has doubtless been incubating for days. A slight cold would serve as a physical basis for it.”

“Fever!” said the Earl drawing back a little. “Is it infectious?”

“It is as yet impossible, my lord,” returned the doctor, “to pronounce decisively upon its nature. He should have a skilled nurse at once. There is a Nurses’ Institution close at hand. Will you allow me to despatch a note to the Superintendent?”

Windgall supplied him with writing materials, and he penned a brief note and a prescription.

“I will send these at once,” he said, “and in

in two or three hours' time I will call to see the nurse, and to observe the effect of the prescription. For the present, my lord, I have the honour to wish you a good evening."

Windgall, being left alone, finished the arrangement of the papers, locked them in the despatch box, in the lock of which Kimberley had left the key, and then walked on tiptoe into the bedroom. The millionaire was lying with his flushed face and bright eyes turned to the ceiling, and was still talking to himself at the same wild speed as before, but in tones so low that not a single intelligible word reached his lordship's ears, until, on a sudden, he caught the phrase "If I live."

"What was that?" said Windgall. "He said that when he began to break down so suddenly." With half an inward shame he bent over the bed; and inclined his ear. Little by little he pieced the indistinct mutterings together. Over and

over again the phrases recurred until he knew them all.

“Put that down. My dearest love and worship. It won't matter when I'm dead. My dearest love and worship. Put that down. Everything to Lady Ella if I die. With dearest love and worship. Put it down. My dearest love and worship.”

Windgall crept away again on tiptoe, and sat down in the sitting-room with many strangely-blended thoughts and feelings. Kimberley was mad enough now in all conscience. Had he been sane less than two hours ago when he had insisted upon my lord's reacceptance of that terrible ninety thousand pounds? And could my lord keep the ninety thousand pounds so given? And was the promise to recall Clare binding in case Kimberley died? And if Kimberley died after recovering wits enough to make a will in Lady Ella's favour, would not that after all be the best course events could take? But the

grey nobleman was not a monster, and these sordid thoughts were not natural to him. They felt to him like the promptings of some devil of unutterable meanness, who had control over his mental springs, and did what he would with them. He was feeling all the while, too, how gentle and generous a nature Kimberley had revealed, how unselfish and how loyal in his love he was, and how profound and earnest his passions must have been. Well, there was no driving nature in these matters, but surely, in spite of his unpretending exterior, the man had enough of goodness and nobility inside him to have justified a woman's acceptance of him. • And the million and a quarter might have gone for something, one would have thought.

The arrival of a nurse, despatched from the neighbouring institution, dispersed these thoughts, and sent Windgall into new apartments which had already been prepared for him. He sat up until the doctor had visited the patient

a second time, and questioned him somewhat eagerly.

“It can’t be usual,” he said, “for a man to break down so suddenly. A fever can’t commonly leap upon a man without warning in that way.”

“The patient always has full warning,” replied the doctor, “though it may often happen that he will not know what the warning meant.”

“He seemed,” said Windgall, “to break down in a minute.” He hardly liked to put the decisive question which was in his mind.

“You spoke, my lord,” said the doctor, “of a great mental agitation. That would supply a stimulus, which would seem to retard, whilst it would actually hasten the progress of the disease. In such a case a man, as they say in athletics, would run himself to a standstill. I have known a man win a race and drop dead on the winning tape. He lived whilst he had to live.”

“M-m,” said the Earl thoughtfully. “He carried his point before he broke down,” he said

to himself. "He must have been passionately set upon it. I understand," he said aloud. "You are accustomed to receive confidences in your profession." The doctor bowed. "There is some parallel to that in my friend's case. A great mental strain—a greater strain than I could have conceived it to be—had been removed at the instant at which I noticed his first aberration."

Whilst they were talking thus, and all night long, Kimberley lay staring with bright unwinking eyes at the ceiling, muttering continually.

"Everything to Lady Ella if I die. With dearest love and worship. To Lady Ella. Everything. With dearest love and worship."

CHAPTER V.

It was a rainy morning at the docks, and the decks of the steamship *Patagonia* were wet and dirty, and bestrewn with a wild variety of packages, great bales in canvas coverings, huge packing-cases, and the hundred component parts of machines of various make, each packed in straw, and a rabble of gentry in 'long-shore costume made a hideous shindy, with shouting, pulling, and hauling, in the midst of which a person in blue pilot cloth and a gold-bound cap seemed to swear at large without creating any impression upon anybody. In the middle of the disorder stood Jack Clare, with the collar of a big ulster turned up over his ears, a cloth travelling-cap pulled moodily over his eyes, and his hands in

his coat pockets, watching the bestowal of his belongings in the hold. The gold-bound mate looked in his direction now and then, and invariably swore with added gusto afterwards, for he regarded Jack's presence there as being in some sort an intrusion on his manor.

For his part Jack thought nothing of the mate, and knew nothing of his grievance. He came down here every day now, and watched the arrival of his agricultural properties, and of the corrugated zinc farmhouse and outhouses; and he pictured them, sorrowfully enough, as they would be, or might be, about the land he had never seen, and on which, as it seemed, he was to spend the rest of his lifetime.

The one thing that nerved the young fellow in these melancholy hours of preparation for a lifelong exile was the thought that he was going to be of use in the world, and though, in the abstract, this was no doubt a noble sentiment, it was but a poor plaster for a sore heart.

“I’ll go and do something,” he said to himself a thousand times. “All the Clares sha’n’t be poverty-stricken to the end of time. Charley’ll get married, and have a lad or two most likely, and by their time there’ll be an estate in New Zealand worth more than the bare acres at home.”

But the prospect of benefiting these visionary possible youths helped him less than he expected. He who works for posterity cannot hope to receive his reward to-day. He longed savagely to be actually at work with his own head and hands, where he could tire himself into nightly sleep, and where the daily struggle with nature, as he figured her in those solitudes, would help him little by little to ignore the past.

That ill-advised visit to Shouldershott had taught him one thing which he would have been less wretched not to have known, for he had learned there, beyond his power to doubt, that Ella loved him, and that she, like himself,

was condemned to a lonely and loveless life. If in his thoughts about Windgall he was hard and bitter and spiteful, it is not, perhaps, greatly to be wondered at, or very strongly to be condemned. In the creed of young men who are in love, love has a natural right to override everything, and the economies and cares which age suggests look mean to the eyes of a lover. In a case like Jack Clare's nothing more could be asked than that he should consume his own smoke. This he did, with more than average assiduity, and apart from those who knew the case, nobody fancied the young fellow to be lovelorn, though he was quite taciturn and gloomy enough at this time, and ferociously radical in his opinions. In his own heart he cursed, like the hero of Locksley Hall, the gold that gilded the straightened forehead of the fool, and, of course, the fool was Bolsover Kimberley.

“In a month,”

So poor Jack would quote to himself at times—

“In a month

They wedded her to eighty thousand pounds,
To lands in Kent, and messuages in York,
To slight Sir Robert, with his watery smile
And educated whisker.”

He would rail inwardly at Kimberley for not being even the “slight Sir Robert,” and denied that most arrant and contemptible of snobs the poor merit even of the educated whisker.

It is not likely that there is any young man in the world who would not have thought it cruel to separate so true a pair of lovers, and to force the lady into a loveless marriage with a man so certain to be repugnant to her. But Clare was in love, and to him this match looked hideous and shameful. The thought of it corroded his soul, and he brooded over it with an indignation so passionate and bitter that he felt at times as if he carried an actual fire within him. It is a hard thing to learn such hatred and disdain, and the careful elders who instruct the young in this wise may have more upon

their heads than they know of. To turn generous young blood to gall, and the kindly instincts of a young heart to cynicism, is not a little matter, or one to be lightly thought of. Some of the highest social advantages may be too dearly purchased at such a price.

Somehow the rain and hubbub and discomfort on the *Patagonia's* deck seemed to suit his mood, and he would not have abated any of these small miseries if he had had the power.

"*Patagonia*" cried a voice from the quay, and Jack, looking round with listless eyes, saw a smart-looking messenger with his hand at his mouth to direct the lengthened "ahoy" with which he followed the vessel's name.

"Here," shouted the sullen mate, with a gratuitous execration. "What are you bawling there for?"

"Honourable Captain Clare aboard?" shouted the messenger.

The mate pointed out the honourable Captain

Clare with a sort of bearish politeness extorted by the title, and made up for this concession by swearing with unusual fluency at a lighter-man, who, being independent of the mate's good will, swore back again. Whilst the wordy torrents met and raged together the messenger came aboard and tendered to Clare a letter. He saw with amazement that it bore the Windgall crest, and that it was directed in Windgall's hand and marked "immediate."

"It was sent to the hotel, sir," said the messenger touching his hat, "and the manager ordered me to take a cab and come on with it at once."

"H'm," said Jack, and turning his back to the wind and rain opened the envelope and read—

"MY DEAR CLARE,

"After the circumstances attendant upon our late meeting you will probably be

surprised by the receipt of this letter. I have, however, to tell you (and I may as well do it without circumloction or delay) that circumstances have occurred which enable me to withdraw the opposition I have hitherto been compelled to offer to your union with my daughter. I shall be pleased to see you here at your earliest convenience.

“ Yours very truly,

“ WINDGALL.”

This epistle was undoubtedly a somewhat odd one, though perhaps his lordship could not have done better if he had taken a twelvemonth to think about it. It had been written, and looked as if it had been written at great haste, and the letters stretched and sprawled over three sides of the sheet of note-paper. As Jack read it he understood it well enough, and yet he could scarcely believe that he understood it at all. He read it two or three times over, and felt

stunned, as if he had been smartly rapped on the head with a mallet.

“I’m not mad,” he said to himself. “I’m not dreaming. ‘Circumstances have occurred which enable me to withdraw the opposition I have hitherto been compelled to offer to your union with my daughter.’ Plain black and white. ‘I shall be pleased to see you here at your earliest convenience.’”

He hardly dared to believe this astounding intelligence. That the skies should have fallen would have been nothing by comparison with it. He read the letter anew, and his heart began to beat thick with an actual fear, the delusion looked so real. When the impossible happens the man to whom it occurs is apt to feel a little staggered by it to begin with.

“Get me a cab,” he said in a quiet and unmoved voice to the messenger, who touched his cap anew and followed him on shore. “I’ll see this through,” murmured Jack to himself.

"If I am mad I *am* mad. Perhaps I am dead and things are righting themselves in a second world. I don't remember dying, though." He felt a strange wild tendency to laugh, and when he came to the cab by which the messenger had arrived he could not speak for nearly half-a-minute, but stood with bent head as if sunk deep in thought, controlling himself the while.

"Where to, sir?" asked the cabman at last.

Clare opened the letter and re-read the name of the hotel at which Windgall was staying. It cost him a great effort to pronounce it, but he looked no more than dreamy and pre-occupied. Neither cabman nor messenger noted anything as he entered the vehicle and was driven away, but as the first numbed feeling induced by this amazing shock began to disappear his pulses rioted in his heart and head, and he shot such wild conjectures here and there as to the causes which could have induced this change in Windgall's mind that he almost

resigned himself to the conclusion that his own mind had fallen into chaos. For had not Windgall hated him this three years past? And was not Ella bound to that dreadful little millionaire? And was her father the man to relent at any sorrow of hers? Was he not steeped to the heart in sordid thoughts, and by nature incapable of a generous impulse? Was not, in brief, the whole incredible incident the obvious growth of a mind diseased, and could a man with a scrap of sanity left in him yield it credence for a single moment?

“I must believe it,” said the disturbed youngster aloud. “I’ll believe it till I find it’s false.”

He sat with his thoughts in a whirl, and by the time at which the cab drew up before the hotel he was as pale as death. It cost him a prodigious effort to ask for Windgall in a way which should not reveal the agitation he suffered, and he felt his hands tremble so much when he essayed to unbutton his overcoat to seek his

cardcase that he abandoned that enterprise, and, making shift to say, "Tell his lordship that Captain Clare is here," awaited Windgall's answer in a sort of desperation. Out of this grew a sudden coolness and self-possession, which lasted until the servant returned.

"This way, sir." Jack's heart began to beat again, and he could scarce see the way along the broad and well-lit corridor. "This way, sir," said the servant a second time, and threw open a door. The young man entered almost blindly, and heard the Earl's voice with an odd tremor in it.

"Good morning, Clare. Good morning. Wild weather, but not unseasonable for the time of year." His lordship was shaking Jack by the hand.

"I received your note," said the younger man, who saw his lordship's grey features as if through a silvery fog, "and I came here at once."

“So I see,” said the Earl. “Be seated.” The servant had closed the door, and his retreating footsteps sounded clearly. Jack obeyed his lordship’s injunction, and the silvery fog began to clear away. “I have no doubt,” said his lordship, approaching the centre table, and beginning to push about the trifles which lay upon it. “I have no doubt that you were surprised by the receipt of my note?”

“I was surprised, my lord, certainly,” said Jack, not as yet knowing well what to say, or what to think.

“You must allow me to go back a little while,” his lordship said nervously. “When I requested you, nearly three years ago, to allow your intimate and friendly visits at the Castle to cease for a time, I spoke in my daughter’s interest and your own. You naturally thought my conduct a little brutal and self-interested. Young men think such things of their elders. We see things from different stand-points, and in

thirty years from now you will be readier to take my side than I can expect you to be at present."

He paused, as if expecting a reply, probably a negative, but Jack merely nodded to him to continue. He did not see the sign, for he was still nervously pushing about the trifles on the table, but he went on again.

"I will not even say that if—in the existing circumstances—I had known at the time that my daughter's affections were engaged in your behalf—I will not say that even then I should have been disposed to encourage your suit. Young people form attachments, and set their hearts upon unions"—he floundered somewhat awkwardly—"attachments which are unfortunate, and unions which are impossible. And even if I had known that Ella's wishes were as deeply concerned as your own I am not sure that I could have consented. I am almost sure that I should still have felt it my duty to persuade her to a wiser view."

Still Jack made no response, and after another nervous pause the Earl continued.

“In spite of what I have said already, Clare, I shall ask you to believe that I love my daughter. If I had been a wealthy man—if I had been anything but a very poor man—you would have been welcome to continue your addresses. If you had been wealthy, or if I had been wealthy, (it would have made no difference to me from which side the money came,) I would have given my consent to the proposals you made to me. But I have suffered from poverty all my life, and I know its bitternesses, its humiliations. You may accept it as a proof of the feeling with which I regard you that I tell you these things. They are not easy things to speak of.”

“I am obliged to your lordship for the confidence you are pleased to place in me,” said Jack, opening his lips for the second time since his entrance to the room.

“But,” said his lordship, looking up and

looking down again, "you naturally ask to what does all this lead? Well, I am going to be perfectly frank and candid with you. I did not know, and I had no reason given me to suspect, that Ella was suffering from any sentimental distresses on account of the decision at which I had felt myself compelled to arrive. Even if I had known that she had taken my decision to heart I am not sure, as I have said already, that I should have been the more disposed to yield. But I should have stood firm, not because I am a heartless father, or insensible to my child's welfare, but because I have learned some little wisdom in a harder school than she or you have known."

"Your letter tells me," Jack began, when the Earl paused, "that circumstances have occurred——"

"I will not tell you what those circumstances are precisely," said Windgall. "I do not know if I have a right to tell you. Some day I may

be able to lay them all before you, but at present they involve a secret which I have no right to reveal. It must be enough that they have occurred. I have learned that my daughter's happiness, if not actually bound up with your own, is likely to be affected—— I do not find it easy to talk of these things, Clare."

"Have I your permission, my lord," said Jack, standing up suddenly, "to renew my addresses to Lady Ella?"

"That is really the question," said his lordship, advancing with his right hand outstretched. "You have my full permission, and I wish you and her long life and happiness with all my heart."

Jack grasped the extended hand in so unconventional a manner that his lordship's fingers felt as if glued together for a full minute after their release.

"Thank you," he said, with a little catch in his voice, "Thank you, my lord. Can I see

Ella? Is she in town?" His heart felt almost drowned in this tide of joy, which poured so suddenly on the desert of his griefs. "I am afraid I have thought hard thoughts about you, sir," he stammered. "I beg your pardon for them."

"Ella," said Windgall, rubbing his hands together in a fashion that looked cordial, but was only intended to restore the circulation to his stiffened fingers, "Ella is at Gallowbay. I have wired to her this morning, asking her to join me here. If you care to dine with us this evening——?"

"Thank you," cried Jack once more. "My lord," he hurried on humbly, "I don't know how to thank you. I don't know how to ask your pardon for all the mistaken thoughts I have had about you."

"Tut, tut," said my lord, with a transient shamefacedness. "I acted for the best."

He was mightily relieved up to now to find

that Jack asked no questions about Kimberley ; but he was still nervous lest the topic should be broached. The lover had thought of Kimberley also ; but, even now, he could hardly bear to couple his name in the same mental breath with Ella's, and it was enough for the present to know that, however it had come about, that shameful match was broken off, and Ella released from the prospect of that awful life-long slavery.

“And now,” said Windgall, with some little awkwardness still remaining, “may I ask you to leave me to some business of extreme importance, which I am afraid,” looking at his watch, “I can really delay no longer.” He gave his prospective son-in-law his hand. “Be as fervent as you like,” he was enforced to say on withdrawing it, “but you are a little stronger than you know, I fancy. Don't forget this evening. Half-past seven. And now, good-bye.”

Jack blushed and stammered like a schoolboy, and escaped he scarce knew how. His forgotten

cabman hailed him as he came upon the pavement, and he leaped into the vehicle and commanded the driver to his hotel, where he locked himself in his own room and paced up and down elated. He stretched out his arms as if Ella could fly to them.

“No more grief, dear; no more pain. My dear, my dear.”

By-and-by he grew a little calmer, and sat down with that contraband portrait he had kept so long, and gazed at it with tear-dimmed eyes until he was fain to fall upon his knees, remembering the things his mother had taught him, and thank God for Ella's rescue and the new happiness of his own lot. But this is scarcely within the storyteller's province, to my mind.

“My dear Ella,” said his lordship, in answer to her troubled inquiry at Euston, where he met her, “there was no cause for any alarm in my despatch. Altogether, I have reason to believe

that you will find the circumstances in which I have summoned you to town very agreeable and satisfactory. Tollgett and Priscille will see to your baggage. Alice is already in the carriage. When we reach the hotel I shall want to speak to you. I have altogether very happy news." He was excited, and Ella could scarcely help thinking that his news was less happy than he proclaimed it to be. "Especially happy news for you, my dear," he half whispered, as he led her to the carriage.

She did not quite know what news could be especially happy for her to hear. She had resigned herself to hear no news of her own affairs which could seem happy, and she did not greatly trouble herself to understand the meaning of her father's words. But when they had reached the hotel he contrived that he and Ella should be alone for a while, and he stooped and kissed her as she sat before the fire with folded hands.

"My dear," he said, in a voice which betrayed

some agitation, "you must look your best this evening. I have invited Captain Clare to dinner."

He had scarcely spoken when he blamed himself for this precipitation, though even then, he scarcely saw how he could have softened the intelligence he had to offer. He could not understand that it was the complete uncertainty of its meaning rather than the simple intelligence itself which so agitated his daughter. Her cheeks became deadly pale, and for a moment he thought she was about to swoon, but she controlled herself with a great effort and sat silent and trembling.

"You will be pleased to see him, dear?" he asked, when he saw the colour stealing back to her cheek. At this query she blushed divinely, but she smiled also, and he stooped again to kiss her on the forehead. There was a strong feeling of compunction and pity in his heart as he did so, for he thought how long for his own selfish

reasons he had made this best of daughters unhappy, and with how profound a sense of duty she had obeyed him. For he knew, now, something of the sense of heartbreak she had suffered, and though he had never been the man to feel that kind of grief acutely, or to sympathise with it keenly, he was not cruel or hard-hearted, and he loved her after all. "I saw him this morning," Windgall continued, "and I told him formally that so far as I was concerned I withdrew all opposition to his suit. I have been mistaken, all along, my dear," he went on, with a huskiness in his voice and a moisture in his eyes. "I never meant to be cruel to you."

"No, no," she answered, rising and hiding her blushing face beside his. "I am sure of that."

He put his right arm about her waist, and she set an arm around his neck, and in that way they walked up and down the room together for a little while, as Windgall spoke.

“There is a thing I have not yet been able to tell Captain Clare. No, don't be alarmed, Ella. There is nothing more to come between you. But there is a thing I have not been able to tell him, and I must ask you not to tell him either, though I have not only a right to let you know it, but feel it a sort of duty. You remember the documents poor Kimberley so nobly offered me? We mistook him. I mistook him. The noblest and the most generous heart——” He paused a little in his speech and in his walk, but resumed both together. “When he discovered how distasteful he was to you, and became quite certain in his own mind that you could not possibly be happy with him, he came to tell me so, as you know already. Then, as you know already, I sent the papers back to him. He had proposed to make a wedding bonfire of them, and of course I could not keep them after what had happened. He followed me here to London, and brought the papers with him. He abso-

lutely refused to accept them, and I as absolutely refused to retain them."

Once before in this history Lord Windgall made a statement of this kind, a statement not purely veracious. In that instance, as in this, he was unconscious of deception, and he really thought that he had made his refusal absolute.

"He told me," his lordship continued, "that he had been an involuntary witness of your parting with Captain Clare." At this Ella started and blushed, and half withdrew her arm. Even when she had restored it her father noticed a difference in her gait, a something which spoke of wounded reserve and of indignation. "He was at that moment on his way to see me, and to tell me the conclusion at which he had arrived. He told me this, and when I gave the papers back to him he threatened me. It was the most magnanimous threat I ever heard, my dear. He told me that if I would not give my consent to your marriage with Captain Clare, he would put

every one of the documents in force next day. But he cried out a moment later that he had never meant to threaten me, and implored me to take them as a wedding gift, and remove the barrier which stood between you and the man of your choice. And so, my dear," he continued hurriedly, "I had no choice but to yield, and—and the papers were destroyed, were burned."

"Papa," she said gravely, and even sorrowfully. "How could you take them?"

"I felt that," cried Windgall, eagerly. "But I could not refuse them. He would take no nay. He insisted. A man who won't take money from another can't be forced into taking it."

After that, seeing into what an easily escapable pitfall he had fallen, he was dumb for a minute.

"That was awkwardly expressed, of course," he began again, with an uneasy laugh. "He had the power to refuse and I had not. My dear, we have all been mistaken in the man.

He has the noblest, the most generous, the tenderest, the most chivalrous heart." The withered nobleman was honestly moved as he spoke these words. "There is one thing I must tell you, dear, though it may dash your joy a little. You ought to know it, for it can't all be merry-making here at this time, with no memory of the man who gave us the right to be happy. You may not think much of poor Kimberley's heart, my dear, but it was all yours. He lies here now, in this same hotel, ill of brain fever, and in great danger, as the doctors fear. And he has never spoken a word since he lost consciousness that did not relate to you. 'If I die,' he says continually, poor fellow, 'If I die, everything is to go to Lady Ella, with dearest love and worship.' That is all the poor stricken creature thinks about." An actual tear trickled down the grey face and dropped on Ella's hand, for his lordship was a good deal moved by his own eloquence by this time.

“He says that always without ceasing, and he says nothing else. I pray God, with all my heart, that he may live for many a year, and be as happy as he deserves to be.”

This story touched the girl profoundly. These things are hard to find, but, perhaps, now that she knew all the devotion of the heart she had despised, if there had been no such man as Jack Clare in the world, she might have resigned herself to marry even the poor little Bolsover Kimberley. She was free of him now, and free to pity him. If Kimberley could ever have known of the tears she shed over this pathetic story, and the thoughts she thought of him, he would have been more than consoled, a proud and happy man for ever.

What are externals after all, when heart really comes within reach of heart? What did it matter to have been a lawyer's clerk, and to have been cursed with an exterior of foolish meekness, and to have been ill-bred and full of

gaucheries, when, after all, this patrician lady whom he loved so tenderly, could shed tears of pity for him, and could come near to loving him, if even for a moment only?

But it is rare to meet with one's deserts in this world, and Kimberley never knew of these things.

CHAPTER VI.

IF Ella had a tear or two to bestow on Kimberley's sorrows, it was still natural that she should remember her own good fortune, and the happiness which lay before her and her lover. There really are people in the world, however much the pessimist may be disposed to disbelieve it, whose only road to happiness lies through the happiness of others, and Ella thought a great deal more of seeing her lover happy than of her own content. The sweet and only half-conscious egotism which assured her that it was in her power to make him happy furnished her with a rich reward for all the sorrows of the past. The thought never once crossed her mind, "Now I am going to be happy!" but that other

thought, infinitely more delightful, "Now Jack will be happy!" made very music in her heart. It is not unreasonable, surely, that at times events should be so ordered, that this sort of unselfish and generous nature should be happier than any selfish nature has the power to be.

So if over poor Kimberley some natural tears she shed, she dried them soon, and when Alice saw her a half-hour later, she was amazed at her radiant and tender looks. It must needs be sorrowful that so good a creature as the little Bolsover had after all proved to be should suffer as he suffered, but it must needs be a glad thing that her hero and man of men was saved from loveless exile, and that after all the rainy days he had known the sun was at last to shine upon him. Perhaps in the course of this history it has never been made quite clear that Jack was much of a hero, but it might go hard with Lady Ella's suitor if it were imperatively demanded

that he should be in all respects worthy of her. Goodness is not the sole prerogative of women. There are manly virtues which few women own, but women are better than we are, and there are few amongst us who are really worthy of a good woman's love. A good woman is beyond rubies. Think of her life—how pure and blameless! Set your own beside it, and you can scarce do less than feel a twinge of shame. It is a thousand to one that you show like a raven on a snow-bank. In that tender domestic purity we have all seen and known there is something almost terrible, and the angel of the flaming sword might well seem to stand between us and it, warning us back from a trespass on that paradise of goodness.

But Ella was at least provided with a husband, chaste, honourable, and manly, and in this imperfect world perhaps even the best sort of women could scarcely ask for more. Jack, awaiting the happy moment when he should

rejoin her, could as yet hardly find it in his heart to credit his own good fortune, and certainly never presumed for a moment to think himself worthy of it. But the whole thing at present was a wonder and a miracle. The cruellest of conceivable fates had changed, without a moment's warning, into the happiest. That wicked ogre of an Earl had suddenly become a good father, with his daughter's welfare the one thing nearest to his heart, and the Kimberley goblin had somehow vanished into the outer darkness, had made himself air, like the foul figures in *Macbeth*.

Jack was attired cap-à-pie a good three hours before the time appointed, and paced his room like a prisoner awaiting the moment of release. Half an hour before he dared presume to start, he despatched a waiter for a cab, and he looked at his watch a thousand times at a moderate computation. Before this, the weather had cleared pretty much as his own prospects had done, and

the gas-lit streets lay under a clear sky, with rosy clouds of sunset in it ; London smoke made glorious beyond human imagination. As he drove to Windgall's hotel the young man surveyed the passengers on either side the road and blessed them unaware.

When he arrived at the hotel and was ushered into Windgall's sitting-room, he found himself alone for a moment. A clear fire was burning on the hearth, and one shaded lamp shed a soft and rosy twilight upon the half-darkness of the chamber. The curtains were close drawn, and to his fancy there was something home-like in the room. His heart was beating high with a flattered sense of expectancy when the door opened and Ella entered alone. She advanced with a hand frankly stretched towards him, and he took it in both his own, and bent over it as if he were a pilgrim at a shrine, and kissed it reverently. Then still holding it in both his own he drew her gently to the hearth-rug where

the softened light of the lamp, and the glow of the fire met together, and could fall upon her face. A woman is never so beautiful as in the eyes of her lover, and lovely as she was his love spiritualised her beauty. She seemed scarcely mortal to him, and he looked at her with much such a reverence and tender awe as one might feel in the presence of an angel. But she was all woman, too, and as he looked the hand he held was drawn closer and closer, and the lovely face came nearer and nearer, until at last his lips touched hers, and he set both arms around her and drew her to his heart. There was no need of question or reply just then; for they each knew the other's heart already.

Ella disengaged herself from his embrace, but he took her by both unresisting hands and held her, looking into her eyes, until brave as they were they drooped before him in a pleased confusion, and then he found audacity enough to take her to his arms again.

It was full a minute before either of them spoke, and then said Jack, looking down into her eyes,

“Are you happy, dear?”

“And you?” she answered with delightful *naïveté*, “Are you happy, too?”

“Happy?” cried Jack with a sort of scorn of the word, and he must needs kiss her once more, as if kissing were the only possible channel of communication. “I can’t believe that I am here,” he said, when she had again escaped from him. “I feel as if it were all a dream. I am afraid of awaking.” She shook her head with a shy and radiant smile. “How did it all come about, dear?” he asked her. “How was the miracle accomplished? I was eating my heart this morning, and it was as bitter as gall. And only half a dozen hours later I find myself in heaven. Who has done it all?”

“You must ask papa,” said Ella.

“He found out that you cared for me?” said

Jack, "that you—loved me? You do care for me, a little? It isn't mere mad vanity and insolence in me to think so? I don't think it is vanity or insolence, my darling. I never felt so humble. I never felt so unworthy."

She was once more a purely angelic presence to him, and he abased himself in spirit before her. He knelt to her and kissed both her hands.

"And yet you do care for me a little?" he asked her with returning courage.

"Yes," she answered, with a low ripple of happy laughter in her voice. "A little."

His lordship of Windgall, who had the good taste to be attacked with a rather severe fit of coughing at the moment at which he opened the door, appeared at this juncture, and Jack scrambled somewhat hastily and guiltily to his feet, and there seemed to both these young people a something sly and underhanded in the attempt to hide altogether the character of the

interview which had taken place between them, and so when my lord entered, he found them still standing, in spite of the signal he had given, hand in hand before the fireplace. If there had been light enough for him to observe by he would have seen that both of them were blushing in a way which in one case was singularly becoming, and in the other rather sheepish. For it has been ordained by Nature that under this sort of conditions, the maid shall look more than mortal sweet and charming, and the man a trifle ridiculous.

“This is Captain Clare, papa,” said Lady Ella, and Captain Clare, relinquishing her hands, proffered his own right hand to Windgall.

“Nothing will afford me greater pleasure than to shake hands with Captain Clare,” said his lordship laughing. “But, Clare, as you are strong be merciful.”

Jack blushed and laughed in answer, but shook hands in a manly and straightforward

way, and Windgall returned the pressure with a seeming cordiality. Perhaps it was not in human nature to be actually cordial all at once with a man who robbed him of so excellent a son-in-law as Kimberley would have been, but the Earl made at least a creditable struggle. First impressions are sometimes difficult to overcome, but his lordship had thoroughly vanquished his first beliefs in Kimberley, and was, after the ordinary manner of human nature, much more disposed to value him now that he had lost him than he had ever been before. This natural tendency was strengthened by the fact that he had only really begun to value that despised prospective son-in-law of his when the little man had come to deal the death-blow to his own dearest hopes. But Windgall saw now clearly enough what he had lost, and to do him no more than justice his regret for the millionaire's money was no stronger than his sense of the millionaire's more personal possessions.

He had been trying hard all the afternoon to persuade himself that things had happened for the best, and even in the unhappiest light his moods could throw upon the history of his daughter's love affairs, they still looked almost sufficiently prosperous. He himself stood clear of debt, and he could settle a couple of thousand a year upon Ella and still be more than two thousand five hundred pounds a year richer than he had ever been in his life before. He knew the amount of Clare's recent windfall, and supposed the young gentleman's private income to amount to something like fifteen hundred pounds. Now, even with the addition he proposed to make to it from his own poor resources, the income of Ella's future husband looked very poor indeed beside Kimberley's annual fifty or sixty thousand pounds, but his lordship bethought him—being anxious now to make the best of everything—that he had always voted straight with his party, and had been not

altogether useless in other ways to his political chieftains, that having no sons of his own, he had never had occasion to ask a favour in his life, and with the influence on which he could fairly count, in combination with Captain Clare's brother, Lord Montacute, the young gentleman might be hoisted into some place of emolument and honour, which would make him not so poor a match for Ella after all. Captain Clare had certainly been guilty of a public indiscretion at the last Gallowbay election, and had deserted the traditional politics of his family, but he was young, and that false step might easily be condoned if he would consent in his future doings to be guided by the voice of experience and reason. And perhaps it had been no more than natural, my lord allowed, in his new-found anxiety to think the best of Jack Clare, that the young man should have been stung by the pangs of despised love, into the expression of those ill-considered Radical opinions. To my lord's

natural way of thinking, a Radical was an interested person who wanted something which was out of reach, and now that Jack had what he wanted, it was easy to suppose that he would return to the faith of his fathers.

None of these considerations presented themselves to the lover's mind as he sat in heavenly blessedness at the same table with Ella. He ate but little, being content to feed his eyes and heart, but what he ate was like manna to him, a food sublimated and refined. Ella and Alice, Windgall and Clare, made a very quiet party, and Jack's replies to his host's observations were sometimes altogether out of joint. Windgall had more to say than anybody else at table, but even he was often a little silent and self-absorbed in spite of himself, and Alice, as it turned out afterwards, was observing her sister and the visitor, and forming opinions of her own.

For when the two sisters were alone together after dinner, the sagacious young observer stole

to her sister's side, and without apparent provocation kissed her. Young ladies do not usually blush beneath a salute of this sort from sisterly lips, and yet Ella's clear cheek took a rare tint of carmine.

"I always thought," said Alice, "that there was somebody else, and I always thought it was——"

At this point Ella kissed her back again, and the confidence was either lost, or held to be unnecessary.

Meanwhile, in the dining-room my lord and his guest were engaged in serious talk. Windgall lit a cigar, but Jack, ordinarily an egregious smoker, for some reason of his own declined tobacco. It is undeniable that tobacco smoke clings to the moustache, and the young man was not as yet, perhaps, altogether certain of Lady Ella's approval of the odour.

"Clare," said my lord, "I want to have a serious talk with you." Jack nodded gravely,

and drew his chair a little nearer to the table. "I am not able to give my daughter a great portion, and you are not a wealthy man. It is best to be candid in these matters, and I am sure I can speak to you quite openly."

"Assuredly," said the lover.

"I don't know as yet," resumed Windgall, "what provision I shall be able to make for her, but in any case it will not be large."

"It is a question, my lord," cried Jack, "that has never entered my thoughts."

"Let it enter now," said Windgall, in an almost sportive manner. "As a matter of fact—and matters of fact deserve to be looked at, even when one is going to be married—this is a dreadfully improvident marriage on both sides, and if you young people had properly understood your own interests, you would each have fallen in love with somebody who had a little money." He spoke quite laughingly, but Jack was so persuaded that he believed he was speaking the

truth, that he could secure no smiling answer for him, but toyed seriously with a pair of nut-crackers and attempted no reply. "Of course," pursued his lordship, "that is a very heathen sentiment, and is not at all likely to recommend itself to you. But still the fact remains that in a worldly sense both Ella and yourself might have chosen more wisely. We elderly people, you know, Clare, get into a way of thinking that in right of our experience we ought to be allowed to have things our own way, but you impetuous youngsters beat us, and we have to accept defeat with the best grace we can command. You must allow experience to have a word, however. Let us make the best of things. And to begin with, let me ask you what is your financial position?"

"My income," Jack answered, "is a trifle, a mere trifle, over fifteen hundred a year."

"Well," said my lord, "you know what that is to a man in our position. It means poverty—

actual poverty—poverty bitter and galling. I can give Ella enough to double that sum,—perhaps even a little more, but it still means poverty.”

“You are very generous, my lord,” said the lover. “But fifteen hundred a year does not necessarily mean poverty.”

“No!” said his lordship, lifting his grey eyebrows with a smile half-pitying and half-satirical. “It will pay rent and taxes if you choose to house yourself moderately. You are not so simple as to suppose that you can resign everything to which your position entitles you. No, no. With three thousand a year you will still be poor, but you will not want to be idle and unoccupied, and I suppose you have ambitions, as most young men of parts have. I had ambitions myself once on a time, but I did what you are doing, Clare,—I made an improvident marriage, a love match, and they dropped away from me. I was blessed with

the best of wives, and I never regretted my marriage except for my children's sake. But poverty is a dreadful clog, a dreadful clog. It drags the life out of everything."

"I am not afraid of poverty," said Jack, "either for myself or for Lady Ella."

"Nor was I," said Windgall. "I defied it with a light heart, and I have borne it for many a year with a heavy one. But this is apart from what I meant to say. You have talents, as I know. I suppose you have ambitions?"

"Yes," said Jack, "I have ambitions of a sort."

"The posts at the disposal of private patronage are fewer than they were," said the Earl, "but everything is not yet handed over to the demon of Public Competition. I have some little influence. I have never asked a favour in my life, and my long service will count for something. Your brother has influence also. We

must combine our forces and find you a post, and you must exert yourself for your own advancement. I speak with no fatherly partiality when I say that such a wife as my daughter will be, will be of the utmost value in such a struggle. She is fitted for social distinction, and will secure it."

Jack sat silent for two or three minutes, scarce knowing how to begin to break ground.

"You are very kind indeed, my lord," he said at last, "but I am afraid you have not taken my politics into account." The Earl actually groaned at this. "Your friends will prefer to keep what places they have to bestow for those who share their opinions, and can be useful to them."

"My dear Clare," said Windgall. "What is the game of politics as played in England, or anywhere for that matter? Is there anything in it at all, but just enough to keep the masses occupied with public affairs, and to find the

people of better breeding an honourable occupation? Does anybody—except here and there an uncultured stupid person in the country, and here and there a hot-headed fanatic—believe that Gladstone is a demon or Disraeli a demigod, or think Gladstone demigod and Disraeli demon? Does anybody *believe*, as a solid matter of fact, that the country is happier or more prosperous under one government than under another? We make a prodigious fuss, of course, as to who shall be in and who shall be out. That is part of the game, and it finds the masses something in which they can take an interest, but to think of taking it in earnest between ourselves is really a little absurd. When the Tories are in the tide rolls out, when the Liberals are in the tide rolls up. The tide rises and the tide falls, and we make a noise about it every time, and bring out our mops to help it up or keep it down, and somehow in a kind of way we succeed in persuading ourselves for the

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moment that we have quite an important effect upon it."

He spoke very lightly, and with a certain air of 'humour, but he looked keenly once or twice at Jack as if to gauge the effect of his speech upon him. The young man still played seriously with the nutcrackers, and seemed to examine them with an attention altogether unnecessary.

"I am afraid," he said, when Windgall paused, "that I take a somewhat more serious view of politics than your lordship."

"Well, come now," returned Windgall with a voice of badinage, "you don't tell me that in cool reason you abide by the proclamations of Gallowbay. You fluttered the Tory dovecote, and I assure you that nobody admired the dash and vigour of your speeches more than I. There was a certain happy audacity in them which really reminded one of what one reads of Disraeli in his younger days. They were capital, and I had a

laugh at my own expense on more than one occasion I assure you. But in cool blood now, Clare, you are scarcely so undaunted a political fire-eater? Confess it."

"I was guilty of a good deal of bad taste, my lord," Jack confessed with a blush, "but in the main I spoke my honest opinions. If I disappoint you now, I am extremely sorry. There is scarcely anything else in which I shall not be proud to allow you to command me."

"Well, well," said Windgall, who was more angry than he cared to show. "I can't ask you to be false to any profound convictions. But if the convictions should turn out not to be so very profound after all (and to my way of thinking there is no need for any very profound political convictions in a country like England), there might be a career opened for you which would find full scope for an honourable ambition. Think it over, Clare, think it over. For the present we may leave it. Discussion never con-

verted anybody. It only indurates opinion, and makes each of the disputants more obstinately attached to his own particular crotchet. Leave the thing alone, and I may come to your opinion or you may come to mine. There is a sort of satisfaction in converting oneself, and a sort of scorn of being converted by anybody else. Shall we go back to the drawing-room?"

Jack would honestly have preferred to tell him that there was no likelihood of his changing his mind in this respect, but set a check upon himself. It would be easy to say all he had to say upon the matter when the Earl returned to the subject. In the mind of the younger man there was a grave disapproval of the elder's flippancy, and a day or two earlier the sentiments to which he had listened would have served to confirm him in that base opinion of Windgall which he had held so long. But in Ella's presence it was hard to think ill of Ella's father, and he soon brought

himself to forgive his lordship's want of political fervour. The thought of politics fled his mind as he sat down by the side of his sweetheart. Delightful old word. A little out of fashion perhaps with the people who write of the love affairs of ladies and gentlemen nowadays, but still delightful.

They spent a wonderfully quiet evening. Alice sat at the piano for a time and played dreamy music, and his lordship had little to say for himself, and by-and-by withdrew, leaving the three young people together for a delicious quarter of an hour. No lady of her years would have been expected to have been more discreet than Alice at this happy juncture, and she sat womanfully at the piano and left the lovers perfectly to themselves until Windgall's return. Jack made prisoner of one of the beautiful slender hands and kissed it now and again, but they spoke scarcely a word between them, and were content simply with each other's presence,

and that common sense of ownership which lovers find so exquisitely flattering to the heart. And of course their past sorrow made them happier now, and even tranquilised their joy a little.

My lord returning put an end to this *tête-à-tête*, in which the eyes had done all or nearly all the talking, and the four settled round the fire like a veritable family party, until at last Jack had to go, and to be satisfied with a merely formal leave-taking. But he seemed to walk on air, and the early winter night in the sloppy London streets was like a spring morning in Arcadia to him.

Yet when he gave himself time to think of them, the hopes and anticipations Windgall had expressed began to trouble him not a little, and he was forced to look at his own prospects. A life of idleness, even with Ella to share it, was by no means to his mind, and indeed the more he thought of her the more he recognised the

necessity of a life of usefulness. The young fellow, in short, took his high good fortune loftily, and determined not to be unworthy of it. It was possible enough, as Montacute had told him long ago, that his love affairs had influenced his political opinions, but it was certain that his political opinions had left a considerable impression on his character. Windgall's proposal was frankly and flatly impossible—a thing there could be no two thoughts about in his own mind. He was resolved to be honest and to be of some service in the world. It was easy to be honest, but it was hard to see in what way he could be of use. Could he drag Ella out into that half-wild new world, and ask her to share his life there? To him, with long thinking of it, it had come to seem the noblest and most useful life open to him, to subdue nature, to train the rough, shaggy forest into smooth-smiling fields of harvest, to be one in the great crowd of men who would

by-and-by cheapen bread for the hungry millions of the world. A practical honest hope, and, as he thought it, a high practical duty. A work thoroughly fit for him whilst he stood alone, but how about it now with this more delicate life in charge?

It took him some days to come to a definite opinion on this matter, but at last he determined to consult Ella herself upon it, and to abide by her judgment. Whilst this inward discussion went on the *Patagonia* sailed without him, but the practical man he had engaged to look after his affairs went with her, and Jack started away to appeal to Ella. Calling at his hotel by the way, he ran against Major Heard in the vestibule, and noticed on the grisly warrior's face an expression of wrath and severity.

“Ah!” said the Major, “the very man I wanted. You know nothing about it yet? You haven't heard?”

Now Jack had seemed so long detested of the Fates that his heart sank a little at the Major's face and voice.

"I have heard nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. What is it?"

"Well, it's confoundedly unpleasant," said the Major. "We'd better go up-stairs to your own room and talk it over."

Jack led the way, and when they were once closeted together, the Major drew out of his coat-pocket a copy of *The Way of the World*, and indicating Mr. Amelia's brilliant article with an outstretched forefinger, handed it to his companion.

"Read that, sir," said the Major. "That fellow Kimberley is the proprietor of this journal. Money won't matter to him, confound him! But there is plenty of material there for a criminal proceeding, and I should think he's good for a year or two."

The Major stood pulling at his moustache

with first one hand and then the other, and watched Jack's face, on which an expression mixed of wrath and wonder gathered as he read.

CHAPTER VII.

“THE scoundrel!” cried Jack, when he had finished Mr. Amelia’s masterpiece. “The villain!” He crumbled the paper in both hands and faced the Major. “You have read it all?”

“Every word,” replied the Major. “The fellow has given himself into your hands. Don’t be any angrier about it than you can help. Do you notice the odd thing about it? All the villainies charged against you were actually committed by that fellow Stracey or Bracey, or whatever his name was. You remember *him*? They’ve taken his biography and tacked it on to you. That’s all.”

“The scoundrel!” cried Jack again.

It came easy to suppose that “that fellow Kimberley,” as the Major called him, was a person capable of any degraded action. What, indeed, might be expected from an ill-bred fellow, sprung from the lowest ranks of life, who had defeated one of these gentlemen in a parliamentary contest, and had outbid the other for the matrimonial prize? But neither Major Heard nor Jack Clare had hitherto charged him with anything so bad as this. What was said of Clare was simply and purely absurd—the slightest breath would blow that away for good and all—but it was the attack on Lady Ella which betrayed the dark spot in the discarded lover’s heart.

“You don’t know why his lordship got rid of him?” asked the Major.

“No,” said Jack. “I never asked.” Of course so old and close a friend as the Major knew all the young man’s happy news. “He

told me enough to make me understand that he had found out how unhappy she was."

"Found him out in some confounded snobbery, and gave him his discharge at once, most probably," said the Major. "Windgall was always poor, but he was never a dishonourable man. It was always a matter of wonder to me, poor as he was, that he ever brought himself to consent for a moment to such a match. You may depend upon it," said the Major, nodding sapiently, "that Windgall found him out and sent him packing, and that he imagined this in revenge. Of course the little skunk couldn't write it himself. That other little rascal, that Amelia, used to write his speeches for him."

So limited a thing is earthly fame, in spite of the most assiduous puffing, that neither Jack nor the Major knew of Mr. Amelia's connection with *The Way of the World*.

"To talk about the vindication of your own character in a case of this kind," pursued the

Major, "would be absurd, because nobody is at all likely to believe this bundle of lies. But you must punish the scoundrel too. What do you think of doing, to begin with?"

"I hardly know," said Jack. "I ought to see Windgall at once, I suppose, but it is an unpleasant thing to do. If this shameless thing came to Lady Ella's ears——." He could not speak for mingled rage and shame.

"Go and see Windgall," said the Major. "I remember a case something like this, when *The Scourge* fell foul of Collard of the Sixteenth. It was stopped the first day because they hadn't 'proved publication,' as they call it. I'll go down to the office of this confounded paper, sir, and I'll see the editor, and tell him in your name that you intend to institute criminal proceedings. I am not altogether ignorant of the proper way to go about these things. I'll buy a paper, and I'll tell him what I'm buying it for. The law lays down certain rules in these matters.

You do the same if you want anything analysed. You go and see Windgall. I'll go and see the editor."

The Major put on his glasses and hunted over the copy of *The Way of the World* for the address of the publisher, and having found it, handed the paper to Clare, folded his glasses, resumed his hat and gloves, and with a more than usually military gait, departed. The Major was essentially warlike, and the stern joy that warriors feel illumined his bosom, and made his self-imposed task almost a pleasure to him, notwithstanding his anger and contempt.

The office of *The Way of the World* was situated in a retired court off the Strand, and he had some little difficulty in finding it. He entered with majestic calm, and demanded of the stalwart Scottish graduate who sat in a screened corner writing, the whereabouts of the editor.

"Oblige me with your name, sir," said the courteous secretary. "I'll see if he is within."

The Major produced a card and handed it to the Scot, who slid sedately into the inner room, and having closed the door behind him presented the piece of pasteboard to his chief. Mr. Amelia sat in the little revolving chair at his customary desk, with by no means his customary air of crisp assurance. As a matter of fact Mr. Webling—though it has taken some time to bring up the other side of the narrative to this point—had but just left the office after the delivery of his awful news, and Mr. Amelia was a good deal unnerved by his disclosures. He took the card abstractedly, but he jumped when he saw the name.

“Tell him,” he said with a manner which was in strange contrast with his ordinary crisp self-assertiveness, “that I am particularly engaged. Tell him to write.”

The private secretary returned with this message to Major Heard.

“Tell him,” said the Major, who had no

remotest idea as yet of the editor's personality, "that I desire to see him personally, and at once."

The private secretary returned to Mr. Amelia with this message.

"I can't see him," said the editor, almost with a groan. "I won't see him." Nobody would have been less welcome than Major Heard at any moment, and that he should appear now before Mr. Amelia had had time to gather his shattered wits from the shock Webling had given them was quite dreadful. "Tell him he must write."

With good-humoured simple courtesy the secretary came back again.

"Tell the editor," said Major Heard, "that I insist upon seeing him." He spoke in a raised voice, and the editor hearing him, ruffled his upstanding hair with both hands and moaned. "Tell him that I will not go until I have seen him."

“He is really very busily engaged, sir,” said the secretary.

“The business on which I have to speak to him,” said Major Heard, “is much more important to him than anything on which he is likely to be engaged at present. Oblige me by telling him that I insist upon an interview.”

There was no need for the secretary to deliver this last message, for the Major’s voice was very warlike and distinct, and every syllable had reached the editor’s ears.

“Show him in,” said Mr. Amelia, springlessly.

The Major entered with his eye-glass stuck fiercely in his right eye, and glaring round beheld Mr. Amelia in the revolving chair. The secretary had closed the door, and was back in the screened corner again. Seeing Mr. Amelia, the Major started.

“Eh?” he said, his fierce expression merging into a sardonic smile. “So *you* are the editor of this precious publication, are you?”

“May I ask the nature of your business?” said Mr. Amelia, with a feeble effort to assume his customary manner.

A copy of *The Way of the World* lay open on the editor's desk, and the brilliant article on the High Life episode was uppermost. Mr. Amelia had indeed been looking at it, and trying to see if it were possible to quibble over it, and pretend that it was not meant to apply to Lady Ella and Windgall and Jack Clare. But his own workmanship had been too neat and sound. He had clinched the nail of identity so well, that there was no withdrawing it. The Major caught sight of the Journal, and, dropping his eye-glass stooped until his nose almost touched the paper. Then, his fancy being confirmed, he drew himself upright, stuck the glass in his eye once more, and tapped the paper with his cane.

“Is that piece of rascality your work, sir?” he demanded.

Half-a-dozen retorts chased each other through

Mr. Amelia's mind, but he employed no one of them. He remembered that Captain Clare and Major Heard were friends, and the dreadful truth was plain to him. This visit was the preliminary to legal proceedings.

“Is that piece of rascality your work, sir?” he demanded anew, tapping the offending article so loudly that the private secretary started at the sound.

“You must surely be aware, sir,” said Mr. Amelia, rousing himself to the occasion, “that a question offered in that tone and in those terms, is not one which you, yourself, would answer.”

“Did you write that article, sir?” cried the Major. “Is that blackguard article yours, sir?”

Mr. Amelia was not wanting in courage of a certain sort, but then he was so very small a man that he could not resist a consciousness of his own helplessness in comparison with a man like Major Heard, and when the Major put this

question he struck the table so resoundingly in his wrath, and brought his cane to the slope with so military a gesture, that the editor's heart became as water within him, and he responded meekly.

“To which article do you allude, sir?”

“That,” cried the Major, bringing down his stick again, “that, sir.”

Mr. Amelia looked carefully at the article, and did not even see it, he was so disturbed.

“It is not customary to reveal the names of our authors,” he answered. “But I have just learned, to my great regret, that this article has been written on insufficient grounds, and——”

“Insufficient grounds, sir?” cried the Major. “Insufficient grounds? There is not one grain of truth in the whole infamous tissue of lies.” The Major was apt to mix his similes when excited. He had spoken once of Mr. Amelia as of a Snake in the Grass who bit the hand that fed him, and his public speeches were resplendent

with that sort of jewel. "I am here, sir, in behalf of my friend, Captain Clare, formally to purchase a copy of your abominable journal, and to inform you that he intends to institute immediate criminal proceedings, against the writer of the article, the editor, and the proprietor."

"The article," said Mr. Amelia, "was written under a complete misapprehension of the facts. Our next issue will contain a complete retraction and apology."

"Oblige me with a copy of the paper," said the Major.

"The retraction," said Mr. Amelia, "shall be made as full and complete as possible."

"I am not authorised to accept any apology," returned the Major, "nor, I am persuaded, will any apology be accepted by my friend. We shall press this scandalous matter to the end. We shall press for the extreme rigour of the law."

This was very dreadful to Mr. Amelia.

"I assure you, Major Heard," he protested,

“that the article was written in error, not in malice.”

“Not in malice?” demanded the Major, with frosty indignation. The apparent insolence of this statement cooled him on a sudden. “If you can induce a jury to believe that Mr. Kimberley was actuated by no enmity to Captain Clare when he inspired this article——” Mr. Amelia cut him short.

“Mr. Kimberley,” he cried, “was utterly ignorant of the article. It was written without his knowledge, and printed without his knowledge.” The Major stared at this, and Mr. Amelia hurried along. Affairs were looking desperate, and if anything were to be done at all it could only be done by making a clean breast of it. “The article was written by me, as a matter of fact, sir, and I regret deeply that I was induced to write without further examination into the statements that were laid before me.

“That is very natural,” said the Major.

“The information,” pursued Mr. Amelia, “came from a source which we have hitherto found to be perfectly trustworthy. But it appears that my informant confounded the career of Captain Clare with that of a Captain Stracey, so that really the article does not reflect upon Captain Clare at all.”

“I am very pleased to hear that,” said the old warrior grimly.

“The whole history refers to another person,” cried Mr. Amelia.

“Well, sir,” said the Major, “I had intended this visit to be purely formal, and nothing but this unexpected meeting with an old friend, whom I have such sound reasons for admiring, would have induced me to prolong it. You will have an opportunity of establishing your employer’s innocence and your own ill fortune before a jury, sir. For the present I will only ask you to supply me with a copy of your last issue.”

Mr. Amelia somewhat feebly opened the door, and Major Heard passed into the outer room.

“Give this gentleman a copy of this week’s paper,” said the editor. The secretary proffered a paper to the Major, who opened it to verify it with the one he desired to purchase. “Oh!” cried Mr. Amelia, anxious to propitiate, “that’s of no consequence.”

The Major, who had drawn out his purse to pay, drew forth a sixpence and rung it on the counter, and then bestowing the journal in his breast-pocket, turned upon his heel and marched into the court. Mr. Amelia had so long been present to his mind as a little crawling figure of baseness, that he was rather pleased than otherwise to find in him the author of this obnoxious article. The Major could feel no compunction over the punishment of Mr. Amelia, nothing but that grim rejoicing with which, according to the creed of some, a good man is justified in regarding the castigation of a sinner.

There are others, a mere sentimental few, perhaps, who feel that it is hard measure to be a sinner, and who can find the same sort of pity for a liar as for a hunchback, for an egotist as a deaf man, for a thief as for a paralytic.

The clever little self-seeker and time-server went back into the editorial sanctum with a limp and sickly air, and sitting down with his head between his hands and his elbows on the desk, tried to see a way out of this *cul de sac* and found none. The best way of mitigating his own chances of suffering would be to make a full and complete apology. If it told with nobody else it might tell with the judge. Awful fancy. Mr. Amelia saw the judge—dreadful in scarlet and ermine and a wig, and heard him say, "Prisoner at the bar." Great Heaven! what a position for a respectable man to be placed in. The fancy actually nerved him and he seized a pen and wrote—

“To the Editor of the——” (there he left a blank) “Sir,—I rely upon your kindness to assist me in dissipating a scandal of which I myself am the unfortunate propagator. Relying upon information derived from a source which has hitherto been absolutely trustworthy, I consented to the insertion of an article in *The Way of the World* which reflects seriously upon the character of a gentleman whom I now discover to be perfectly innocent of the charges made against him. The article is entitled ‘An Episode in High Life,’ and appeared in the issue of the 9th instant. I desire to express my profoundest regret for its insertion, and my conviction that it is totally without foundation. A threat of legal proceedings has already been made. It is not in deference to that threat, but from an earnest desire to clear the character of a gentleman who has been mistakenly aspersed, that I write this letter. I am, Sir, your obedient servant, the Editor of *The Way of the World*.”

Mr. Amelia laboured long and anxiously at this letter, and had to doctor and tinker it a good deal before he got it to this shape. But when he had finished it he read it over half-a-dozen times, and became satisfied that there was an air of manly candour and regret about it which could scarcely fail to have its effect upon the awful personage in the wig and ermine, when his time should come. He was especially hopeful in respect to that artful admission that threats of legal proceedings had already been made. It looked artless, and as if the writer were too eager to exculpate the maligned gentleman to have time to consider his own wisest words.

He felt keenly that under ordinary circumstances an editor would have a wider shield of anonymity than he had left himself. He had been so anxious to be seen that he had chopped that shelter all away, and now he was a little sorry for it. To his own mind there could

hardly be an intelligent creature alive who was unaware that *The Way of the World* was conducted by Mr. William Amelia. Now he could have wished that he had clarified that fact a little less.

“Make copies of that for each of the London dailies,” he said to his private secretary. “Write them on office paper, put them in office envelopes, and post them immediately.”

The secretary laughed to himself as he read the letter, and smiled softly all the while as he copied it. Nobody liked Mr. Amelia, and almost anybody who knew him took a pleasure in any small discomfiture which might befall him. The little editor sat mournful whilst the secretary sat smiling, and the vision in the wig and the ermine assumed at moments a distinctness which was downright uncomfortable.

Whilst all this was enacting with the libeller, the libelled betook himself with extreme reluctance to the Earl of Windgall.

“My lord,” said Jack, when he was shown into Windgall’s room, “I am here on an unhappy errand. I scarcely know how to explain it. Perhaps I had better ask you at once if you have seen or heard of this article?”

His lordship, receiving the article quietly enough, had scarce read half-a-dozen lines when he began to fidget in his chair as if some person unseen were sticking needles into him. Mr. Amelia’s charming article began with his lordship, around whom he danced with a sort of elfish grotesquerie, firing stinging crackers, as it were, the while, and launching stinging Lili-putian darts. There was no disputing the small man’s cleverness. Even the injured nobleman could feel that he was attacked by a master in the art of saying nasty things, and not by any common penny-a-liner and maligner. The worst of it was for Windgall that whilst there was no mistaking the portrait, there was not a ghost of a chance for an action. But as his lordship

read on a smile began to irradiate his features, and he not only ceased to writhe, but read with an actual aspect of contentment.

“Well, Clare,” he said, when he had gone right through his task, “this is really your affair and not mine.”

“It was needful that you should see it,” said Jack.

“It was certainly advisable that I should see it,” said his lordship, taking his share of the article with stoicism, now that he got over the first astonishment of it. “So you are a horse-coper and a card-sharper, and I am—well, I am a number of disagreeable things. What steps do you intend to take? Have you any idea of the identity of the author. God bless my soul,” he cried, with sudden amazement, “it’s *The Way of the World*. It can’t be. It’s a bogus copy,” said the Earl to himself.

“I do not as yet know the name of the author, but I know the name of the proprietor.”

"The proprietor?" said the Earl, automatically. "Yes. Certainly, one knows the proprietor."

"I presume," said Jack, "that whatever steps are taken must be taken against him. I am advised to take criminal proceedings——"

"Impossible!" cried Windgall. "Impossible! My dear Clare, you don't know what you are saying."

"Impossible, my lord?" cried Clare in answer. "I recognise the unpleasantness of the situation to the full, but surely there are scarcely any circumstances in the world which could make it possible to pass by so gross a scandal."

"Sit down, Clare," said his lordship. "I must make a clean breast of it, or you can never understand. You do know the name of the proprietor? Who is it?"

"Mr. Bolsover Kimberley is the proprietor," said Jack.

“My friend Bolsover Kimberley,” said his lordship, “is the proprietor of this paper, and is as innocent of this outrage and as incapable of it as any man alive. Mr. Kimberley has acted with a tact, a delicacy, a sense of honour and a generosity in this whole matter, which are beyond praise.” Jack looked at his lordship open-eyed. “You are aware,” said his lordship, with a momentary shamefacedness, “that Mr. Kimberley made a proposal for the hand of my eldest daughter, and that his proposal was accepted.” The listener bowed with a face of scarlet. “I am a poor man, as you know, and it appears that Ella fancied she saw a way of relieving me of my embarrassments. It was for my sake, and for my sake only, that she consented to listen to Mr. Kimberley’s proposals. When I asked her,” continued his lordship, who could not help being disingenuous now and then, “if that was not her object, she assured me that she would not be unhappy in the match.

But Kimberley saw that she detested it, and that she was suffering because of it. He came to me, and, in the most delicate manner in the world, he released her. He did more. He informed me of her attachment to yourself, and he—he made proposals of a—of a business nature which resulted in my being able to send for you. Indeed, I must tell you that he insisted upon my sending for you. And our—our business arrangements were of such a character that if he had pleased he could have ruined me. In—in short,” said his lordship, who stumbled more and more, until he found himself forced into candour, “it is to him you owe your present position here. He retired, for Ella’s sake, in your favour.”

At this prodigious news Jack sat stunned and dazed, and his lordship, arising, began to walk about the room.

“Let me tell you another thing, Clare, to show you how impossible it is that Kimberley

should have had any cognisance of this article. His proposal to Lady Ella was not dictated, as I own I thought it was at first, by any desire to gild his money by an alliance with an old family. He loved her, Clare."

At this Jack rose also and walked quickly to the window. That Ella's father should say that Kimberley had loved her was like a blasphemy against her. He did not think it so, but felt it so.

"He loved her so well," pursued the Earl, "and it so broke his heart to surrender her, that he lies here, in this house, in this hotel, now, at this hour, sick to death of brain fever, and her name is always on his lips. I am at a loss to say how I feel this. I am altogether at a loss to say how keenly it touches me. I despised the man, and he is worth a thousand of such men as I am."

His lordship enjoyed his own emotion and his own self-depreciation, and yet he *was* honestly

moved, as he had been from the first moment of his real understanding of it, by Kimberley's self-abnegation. He could not bring himself greatly to like Clare just at present, but Ella's new happiness and the new beauty he saw in her face touched him so keenly that he could do no less than welcome Clare's return for her sake. The long-forgotten glad smile, and the happy heart whose sweet reflected light it was, were Kimberley's gifts to him and her, and there were times when they far outweighed that solid ninety thousand pounds, which had once seemed the heavier.

"May I ask you," said Jack, speaking from the window, "where it was that Mr. Kimberley made this generous appeal in my behalf?"

"His first appeal in your behalf," said Windgall, "was made at Gallowbay, on the day I met you there."

"The day," said Jack, inwardly, "on which I insulted him."

“He appears to have seen you,” said the Earl, rather awkwardly, “whilst he was on his way to me, that afternoon.”

“Did he tell you what happened between us?” asked Clare.

“No,” said Windgall. “I did not know that you had spoken to him.”

“Is he dangerously ill, my lord?” Clare asked, after a lengthy pause.

“He has had a relapse,” said his lordship. “The doctors are less hopeful than they were.” Then, after another lengthy pause, “You see, Clare,” Windgall said, “how innocent poor Kimberley is of this blackguard business. You must find out who the writer is, and compel him to a complete retractation of this farrago of nonsense, though, as a matter of fact, nobody will do more than laugh at it. By the way, don’t I remember something of all this, about some fellow, a Cumberland man, an army man? I seem to remember that

something of the kind came out a year or two ago."

"Yes," said Jack. "His name was Stracey. He went away. People lost sight of him. Somebody told me he was a billiard-marker at Dublin, but nothing is quite sure about him now."

"Ah!" said my lord, "and they have bestowed his history on you. Very agreeable, certainly."

"My friend Major Heard," said Jack, "went to the office this morning, to say that criminal proceedings would be taken."

"Against whom can you proceed?" asked Windgall. "I am a legislator, certainly, but I am no lawyer, and I don't understand these things. Whatever you do, don't make a move without legal advice. And do nothing that will cause poor Kimberley trouble," he added. "Heaven only knows whether he will ever wake to know of it; but if he does it will be a deeper

wound to him than it has been either to you or to me."

Jack took his news to Major Heard, and next day all the leading journals published Mr. Amelia's apology. The *Herald* had an article about it, for Mr. Amelia was associated with the *Constitutional*, and it and the *Herald* were natural enemies.

"The gentleman whose character was thus scandalously attacked," said the *Herald*, "did not even stand in need of this withdrawal of the libel. As associated with him the whole series of charges was no less than frantically absurd, and the editor of *The Way of the World* had but to ask one who was no more acquainted with the *grand monde* than a flunkey might be, to have discovered that an old story had been affixed to a new name, and palmed off upon him as a fresh and original scandal."

Jack Clare, in the unprofessional innocence of his heart, imagined that this was written

by somebody who knew him, as it well might have been, since he had been for years a familiar figure about the clubs where journalists most do congregate. But, as it happened, the gentleman who thus wrote in his defence, had never heard of him, and did not know to whom the libellous article alluded. The grand monde was not his particular study, but he disliked Amelia, and was pleased to have a dig at him.

Mr. Amelia, in next week's issue of *The Way of the World*, published a new retraction in large type, prompted thereto by a dread of the ghost in wig and ermine, and he awaited in melancholy mood the first note of those criminal proceedings which Major Heard had threatened.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON a certain morning Bolsover Kimberley awoke to find himself little more than skin and bone—the skin extremely pallid and transparent, and the bone so heavy that each hand seemed to weigh a hundredweight. He discovered that his hair and his whiskers had alike been removed, and on first seeing himself in a glass he laughed himself into a feeble hysteria, out of which he fell in a moment into deep sleep. He awoke again feeling wonderfully like a child, and like a child he was washed and fed and tended. For some days he did not care much about anything. The past lay dead with a strange dead pall upon it, the

present was languid and uninteresting, and it seemed as if there were no such thing as a future in store for him at all.

Windgall was assiduous in his attentions to the invalid, and saw as much of him as the doctors permitted, being moved to a genuine gratitude and esteem, which, as may be acknowledged, Kimberley had well earned at his hands. There was no longer any question in my lord's mind as to the propriety of accepting Kimberley's gift, and assurance had been made doubly sure on that point by the burning of all the documents. After that it was of no use to have any qualms about them, and perhaps my lord had chosen the best as well as the readiest way out of his perplexities. There was some little remaining sense of humiliation, but there was no dishonour in the acceptance of the gift, and Windgall tried to atone to himself by thinking very highly of the giver. His appreciation of Kimberley's high qualities was continually on

the stretch, so that, in point of fact, he rather bored himself with Kimberley than otherwise, and constantly flogged his own senses of gratitude and admiration, until that willing pair showed signs of overwork, and refused to stir at all without the lash.

After the first dull days which succeeded his return to reason, the sore places in Kimberley's heart naturally began to throb and ache again, but his pains were subdued in comparison with what they had been, and they scarcely retarded his recovery. Ella and Alice had taken up their quarters with an old friend of their mother's, who had a curious craze for residing far into the winter months in London, a fancy which for once in a way proved convenient, though it was execrated by all the people who had expectations from her, and were compelled to follow her example. Windgall lived on at the hotel and nursed his patient.

Jack Clare felt his own position in regard

to Kimberley to be altogether singular, and he found it difficult to think of his self-sacrificing rival without a constant shame. But for that interview in the King's Avenue he would have had nothing for which to blame himself in connection with Kimberley; but he flushed with anger and mortification many and many a time when he thought of that scene, and of his own brutal and inexcusable behaviour. For Jack's scheme about Kimberley had necessarily undergone a wonderful change, and in his eyes the little man wore a sort of halo.

Every day saw him at the hotel making inquiries after Kimberley's progress towards recovery.

"You needn't tell him I called, sir," said the young man to Windgall, "but I like to know how he is getting on."

Day by day the doctors were more confident of complete recovery, and in a while the invalid was strong enough to be sent to a watering-place

on the South Coast, where he wandered mournful and alone, and stared a good deal at the melancholy main, and on the whole found life hardly worth the living. It happened one day that he had a little overtaxed his strength in walking, and had to stand still in the middle of the parade. His head swam so with weakness and fatigue that he lurched a little, and was relieved to find a strong arm thrust within his own, and to hear a voice proffering assistance. When he had reached one of the small glass-roofed resting-places with which the whole length of the parade is dotted, and had been gently seated there, he looked up for the first time and recognised his assistant. It was no other than the Honourable Captain Clare, who, with genuine concern and friendship in his eyes, stood bending over him, and blushing like a schoolboy.

“You are still very weak,” said Captain Clare. “Do you think it quite safe to venture out alone just yet?”

"I walked too far," returned Kimberley, feebly. "That's all."

"You don't mind my sitting with you a little while?" asked Clare.

"Thank you," answered Kimberley. "You are very kind." Then for a time they were both silent. The millionaire shrank somewhat in his own heart from Captain Clare, and found his presence a reminder of a pain which needed no reminder. The sight of him galled the sore place in Kimberley's heart. "I am quite right, now," said the little man, after some two or three minutes had gone by.

"Let me offer you my arm," said Clare, with unwonted shyness.

"No, thank you," said Kimberley. "I'm not so weak as you think I am. I'm not, really."

"Do, pray, let me help you," urged the repentant and pitiful Jack, and Kimberley yielded, half to something beseeching in the

tone, and half to his own shyness. "I think you are staying at the Queen's Hotel?"

"Yes," answered Kimberley.

"I saw you leave it an hour ago," said Jack; and then they went on in silence, Kimberley finding the stalwart arm a real help to him, but wishing it and its owner far removed.

When they reached the hotel, he put out a feeble little hand, and bade his assistant good-day. "I am very much obliged to you, I am sure," he said, meekly, and Jack stood to watch him, with some compunctions in his heart, as he walked slowly up the steps.

The millionaire was out again in the afternoon, and was unaware of the fact that Captain Clare watched him throughout his brief ramble as carefully as a nurse might watch a child. But next day he saw him, and sore-hearted as he was, could do no less than recognise him. Jack crossed over and shook hands.

"You are looking better to-day," he said.

“Yes,” said Kimberley, wearily. “I am getting stronger every day.” The balance had turned in favour of life, and he would have to go on living. It was a sorrowful business, and he would rather have had no more to do with it.

“May I walk a little way with you?” asked the other, gently. “Will you take my arm?”

They went on side by side slowly, and in a while Kimberley sat down upon an overturned boat which lay on the sands, just hereabouts as firm as marble. The day was mild and clear, and the sea heaved gently like the breast of a child asleep. There was nobody within two or three hundred yards of them, and they could hear the sound of a child’s prattle and laughter without distinguishing her words.

“Mr. Kimberley,” said Jack, breaking on the silence with a tremulous voice, “I have to go back to town to-morrow, and we may not meet again for a long time. Will you let me say

how honestly ashamed I am to have insulted such a noble heart as yours."

"No, no," said Kimberley, appealingly. "Please don't say anything."

"I came down here," continued Jack, in spite of this, "on purpose to beg your pardon. The first time we met I spoke in ignorance and passion, and I am profoundly ashamed of the words I used. I beg you to forgive them, and to dismiss them from your mind."

"Please say no more," Kimberley again besought him. "I deserved everything that happened." He leaned his chin dejectedly upon his breast, and pushed the point of his cane about in the firm sands.

"I see that I distress you, Mr. Kimberley," said Jack, gently and sadly. "But I beg you to think of me, if you think of me at all, as the most grateful and devoted of your friends."

There was something which bordered on the grotesque in this situation, and it does not

happen every day that one lover has to thank another for giving up his sweetheart. In Jack Clare's case words seemed altogether inefficient, and for Kimberley, they could be, at least at present, of very little value, if of any.

"It is not always the best man who wins," said the winner to himself, and at that moment he felt thoroughly that Kimberley was his better.

"It is very kind of you to say so," answered Kimberley, after a longish pause, in response to the last words Clare had spoken aloud. There was another lengthy pause, and it was again broken by Kimberley. "I should not like you to think," he said, looking up for an instant, "that I don't accept what you have said, in a proper spirit. It is very kind of you to have come here to say it, and I am very much obliged to you. It was no excuse for me, but I did not know that I was standing in your light."

He bent his head a little lower, and went on pushing the point of his cane about, and

Clare standing over him saw one or two glittering drops fall down upon the broken sands at his feet. He turned away at this with a sense of tightness in the throat, and paced up and down, until Kimberley arose and approached him.

“Good-bye,” said the little millionaire, extending his hand. “Please give my kindest regards to his lordship when you see him.” He shook hands and turned away. “I am sure,” he said, with his face thus hidden, “that I hope you may be happy.”

Clare stood stupidly by the boat's side, feeling in an odd way quite foiled, though he had done all he came to do, and his apology had been amply accepted. There was a gulf between Kimberley and himself, and was always likely to be; and yet if the thing had not been downright impossible he would like to have bridged it over. One man had rarely had—or so he thought—so much reason for gratitude and

friendship towards another, as he had for both towards Kimberley.

So he went back to town, but little the better for that honest errand which had brought him away from it.

The millionaire walking back to his hotel, bearing his sores with him, found Mr. Begg awaiting him. He had forgotten for a while that he had written requesting his presence.

“Lord Windgall tells me that you have been seriously ill,” said the lawyer. “You hardly look recovered yet.”

“I am not very strong,” returned Kimberley, “but the doctors tell me that I am out of danger.” He sighed at this as if it were no great good news for him.

“That’s well,” said the lawyer, heartily. “I suppose that the business concerning which you wished to see me is pressing. It is a considerable journey from Gallowbay to Hastings.”

He laughed and rubbed his hands, thinking

that the head of so respectable a firm as his own could scarcely be expected to travel as far for nothing, and half apologising in his manner for that comfortable reflection.

“Yes,” said Kimberley, his pale face flushing a little; “the business is pressing, or I seem to feel it so. I want to make my will. One never knows what may happen, and I think I ought to make my will.”

“Certainly, certainly, certainly,” cried Mr. Begg. “In this world there is nothing certain but uncertainty. It’s astonishing to notice how many men neglect to arrange their affairs in that way.”

“If you could take my instructions now, Mr. Begg,” said Kimberley, rising and walking to the window with evident embarrassment, “I should be obliged.”

A year ago he would scarcely have dared to talk of offering instructions to Mr. Begg, but he was falling naturally into the phrases used by

other people, and was hardly like the Kimberley of old days at all.

“Certainly,” said Mr. Begg, seating himself at a table on which were pen, ink, and paper.

“I want to leave everything of which I may die possessed, without any condition or reserve, to Lady Ella Santerre.”

“Yes?” said Mr. Begg lingeringly, and awaited Kimberley’s next word. Kimberley, continuing to look out of window, and offering no further word, Mr. Begg himself broke the silence. “That is in case Lady Ella should outlive you. In case she should not?”

“To her children,” said poor Kimberley, almost inaudibly.

“And failing children?” asked Mr. Begg, purposely employing a dry business tone to hide his own knowledge of his client’s embarrassment. Kimberley was silent for so long a time that Mr. Begg was again compelled to break the silence. “You see, Mr. Kimberley,” he said, turning round

in his chair, and making as if he addressed himself confidentially to the wedge he formed of his own fingers, "you are bequeathing a great fortune, a great fortune, and that is not a thing which can be done in a single sentence. The world is full of uncertainties. Nobody knows that much more practically than a lawyer. And in making a will one must take into account a good many possible contingencies."

Kimberley saw this quite clearly, but it was not what he had wanted or expected. He was still very feeble from his recent fever, and the weakness of his body had weakened his heart somewhat. He had never been a strong creature, and the one strong thing in his life had been his love for Ella. That had been strong enough to enable him to renounce all hope of her for the sake of her happiness, which was infinitely dearer to him than his own. But in this new falling back upon his own nature, which followed upon his one heroism, he had got some senti-

mental comfort—it would be a hard heart that could laugh at it—out of the hope and belief that he would die, and that Ella would be enriched by his death, and that he would be finally not only out of the way of her happiness, but the actual promoter and crowner of it. He meant to dower Lady Ella with everything, and then to die as speedily as Heaven should will. The contingencies the lawyer brought in view made a commonplace business of something which ought to have been altogether removed from commonplace. There are few things more shocking than this kind of unescapable incongruity to those whose nature it is to feel it. There are some people who would not be hurt if Othello stopped in his rage of remorse to reckon the cost of Desdemona's coffin, but there are others who want their moods to be of a piece, and who feel altogether disconcerted by the intrusion of any incongruous element.

He sat down without heart or interest to

advise with the lawyer on the disposal to be made of his money in case his original intentions should be frustrated, and talked about the Gallowbay Harbour and a Hospital and a Grammar School and a Church and a Chapel for Gallowbay, and an annual benefaction for the poor, for Kimberley had not, so far as he knew, a single blood relation in the world.

The will grew into a formal and lengthy document in the course of a week or two, far far removed from Kimberley's first simple and romantic notion, and when he came to read it, the long-familiar jargon of its phrases—the aforementioned, and the hereinafter-to-be mentioned, and the freehold tenement with all the appurtenances thereto belonging, together with the mines and minerals thereunder—seemed to carry him back into the time of his servitude.

In brief, his heart had made a poem of this last will and testament, and the lawyers had turned it into prose. It is not every poem that

will bear translating into prose, and the author, of all men, is little likely to be charmed by the translation.

Mr. Begg knew pretty fairly the truth of Kimberley's story, and curiously enough had a high respect for the romance of it. But during his client's illness he had read, as almost everybody had done, Mr. Amelia's masterpiece in *The Way of the World*, and knowing Kimberley's connection with that journal was somewhat puzzled.

"I have never been out of England in my life," said Kimberley, when the will had been read and signed and witnessed, "and I think I shall go and travel. I don't know, but I mayn't be back for a long while, and—I've never been much good in parliamentary life. I shall ask for the Chiltern Hundreds."

Mr. Begg tried to combat this resolve, but in vain.

"Travel by all means, Mr. Kimberley," he

said with a smile, "but don't desert the interests of Gallowbay. The New Harbour Bill will be before the House next session, and we had relied upon your influence. Your position in Gallowbay would be of weight with the Committee."

"You can get a better man than me," said Kimberley. "Major Heard would be a better man."

"But Major Heard is a Whig," cried the lawyer.

"Major Heard would do very well," said Kimberley drearily. "But, of course, they will choose the man they like best. And I have a newspaper, Mr. Begg. It never succeeded very well, but the editor is a very clever person, and I think I shall make him a present of it. He told me that a newspaper was like a child, and had to have teething and measles and all those things before it became strong. It may have had them all by this time, and perhaps he can do something with it."

Mr. Begg, as a lawyer, naturally suggested the selling of the paper, but Kimberley answered,

“You see, Mr. Amelia has had everything to do with it so far, and if anybody is to profit by it he ought to be the person.”

When Kimberley was strong enough he went back to London and called upon Mr. Amelia. Mr. Amelia had been awaiting for week after week those legal proceedings which Major Heard had so confidently promised, and had felt like a new Damocles. When Kimberley entered the office he thought the sword had fallen.

“I have had an illness,” said the millionaire, simply, “and I am going abroad. I am giving up my seat in parliament, and I don’t want a newspaper any longer.”

Of course, Mr. Amelia imagined in his conscious cunning that he could pierce that subterfuge. Kimberley was simply throwing him over.

“The journal,” he said, “is just beginning to be of influence and importance, and is just

ceasing to be expensive. Indeed, I may say it pays its expenses now."

"I am glad of that," said Kimberley. "If you can carry it on to your own advantage I shall be very pleased."

For a moment Mr. Amelia could scarcely conceal his own surprise; but nature is elastic, and however you may pull her from her original shape, she will settle back again.

"I had prepared a schedule of liabilities," said Mr. Amelia. "Perhaps I had better lay it before you now."

Kimberley looked at the schedule and produced his cheque-book.

"He can very well afford it," said the editor, as Kimberley signed his name below a set of considerable figures.

"That is everything?" said Kimberley.

"Everything, thank you," returned Mr. Amelia. "But do I understand that you resign all interest in the journal?"

“Yes,” said Kimberley. “I am going abroad, probably for a long time. I hope you will be able to make a property of it. If anybody profits by it,” he added, with a touch of his ancient shyness, “it should be you. Good-bye, Mr. Amelia.”

“Good-bye, Mr. Kimberley,” answered the editor; “I am very much obliged to you.”

Kimberley did not wait to see if Mr. Amelia’s gratitude for this unexpected favour would carry him to further heights of eloquence in thanks; and when he had gone the newly-made proprietor sat down and looked about him like a monarch of all he surveyed. Then, his exultation being too great to be endured without bodily motion, he got up and paced about the room, looking more like a bantam cock than ever. All on a sudden he seemed to shrink, and he dropped into the revolving chair with a look of horror and amazement.

“A trap!” he groaned. “Of course, it’s a

trap. He has handed everything to me and gone abroad. He was just as much responsible as I was."

Apart from the fact that this surmise showed what Mr. Amelia himself would have done in what he believed to be the circumstances, it was without result, and as week after week passed away in safety he felt himself secure; but a month or two had to go by before he was certain enough of his own security to send forth a round of paragraphs announcing that "Mr. William Amelia, who from the foundation of *The Way of the World* has conducted its destinies, has now acquired complete proprietorial rights over that journal, and purposes introducing into it several features which are altogether novel in English journalism."

In spite of anything and everything the little man was rising. He had his enemies—what man who is worth his salt has not?—but he knew that they hated him through envy of his

success, and that their rancour was barbed by the contemplation in him of qualities which none of them possessed. His one *bête noire* was Maddox, who was rising also, and beginning to shine as a poet, and lately as a novelist. The clever little gentleman had command of the columns of many journals now, and from behind that shield of darkness which obscures so many brilliant writers in England he shot arrows at his enemy, which might have stung pretty deeply if the enemy had not known the hand that impelled them. Mr. Amelia's pet ruse was to treat the name of Kyrle Maddox as a *nom de guerre*, a method which secured an admirable air of impartiality. For, argued Mr. Amelia, if people suppose that you do not know a man, they cannot accuse you of spite towards him: Lest any of these sprightly shafts should miss their intended victim, the little man had them posted to Maddox, and since he had now a cashier, an office boy, and a private secretary

all at his own disposal, he found it easy to get these friendly missives addressed by different hands.

Agreeable as this occasional exercise was sure to be, it could only be occasional, and the greater part of Mr. Amelia's time was still occupied by his purely journalistic duties. He found leisure, however, to write the romance of *Jacob Zladder*, a novel long ago alluded to in these pages as having contained a bitter portrait of one of Mr. Amelia's old enemies. Long before this brilliant work appeared the world was aware of its coming. From John o'Groats to Land's End public expectation might have been supposed to be on tiptoe, if one could judge from the frequency with which an anxious country was informed of its inception, its progress, the title finally fixed upon, the nature of the plot, and the amount of money the gifted author was to receive for the work. The twenty or five-and-twenty journals with which Mr. Amelia was

connected were all charmed with the book, and if the opinions expressed by others were not so favourable, what can be more obvious than that a father is likely to think with some partiality of his own child, or that, however beautiful the child may be, the outside crowd of fathers will not love it quite as dearly as if it were their own?

Mr. Amelia's way was not the common way of English journalists, but its advantages are clear to the dullest understanding. The average journalist toils on unknown. He expends much learning, and now and then high genius, in a calling which condemns him to obscurity. In measure with the quantity and quality of his work he is but poorly paid. Mr. Amelia thrive, and will doubtless continue to thrive. His name is likely to be a household word (for a year or two, whilst he himself lives to scatter it abroad) in two hemispheres. If nobody can point to much that he has actually done, everybody can lay a finger on his published judgment of him-

self, and our British habit of anonymity makes this as valuable to him as if the judgments came from the pens of critics the most independent and profound.

Nowadays the bard has no need to weigh the solid pudding against the empty praise. The empty praise will bring the solid pudding in its turn.

CHAPTER IX.

KIMBERLEY, in the inclement months of the New Year, wandered on the continent, and wrote to nobody because he had nobody to write to. Jack Clare had heard from his agent in New Zealand. The land bought out there was as good as it could be expected to be, and the agent was doing all he could with it, but made it clear that he would be satisfied with his master's early presence; and Jack Clare himself had not quite made up his mind as to what he ought to do, and could do. On the receipt of this letter he travelled to Gallowbay, whither Ella and Alice had retired with his lordship their father, and laid his difficulties before his sweetheart.

“When I thought I had lost you, my darling,” said Jack, “I made up my mind that I would go out there and work, because it seemed as if I *could* live if I took something real and tangible in hand. And now that I have found you again, what am I to do? We are very poor, and I do not see what roads to an honourable success in life are open to me here. Your father is very kind. He offers to settle upon you at least as much as I have myself, and in England that will still leave us poor. He offers me all the influence he has at his disposal, and Montacute does the same. But then I have my political opinions, and I can’t sell my conscience; and I have no influence on my own side at all. I might have it in time if I could get into parliament, and could do anything there to make myself noticeable.”

He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, with long pauses between the sentences, like a man who is feeling his way, and thinking it out bit by

bit. Ella, with some neglected trifle of embroidery between her fingers, sat with both hands in her lap, and regarded him gravely and tenderly.

“You want to go out there, dear?” she asked.

“When I was alone I wanted to go there,” he answered. “I want, now, to do two things. I want to feel that I am doing something of the world’s work, somehow, and I want to escape poverty. You see, my darling, there is a class in England which has gone on doing nothing for a long time, and at last the day has come when some of us will have to turn our hands to the plough in one way or another. Now, Charley is useful in the House of Lords, and his politics and his domestic affairs take up all his time. He works hard and lives economically, and has his duty plain before him. He is doing it, too, like a man and a Briton. Now, what have I to do?”

Ella sat silent for a time, regarding him with grave affectionate eyes.

“These are serious matters, Jack, dear,” she said at last. “Let us face them seriously. Do you wish me to go out to New Zealand with you?”

“I have thought of that,” he answered, “and the idea frightens me for your sake. There would be no ‘privations,’ in the common sense of the word, but there would be privations, too, which you would find real enough. There would be little or no society; little or no intercourse with social equals. The life would be dull—might even be terrible—to a gentlewoman.”

“Should you ask me to milk and make hay, Jack?” she asked, smiling.

“No,” said Jack, smiling also. “I think we might spare you that sort of thing.” He was suddenly serious again. “But the life would be dull. I should have to buckle-to in earnest,

and learn to be a practical man. But, whenever I have thought of that sort of life for you, I have been filled with a sort of remorse and shame. You were made to shine in a court, my darling, and not to be hidden in a New Zealand homestead."

"I am not altogether sure that I should care to shine in a court, Jack," said Ella; "I have had no great experience in that way, but perhaps I might not care for it, even if I had it. Tell me candidly whatever is to be said against New Zealand. So far, I see one thing only that seems to affect me at all. The distance looks dreadful."

"Yes," Jack answered; "the distance is a serious matter."

"What else is there?" she asked. "I see nothing else that moves me at all against it."

"The inevitable dulness of the life."

"We should be there together," she answered, softly. "Is the dulness so inevitable?"

Jack looked round to where, at the far end of

the room, Alice sat with her back towards the pair, immersed in a book, and then gently taking one of Ella's hands he kissed it, and seemed so extremely loath to let it go when she strove to disengage it from his grasp, that she suffered him to keep it.

“Social prejudice,” he said then. “Social prejudice is a strong thing.”

“We should be far away from it,” she answered.

She was naturally a woman of quick and keen perception, and, so far as Jack Clare was concerned; she lost nothing in this respect, but rather gained a great deal, by being in love with him. She knew that this had been his scheme and his hope for years, and for his sake she argued in its favour. For her own part, she had no fear of being unhappy whilst they two were together. She loved him and he loved her, and that double knowledge seemed to make her strong. In comparison with it, the things that

Jack had set against his own scheme looked trivial and unworthy of regard.

“Your father,” said Jack, when he had kissed her hand again. “I have never yet ventured to broach the idea to him.”

The girl was grave and silent for a long time.

“What advantages does your plan offer?” she asked at length.

He answered slowly and with reluctance, as if he were struggling against something within himself.

“I see no avenue to usefulness and prosperity in England. I think I see a road to both out there. The country is new and growing fast. Land is increasing in value, and in a generation or two the estate will be a noble one. Here I might become, almost at the best, a hungry political place-hunter, for I could not afford to adopt politics unless I made the business pay; but there I could be of use. You see what you have taken hold of, dear.”

“Yes,” she said, with a smile so ravishing that Jack must needs kiss the imprisoned hand again. “I see.”

“A social failure in old England, I am afraid,” said the young man, with sudden mournfulness.

“Through any fault of yours?” she asked him.

“I think not,” he said, a little comforted. “I hope not. I believe not. And yet a social failure all the same. Born to be a social failure. A poor man’s younger son.”

“And I am a poor man’s eldest daughter,” she said, smiling once more. “Was I born to be a social failure too?”

“You were born to be an empress,” cried Jack; but he looked dejected a mere second after this outburst of enthusiasm. “I feel wicked and remorseful when I think of asking you to leave everybody you have known, and all the ways of life you have known, to come with me to that far away country.”

“Let us say and think no more of that, dear,” said Ella. “We elected each other, and we must make the best of our choice. And we love each other.” She blushed divinely, but she looked at him with perfect courage, and never drooped her eyes. “If you wish to take me, I will go.”

In a good woman's love for the man she has chosen there is always a sense of protection and defence. It does not matter in the least how stalwart or self-sufficient the man may be, or how weak and helpless the woman; her instinct is still to protect him. All good women, married or single, are mothers at heart, and there is something motherly in such a woman's affection for her lover or her husband. It is mixed, of course, with all sorts of worship and awe and passion, and what not; but it is there as one of the strongest ingredients in the whole wonderful and beautiful thing.

To Lady Ella Santerre, who was very

thoroughly a woman, this young man seemed to have been given into her hands to care for. The very well-spring of her nature was self-sacrifice, and if so much has not been shown already she has been ill-drawn indeed. But here her sense of self-sacrifice became an intense and sacred joy. All figures of speech apart, she would have died to have made Jack happy, and she had no room left in her nature for any coyness, real or pretended. She was prouder and happier to take him than any words could say, and mere worldly considerations were so apart that in the presence of her love he might have been an emperor and have loved her just as well, and it would have made no tittle or jot of difference in her joy and pride. And though women be taught never so carefully the sinfulness of nature, and the advantages of wealth and station, the best of them will go back to nature after all, if you give them but half a chance, and will lead happy natural lives,

to the infinite blessedness of their husbands and of the children who shall hereafter remember a mother who was like an angel, and whose mere memory seems to make all other women sacred.

“It seems a selfish and cruel thing,” said Jack, still holding her hand, and looking at her with a sort of yearning remorsefulness.

“To see you happy will make me happy always,” she answered. “If you were disposed to sit down idly here at home, and do nothing, it would be a selfish and a cruel thing.”

And keenly as Jack Clare felt about the matter, he saw nothing else for it but expatriation. He had high hope about the New Zealand scheme, and was full of thoughts of the family that might be founded in that distant land.

“Can we try it, darling?” he asked, after another lengthy silence. “We are safe against monetary loss, I think, because there is nothing I have sent out there, or bought out there, which will not realise all it cost me. And if we

find the life dull or unhappy we can come home again, with but little time lost, for we are both young as yet, and can cast ourselves upon the stream of English life again."

"Are you afraid of your own happiness there?" she asked.

"I?" asked Jack, with a bright wonder in his eyes. "With you?"

"I can trust my own," she said.

All this conversation was necessarily carried on in the lowest possible tone, and this sweet declaration was spoken in a whisper. She leaned forward a little as she made it, and Jack was leaning forward also, so that her lovely blushing face was close to his. He knelt softly and noiselessly beside her and drew the blushing face nearer to his own. She yielded to him and he kissed her on the lips and eyes, and then when he placed both arms about her she yielded still, and allowed her head to rest upon his shoulder.

“Whither thou goest,” she whispered, “I will go.”

“I shall be glad,” said Jack Clare that same afternoon, “if you can give me a little of your time.” He spoke to Windgall, who noticed that he looked a trifle pale.

“More trouble,” said his lordship inwardly. His experiences had taught him to forebode trouble. “What is in the wind now? . . . Certainly, Clare,” he answered aloud. “I was just about to take a stroll and a smoke. Shall we talk outside?”

“As you please,” said Clare, and they sallied into the park together.

“I have been thinking over what you were good enough to say to me some weeks ago,” Jack began, and then broke down for a minute.

“About your future?” said his lordship.

“Yes,” Jack assented.

“Well,” said Windgall, “I talked the matter

over with your brother Montacute a day or two later, when I met him in town. He agreed with me that if you could be brought to be quiet about your own political predilections, that between us we might do something. He promised to write to you."

"He wrote," answered Clare.

"And you replied to him?"

"Yes. I told him how sorry I was to disappoint him—how sorry I was to disappoint you both. But I can't help it, now. I can't do it. I should be a scoundrel if I did it."

"Well, well," said my lord, somewhat impatiently, "and what do you propose to do?"

"You know, I think, sir," answered Jack slowly, "that I have bought land in New Zealand."

"Well," said Windgall, "it's not likely to have fallen greatly in value. You can easily find a purchaser. I gather from the Emigration Reports, that there is rather a rush to New

Zealand just now, and that land is selling rapidly."

"I have been speaking seriously with Ella," said the youngster with a beating heart, "and we have decided that it will be better not to sell it. We have been trying to face our future seriously and unromantically, and we both see how little chance there is of finding an honourable and lucrative career in England——"

"Great Heaven!" cried his lordship, facing suddenly round. "Don't let me think that I am talking to a madman, Clare."

"I will give you no need to think that, sir, if I can help it," answered Clare a little stiffly. "I knew I should probably have to encounter some opposition on your part, but I trusted, and I still trust, that you will not make it insurmountable." The Earl walked on with a step which revealed his annoyance plainly, but as yet he said nothing, and the young man proceeded. "Since you did me the honour to set me on

my present footing, I have thought every day and almost every hour of every day about this question. I can see no single way, sir, for an honourable ambition to fulfil itself in England."

"Do you mean to tell me, Clare," cried Windgall wheeling round again, "that you have ever for a moment seriously contemplated the possibility of taking my daughter out to New Zealand!"

His indignation and amazement were so real and apparent that the young man was abashed for a minute, and seemed himself to recognise a certain positive enormity in the scheme. But a little reflection brought him back to where he had always been since this scheme had begun to be a part of his thoughts. Rightly or wrongly he could see no room for himself in old England, and a hand that would scarcely be denied seemed to beckon him to the new country.

"Suppose, sir," he ventured to say at last,

“that we permit an experiment to be experimental. You were so kind as to offer Lady Ella a certain dower. If we go to New Zealand we shall not need that, and if you were still disposed to bestow it, it might be allowed to lie by and increase.”

“I decline,” said the Earl, mightily stiff and majestic, “to entertain the scheme at all. When I wrote to you as I did, I naturally expected that you would be prepared to avail yourself of such assistance as your friends might be able to afford you. I certainly never expected to be confronted by any such a hare-brained proposal as this. I decline utterly and completely to entertain the idea at all. Utterly and completely,” he added with angry emphasis, “utterly and completely.”

“Better men than I, sir, have already embarked in colonial enterprises,” said Jack gloomily.

“No doubt,” cried Windgall angrily. “And you, sir, may follow the example of your betters

when you choose, but you will not take my daughter with you."

He had not liked Clare for a long time, and in his heart he had been sore at the fact that he was compelled to recall him. This proposal afforded him the first opportunity he had ever had for giving vent to his anger, and for the moment he rejoiced in it, more than a little. But then came cool reflection, and with it the memory of the truth that this time he had really sold his daughter—though he had sold her to the man she loved, he had sold her none the less—for Kimberley's ninety-thousand pounds.

The walk, which did not extend far, was concluded in silence, and the two men parted in silence. Windgall was so angry that he found it hard work to leave the theme alone, and was on the very edge of further speech about it a hundred times. He had scarcely re-entered the house when he met Ella.

“My—my dear,” he began with anything but a face and a voice of affection, “what is this nonsense Clare has been talking of—this precious emigration scheme of his?”

“Papa,” said the girl, “I shall be sorry to leave you, but it will be for the best. Captain Clare is right. England is not a good place for younger sons.”

“Are you both mad together?” cried the tormented nobleman, but his daughter’s look brought him to the consideration that he was no longer free to express himself with the emphasis and directness he had lately employed. “Really,” he went on with a manner considerably modified. “I have no wish to take a tone like that, but I don’t know what to make of this amazing proposal.”

“But why is the proposal so amazing?” she asked him. “We have talked it over quite seriously, and we both think it for the best.”

Windgall's restraint upon himself was unequal to the anger this speech inspired.

"Let me hear no more of this," he said wrathfully. "I—I won't endure it. If I had dreamed that Clare could have brought such a plan to me, and that you would endorse it, I—I——"

His wrath brought him to a standstill.

"I am sorry you think so ill of it," said Ella quietly.

"And what does that mean?" cried her father. She was silent. "Does it mean that my will is to be defied? Does it mean that this ridiculous project is to disgrace me in the eyes of all the world? That my daughter is to marry an emigrant as if I were an Irish cottar?"

He walked up and down the room fuming. Ella had never seen him so abandoned to anger, and he had never spoken to her in such a voice before.

"I am very sorry indeed, papa," she said again.

"Will you kindly tell me," he said, stopping

in his excited walk and facing her, "what that reiterated phrase may mean? I don't want your sorrow, Ella. I want your obedience."

Nothing more unfortunate for himself could have been conceived than those two last angry phrases, and he had no sooner uttered them than he framed a retort for himself, which, if Ella had spoken it, would have crushed him. Had he not had enough of both already? She had given him sorrow with obedience these four years.

"I beg your pardon, my dear," he said. "I spoke hastily. I beg your pardon. No man ever had a better daughter. I had no right to speak so. I beg your pardon."

"Pray say no more, dear," she answered him, with an arm about his neck. "Let us talk of this quietly, and if it is not for the best we will not go."

My lord was bitterly dejected all the evening, and next day he went over to Gallowbay and

laid the matter before Mr. Begg, who really seemed but little surprised by the proposal, though Windgall tried to make it look as amazing as he could.

“It will be a great grief to part with Lady Ella,” said Mr. Begg sympathetically. “But in these days of rapid communication (it is only a matter of a month or thereabouts) it would be easy to see her often. And there is a great career open out there for energy and enterprise, my lord. There is an aristocracy there, of a sort, already. In a hundred years there will be a genuine aristocracy, great families, great estates. It is a fine country, my lord, a fine country.”

These opinions crushed his lordship without in the least softening his distaste.

“But,” said he, by-and-by, “there is such a thing as public opinion at home.”

“If your lordship does me the honour to ask my opinion on that matter,” said Mr. Begg (and

Windgall nodded to signify that he wanted an opinion), "I believe that enlightened public opinion will applaud the young gentleman's choice and the lady's courage. I am a devout believer in the future of the British colonies. And I do not suppose, my lord," concluded Mr. Begg, with something which, in an elderly lawyer, amounted almost to enthusiasm, "I do not suppose that anywhere in the world the son and daughter of English noblemen would meet with more social consideration than in the English colonies. They will have no social rivals, and there will be no social positions the colony can bestow which will not be open to the son of Lord Montacute and the son-in-law of the Earl of Windgall."

Now all this did considerably soften my lord's distaste, and indeed he had made such a pother to begin with that he had almost exhausted opposition by carrying it too far. When Ella had brought him to a final conversion, he began to

talk about the thing with complacency, and to anticipate the objections of his friends he adopted Mr. Begg's arguments, and spoke of Jack Clare as if he were a sort of missionary of aristocracy going out to inoculate colonial folk.

This sudden and unexpected conversion was brought about quite naturally, however abrupt it may seem, for Windgall saw clearly that Ella meant to abide by Captain Clare, and that she would not have yielded him up again for a wilderness of fathers.

So in due time all the magnates connected with both houses, whether by ties of kindred or friendship, were gathered together, and the Right Honourable John George Alaric Fitz Adington Clare and the Lady Ella Louisa Santerre were bound together in the ties of holy matrimony with much pomp and all the customary signs of rejoicing. The purposed emigration was not hidden, but was proclaimed, as it were, from the housetops, and not only did the speakers allude

to it at the wedding breakfast, but the newspapers made a considerable fanfaronade about it, and set it out as the beginning of a new era in the history of the colonization of the British possessions, so that the Honourable Jack and Lady Ella were familiar in the mouths of New Zealand folk a week or two before they saw their new home, and were received on their arrival with great hospitality and consideration.

AN EPILOGUE.

IN the height of the season of the year 1882 Mr. Bolsover Kimberley attired himself one evening in the plain black and white which is the distinguishing sign of gentlemen, nobodies, and waiters. It was a Wednesday evening, and he was bound to a great dinner in a fashionable square. He wore no blazing solitaire in his shirt-front, but three very small studs of gold. There was not a ring upon his fingers, and a plain ribbon of black silk served him in lieu of watch-chain. For some years past it had been a matter of general observation that, for a millionaire and a *nouveau riche*, Mr. Kimberley was curiously quiet in his dress. For a long time after that

terrible scene in the King's Avenue his discarded finery had made his body servant glorious, and there was still a small safe in Kimberley's bedroom in which reposed a remarkable assortment of rings and chains and pins, none of which for many a day had seen daylight or gaslight as an accessory of Kimberley's attire.

He was dressed on this particular evening much earlier than he need have been, and his manner was marked by a certain nervous anxiety. He looked often at his watch, and finally, the evening being beautifully clear and warm, set out on foot somewhat before the necessary time. Arriving early at the great house in the fashionable square he was received with considerable distinction, and passed from one to another with shy salutations. Almost immediately following upon his own entry came a broad-shouldered and stately gentleman of something over thirty, with grey eyes and a great auburn beard, and with him a lady of singular beauty, some four

or five years younger. With these, a grey man, slight and spare, who, observing Kimberley, crossed over to him instantly and shook hands with great warmth.

“You have met Clare already, I understand?” he said.

“Twice or thrice,” replied Kimberley.

The bearded man crossed over a moment later bringing the lady with him.

Kimberley shook hands with both and the four formed a group together.

“You must let me congratulate you on your maiden speech,” said Kimberley to the bearded man. “I have heard it spoken of everywhere.”

“Oh!” said the other, “when you praise my speeches you laud her ladyship. She makes the bullets and I fire them.”

“Ah,” said the grey man bending over the lady, “Clare tells me that you have become a mighty politician, Ella.”

“That is Jack’s nonsense, papa,” said she in a voice rippled with laughter.

“The plain truth of the matter is,” declared the bearded man with an admiring smile at her, “that Ella should be in the House herself. If she were there your lordship would learn a thing or two. How well you are looking, Kimberley. Better, even, than four years ago.”

“But the colonies beat us all,” said Kimberley with shy mirthfulness. “New Zealand has made quite a giant of you.”

At this point came a lady to the group.

“My dear Ella, I called this afternoon and was dreadfully disappointed to find you away. But I insisted upon seeing the children, and oh, what darlings they both are. I believe little Alaric knew me again, though he was but three when I first saw him. He came to me and kissed me at once, and dragged me off to see the new rocking-horse, which had just arrived.”

“The new rocking-horse?” said Ella.

Kimberley blushed and looked conscious.

“Really, Kimberley,” cried Clare, “you’ll spoil the children. Kimberley’s face betrays him, my dear. Mr. Kimberley is the ogre of our household, Lady Caramel. He has emptied the Lowther Arcade into the nursery, and the little rascals speak disrespectfully of Santa Claus because of him. ‘I don’t care about Santa Claus,’ said the four-year-old this morning, when I threatened him with the loss of the old gentleman’s favour. ‘Mr. Kimberley is better than Santa Claus.’”

“I am very fond of children,” says the little man, “and it is such a pleasure to please them.” He has not yet lost all his shyness, but it is no longer marked enough to make anybody uncomfortable.

By-and-by Ella turns to speak to him, and with her he talks with no embarrassment, and with no pain. Has the weak heart forgotten the

love that once broke it? No. That is not forgotten, or forgettable, but Ella is a sort of angel to him—a Madonna. He will never love again, never marry, but he is by no means unhappy or solitary or burdened with regrets. There broods upon the past a chastened twilight. His sorrows made her happiness, and he is quite contented. When, four years before this time, Ella and her husband spent four or five months in England, his name was heard on the lips of Ella's boy almost as often as the nurse's. He loved to meet the child in the parks and to play with him at home or to guide the three-year-old feet across the lawn at Shouldershott, and he was allowed to have his way. The second boy was born in England, and Kimberley was his godfather. Now again, after a second acquaintance of a month long, the elder boy has learned a second time to love him, and his godson has learned that easy lesson for the first time. He goes into the nursery as if he were a godmother

instead of a godfather. It is the greatest joy of his harmless and benevolent life to be with the children, and again they let him have his way.

And so even Kimberley's romance has reached a happy close. He is happier than he could have been if he had never discovered Ella's grief, and he has the heart to know it. He is grateful in his inmost soul to have known the truth in time.

The feast is over. It is near midnight, and there are new people in the splendid rooms. Amongst them a distinguished Parisian journalist and a Londoner of the same profession, a bantam-like little man the latter, with upright self-assertive hair, keen eyes of no depth, and the promise of a double chin.

"Who is the man," asks the Parisian, "with the great beard of chatain clair? I forget how you call it in English."

“Sweet auburn,” says Mr. Amelia; “loveliest colour of the plain.”

“Plait il?” from the Parisian.

“Nothing,” responds the little man with a transient air of shame. “That is Lord Clare, the last of the new batch of peers, created in acknowledgment of his services in respect to emigration.”

“And the splendid woman?” asks the Parisian.

“His wife? No. He is too attentive.”

“Yes. His wife. By no means ill-looking.”

“Ill-looking. Was Venus ill-looking?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” says Mr. Amelia.

“Our Mutual Friend is less black than he’s painted, and Venus was probably a good deal plainer. Everybody exaggerates.”

“The little man? He is not of the beau monde? Who is he?”

“A parvenu,” responds Mr. Amelia with a high-bred air. “I remember the fellow years ago. He came into a fortune of a million and

a quarter sterling—nearly forty million of francs—think of it!—when he was a lawyer's clerk."

"And the aristocracy admit him to intimacy?"

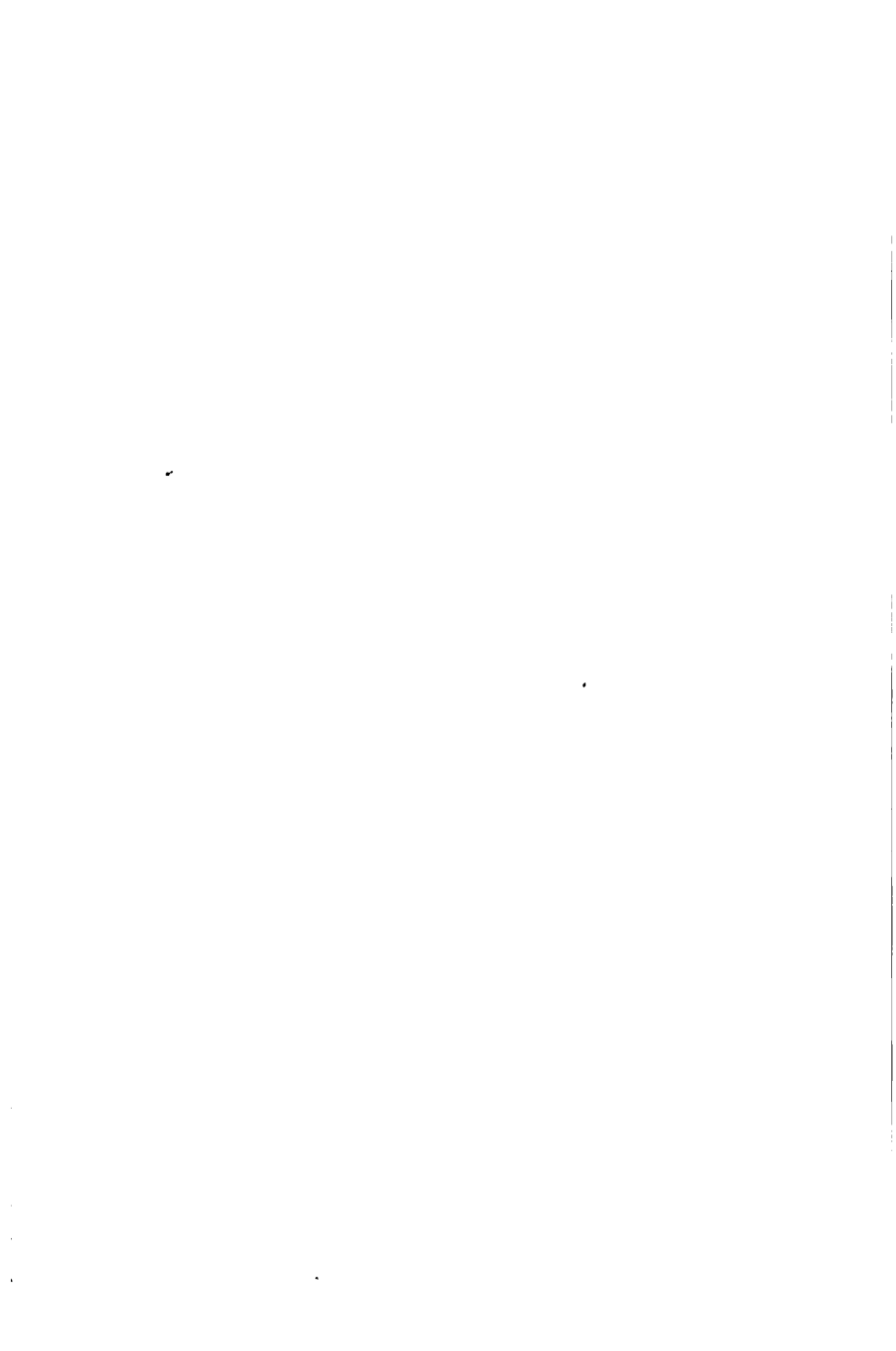
"Delighted to know money here," says the little man in his own crisp way. "At one time he was engaged to be married to the lady you compare with Venus. He threw her over, a little damaged, and the other man married her. Now the poor devil seems to have returned to his allegiance, and you see how they fawn on him. The new peer is as poor as Job, and everybody says the little snob will leave his money to my lord's children."

"And so they make much of him? Well, that is natural. It is the way of the world."

Profoundest gratitude and sincerest friendship and tenderest love. It was the way of the world to taint them all with that base fancy. But it was the way of the world to own them all, gratitude and friendship and love.

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