DOCTOR THORNE

by

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CHAPTER I

The Greshams of Greshamsbury

Before the reader is introduced to the modest country medical

practitioner who is to be the chief personage of the following

tale, it will be well that he should be made acquainted with some

particulars as to the locality in which, and the neighbours among

whom, our doctor followed his profession.

There is a county in the west of England not so full of life, indeed,

nor so widely spoken of as some of its manufacturing leviathan

brethren in the north, but which is, nevertheless, very dear to those

who know it well. Its green pastures, its waving wheat, its deep

and shady and--let us add--dirty lanes, its paths and stiles, its

tawny-coloured, well-built rural churches, its avenues of beeches,

and frequent Tudor mansions, its constant county hunt, its social

graces, and the general air of clanship which pervades it, has made

it to its own inhabitants a favoured land of Goshen. It is purely

agricultural; agricultural in its produce, agricultural in its poor,

and agricultural in its pleasures. There are towns in it, of course;

dÃ©pÃ´ts from whence are brought seeds and groceries, ribbons and

fire-shovels; in which markets are held and county balls are carried

on; which return members to Parliament, generally--in spite of Reform

Bills, past, present, and coming--in accordance with the dictates

of some neighbouring land magnate: from whence emanate the country

postmen, and where is located the supply of post-horses necessary

for county visitings. But these towns add nothing to the importance

of the county; they consist, with the exception of the assize town,

of dull, all but death-like single streets. Each possesses two

pumps, three hotels, ten shops, fifteen beer-houses, a beadle, and a

market-place.

Indeed, the town population of the county reckons for nothing when

the importance of the county is discussed, with the exception, as

before said, of the assize town, which is also a cathedral city.

Herein is a clerical aristocracy, which is certainly not without its

due weight. A resident bishop, a resident dean, an archdeacon, three

or four resident prebendaries, and all their numerous chaplains,

vicars, and ecclesiastical satellites, do make up a society

sufficiently powerful to be counted as something by the county

squirearchy. In other respects the greatness of Barsetshire depends

wholly on the landed powers.

Barsetshire, however, is not now so essentially one whole as it was

before the Reform Bill divided it. There is in these days an East

Barsetshire, and there is a West Barsetshire; and people conversant

with Barsetshire doings declare that they can already decipher some

difference of feeling, some division of interests. The eastern moiety

of the county is more purely Conservative than the western; there

is, or was, a taint of Peelism in the latter; and then, too, the

residence of two such great Whig magnates as the Duke of Omnium and

the Earl de Courcy in that locality in some degree overshadows and

renders less influential the gentlemen who live near them.

It is to East Barsetshire that we are called. When the division above

spoken of was first contemplated, in those stormy days in which

gallant men were still combatting reform ministers, if not with hope,

still with spirit, the battle was fought by none more bravely than

by John Newbold Gresham of Greshamsbury, the member for Barsetshire.

Fate, however, and the Duke of Wellington were adverse, and in the

following Parliament John Newbold Gresham was only member for East

Barsetshire.

Whether or not it was true, as stated at the time, that the aspect of

the men with whom he was called on to associate at St Stephen's broke

his heart, it is not for us now to inquire. It is certainly true that

he did not live to see the first year of the reformed Parliament

brought to a close. The then Mr Gresham was not an old man at the

time of his death, and his eldest son, Francis Newbold Gresham, was a

very young man; but, notwithstanding his youth, and notwithstanding

other grounds of objection which stood in the way of such preferment,

and which must be explained, he was chosen in his father's place.

The father's services had been too recent, too well appreciated, too

thoroughly in unison with the feelings of those around him to allow

of any other choice; and in this way young Frank Gresham found

himself member for East Barsetshire, although the very men who

elected him knew that they had but slender ground for trusting him

with their suffrages.

Frank Gresham, though then only twenty-four years of age, was a

married man, and a father. He had already chosen a wife, and by

his choice had given much ground of distrust to the men of East

Barsetshire. He had married no other than Lady Arabella de Courcy,

the sister of the great Whig earl who lived at Courcy Castle in the

west; that earl who not only voted for the Reform Bill, but had been

infamously active in bringing over other young peers so to vote,

and whose name therefore stank in the nostrils of the staunch Tory

squires of the county.

Not only had Frank Gresham so wedded, but having thus improperly and

unpatriotically chosen a wife, he had added to his sins by becoming

recklessly intimate with his wife's relations. It is true that he

still called himself a Tory, belonged to the club of which his father

had been one of the most honoured members, and in the days of the

great battle got his head broken in a row, on the right side; but,

nevertheless, it was felt by the good men, true and blue, of East

Barsetshire, that a constant sojourner at Courcy Castle could not be

regarded as a consistent Tory. When, however, his father died, that

broken head served him in good stead: his sufferings in the cause

were made the most of; these, in unison with his father's merits,

turned the scale, and it was accordingly decided, at a meeting held

at the George and Dragon, at Barchester, that Frank Gresham should

fill his father's shoes.

But Frank Gresham could not fill his father's shoes; they were too

big for him. He did become member for East Barsetshire, but he was

such a member--so lukewarm, so indifferent, so prone to associate

with the enemies of the good cause, so little willing to fight the

good fight, that he soon disgusted those who most dearly loved the

memory of the old squire.

De Courcy Castle in those days had great allurements for a young man,

and all those allurements were made the most of to win over young

Gresham. His wife, who was a year or two older than himself, was a

fashionable woman, with thorough Whig tastes and aspirations, such

as became the daughter of a great Whig earl; she cared for politics,

or thought that she cared for them, more than her husband did; for

a month or two previous to her engagement she had been attached to

the Court, and had been made to believe that much of the policy of

England's rulers depended on the political intrigues of England's

women. She was one who would fain be doing something if she only

knew how, and the first important attempt she made was to turn her

respectable young Tory husband into a second-rate Whig bantling. As

this lady's character will, it is hoped, show itself in the following

pages, we need not now describe it more closely.

It is not a bad thing to be son-in-law to a potent earl, member of

Parliament for a county, and a possessor of a fine old English seat,

and a fine old English fortune. As a very young man, Frank Gresham

found the life to which he was thus introduced agreeable enough. He

consoled himself as best he might for the blue looks with which he

was greeted by his own party, and took his revenge by consorting more

thoroughly than ever with his political adversaries. Foolishly, like

a foolish moth, he flew to the bright light, and, like the moths,

of course he burnt his wings. Early in 1833 he had become a member

of Parliament, and in the autumn of 1834 the dissolution came.

Young members of three or four-and-twenty do not think much of

dissolutions, forget the fancies of their constituents, and are too

proud of the present to calculate much as to the future. So it was

with Mr Gresham. His father had been member for Barsetshire all his

life, and he looked forward to similar prosperity as though it were

part of his inheritance; but he failed to take any of the steps which

had secured his father's seat.

In the autumn of 1834 the dissolution came, and Frank Gresham, with

his honourable lady wife and all the de Courcys at his back, found

that he had mortally offended the county. To his great disgust

another candidate was brought forward as a fellow to his late

colleague, and though he manfully fought the battle, and spent ten

thousand pounds in the contest, he could not recover his position. A

high Tory, with a great Whig interest to back him, is never a popular

person in England. No one can trust him, though there may be those

who are willing to place him, untrusted, in high positions. Such

was the case with Mr Gresham. There were many who were willing, for

family considerations, to keep him in Parliament; but no one thought

that he was fit to be there. The consequences were, that a bitter

and expensive contest ensued. Frank Gresham, when twitted with being

a Whig, foreswore the de Courcy family; and then, when ridiculed as

having been thrown over by the Tories, foreswore his father's old

friends. So between the two stools he fell to the ground, and, as a

politician, he never again rose to his feet.

He never again rose to his feet; but twice again he made violent

efforts to do so. Elections in East Barsetshire, from various

causes, came quick upon each other in those days, and before he was

eight-and-twenty years of age Mr Gresham had three times contested

the county and been three times beaten. To speak the truth of him,

his own spirit would have been satisfied with the loss of the first

ten thousand pounds; but Lady Arabella was made of higher mettle. She

had married a man with a fine place and a fine fortune; but she had

nevertheless married a commoner and had in so far derogated from her

high birth. She felt that her husband should be by rights a member of

the House of Lords; but, if not, that it was at least essential that

he should have a seat in the lower chamber. She would by degrees sink

into nothing if she allowed herself to sit down, the mere wife of a

mere country squire.

Thus instigated, Mr Gresham repeated the useless contest three times,

and repeated it each time at a serious cost. He lost his money, Lady

Arabella lost her temper, and things at Greshamsbury went on by no

means as prosperously as they had done in the days of the old squire.

In the first twelve years of their marriage, children came fast into

the nursery at Greshamsbury. The first that was born was a boy; and

in those happy halcyon days, when the old squire was still alive,

great was the joy at the birth of an heir to Greshamsbury; bonfires

gleamed through the country-side, oxen were roasted whole, and

the customary paraphernalia of joy, usual to rich Britons on such

occasions were gone through with wondrous Ã©clat. But when the tenth

baby, and the ninth little girl, was brought into the world, the

outward show of joy was not so great.

Then other troubles came on. Some of these little girls were sickly,

some very sickly. Lady Arabella had her faults, and they were such as

were extremely detrimental to her husband's happiness and her own;

but that of being an indifferent mother was not among them. She had

worried her husband daily for years because he was not in Parliament,

she had worried him because he would not furnish the house in Portman

Square, she had worried him because he objected to have more people

every winter at Greshamsbury Park than the house would hold; but now

she changed her tune and worried him because Selina coughed, because

Helena was hectic, because poor Sophy's spine was weak, and Matilda's

appetite was gone.

Worrying from such causes was pardonable it will be said. So it was;

but the manner was hardly pardonable. Selina's cough was certainly

not fairly attributable to the old-fashioned furniture in Portman

Square; nor would Sophy's spine have been materially benefited by

her father having a seat in Parliament; and yet, to have heard Lady

Arabella discussing those matters in family conclave, one would have

thought that she would have expected such results.

As it was, her poor weak darlings were carried about from London to

Brighton, from Brighton to some German baths, from the German baths

back to Torquay, and thence--as regarded the four we have named--to

that bourne from whence no further journey could be made under the

Lady Arabella's directions.

The one son and heir to Greshamsbury was named as his father, Francis

Newbold Gresham. He would have been the hero of our tale had not that

place been pre-occupied by the village doctor. As it is, those who

please may so regard him. It is he who is to be our favourite young

man, to do the love scenes, to have his trials and his difficulties,

and to win through them or not, as the case may be. I am too old now

to be a hard-hearted author, and so it is probable that he may not

die of a broken heart. Those who don't approve of a middle-aged

bachelor country doctor as a hero, may take the heir to Greshamsbury

in his stead, and call the book, if it so please them, "The Loves and

Adventures of Francis Newbold Gresham the Younger."

And Master Frank Gresham was not ill adapted for playing the part

of a hero of this sort. He did not share his sisters' ill-health,

and though the only boy of the family, he excelled all his sisters

in personal appearance. The Greshams from time immemorial had been

handsome. They were broad browed, blue eyed, fair haired, born with

dimples in their chins, and that pleasant, aristocratic dangerous

curl of the upper lip which can equally express good humour or scorn.

Young Frank was every inch a Gresham, and was the darling of his

father's heart.

The de Courcys had never been plain. There was too much hauteur, too

much pride, we may perhaps even fairly say, too much nobility in

their gait and manners, and even in their faces, to allow of their

being considered plain; but they were not a race nurtured by Venus

or Apollo. They were tall and thin, with high cheek-bones, high

foreheads, and large, dignified, cold eyes. The de Courcy girls had

all good hair; and, as they also possessed easy manners and powers

of talking, they managed to pass in the world for beauties till they

were absorbed in the matrimonial market, and the world at large cared

no longer whether they were beauties or not. The Misses Gresham were

made in the de Courcy mould, and were not on this account the less

dear to their mother.

The two eldest, Augusta and Beatrice, lived, and were apparently

likely to live. The four next faded and died one after another--all

in the same sad year--and were laid in the neat, new cemetery at

Torquay. Then came a pair, born at one birth, weak, delicate, frail

little flowers, with dark hair and dark eyes, and thin, long, pale

faces, with long, bony hands, and long bony feet, whom men looked on

as fated to follow their sisters with quick steps. Hitherto, however,

they had not followed them, nor had they suffered as their sisters

had suffered; and some people at Greshamsbury attributed this to the

fact that a change had been made in the family medical practitioner.

Then came the youngest of the flock, she whose birth we have said was

not heralded with loud joy; for when she came into the world, four

others, with pale temples, wan, worn cheeks, and skeleton, white

arms, were awaiting permission to leave it.

Such was the family when, in the year 1854, the eldest son came of

age. He had been educated at Harrow, and was now still at Cambridge;

but, of course, on such a day as this he was at home. That coming of

age must be a delightful time to a young man born to inherit broad

acres and wide wealth. Those full-mouthed congratulations; those

warm prayers with which his manhood is welcomed by the grey-haired

seniors of the county; the affectionate, all but motherly caresses of

neighbouring mothers who have seen him grow up from his cradle, of

mothers who have daughters, perhaps, fair enough, and good enough,

and sweet enough even for him; the soft-spoken, half-bashful, but

tender greetings of the girls, who now, perhaps for the first time,

call him by his stern family name, instructed by instinct rather than

precept that the time has come when the familiar Charles or familiar

John must by them be laid aside; the "lucky dogs," and hints of

silver spoons which are poured into his ears as each young compeer

slaps his back and bids him live a thousand years and then never die;

the shouting of the tenantry, the good wishes of the old farmers who

come up to wring his hand, the kisses which he gets from the farmers'

wives, and the kisses which he gives to the farmers' daughters; all

these things must make the twenty-first birthday pleasant enough to

a young heir. To a youth, however, who feels that he is now liable

to arrest, and that he inherits no other privilege, the pleasure may

very possibly not be quite so keen.

The case with young Frank Gresham may be supposed to much nearer the

former than the latter; but yet the ceremony of his coming of age

was by no means like that which fate had accorded to his father. Mr

Gresham was now an embarrassed man, and though the world did not know

it, or, at any rate, did not know that he was deeply embarrassed, he

had not the heart to throw open his mansion and receive the county

with a free hand as though all things were going well with him.

Nothing was going well with him. Lady Arabella would allow nothing

near him or around him to be well. Everything with him now turned to

vexation; he was no longer a joyous, happy man, and the people of

East Barsetshire did not look for gala doings on a grand scale when

young Gresham came of age.

Gala doings, to a certain extent, there were there. It was in July,

and tables were spread under the oaks for the tenants. Tables were

spread, and meat, and beer, and wine were there, and Frank, as he

walked round and shook his guests by the hand, expressed a hope that

their relations with each other might be long, close, and mutually

advantageous.

We must say a few words now about the place itself. Greshamsbury

Park was a fine old English gentleman's seat--was and is; but we can

assert it more easily in past tense, as we are speaking of it with

reference to a past time. We have spoken of Greshamsbury Park; there

was a park so called, but the mansion itself was generally known as

Greshamsbury House, and did not stand in the park. We may perhaps

best describe it by saying that the village of Greshamsbury consisted

of one long, straggling street, a mile in length, which in the centre

turned sharp round, so that one half of the street lay directly at

right angles to the other. In this angle stood Greshamsbury House,

and the gardens and grounds around it filled up the space so made.

There was an entrance with large gates at each end of the village,

and each gate was guarded by the effigies of two huge pagans with

clubs, such being the crest borne by the family; from each entrance a

broad road, quite straight, running through to a majestic avenue of

limes, led up to the house. This was built in the richest, perhaps we

should rather say in the purest, style of Tudor architecture; so much

so that, though Greshamsbury is less complete than Longleat, less

magnificent than Hatfield, it may in some sense be said to be the

finest specimen of Tudor architecture of which the country can boast.

It stands amid a multitude of trim gardens and stone-built terraces,

divided one from another: these to our eyes are not so attractive as

that broad expanse of lawn by which our country houses are generally

surrounded; but the gardens of Greshamsbury have been celebrated for

two centuries, and any Gresham who would have altered them would have

been considered to have destroyed one of the well-known landmarks of

the family.

Greshamsbury Park--properly so called--spread far away on the other

side of the village. Opposite to the two great gates leading up

to the mansion were two smaller gates, the one opening on to the

stables, kennels, and farm-yard, and the other to the deer park. This

latter was the principal entrance to the demesne, and a grand and

picturesque entrance it was. The avenue of limes which on one side

stretched up to the house, was on the other extended for a quarter of

a mile, and then appeared to be terminated only by an abrupt rise in

the ground. At the entrance there were four savages and four clubs,

two to each portal, and what with the massive iron gates, surmounted

by a stone wall, on which stood the family arms supported by two

other club-bearers, the stone-built lodges, the Doric, ivy-covered

columns which surrounded the circle, the four grim savages, and the

extent of the space itself through which the high road ran, and which

just abutted on the village, the spot was sufficiently significant of

old family greatness.

Those who examined it more closely might see that under the arms was

a scroll bearing the Gresham motto, and that the words were repeated

in smaller letters under each of the savages. "Gardez Gresham,"

had been chosen in the days of motto-choosing probably by some

herald-at-arms as an appropriate legend for signifying the peculiar

attributes of the family. Now, however, unfortunately, men were not

of one mind as to the exact idea signified. Some declared, with much

heraldic warmth, that it was an address to the savages, calling on

them to take care of their patron; while others, with whom I myself

am inclined to agree, averred with equal certainty that it was an

advice to the people at large, especially to those inclined to rebel

against the aristocracy of the county, that they should "beware the

Gresham." The latter signification would betoken strength--so said

the holders of this doctrine; the former weakness. Now the Greshams

were ever a strong people, and never addicted to a false humility.

We will not pretend to decide the question. Alas! either construction

was now equally unsuited to the family fortunes. Such changes had

taken place in England since the Greshams had founded themselves that

no savage could any longer in any way protect them; they must protect

themselves like common folk, or live unprotected. Nor now was it

necessary that any neighbour should shake in his shoes when the

Gresham frowned. It would have been to be wished that the present

Gresham himself could have been as indifferent to the frowns of some

of his neighbours.

But the old symbols remained, and may such symbols long remain among

us; they are still lovely and fit to be loved. They tell us of the

true and manly feelings of other times; and to him who can read

aright, they explain more fully, more truly than any written history

can do, how Englishmen have become what they are. England is not yet

a commercial country in the sense in which that epithet is used for

her; and let us still hope that she will not soon become so. She

might surely as well be called feudal England, or chivalrous England.

If in western civilised Europe there does exist a nation among whom

there are high signors, and with whom the owners of the land are

the true aristocracy, the aristocracy that is trusted as being best

and fittest to rule, that nation is the English. Choose out the ten

leading men of each great European people. Choose them in France, in

Austria, Sardinia, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Spain (?), and

then select the ten in England whose names are best known as those of

leading statesmen; the result will show in which country there still

exists the closest attachment to, the sincerest trust in, the old

feudal and now so-called landed interests.

England a commercial country! Yes; as Venice was. She may excel

other nations in commerce, but yet it is not that in which she most

prides herself, in which she most excels. Merchants as such are not

the first men among us; though it perhaps be open, barely open, to

a merchant to become one of them. Buying and selling is good and

necessary; it is very necessary, and may, possibly, be very good; but

it cannot be the noblest work of man; and let us hope that it may not

in our time be esteemed the noblest work of an Englishman.

Greshamsbury Park was very large; it lay on the outside of the angle

formed by the village street, and stretched away on two sides without

apparent limit or boundaries visible from the village road or house.

Indeed, the ground on this side was so broken up into abrupt hills,

and conical-shaped, oak-covered excrescences, which were seen peeping

up through and over each other, that the true extent of the park was

much magnified to the eye. It was very possible for a stranger to get

into it and to find some difficulty in getting out again by any of

its known gates; and such was the beauty of the landscape, that a

lover of scenery would be tempted thus to lose himself.

I have said that on one side lay the kennels, and this will give

me an opportunity of describing here one especial episode, a long

episode, in the life of the existing squire. He had once represented

his county in Parliament, and when he ceased to do so he still felt

an ambition to be connected in some peculiar way with that county's

greatness; he still desired that Gresham of Greshamsbury should be

something more in East Barsetshire than Jackson of the Grange, or

Baker of Mill Hill, or Bateson of Annesgrove. They were all his

friends, and very respectable country gentlemen; but Mr Gresham of

Greshamsbury should be more than this: even he had enough of ambition

to be aware of such a longing. Therefore, when an opportunity

occurred he took to hunting the county.

For this employment he was in every way well suited--unless it was in

the matter of finance. Though he had in his very earliest manly years

given such great offence by indifference to his family politics,

and had in a certain degree fostered the ill-feeling by contesting

the county in opposition to the wishes of his brother squires,

nevertheless, he bore a loved and popular name. Men regretted that he

should not have been what they wished him to be, that he should not

have been such as was the old squire; but when they found that such

was the case, that he could not be great among them as a politician,

they were still willing that he should be great in any other way if

there were county greatness for which he was suited. Now he was known

as an excellent horseman, as a thorough sportsman, as one knowing in

dogs, and tender-hearted as a sucking mother to a litter of young

foxes; he had ridden in the county since he was fifteen, had a fine

voice for a view-hallo, knew every hound by name, and could wind a

horn with sufficient music for all hunting purposes; moreover, he had

come to his property, as was well known through all Barsetshire, with

a clear income of fourteen thousand a year.

Thus, when some old worn-out master of hounds was run to ground,

about a year after Mr Gresham's last contest for the county, it

seemed to all parties to be a pleasant and rational arrangement that

the hounds should go to Greshamsbury. Pleasant, indeed, to all except

the Lady Arabella; and rational, perhaps, to all except the squire

himself.

All this time he was already considerably encumbered. He had spent

much more than he should have done, and so indeed had his wife, in

those two splendid years in which they had figured as great among the

great ones of the earth. Fourteen thousand a year ought to have been

enough to allow a member of Parliament with a young wife and two or

three children to live in London and keep up their country family

mansion; but then the de Courcys were very great people, and Lady

Arabella chose to live as she had been accustomed to do, and as her

sister-in-law the countess lived: now Lord de Courcy had much more

than fourteen thousand a year. Then came the three elections, with

their vast attendant cost, and then those costly expedients to which

gentlemen are forced to have recourse who have lived beyond their

income, and find it impossible so to reduce their establishments as

to live much below it. Thus when the hounds came to Greshamsbury, Mr

Gresham was already a poor man.

Lady Arabella said much to oppose their coming; but Lady Arabella,

though it could hardly be said of her that she was under her

husband's rule, certainly was not entitled to boast that she had him

under hers. She then made her first grand attack as to the furniture

in Portman Square; and was then for the first time specially informed

that the furniture there was not matter of much importance, as she

would not in future be required to move her family to that residence

during the London seasons. The sort of conversations which grew from

such a commencement may be imagined. Had Lady Arabella worried her

lord less, he might perhaps have considered with more coolness the

folly of encountering so prodigious an increase to the expense of his

establishment; had he not spent so much money in a pursuit which his

wife did not enjoy, she might perhaps have been more sparing in her

rebukes as to his indifference to her London pleasures. As it was,

the hounds came to Greshamsbury, and Lady Arabella did go to London

for some period in each year, and the family expenses were by no

means lessened.

The kennels, however, were now again empty. Two years previous to the

time at which our story begins, the hounds had been carried off to

the seat of some richer sportsman. This was more felt by Mr Gresham

than any other misfortune which he had yet incurred. He had been

master of hounds for ten years, and that work he had at any rate done

well. The popularity among his neighbours which he had lost as a

politician he had regained as a sportsman, and he would fain have

remained autocratic in the hunt, had it been possible. But he so

remained much longer than he should have done, and at last they went

away, not without signs and sounds of visible joy on the part of Lady

Arabella.

But we have kept the Greshamsbury tenantry waiting under the

oak-trees by far too long. Yes; when young Frank came of age there

was still enough left at Greshamsbury, still means enough at the

squire's disposal, to light one bonfire, to roast, whole in its skin,

one bullock. Frank's virility came on him not quite unmarked, as

that of the parson's son might do, or the son of the neighbouring

attorney. It could still be reported in the Barsetshire Conservative

\_Standard\_ that "The beards wagged all" at Greshamsbury, now as they

had done for many centuries on similar festivals. Yes; it was so

reported. But this, like so many other such reports, had but a shadow

of truth in it. "They poured the liquor in," certainly, those who

were there; but the beards did not wag as they had been wont to wag

in former years. Beards won't wag for the telling. The squire was at

his wits' end for money, and the tenants one and all had so heard.

Rents had been raised on them; timber had fallen fast; the lawyer

on the estate was growing rich; tradesmen in Barchester, nay, in

Greshamsbury itself, were beginning to mutter; and the squire himself

would not be merry. Under such circumstances the throats of a

tenantry will still swallow, but their beards will not wag.

"I minds well," said Farmer Oaklerath to his neighbour, "when the

squoire hisself comed of age. Lord love 'ee! There was fun going that

day. There was more yale drank then than's been brewed at the big

house these two years. T'old squoire was a one'er."

"And I minds when squoire was borned; minds it well," said an old

farmer sitting opposite. "Them was the days! It an't that long ago

neither. Squoire a'nt come o' fifty yet; no, nor an't nigh it, though

he looks it. Things be altered at Greemsbury"--such was the rural

pronunciation--"altered sadly, neebor Oaklerath. Well, well; I'll

soon be gone, I will, and so it an't no use talking; but arter paying

one pound fifteen for them acres for more nor fifty year, I didn't

think I'd ever be axed for forty shilling."

Such was the style of conversation which went on at the various

tables. It had certainly been of a very different tone when the

squire was born, when he came of age, and when, just two years

subsequently, his son had been born. On each of these events similar

rural fÃªtes had been given, and the squire himself had on these

occasions been frequent among his guests. On the first, he had been

carried round by his father, a whole train of ladies and nurses

following. On the second, he had himself mixed in all the sports, the

gayest of the gay, and each tenant had squeezed his way up to the

lawn to get a sight of the Lady Arabella, who, as was already known,

was to come from Courcy Castle to Greshamsbury to be their mistress.

It was little they any of them cared now for the Lady Arabella. On

the third, he himself had borne his child in his arms as his father

had before borne him; he was then in the zenith of his pride, and

though the tenantry whispered that he was somewhat less familiar with

them than of yore, that he had put on somewhat too much of the de

Courcy airs, still he was their squire, their master, the rich man

in whose hand they lay. The old squire was then gone, and they were

proud of the young member and his lady bride in spite of a little

hauteur. None of them were proud of him now.

He walked once round among the guests, and spoke a few words of

welcome at each table; and as he did so the tenants got up and bowed

and wished health to the old squire, happiness to the young one, and

prosperity to Greshamsbury; but, nevertheless, it was but a tame

affair.

There were also other visitors, of the gentle sort, to do honour to

the occasion; but not such swarms, not such a crowd at the mansion

itself and at the houses of the neighbouring gentry as had always

been collected on these former gala doings. Indeed, the party at

Greshamsbury was not a large one, and consisted chiefly of Lady de

Courcy and her suite. Lady Arabella still kept up, as far as she was

able, her close connexion with Courcy Castle. She was there as much

as possible, to which Mr Gresham never objected; and she took her

daughters there whenever she could, though, as regarded the two elder

girls, she was interfered with by Mr Gresham, and not unfrequently by

the girls themselves. Lady Arabella had a pride in her son, though

he was by no means her favourite child. He was, however, the heir of

Greshamsbury, of which fact she was disposed to make the most, and

he was also a fine gainly open-hearted young man, who could not but

be dear to any mother. Lady Arabella did love him dearly, though she

felt a sort of disappointment in regard to him, seeing that he was

not so much like a de Courcy as he should have been. She did love him

dearly; and, therefore, when he came of age she got her sister-in-law

and all the Ladies Amelia, Rosina etc., to come to Greshamsbury; and

she also, with some difficulty, persuaded the Honourable Georges and

the Honourable Johns to be equally condescending. Lord de Courcy

himself was in attendance at the Court--or said that he was--and Lord

Porlock, the eldest son, simply told his aunt when he was invited

that he never bored himself with those sort of things.

Then there were the Bakers, and the Batesons, and the Jacksons, who

all lived near and returned home at night; there was the Reverend

Caleb Oriel, the High-Church rector, with his beautiful sister,

Patience Oriel; there was Mr Yates Umbleby, the attorney and agent;

and there was Dr Thorne, and the doctor's modest, quiet-looking

little niece, Miss Mary.

CHAPTER II

Long, Long Ago

As Dr Thorne is our hero--or I should rather say my hero, a privilege

of selecting for themselves in this respect being left to all my

readers--and as Miss Mary Thorne is to be our heroine, a point on

which no choice whatsoever is left to any one, it is necessary that

they shall be introduced and explained and described in a proper,

formal manner. I quite feel that an apology is due for beginning a

novel with two long dull chapters full of description. I am perfectly

aware of the danger of such a course. In so doing I sin against the

golden rule which requires us all to put our best foot foremost, the

wisdom of which is fully recognised by novelists, myself among the

number. It can hardly be expected that any one will consent to go

through with a fiction that offers so little of allurement in its

first pages; but twist it as I will I cannot do otherwise. I find

that I cannot make poor Mr Gresham hem and haw and turn himself

uneasily in his arm-chair in a natural manner till I have said why

he is uneasy. I cannot bring in my doctor speaking his mind freely

among the bigwigs till I have explained that it is in accordance

with his usual character to do so. This is unartistic on my part,

and shows want of imagination as well as want of skill. Whether or

not I can atone for these faults by straightforward, simple, plain

story-telling--that, indeed, is very doubtful.

Dr Thorne belonged to a family in one sense as good, and at any rate

as old, as that of Mr Gresham; and much older, he was apt to boast,

than that of the de Courcys. This trait in his character is mentioned

first, as it was the weakness for which he was most conspicuous. He

was second cousin to Mr Thorne of Ullathorne, a Barsetshire squire

living in the neighbourhood of Barchester, and who boasted that his

estate had remained in his family, descending from Thorne to Thorne,

longer than had been the case with any other estate or any other

family in the county.

But Dr Thorne was only a second cousin; and, therefore, though he was

entitled to talk of the blood as belonging to some extent to himself,

he had no right to lay claim to any position in the county other than

such as he might win for himself if he chose to locate himself in it.

This was a fact of which no one was more fully aware than our doctor

himself. His father, who had been first cousin of a former Squire

Thorne, had been a clerical dignitary in Barchester, but had been

dead now many years. He had had two sons; one he had educated as a

medical man, but the other, and the younger, whom he had intended

for the Bar, had not betaken himself in any satisfactory way to any

calling. This son had been first rusticated from Oxford, and then

expelled; and thence returning to Barchester, had been the cause to

his father and brother of much suffering.

Old Dr Thorne, the clergyman, died when the two brothers were yet

young men, and left behind him nothing but some household and

other property of the value of about two thousand pounds, which he

bequeathed to Thomas, the elder son, much more than that having been

spent in liquidating debts contracted by the younger. Up to that time

there had been close harmony between the Ullathorne family and that

of the clergyman; but a month or two before the doctor's death--the

period of which we are speaking was about two-and-twenty years before

the commencement of our story--the then Mr Thorne of Ullathorne had

made it understood that he would no longer receive at his house his

cousin Henry, whom he regarded as a disgrace to the family.

Fathers are apt to be more lenient to their sons than uncles to their

nephews, or cousins to each other. Dr Thorne still hoped to reclaim

his black sheep, and thought that the head of his family showed an

unnecessary harshness in putting an obstacle in his way of doing so.

And if the father was warm in support of his profligate son, the

young medical aspirant was warmer in support of his profligate

brother. Dr Thorne, junior, was no rouÃ© himself, but perhaps, as a

young man, he had not sufficient abhorrence of his brother's vices.

At any rate, he stuck to him manfully; and when it was signified

in the Close that Henry's company was not considered desirable at

Ullathorne, Dr Thomas Thorne sent word to the squire that under such

circumstances his visits there would also cease.

This was not very prudent, as the young Galen had elected to

establish himself in Barchester, very mainly in expectation of the

help which his Ullathorne connexion would give him. This, however, in

his anger he failed to consider; he was never known, either in early

or in middle life, to consider in his anger those points which were

probably best worth his consideration. This, perhaps, was of the less

moment as his anger was of an unenduring kind, evaporating frequently

with more celerity than he could get the angry words out of his

mouth. With the Ullathorne people, however, he did establish a

quarrel sufficiently permanent to be of vital injury to his medical

prospects.

And then the father died, and the two brothers were left living

together with very little means between them. At this time there

were living, in Barchester, people of the name of Scatcherd. Of that

family, as then existing, we have only to do with two, a brother and

a sister. They were in a low rank of life, the one being a journeyman

stone-mason, and the other an apprentice to a straw-bonnet maker; but

they were, nevertheless, in some sort remarkable people. The sister

was reputed in Barchester to be a model of female beauty of the

strong and robuster cast, and had also a better reputation as being

a girl of good character and honest, womanly conduct. Both of her

beauty and of her reputation her brother was exceedingly proud, and

he was the more so when he learnt that she had been asked in marriage

by a decent master-tradesman in the city.

Roger Scatcherd had also a reputation, but not for beauty or

propriety of conduct. He was known for the best stone-mason in the

four counties, and as the man who could, on occasion, drink the most

alcohol in a given time in the same localities. As a workman, indeed,

he had higher reputate even than this: he was not only a good and

very quick stone-mason, but he had also a capacity for turning other

men into good stone-masons: he had a gift of knowing what a man could

and should do; and, by degrees, he taught himself what five, and ten,

and twenty--latterly, what a thousand and two thousand men might

accomplish among them: this, also, he did with very little aid

from pen and paper, with which he was not, and never became, very

conversant. He had also other gifts and other propensities. He could

talk in a manner dangerous to himself and others; he could persuade

without knowing that he did so; and being himself an extreme

demagogue, in those noisy times just prior to the Reform Bill,

he created a hubbub in Barchester of which he himself had had no

previous conception.

Henry Thorne among his other bad qualities had one which his friends

regarded as worse than all the others, and which perhaps justified

the Ullathorne people in their severity. He loved to consort with

low people. He not only drank--that might have been forgiven--but he

drank in tap-rooms with vulgar drinkers; so said his friends, and so

said his enemies. He denied the charge as being made in the plural

number, and declared that his only low co-reveller was Roger

Scatcherd. With Roger Scatcherd, at any rate, he associated, and

became as democratic as Roger was himself. Now the Thornes of

Ullathorne were of the very highest order of Tory excellence.

Whether or not Mary Scatcherd at once accepted the offer of the

respectable tradesman, I cannot say. After the occurrence of certain

events which must here shortly be told, she declared that she never

had done so. Her brother averred that she most positively had. The

respectable tradesman himself refused to speak on the subject.

It is certain, however, that Scatcherd, who had hitherto been silent

enough about his sister in those social hours which he passed with

his gentleman friend, boasted of the engagement when it was, as he

said, made; and then boasted also of the girl's beauty. Scatcherd, in

spite of his occasional intemperance, looked up in the world, and the

coming marriage of his sister was, he thought, suitable to his own

ambition for his family.

Henry Thorne had already heard of, and already seen, Mary Scatcherd;

but hitherto she had not fallen in the way of his wickedness. Now,

however, when he heard that she was to be decently married, the devil

tempted him to tempt her. It boots not to tell all the tale. It came

out clearly enough when all was told, that he made her most distinct

promises of marriage; he even gave her such in writing; and having

in this way obtained from her her company during some of her little

holidays--her Sundays or summer evenings--he seduced her. Scatcherd

accused him openly of having intoxicated her with drugs; and Thomas

Thorne, who took up the case, ultimately believed the charge. It

became known in Barchester that she was with child, and that the

seducer was Henry Thorne.

Roger Scatcherd, when the news first reached him, filled himself with

drink, and then swore that he would kill them both. With manly wrath,

however, he set forth, first against the man, and that with manly

weapons. He took nothing with him but his fists and a big stick as he

went in search of Henry Thorne.

The two brothers were then lodging together at a farm-house close

abutting on the town. This was not an eligible abode for a medical

practitioner; but the young doctor had not been able to settle

himself eligibly since his father's death; and wishing to put what

constraint he could upon his brother, had so located himself. To this

farm-house came Roger Scatcherd one sultry summer evening, his anger

gleaming from his bloodshot eyes, and his rage heightened to madness

by the rapid pace at which he had run from the city, and by the

ardent spirits which were fermenting within him.

At the very gate of the farm-yard, standing placidly with his

cigar in his mouth, he encountered Henry Thorne. He had thought

of searching for him through the whole premises, of demanding his

victim with loud exclamations, and making his way to him through

all obstacles. In lieu of that, there stood the man before him.

"Well, Roger, what's in the wind?" said Henry Thorne.

They were the last words he ever spoke. He was answered by a blow

from the blackthorn. A contest ensued, which ended in Scatcherd

keeping his word--at any rate, as regarded the worst offender. How

the fatal blow on the temple was struck was never exactly determined:

one medical man said it might have been done in a fight with a

heavy-headed stick; another thought that a stone had been used; a

third suggested a stone-mason's hammer. It seemed, however, to be

proved subsequently that no hammer was taken out, and Scatcherd

himself persisted in declaring that he had taken in his hand no

weapon but the stick. Scatcherd, however, was drunk; and even though

he intended to tell the truth, may have been mistaken. There were,

however, the facts that Thorne was dead; that Scatcherd had sworn

to kill him about an hour previously; and that he had without delay

accomplished his threat. He was arrested and tried for murder; all

the distressing circumstances of the case came out on the trial: he

was found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to be imprisoned for

six months. Our readers will probably think that the punishment was

too severe.

Thomas Thorne and the farmer were on the spot soon after Henry Thorne

had fallen. The brother was at first furious for vengeance against

his brother's murderer; but, as the facts came out, as he learnt

what had been the provocation given, what had been the feelings of

Scatcherd when he left the city, determined to punish him who had

ruined his sister, his heart was changed. Those were trying days for

him. It behoved him to do what in him lay to cover his brother's

memory from the obloquy which it deserved; it behoved him also to

save, or to assist to save, from undue punishment the unfortunate man

who had shed his brother's blood; and it behoved him also, at least

so he thought, to look after that poor fallen one whose misfortunes

were less merited than those either of his brother or of hers.

And he was not the man to get through these things lightly, or with

as much ease as he perhaps might conscientiously have done. He would

pay for the defence of the prisoner; he would pay for the defence of

his brother's memory; and he would pay for the poor girl's comforts.

He would do this, and he would allow no one to help him. He stood

alone in the world, and insisted on so standing. Old Mr Thorne

of Ullathorne offered again to open his arms to him; but he had

conceived a foolish idea that his cousin's severity had driven his

brother on to his bad career, and he would consequently accept no

kindness from Ullathorne. Miss Thorne, the old squire's daughter--a

cousin considerably older than himself, to whom he had at one time

been much attached--sent him money; and he returned it to her under a

blank cover. He had still enough for those unhappy purposes which he

had in hand. As to what might happen afterwards, he was then mainly

indifferent.

The affair made much noise in the county, and was inquired into

closely by many of the county magistrates; by none more closely than

by John Newbold Gresham, who was then alive. Mr Gresham was greatly

taken with the energy and justice shown by Dr Thorne on the occasion;

and when the trial was over, he invited him to Greshamsbury. The

visit ended in the doctor establishing himself in that village.

We must return for a moment to Mary Scatcherd. She was saved from the

necessity of encountering her brother's wrath, for that brother was

under arrest for murder before he could get at her. Her immediate

lot, however, was a cruel one. Deep as was her cause for anger

against the man who had so inhumanly used her, still it was natural

that she should turn to him with love rather than with aversion. To

whom else could she in such plight look for love? When, therefore,

she heard that he was slain, her heart sank within her; she turned

her face to the wall, and laid herself down to die: to die a double

death, for herself and the fatherless babe that was now quick within

her.

But, in fact, life had still much to offer, both to her and to her

child. For her it was still destined that she should, in a distant

land, be the worthy wife of a good husband, and the happy mother of

many children. For that embryo one it was destined--but that may not

be so quickly told: to describe her destiny this volume has yet to be

written.

Even in those bitterest days God tempered the wind to the shorn

lamb. Dr Thorne was by her bedside soon after the bloody tidings

had reached her, and did for her more than either her lover or her

brother could have done. When the baby was born, Scatcherd was still

in prison, and had still three months' more confinement to undergo.

The story of her great wrongs and cruel usage was much talked of,

and men said that one who had been so injured should be regarded as

having in nowise sinned at all.

One man, at any rate, so thought. At twilight, one evening, Thorne

was surprised by a visit from a demure Barchester hardware dealer,

whom he did not remember ever to have addressed before. This was the

former lover of poor Mary Scatcherd. He had a proposal to make, and

it was this:--if Mary would consent to leave the country at once, to

leave it without notice from her brother, or talk or Ã©clat on the

matter, he would sell all that he had, marry her, and emigrate.

There was but one condition; she must leave her baby behind her.

The hardware-man could find it in his heart to be generous, to be

generous and true to his love; but he could not be generous enough to

father the seducer's child.

"I could never abide it, sir, if I took it," said he; "and she,--why

in course she would always love it the best."

In praising his generosity, who can mingle any censure for such

manifest prudence? He would still make her the wife of his bosom,

defiled in the eyes of the world as she had been; but she must be

to him the mother of his own children, not the mother of another's

child.

And now again our doctor had a hard task to win through. He saw at

once that it was his duty to use his utmost authority to induce the

poor girl to accept such an offer. She liked the man; and here was

opened to her a course which would have been most desirable, even

before her misfortune. But it is hard to persuade a mother to part

with her first babe; harder, perhaps, when the babe had been so

fathered and so born than when the world has shone brightly on its

earliest hours. She at first refused stoutly: she sent a thousand

loves, a thousand thanks, profusest acknowledgements for his

generosity to the man who showed her that he loved her so well; but

Nature, she said, would not let her leave her child.

"And what will you do for her here, Mary?" said the doctor. Poor Mary

replied to him with a deluge of tears.

"She is my niece," said the doctor, taking up the tiny infant in his

huge hands; "she is already the nearest thing, the only thing that I

have in this world. I am her uncle, Mary. If you will go with this

man I will be father to her and mother to her. Of what bread I eat,

she shall eat; of what cup I drink, she shall drink. See, Mary, here

is the Bible;" and he covered the book with his hand. "Leave her to

me, and by this word she shall be my child."

The mother consented at last; left her baby with the doctor, married,

and went to America. All this was consummated before Roger Scatcherd

was liberated from jail. Some conditions the doctor made. The first

was, that Scatcherd should not know his sister's child was thus

disposed of. Dr Thorne, in undertaking to bring up the baby, did not

choose to encounter any tie with persons who might hereafter claim

to be the girl's relations on the other side. Relations she would

undoubtedly have had none had she been left to live or die as a

workhouse bastard; but should the doctor succeed in life, should he

ultimately be able to make this girl the darling of his own house,

and then the darling of some other house, should she live and win the

heart of some man whom the doctor might delight to call his friend

and nephew; then relations might spring up whose ties would not be

advantageous.

No man plumed himself on good blood more than Dr Thorne; no man had

greater pride in his genealogical tree, and his hundred and thirty

clearly proved descents from MacAdam; no man had a stronger theory

as to the advantage held by men who have grandfathers over those who

have none, or have none worth talking about. Let it not be thought

that our doctor was a perfect character. No, indeed; most far from

perfect. He had within him an inner, stubborn, self-admiring pride,

which made him believe himself to be better and higher than those

around him, and this from some unknown cause which he could hardly

explain to himself. He had a pride in being a poor man of a high

family; he had a pride in repudiating the very family of which he

was proud; and he had a special pride in keeping his pride silently

to himself. His father had been a Thorne, and his mother a Thorold.

There was no better blood to be had in England. It was in the

possession of such properties as these that he condescended to

rejoice; this man, with a man's heart, a man's courage, and a man's

humanity! Other doctors round the county had ditch-water in their

veins; he could boast of a pure ichor, to which that of the great

Omnium family was but a muddy puddle. It was thus that he loved to

excel his brother practitioners, he who might have indulged in the

pride of excelling them both in talent and in energy! We speak now

of his early days; but even in his maturer life, the man, though

mellowed, was the same.

This was the man who now promised to take to his bosom as his own

child a poor bastard whose father was already dead, and whose

mother's family was such as the Scatcherds! It was necessary that

the child's history should be known to none. Except to the mother's

brother it was an object of interest to no one. The mother had for

some short time been talked of; but now the nine-days' wonder was a

wonder no longer. She went off to her far-away home; her husband's

generosity was duly chronicled in the papers, and the babe was left

untalked of and unknown.

It was easy to explain to Scatcherd that the child had not lived.

There was a parting interview between the brother and sister in the

jail, during which, with real tears and unaffected sorrow, the mother

thus accounted for the offspring of her shame. Then she started,

fortunate in her coming fortunes; and the doctor took with him his

charge to the new country in which they were both to live. There he

found for her a fitting home till she should be old enough to sit

at his table and live in his bachelor house; and no one but old Mr

Gresham knew who she was, or whence she had come.

Then Roger Scatcherd, having completed his six months' confinement,

came out of prison.

Roger Scatcherd, though his hands were now red with blood, was to be

pitied. A short time before the days of Henry Thorne's death he had

married a young wife in his own class of life, and had made many

resolves that henceforward his conduct should be such as might become

a married man, and might not disgrace the respectable brother-in-law

he was about to have given him. Such was his condition when he first

heard of his sister's plight. As has been said, he filled himself

with drink and started off on the scent of blood.

During his prison days his wife had to support herself as she might.

The decent articles of furniture which they had put together were

sold; she gave up their little house, and, bowed down by misery, she

also was brought near to death. When he was liberated he at once got

work; but those who have watched the lives of such people know how

hard it is for them to recover lost ground. She became a mother

immediately after his liberation, and when her child was born they

were in direst want; for Scatcherd was again drinking, and his

resolves were blown to the wind.

The doctor was then living at Greshamsbury. He had gone over there

before the day on which he undertook the charge of poor Mary's baby,

and soon found himself settled as the Greshamsbury doctor. This

occurred very soon after the birth of the young heir. His predecessor

in this career had "bettered" himself, or endeavoured to do so, by

seeking the practice of some large town, and Lady Arabella, at a very

critical time, was absolutely left with no other advice than that of

a stranger, picked up, as she declared to Lady de Courcy, somewhere

about Barchester jail, or Barchester court-house, she did not know

which.

Of course Lady Arabella could not suckle the young heir herself.

Ladies Arabella never can. They are gifted with the powers of being

mothers, but not nursing-mothers. Nature gives them bosoms for show,

but not for use. So Lady Arabella had a wet-nurse. At the end of six

months the new doctor found Master Frank was not doing quite so well

as he should do; and after a little trouble it was discovered that

the very excellent young woman who had been sent express from Courcy

Castle to Greshamsbury--a supply being kept up on the lord's demesne

for the family use--was fond of brandy. She was at once sent back to

the castle, of course; and, as Lady de Courcy was too much in dudgeon

to send another, Dr Thorne was allowed to procure one. He thought of

the misery of Roger Scatcherd's wife, thought also of her health,

and strength, and active habits; and thus Mrs Scatcherd became the

foster-mother to young Frank Gresham.

One other episode we must tell of past times. Previous to his

father's death, Dr Thorne was in love. Nor had he altogether sighed

and pleaded in vain; though it had not quite come to that, that the

young lady's friends, or even the young lady herself, had actually

accepted his suit. At that time his name stood well in Barchester.

His father was a prebendary; his cousins and his best friends were

the Thornes of Ullathorne, and the lady, who shall be nameless, was

not thought to be injudicious in listening to the young doctor. But

when Henry Thorne went so far astray, when the old doctor died, when

the young doctor quarrelled with Ullathorne, when the brother was

killed in a disgraceful quarrel, and it turned out that the physician

had nothing but his profession and no settled locality in which to

exercise it; then, indeed, the young lady's friends thought that she

was injudicious, and the young lady herself had not spirit enough, or

love enough, to be disobedient. In those stormy days of the trial she

told Dr Thorne that perhaps it would be wise that they should not see

each other any more.

Dr Thorne, so counselled, at such a moment,--so informed then, when

he most required comfort from his love, at once swore loudly that he

agreed with her. He rushed forth with a bursting heart, and said to

himself that the world was bad, all bad. He saw the lady no more;

and, if I am rightly informed, never again made matrimonial overtures

to any one.

CHAPTER III

Dr Thorne

And thus Dr Thorne became settled for life in the little village of

Greshamsbury. As was then the wont with many country practitioners,

and as should be the wont with them all if they consulted their own

dignity a little less and the comforts of their customers somewhat

more, he added the business of a dispensing apothecary to that of

physician. In doing so, he was of course much reviled. Many people

around him declared that he could not truly be a doctor, or, at any

rate, a doctor to be so called; and his brethren in the art living

around him, though they knew that his diplomas, degrees, and

certificates were all \_en rÃ¨gle\_, rather countenanced the report.

There was much about this new-comer which did not endear him to his

own profession. In the first place he was a new-comer, and, as such,

was of course to be regarded by other doctors as being \_de trop\_.

Greshamsbury was only fifteen miles from Barchester, where there was

a regular dÃ©pÃ´t of medical skill, and but eight from Silverbridge,

where a properly established physician had been in residence for the

last forty years. Dr Thorne's predecessor at Greshamsbury had been a

humble-minded general practitioner, gifted with a due respect for

the physicians of the county; and he, though he had been allowed to

physic the servants, and sometimes the children of Greshamsbury, had

never had the presumption to put himself on a par with his betters.

Then, also, Dr Thorne, though a graduated physician, though entitled

beyond all dispute to call himself a doctor, according to all the

laws of all the colleges, made it known to the East Barsetshire

world, very soon after he had seated himself at Greshamsbury, that

his rate of pay was to be seven-and-sixpence a visit within a

circuit of five miles, with a proportionally increased charge at

proportionally increased distances. Now there was something low,

mean, unprofessional, and democratic in this; so, at least, said the

children of Ãsculapius gathered together in conclave at Barchester.

In the first place, it showed that this Thorne was always thinking

of his money, like an apothecary, as he was; whereas, it would have

behoved him, as a physician, had he had the feelings of a physician

under his hat, to have regarded his own pursuits in a purely

philosophical spirit, and to have taken any gain which might have

accrued as an accidental adjunct to his station in life. A physician

should take his fee without letting his left hand know what his right

hand was doing; it should be taken without a thought, without a look,

without a move of the facial muscles; the true physician should

hardly be aware that the last friendly grasp of the hand had been

made more precious by the touch of gold. Whereas, that fellow Thorne

would lug out half a crown from his breeches pocket and give it in

change for a ten shilling piece. And then it was clear that this man

had no appreciation of the dignity of a learned profession. He might

constantly be seen compounding medicines in the shop, at the left

hand of his front door; not making experiments philosophically in

materia medica for the benefit of coming ages--which, if he did, he

should have done in the seclusion of his study, far from profane

eyes--but positively putting together common powders for rural

bowels, or spreading vulgar ointments for agricultural ailments.

A man of this sort was not fit society for Dr Fillgrave of

Barchester. That must be admitted. And yet he had been found to be

fit society for the old squire of Greshamsbury, whose shoe-ribbons Dr

Fillgrave would not have objected to tie; so high did the old squire

stand in the county just previous to his death. But the spirit of the

Lady Arabella was known by the medical profession of Barsetshire, and

when that good man died it was felt that Thorne's short tenure of

Greshamsbury favour was already over. The Barsetshire regulars were,

however, doomed to disappointment. Our doctor had already contrived

to endear himself to the heir; and though there was not even then

much personal love between him and the Lady Arabella, he kept his

place at the great house unmoved, not only in the nursery and in the

bedrooms, but also at the squire's dining-table.

Now there was in this, it must be admitted, quite enough to make him

unpopular with his brethren; and this feeling was soon shown in a

marked and dignified manner. Dr Fillgrave, who had certainly the

most respectable professional connexion in the county, who had a

reputation to maintain, and who was accustomed to meet, on almost

equal terms, the great medical baronets from the metropolis at the

houses of the nobility--Dr Fillgrave declined to meet Dr Thorne in

consultation. He exceedingly regretted, he said, most exceedingly,

the necessity which he felt of doing so: he had never before had

to perform so painful a duty; but, as a duty which he owed to his

profession, he must perform it. With every feeling of respect for

Lady ----, a sick guest at Greshamsbury--and for Mr Gresham, he must

decline to attend in conjunction with Dr Thorne. If his services

could be made available under any other circumstances, he would go to

Greshamsbury as fast as post-horses could carry him.

Then, indeed, there was war in Barsetshire. If there was on Dr

Thorne's cranium one bump more developed than another, it was that of

combativeness. Not that the doctor was a bully, or even pugnacious,

in the usual sense of the word; he had no disposition to provoke a

fight, no propense love of quarrelling; but there was that in him

which would allow him to yield to no attack. Neither in argument nor

in contest would he ever allow himself to be wrong; never at least to

any one but to himself; and on behalf of his special hobbies, he was

ready to meet the world at large.

It will therefore be understood, that when such a gauntlet was thus

thrown in his very teeth by Dr Fillgrave, he was not slow to take it

up. He addressed a letter to the Barsetshire Conservative \_Standard\_,

in which he attacked Dr Fillgrave with some considerable acerbity.

Dr Fillgrave responded in four lines, saying that on mature

consideration he had made up his mind not to notice any remarks

that might be made on him by Dr Thorne in the public press. The

Greshamsbury doctor then wrote another letter, more witty and much

more severe than the last; and as this was copied into the Bristol,

Exeter, and Gloucester papers, Dr Fillgrave found it very difficult

to maintain the magnanimity of his reticence. It is sometimes

becoming enough for a man to wrap himself in the dignified toga of

silence, and proclaim himself indifferent to public attacks; but it

is a sort of dignity which it is very difficult to maintain. As well

might a man, when stung to madness by wasps, endeavour to sit in his

chair without moving a muscle, as endure with patience and without

reply the courtesies of a newspaper opponent. Dr Thorne wrote a third

letter, which was too much for medical flesh and blood to bear. Dr

Fillgrave answered it, not, indeed, in his own name, but in that of

a brother doctor; and then the war raged merrily. It is hardly too

much to say that Dr Fillgrave never knew another happy hour. Had he

dreamed of what materials was made that young compounder of doses at

Greshamsbury he would have met him in consultation, morning, noon,

and night, without objection; but having begun the war, he was

constrained to go on with it: his brethren would allow him no

alternative. Thus he was continually being brought up to the fight,

as a prize-fighter may be seen to be, who is carried up round after

round, without any hope on his own part, and who, in each round,

drops to the ground before the very wind of his opponent's blows.

But Dr Fillgrave, though thus weak himself, was backed in practice

and in countenance by nearly all his brethren in the county. The

guinea fee, the principle of \_giving\_ advice and of selling no

medicine, the great resolve to keep a distinct barrier between

the physician and the apothecary, and, above all, the hatred of

the contamination of a bill, were strong in the medical mind of

Barsetshire. Dr Thorne had the provincial medical world against him,

and so he appealed to the metropolis. The \_Lancet\_ took the matter up

in his favour, but the \_Journal of Medical Science\_ was against him;

the \_Weekly Chirurgeon\_, noted for its medical democracy, upheld him

as a medical prophet, but the \_Scalping Knife\_, a monthly periodical

got up in dead opposition to the \_Lancet\_, showed him no mercy. So

the war went on, and our doctor, to a certain extent, became a noted

character.

He had, moreover, other difficulties to encounter in his professional

career. It was something in his favour that he understood his

business; something that he was willing to labour at it with energy;

and resolved to labour at it conscientiously. He had also other

gifts, such as conversational brilliancy, an aptitude for true

good fellowship, firmness in friendship, and general honesty of

disposition, which stood him in stead as he advanced in life. But,

at his first starting, much that belonged to himself personally was

against him. Let him enter what house he would, he entered it with a

conviction, often expressed to himself, that he was equal as a man to

the proprietor, equal as a human being to the proprietress. To age he

would allow deference, and to special recognised talent--at least so

he said; to rank also, he would pay that respect which was its clear

and recognised prerogative; he would let a lord walk out of a room

before him if he did not happen to forget it; in speaking to a duke

he would address him as his Grace; and he would in no way assume a

familiarity with bigger men than himself, allowing to the bigger man

the privilege of making the first advances. But beyond this he would

admit that no man should walk the earth with his head higher than his

own.

He did not talk of these things much; he offended no rank by boasts

of his own equality; he did not absolutely tell the Earl de Courcy in

words, that the privilege of dining at Courcy Castle was to him no

greater than the privilege of dining at Courcy Parsonage; but there

was that in his manner that told it. The feeling in itself was

perhaps good, and was certainly much justified by the manner in which

he bore himself to those below him in rank; but there was folly in

the resolution to run counter to the world's recognised rules on such

matters; and much absurdity in his mode of doing so, seeing that at

heart he was a thorough Conservative. It is hardly too much to say

that he naturally hated a lord at first sight; but, nevertheless, he

would have expended his means, his blood, and spirit, in fighting for

the upper house of Parliament.

Such a disposition, until it was thoroughly understood, did not tend

to ingratiate him with the wives of the country gentlemen among whom

he had to look for practice. And then, also, there was not much in

his individual manner to recommend him to the favour of ladies. He

was brusque, authoritative, given to contradiction, rough though

never dirty in his personal belongings, and inclined to indulge

in a sort of quiet raillery, which sometimes was not thoroughly

understood. People did not always know whether he was laughing

at them or with them; and some people were, perhaps, inclined to

think that a doctor should not laugh at all when called in to act

doctorially.

When he was known, indeed, when the core of the fruit had been

reached, when the huge proportions of that loving trusting heart had

been learned, and understood, and appreciated, when that honesty had

been recognised, that manly, and almost womanly tenderness had been

felt, then, indeed, the doctor was acknowledged to be adequate in his

profession. To trifling ailments he was too often brusque. Seeing

that he accepted money for the cure of such, he should, we may say,

have cured them without an offensive manner. So far he is without

defence. But to real suffering no one found him brusque; no patient

lying painfully on a bed of sickness ever thought him rough.

Another misfortune was, that he was a bachelor. Ladies think, and

I, for one, think that ladies are quite right in so thinking, that

doctors should be married men. All the world feels that a man when

married acquires some of the attributes of an old woman--he becomes,

to a certain extent, a motherly sort of being; he acquires a

conversance with women's ways and women's wants, and loses the wilder

and offensive sparks of his virility. It must be easier to talk to

such a one about Matilda's stomach, and the growing pains in Fanny's

legs, than to a young bachelor. This impediment also stood much in Dr

Thorne's way during his first years at Greshamsbury.

But his wants were not at first great; and though his ambition was

perhaps high, it was not of an impatient nature. The world was his

oyster; but, circumstanced as he was, he knew that it was not for him

to open it with his lancet all at once. He had bread to earn, which

he must earn wearily; he had a character to make, which must come

slowly; it satisfied his soul that, in addition to his immortal

hopes, he had a possible future in this world to which he could look

forward with clear eyes, and advance with a heart that would know no

fainting.

On his first arrival at Greshamsbury he had been put by the squire

into a house, which he still occupied when that squire's grandson

came of age. There were two decent, commodious, private houses in the

village--always excepting the rectory, which stood grandly in its own

grounds, and, therefore, was considered as ranking above the village

residences--of these two Dr Thorne had the smaller. They stood

exactly at the angle before described, on the outer side of it, and

at right angles to each other. They both possessed good stables and

ample gardens; and it may be as well to specify, that Mr Umbleby, the

agent and lawyer to the estate, occupied the larger one.

Here Dr Thorne lived for eleven or twelve years, all alone; and

then for ten or eleven more with his niece, Mary Thorne. Mary was

thirteen when she came to take up permanent abode as mistress of the

establishment--or, at any rate, to act as the only mistress which the

establishment possessed. This advent greatly changed the tenor of

the doctor's ways. He had been before pure bachelor; not a room in

his house had been comfortably furnished; he at first commenced in a

makeshift sort of way, because he had not at his command the means of

commencing otherwise; and he had gone on in the same fashion, because

the exact time had never come at which it was imperative in him to

set his house in order. He had had no fixed hour for his meals, no

fixed place for his books, no fixed wardrobe for his clothes. He had

a few bottles of good wine in his cellar, and occasionally asked a

brother bachelor to take a chop with him; but beyond this he had

touched very little on the cares of housekeeping. A slop-bowl full of

strong tea, together with bread, and butter, and eggs, was produced

for him in the morning, and he expected that at whatever hour he

might arrive in the evening, some food should be presented to him

wherewith to satisfy the cravings of nature; if, in addition to this,

he had another slop-bowl of tea in the evening, he got all that he

ever required, or all, at least, that he ever demanded.

But when Mary came, or rather, when she was about to come, things

were altogether changed at the doctor's. People had hitherto

wondered--and especially Mrs Umbleby--how a gentleman like Dr Thorne

could continue to live in so slovenly a manner; and how people again

wondered, and again especially Mrs Umbleby, how the doctor could

possibly think it necessary to put such a lot of furniture into a

house because a little chit of a girl of twelve years of age was

coming to live with him.

Mrs Umbleby had great scope for her wonder. The doctor made a

thorough revolution in his household, and furnished his house from

the ground to the roof completely. He painted--for the first time

since the commencement of his tenancy--he papered, he carpeted, and

curtained, and mirrored, and linened, and blanketed, as though a Mrs

Thorne with a good fortune were coming home to-morrow; and all for a

girl of twelve years old. "And how," said Mrs Umbleby, to her friend

Miss Gushing, "how did he find out what to buy?" as though the doctor

had been brought up like a wild beast, ignorant of the nature of

tables and chairs, and with no more developed ideas of drawing-room

drapery than an hippopotamus.

To the utter amazement of Mrs Umbleby and Miss Gushing, the doctor

did it all very well. He said nothing about it to any one--he never

did say much about such things--but he furnished his house well and

discreetly; and when Mary Thorne came home from her school at Bath,

to which she had been taken some six years previously, she found

herself called upon to be the presiding genius of a perfect paradise.

It has been said that the doctor had managed to endear himself to the

new squire before the old squire's death, and that, therefore, the

change at Greshamsbury had had no professional ill effects upon him.

Such was the case at the time; but, nevertheless, all did not go

smoothly in the Greshamsbury medical department. There was six or

seven years' difference in age between Mr Gresham and the doctor,

and, moreover, Mr Gresham was young for his age, and the doctor old;

but, nevertheless, there was a very close attachment between them

early in life. This was never thoroughly sundered, and, backed by

this, the doctor did maintain himself for some years before the

fire of Lady Arabella's artillery. But drops falling, if they fall

constantly, will bore through a stone.

Dr Thorne's pretensions, mixed with his subversive professional

democratic tendencies, his seven-and-sixpenny visits, added to his

utter disregard of Lady Arabella's airs, were too much for her

spirit. He brought Frank through his first troubles, and that at

first ingratiated her; he was equally successful with the early

dietary of Augusta and Beatrice; but, as his success was obtained

in direct opposition to the Courcy Castle nursery principles, this

hardly did much in his favour. When the third daughter was born,

he at once declared that she was a very weakly flower, and sternly

forbade the mother to go to London. The mother, loving her babe,

obeyed; but did not the less hate the doctor for the order, which

she firmly believed was given at the instance and express dictation

of Mr Gresham. Then another little girl came into the world, and the

doctor was more imperative than ever as to the nursery rules and the

excellence of country air. Quarrels were thus engendered, and Lady

Arabella was taught to believe that this doctor of her husband's

was after all no Solomon. In her husband's absence she sent for Dr

Fillgrave, giving very express intimation that he would not have to

wound either his eyes or dignity by encountering his enemy; and she

found Dr Fillgrave a great comfort to her.

Then Dr Thorne gave Mr Gresham to understand that, under such

circumstances, he could not visit professionally at Greshamsbury

any longer. The poor squire saw there was no help for it, and though

he still maintained his friendly connexion with his neighbour,

the seven-and-sixpenny visits were at an end. Dr Fillgrave from

Barchester, and the gentleman at Silverbridge, divided the

responsibility between them, and the nursery principles of Courcy

Castle were again in vogue at Greshamsbury.

So things went on for years, and those years were years of sorrow.

We must not ascribe to our doctor's enemies the sufferings, and

sickness, and deaths that occurred. The four frail little ones that

died would probably have been taken had Lady Arabella been more

tolerant of Dr Thorne. But the fact was, that they did die; and that

the mother's heart then got the better of the woman's pride, and Lady

Arabella humbled herself before Dr Thorne. She humbled herself, or

would have done so, had the doctor permitted her. But he, with his

eyes full of tears, stopped the utterance of her apology, took her

two hands in his, pressed them warmly, and assured her that his joy

in returning would be great, for the love that he bore to all that

belonged to Greshamsbury. And so the seven-and-sixpenny visits were

recommenced; and the great triumph of Dr Fillgrave came to an end.

Great was the joy in the Greshamsbury nursery when the second change

took place. Among the doctor's attributes, not hitherto mentioned,

was an aptitude for the society of children. He delighted to talk to

children, and to play with them. He would carry them on his back,

three or four at a time, roll with them on the ground, race with

them in the garden, invent games for them, contrive amusements in

circumstances which seemed quite adverse to all manner of delight;

and, above all, his physic was not nearly so nasty as that which came

from Silverbridge.

He had a great theory as to the happiness of children; and though

he was not disposed altogether to throw over the precepts of

Solomon--always bargaining that he should, under no circumstances,

be himself the executioner--he argued that the principal duty which

a parent owed to a child was to make him happy. Not only was the man

to be made happy--the future man, if that might be possible--but the

existing boy was to be treated with equal favour; and his happiness,

so said the doctor, was of much easier attainment.

"Why struggle after future advantage at the expense of present pain,

seeing that the results were so very doubtful?" Many an opponent of

the doctor had thought to catch him on the hip when so singular a

doctrine was broached; but they were not always successful. "What!"

said his sensible enemies, "is Johnny not to be taught to read

because he does not like it?" "Johnny must read by all means," would

the doctor answer; "but is it necessary that he should not like it?

If the preceptor have it in him, may not Johnny learn, not only to

read, but to like to learn to read?"

"But," would say his enemies, "children must be controlled." "And so

must men also," would say the doctor. "I must not steal your peaches,

nor make love to your wife, nor libel your character. Much as I

might wish through my natural depravity to indulge in such vices,

I am debarred from them without pain, and I may almost say without

unhappiness."

And so the argument went on, neither party convincing the other. But,

in the meantime, the children of the neighbourhood became very fond

of Dr Thorne.

Dr Thorne and the squire were still fast friends, but circumstances

had occurred, spreading themselves now over a period of many years,

which almost made the poor squire uneasy in the doctor's company. Mr

Gresham owed a large sum of money, and he had, moreover, already sold

a portion of his property. Unfortunately it had been the pride of the

Greshams that their acres had descended from one to another without

an entail, so that each possessor of Greshamsbury had had the full

power to dispose of the property as he pleased. Any doubt as to

its going to the male heir had never hitherto been felt. It had

occasionally been encumbered by charges for younger children; but

these charges had been liquidated, and the property had come down

without any burden to the present squire. Now a portion of this had

been sold, and it had been sold to a certain degree through the

agency of Dr Thorne.

This made the squire an unhappy man. No man loved his family name and

honour, his old family blazon and standing more thoroughly than he

did; he was every whit a Gresham at heart; but his spirit had been

weaker than that of his forefathers; and, in his days, for the first

time, the Greshams were to go to the wall! Ten years before the

beginning of our story it had been necessary to raise a large sum of

money to meet and pay off pressing liabilities, and it was found that

this could be done with more material advantage by selling a portion

of the property than in any other way. A portion of it, about a third

of the whole in value, was accordingly sold.

Boxall Hill lay half-way between Greshamsbury and Barchester, and was

known as having the best partridge shooting in the county; as having

on it also a celebrated fox cover, Boxall Gorse, held in very high

repute by Barsetshire sportsmen. There was no residence on the

immediate estate, and it was altogether divided from the remainder of

the Greshamsbury property. This, with many inward and outward groans,

Mr Gresham permitted to be sold.

It was sold, and sold well, by private contract to a native of

Barchester, who, having risen from the world's ranks, had made for

himself great wealth. Somewhat of this man's character must hereafter

be told; it will suffice to say that he relied for advice in money

matters upon Dr Thorne, and that at Dr Thorne's suggestion he had

purchased Boxall Hill, partridge-shooting and gorse cover all

included. He had not only bought Boxall Hill, but had subsequently

lent the squire large sums of money on mortgage, in all which

transactions the doctor had taken part. It had therefore come to pass

that Mr Gresham was not unfrequently called upon to discuss his money

affairs with Dr Thorne, and occasionally to submit to lectures and

advice which might perhaps as well have been omitted.

So much for Dr Thorne. A few words must still be said about Miss Mary

before we rush into our story; the crust will then have been broken,

and the pie will be open to the guests. Little Miss Mary was kept at

a farm-house till she was six; she was then sent to school at Bath,

and transplanted to the doctor's newly furnished house a little more

than six years after that. It must not be supposed that he had lost

sight of his charge during her earlier years. He was much too well

aware of the nature of the promise which he had made to the departing

mother to do that. He had constantly visited his little niece, and

long before the first twelve years of her life were over had lost all

consciousness of his promise, and of his duty to the mother, in the

stronger ties of downright personal love for the only creature that

belonged to him.

When Mary came home the doctor was like a child in his glee. He

prepared surprises for her with as much forethought and trouble as

though he were contriving mines to blow up an enemy. He took her

first into the shop, and then into the kitchen, thence to the

dining-rooms, after that to his and her bedrooms, and so on till

he came to the full glory of the new drawing-room, enhancing the

pleasure by little jokes, and telling her that he should never dare

to come into the last paradise without her permission, and not then

till he had taken off his boots. Child as she was, she understood the

joke, and carried it on like a little queen; and so they soon became

the firmest of friends.

But though Mary was a queen, it was still necessary that she should

be educated. Those were the earlier days in which Lady Arabella had

humbled herself, and to show her humility she invited Mary to share

the music-lessons of Augusta and Beatrice at the great house. A

music-master from Barchester came over three times a week, and

remained for three hours, and if the doctor chose to send his girl

over, she could pick up what was going on without doing any harm.

So said the Lady Arabella. The doctor with many thanks and with no

hesitation, accepted the offer, merely adding, that he had perhaps

better settle separately with Signor Cantabili, the music-master. He

was very much obliged to Lady Arabella for giving his little girl

permission to join her lessons to those of the Miss Greshams.

It need hardly be said that the Lady Arabella was on fire at once.

Settle with Signor Cantabili! No, indeed; she would do that; there

must be no expense whatever incurred in such an arrangement on Miss

Thorne's account! But here, as in most things, the doctor carried his

point. It being the time of the lady's humility, she could not make

as good a fight as she would otherwise have done; and thus she

found, to her great disgust, that Mary Thorne was learning music in

her schoolroom on equal terms, as regarded payment, with her own

daughters. The arrangement having been made could not be broken,

especially as the young lady in nowise made herself disagreeable; and

more especially as the Miss Greshams themselves were very fond of

her.

And so Mary Thorne learnt music at Greshamsbury, and with her music

she learnt other things also; how to behave herself among girls of

her own age; how to speak and talk as other young ladies do; how to

dress herself, and how to move and walk. All which, she, being quick

to learn, learnt without trouble at the great house. Something also

she learnt of French, seeing that the Greshamsbury French governess

was always in the room.

And then, some few years later, there came a rector, and a rector's

sister; and with the latter Mary studied German, and French also.

From the doctor himself she learnt much; the choice, namely, of

English books for her own reading, and habits of thought somewhat

akin to his own, though modified by the feminine softness of her

individual mind.

And so Mary Thorne grew up and was educated. Of her personal

appearance it certainly is my business as an author to say something.

She is my heroine, and, as such, must necessarily be very beautiful;

but, in truth, her mind and inner qualities are more clearly distinct

to my brain than her outward form and features. I know that she was

far from being tall, and far from being showy; that her feet and

hands were small and delicate; that her eyes were bright when looked

at, but not brilliant so as to make their brilliancy palpably

visible to all around her; her hair was dark brown, and worn very

plainly brushed from her forehead; her lips were thin, and her

mouth, perhaps, in general inexpressive, but when she was eager in

conversation it would show itself to be animated with curves of

wondrous energy; and, quiet as she was in manner, sober and demure as

was her usual settled appearance, she could talk, when the fit came

on her, with an energy which in truth surprised those who did not

know her; aye, and sometimes those who did. Energy! nay, it was

occasionally a concentration of passion, which left her for the

moment perfectly unconscious of all other cares but solicitude for

that subject which she might then be advocating.

All her friends, including the doctor, had at times been made unhappy

by this vehemence of character; but yet it was to that very vehemence

that she owed it that all her friends so loved her. It had once

nearly banished her in early years from the Greshamsbury schoolroom;

and yet it ended in making her claim to remain there so strong, that

Lady Arabella could no longer oppose it, even when she had the wish

to do so.

A new French governess had lately come to Greshamsbury, and was, or

was to be, a great pet with Lady Arabella, having all the great gifts

with which a governess can be endowed, and being also a protÃ©gÃ©e

from the castle. The castle, in Greshamsbury parlance, always meant

that of Courcy. Soon after this a valued little locket belonging to

Augusta Gresham was missing. The French governess had objected to its

being worn in the schoolroom, and it had been sent up to the bedroom

by a young servant-girl, the daughter of a small farmer on the

estate. The locket was missing, and after a while, a considerable

noise in the matter having been made, was found, by the diligence of

the governess, somewhere among the belongings of the English servant.

Great was the anger of Lady Arabella, loud were the protestations

of the girl, mute the woe of her father, piteous the tears of her

mother, inexorable the judgment of the Greshamsbury world. But

something occurred, it matters now not what, to separate Mary Thorne

in opinion from that world at large. Out she then spoke, and to her

face accused the governess of the robbery. For two days Mary was in

disgrace almost as deep as that of the farmer's daughter. But she was

neither quiet nor dumb in her disgrace. When Lady Arabella would not

hear her, she went to Mr Gresham. She forced her uncle to move in the

matter. She gained over to her side, one by one, the potentates of

the parish, and ended by bringing Mam'selle Larron down on her knees

with a confession of the facts. From that time Mary Thorne was dear

to the tenantry of Greshamsbury; and specially dear at one small

household, where a rough-spoken father of a family was often heard to

declare, that for Miss Mary Thorne he'd face man or magistrate, duke

or devil.

And so Mary Thorne grew up under the doctor's eye, and at the

beginning of our tale she was one of the guests assembled at

Greshamsbury on the coming of age of the heir, she herself having

then arrived at the same period of her life.

CHAPTER IV

Lessons from Courcy Castle

It was the first of July, young Frank Gresham's birthday, and the

London season was not yet over; nevertheless, Lady de Courcy had

managed to get down into the country to grace the coming of age

of the heir, bringing with her all the Ladies Amelia, Rosina,

Margaretta, and Alexandrina, together with such of the Honourable

Johns and Georges as could be collected for the occasion.

The Lady Arabella had contrived this year to spend ten weeks in town,

which, by a little stretching, she made to pass for the season; and

had managed, moreover, at last to refurnish, not ingloriously, the

Portman Square drawing-room. She had gone up to London under the

pretext, imperatively urged, of Augusta's teeth--young ladies' teeth

are not unfrequently of value in this way;--and having received

authority for a new carpet, which was really much wanted, had made

such dexterous use of that sanction as to run up an upholsterer's

bill of six or seven hundred pounds. She had of course had her

carriage and horses; the girls of course had gone out; it had been

positively necessary to have a few friends in Portman Square;

and, altogether, the ten weeks had not been unpleasant, and not

inexpensive.

For a few confidential minutes before dinner, Lady de Courcy and her

sister-in-law sat together in the latter's dressing-room, discussing

the unreasonableness of the squire, who had expressed himself with

more than ordinary bitterness as to the folly--he had probably used

some stronger word--of these London proceedings.

"Heavens!" said the countess, with much eager animation; "what can

the man expect? What does he wish you to do?"

"He would like to sell the house in London, and bury us all here for

ever. Mind, I was there only for ten weeks."

"Barely time for the girls to get their teeth properly looked at! But

Arabella, what does he say?" Lady de Courcy was very anxious to learn

the exact truth of the matter, and ascertain, if she could, whether

Mr Gresham was really as poor as he pretended to be.

"Why, he said yesterday that he would have no more going to town at

all; that he was barely able to pay the claims made on him, and keep

up the house here, and that he would not--"

"Would not what?" asked the countess.

"Why, he said that he would not utterly ruin poor Frank."

"Ruin Frank!"

"That's what he said."

"But, surely, Arabella, it is not so bad as that? What possible

reason can there be for him to be in debt?"

"He is always talking of those elections."

"But, my dear, Boxall Hill paid all that off. Of course Frank will

not have such an income as there was when you married into the

family; we all know that. And whom will he have to thank but his

father? But Boxall Hill paid all those debts, and why should there be

any difficulty now?"

"It was those nasty dogs, Rosina," said the Lady Arabella, almost in

tears.

"Well, I for one never approved of the hounds coming to Greshamsbury.

When a man has once involved his property he should not incur any

expenses that are not absolutely necessary. That is a golden rule

which Mr Gresham ought to have remembered. Indeed, I put it to him

nearly in those very words; but Mr Gresham never did, and never will

receive with common civility anything that comes from me."

"I know, Rosina, he never did; and yet where would he have been

but for the de Courcys?" So exclaimed, in her gratitude, the Lady

Arabella; to speak the truth, however, but for the de Courcys, Mr

Gresham might have been at this moment on the top of Boxall Hill,

monarch of all he surveyed.

"As I was saying," continued the countess, "I never approved of the

hounds coming to Greshamsbury; but yet, my dear, the hounds can't

have eaten up everything. A man with ten thousand a year ought to be

able to keep hounds; particularly as he had a subscription."

"He says the subscription was little or nothing."

"That's nonsense, my dear. Now, Arabella, what does he do with his

money? That's the question. Does he gamble?"

"Well," said Lady Arabella, very slowly, "I don't think he does." If

the squire did gamble he must have done it very slyly, for he rarely

went away from Greshamsbury, and certainly very few men looking like

gamblers were in the habit of coming thither as guests. "I don't

think he does gamble." Lady Arabella put her emphasis on the word

gamble, as though her husband, if he might perhaps be charitably

acquitted of that vice, was certainly guilty of every other known in

the civilised world.

"I know he used," said Lady de Courcy, looking very wise, and rather

suspicious. She certainly had sufficient domestic reasons for

disliking the propensity; "I know he used; and when a man begins, he

is hardly ever cured."

"Well, if he does, I don't know it," said the Lady Arabella.

"The money, my dear, must go somewhere. What excuse does he give when

you tell him you want this and that--all the common necessaries of

life, that you have always been used to?"

"He gives no excuse; sometimes he says the family is so large."

"Nonsense! Girls cost nothing; there's only Frank, and he can't have

cost anything yet. Can he be saving money to buy back Boxall Hill?"

"Oh no!" said the Lady Arabella, quickly. "He is not saving anything;

he never did, and never will save, though he is so stingy to me. He

\_is\_ hard pushed for money, I know that."

"Then where has it gone?" said the Countess de Courcy, with a look of

stern decision.

"Heaven only knows! Now, Augusta is to be married. I must of course

have a few hundred pounds. You should have heard how he groaned when

I asked him for it. Heaven only knows where the money goes!" And the

injured wife wiped a piteous tear from her eye with her fine dress

cambric handkerchief. "I have all the sufferings and privations of

a poor man's wife, but I have none of the consolations. He has no

confidence in me; he never tells me anything; he never talks to

me about his affairs. If he talks to any one it is to that horrid

doctor."

"What, Dr Thorne?" Now the Countess de Courcy hated Dr Thorne with a

holy hatred.

"Yes; Dr Thorne. I believe that he knows everything; and advises

everything, too. Whatever difficulties poor Gresham may have, I do

believe Dr Thorne has brought them about. I do believe it, Rosina."

"Well, that is surprising. Mr Gresham, with all his faults, is

a gentleman; and how he can talk about his affairs with a low

apothecary like that, I, for one, cannot imagine. Lord de Courcy has

not always been to me all that he should have been; far from it." And

Lady de Courcy thought over in her mind injuries of a much graver

description than any that her sister-in-law had ever suffered; "but I

have never known anything like that at Courcy Castle. Surely Umbleby

knows all about it, doesn't he?"

"Not half so much as the doctor," said Lady Arabella.

The countess shook her head slowly; the idea of Mr Gresham, a country

gentleman of good estate like him, making a confidant of a country

doctor was too great a shock for her nerves; and for a while she was

constrained to sit silent before she could recover herself.

"One thing at any rate is certain, Arabella," said the countess,

as soon as she found herself again sufficiently composed to offer

counsel in a properly dictatorial manner. "One thing at any rate is

certain; if Mr Gresham be involved so deeply as you say, Frank has

but one duty before him. He must marry money. The heir of fourteen

thousand a year may indulge himself in looking for blood, as Mr

Gresham did, my dear"--it must be understood that there was very

little compliment in this, as the Lady Arabella had always conceived

herself to be a beauty--"or for beauty, as some men do," continued

the countess, thinking of the choice that the present Earl de Courcy

had made; "but Frank must marry money. I hope he will understand this

early; do make him understand this before he makes a fool of himself;

when a man thoroughly understands this, when he knows what his

circumstances require, why, the matter becomes easy to him. I hope

that Frank understands that he has no alternative. In his position he

must marry money."

But, alas! alas! Frank Gresham had already made a fool of himself.

"Well, my boy, I wish you joy with all my heart," said the Honourable

John, slapping his cousin on the back, as he walked round to the

stable-yard with him before dinner, to inspect a setter puppy of

peculiarly fine breed which had been sent to Frank as a birthday

present. "I wish I were an elder son; but we can't all have that

luck."

"Who wouldn't sooner be the younger son of an earl than the eldest

son of a plain squire?" said Frank, wishing to say something civil in

return for his cousin's civility.

"I wouldn't for one," said the Honourable John. "What chance have I?

There's Porlock as strong as a horse; and then George comes next. And

the governor's good for these twenty years." And the young man sighed

as he reflected what small hope there was that all those who were

nearest and dearest to him should die out of his way, and leave him

to the sweet enjoyment of an earl's coronet and fortune. "Now, you're

sure of your game some day; and as you've no brothers, I suppose the

squire'll let you do pretty well what you like. Besides, he's not so

strong as my governor, though he's younger."

Frank had never looked at his fortune in this light before, and was

so slow and green that he was not much delighted at the prospect now

that it was offered to him. He had always, however, been taught to

look to his cousins, the de Courcys, as men with whom it would be

very expedient that he should be intimate; he therefore showed no

offence, but changed the conversation.

"Shall you hunt with the Barsetshire this season, John? I hope you

will; I shall."

"Well, I don't know. It's very slow. It's all tillage here, or else

woodland. I rather fancy I shall go to Leicestershire when the

partridge-shooting is over. What sort of a lot do you mean to come

out with, Frank?"

Frank became a little red as he answered, "Oh, I shall have two," he

said; "that is, the mare I have had these two years, and the horse my

father gave me this morning."

"What! only those two? and the mare is nothing more than a pony."

"She is fifteen hands," said Frank, offended.

"Well, Frank, I certainly would not stand that," said the Honourable

John. "What, go out before the county with one untrained horse and a

pony; and you the heir to Greshamsbury!"

"I'll have him so trained before November," said Frank, "that

nothing in Barsetshire shall stop him. Peter says"--Peter was

the Greshamsbury stud-groom--"that he tucks up his hind legs

beautifully."

"But who the deuce would think of going to work with one horse; or

two either, if you insist on calling the old pony a huntress? I'll

put you up to a trick, my lad: if you stand that you'll stand

anything; and if you don't mean to go in leading-strings all your

life, now is the time to show it. There's young Baker--Harry Baker,

you know--he came of age last year, and he has as pretty a string of

nags as any one would wish to set eyes on; four hunters and a hack.

Now, if old Baker has four thousand a year it's every shilling he has

got."

This was true, and Frank Gresham, who in the morning had been made so

happy by his father's present of a horse, began to feel that hardly

enough had been done for him. It was true that Mr Baker had only four

thousand a year; but it was also true that he had no other child than

Harry Baker; that he had no great establishment to keep up; that he

owed a shilling to no one; and, also, that he was a great fool in

encouraging a mere boy to ape all the caprices of a man of wealth.

Nevertheless, for a moment, Frank Gresham did feel that, considering

his position, he was being treated rather unworthily.

"Take the matter in your own hands, Frank," said the Honourable John,

seeing the impression that he had made. "Of course the governor knows

very well that you won't put up with such a stable as that. Lord

bless you! I have heard that when he married my aunt, and that was

when he was about your age, he had the best stud in the whole county;

and then he was in Parliament before he was three-and-twenty."

"His father, you know, died when he was very young," said Frank.

"Yes; I know he had a stroke of luck that doesn't fall to everyone;

but--"

Young Frank's face grew dark now instead of red. When his cousin

submitted to him the necessity of having more than two horses for

his own use he could listen to him; but when the same monitor talked

of the chance of a father's death as a stroke of luck, Frank was

too much disgusted to be able to pretend to pass it over with

indifference. What! was he thus to think of his father, whose face

was always lighted up with pleasure when his boy came near to him,

and so rarely bright at any other time? Frank had watched his father

closely enough to be aware of this; he knew how his father delighted

in him; he had had cause to guess that his father had many troubles,

and that he strove hard to banish the memory of them when his son was

with him. He loved his father truly, purely, and thoroughly, liked to

be with him, and would be proud to be his confidant. Could he then

listen quietly while his cousin spoke of the chance of his father's

death as a stroke of luck?

"I shouldn't think it a stroke of luck, John. I should think it the

greatest misfortune in the world."

It is so difficult for a young man to enumerate sententiously a

principle of morality, or even an expression of ordinary good

feeling, without giving himself something of a ridiculous air,

without assuming something of a mock grandeur!

"Oh, of course, my dear fellow," said the Honourable John, laughing;

"that's a matter of course. We all understand that without saying it.

Porlock, of course, would feel exactly the same about the governor;

but if the governor were to walk, I think Porlock would console

himself with the thirty thousand a year."

"I don't know what Porlock would do; he's always quarrelling with my

uncle, I know. I only spoke of myself; I never quarrelled with my

father, and I hope I never shall."

"All right, my lad of wax, all right. I dare say you won't be tried;

but if you are, you'll find before six months are over, that it's a

very nice thing to master of Greshamsbury."

"I'm sure I shouldn't find anything of the kind."

"Very well, so be it. You wouldn't do as young Hatherly did, at

Hatherly Court, in Gloucestershire, when his father kicked the

bucket. You know Hatherly, don't you?"

"No; I never saw him."

"He's Sir Frederick now, and has, or had, one of the finest fortunes

in England, for a commoner; the most of it is gone now. Well, when he

heard of his governor's death, he was in Paris, but he went off to

Hatherly as fast as special train and post-horses would carry him,

and got there just in time for the funeral. As he came back to

Hatherly Court from the church, they were putting up the hatchment

over the door, and Master Fred saw that the undertakers had put at

the bottom 'Resurgam.' You know what that means?"

"Oh, yes," said Frank.

"'I'll come back again,'" said the Honourable John, construing the

Latin for the benefit of his cousin. "'No,' said Fred Hatherly,

looking up at the hatchment; 'I'm blessed if you do, old gentleman.

That would be too much of a joke; I'll take care of that.' So he

got up at night, and he got some fellows with him, and they climbed

up and painted out 'Resurgam,' and they painted into its place,

'Requiescat in pace;' which means, you know, 'you'd a great deal

better stay where you are.' Now I call that good. Fred Hatherly did

that as sure as--as sure as--as sure as anything."

Frank could not help laughing at the story, especially at his

cousin's mode of translating the undertaker's mottoes; and then they

sauntered back from the stables into the house to dress for dinner.

Dr Thorne had come to the house somewhat before dinner-time, at Mr

Gresham's request, and was now sitting with the squire in his own

book-room--so called--while Mary was talking to some of the girls

upstairs.

"I must have ten or twelve thousand pounds; ten at the very least,"

said the squire, who was sitting in his usual arm-chair, close to his

littered table, with his head supported on his hand, looking very

unlike the father of an heir of a noble property, who had that day

come of age.

It was the first of July, and of course there was no fire in the

grate; but, nevertheless, the doctor was standing with his back to

the fireplace, with his coat-tails over his arms, as though he were

engaged, now in summer as he so often was in winter, in talking, and

roasting his hinder person at the same time.

"Twelve thousand pounds! It's a very large sum of money."

"I said ten," said the squire.

"Ten thousand pounds is a very large sum of money. There is no doubt

he'll let you have it. Scatcherd will let you have it; but I know

he'll expect to have the title deeds."

"What! for ten thousand pounds?" said the squire. "There is not a

registered debt against the property but his own and Armstrong's."

"But his own is very large already."

"Armstrong's is nothing; about four-and-twenty thousand pounds."

"Yes; but he comes first, Mr Gresham."

"Well, what of that? To hear you talk, one would think that there was

nothing left of Greshamsbury. What's four-and-twenty thousand pounds?

Does Scatcherd know what rent-roll is?"

"Oh, yes, he knows it well enough: I wish he did not."

"Well, then, why does he make such a bother about a few thousand

pounds? The title-deeds, indeed!"

"What he means is, that he must have ample security to cover what he

has already advanced before he goes on. I wish to goodness you had

no further need to borrow. I did think that things were settled last

year."

"Oh if there's any difficulty, Umbleby will get it for me."

"Yes; and what will you have to pay for it?"

"I'd sooner pay double than be talked to in this way," said the

squire, angrily, and, as he spoke, he got up hurriedly from his

chair, thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets, walked quickly to

the window, and immediately walking back again, threw himself once

more into his chair.

"There are some things a man cannot bear, doctor," said he, beating

the devil's tattoo on the floor with one of his feet, "though God

knows I ought to be patient now, for I am made to bear a good many

things. You had better tell Scatcherd that I am obliged to him for

his offer, but that I will not trouble him."

The doctor during this little outburst had stood quite silent with

his back to the fireplace and his coat-tails hanging over his arms;

but though his voice said nothing, his face said much. He was very

unhappy; he was greatly grieved to find that the squire was so soon

again in want of money, and greatly grieved also to find that this

want had made him so bitter and unjust. Mr Gresham had attacked him;

but as he was determined not to quarrel with Mr Gresham, he refrained

from answering.

The squire also remained silent for a few minutes; but he was not

endowed with the gift of silence, and was soon, as it were, compelled

to speak again.

"Poor Frank!" said he. "I could yet be easy about everything if it

were not for the injury I have done him. Poor Frank!"

The doctor advanced a few paces from off the rug, and taking his hand

out of his pocket, he laid it gently on the squire's shoulder. "Frank

will do very well yet," said the he. "It is not absolutely necessary

that a man should have fourteen thousand pounds a year to be happy."

"My father left me the property entire, and I should leave it entire

to my son;--but you don't understand this."

The doctor did understand the feeling fully. The fact, on the other

hand, was that, long as he had known him, the squire did not

understand the doctor.

"I would you could, Mr Gresham," said the doctor, "so that your mind

might be happier; but that cannot be, and, therefore, I say again,

that Frank will do very well yet, although he will not inherit

fourteen thousand pounds a year; and I would have you say the same

thing to yourself."

"Ah! you don't understand it," persisted the squire. "You don't know

how a man feels when he--Ah, well! it's no use my troubling you with

what cannot be mended. I wonder whether Umbleby is about the place

anywhere?"

The doctor was again standing with his back against the

chimney-piece, and with his hands in his pockets.

"You did not see Umbleby as you came in?" again asked the squire.

"No, I did not; and if you will take my advice you will not see him

now; at any rate with reference to this money."

"I tell you I must get it from someone; you say Scatcherd won't let

me have it."

"No, Mr Gresham; I did not say that."

"Well, you said what was as bad. Augusta is to be married in

September, and the money must be had. I have agreed to give Moffat

six thousand pounds, and he is to have the money down in hard cash."

"Six thousand pounds," said the doctor. "Well, I suppose that is not

more than your daughter should have. But then, five times six are

thirty; thirty thousand pounds will be a large sum to make up."

The father thought to himself that his younger girls were but

children, and that the trouble of arranging their marriage portions

might well be postponed a while. Sufficient for the day is the evil

thereof.

"That Moffat is a griping, hungry fellow," said the squire. "I

suppose Augusta likes him; and, as regards money, it is a good

match."

"If Miss Gresham loves him, that is everything. I am not in love with

him myself; but then, I am not a young lady."

"The de Courcys are very fond of him. Lady de Courcy says that he is

a perfect gentleman, and thought very much of in London."

"Oh! if Lady de Courcy says that, of course, it's all right," said

the doctor, with a quiet sarcasm, that was altogether thrown away on

the squire.

The squire did not like any of the de Courcys; especially, he did not

like Lady de Courcy; but still he was accessible to a certain amount

of gratification in the near connexion which he had with the earl and

countess; and when he wanted to support his family greatness, would

sometimes weakly fall back upon the grandeur of Courcy Castle. It

was only when talking to his wife that he invariably snubbed the

pretensions of his noble relatives.

The two men after this remained silent for a while; and then the

doctor, renewing the subject for which he had been summoned into the

book-room, remarked, that as Scatcherd was now in the country--he

did not say, was now at Boxall Hill, as he did not wish to wound the

squire's ears--perhaps he had better go and see him, and ascertain

in what way this affair of the money might be arranged. There was

no doubt, he said, that Scatcherd would supply the sum required at

a lower rate of interest than that at which it could be procured

through Umbleby's means.

"Very well," said the squire. "I'll leave it in your hands, then. I

think ten thousand pounds will do. And now I'll dress for dinner."

And then the doctor left him.

Perhaps the reader will suppose after this that the doctor had some

pecuniary interest of his own in arranging the squire's loans; or, at

any rate, he will think that the squire must have so thought. Not in

the least; neither had he any such interest, nor did the squire think

that he had any. What Dr Thorne did in this matter the squire well

knew was done for love. But the squire of Greshamsbury was a great

man at Greshamsbury; and it behoved him to maintain the greatness of

his squirehood when discussing his affairs with the village doctor.

So much he had at any rate learnt from his contact with the de

Courcys.

And the doctor--proud, arrogant, contradictory, headstrong as he

was--why did he bear to be thus snubbed? Because he knew that the

squire of Greshamsbury, when struggling with debt and poverty,

required an indulgence for his weakness. Had Mr Gresham been in easy

circumstances, the doctor would by no means have stood so placidly

with his hands in his pockets, and have had Mr Umbleby thus thrown in

his teeth. The doctor loved the squire, loved him as his own oldest

friend; but he loved him ten times better as being in adversity than

he could ever have done had things gone well at Greshamsbury in his

time.

While this was going on downstairs, Mary was sitting upstairs with

Beatrice Gresham in the schoolroom. The old schoolroom, so called,

was now a sitting-room, devoted to the use of the grown-up young

ladies of the family, whereas one of the old nurseries was now the

modern schoolroom. Mary well knew her way to the sanctum, and,

without asking any questions, walked up to it when her uncle went to

the squire. On entering the room she found that Augusta and the Lady

Alexandrina were also there, and she hesitated for a moment at the

door.

"Come in, Mary," said Beatrice, "you know my cousin Alexandrina."

Mary came in, and having shaken hands with her two friends, was

bowing to the lady, when the lady condescended, put out her noble

hand, and touched Miss Thorne's fingers.

Beatrice was Mary's friend, and many heart-burnings and much mental

solicitude did that young lady give to her mother by indulging in

such a friendship. But Beatrice, with some faults, was true at heart,

and she persisted in loving Mary Thorne in spite of the hints which

her mother so frequently gave as to the impropriety of such an

affection.

Nor had Augusta any objection to the society of Miss Thorne. Augusta

was a strong-minded girl, with much of the de Courcy arrogance, but

quite as well inclined to show it in opposition to her mother as in

any other form. To her alone in the house did Lady Arabella show much

deference. She was now going to make a suitable match with a man of

large fortune, who had been procured for her as an eligible \_parti\_

by her aunt, the countess. She did not pretend, had never pretended,

that she loved Mr Moffat, but she knew, she said, that in the present

state of her father's affairs such a match was expedient. Mr Moffat

was a young man of very large fortune, in Parliament, inclined to

business, and in every way recommendable. He was not a man of birth,

to be sure; that was to be lamented;--in confessing that Mr Moffat

was not a man of birth, Augusta did not go so far as to admit that he

was the son of a tailor; such, however, was the rigid truth in this

matter--he was not a man of birth, that was to be lamented; but in

the present state of affairs at Greshamsbury, she understood well

that it was her duty to postpone her own feelings in some respect. Mr

Moffat would bring fortune; she would bring blood and connexion. And

as she so said, her bosom glowed with strong pride to think that she

would be able to contribute so much more towards the proposed future

partnership than her husband would do.

'Twas thus that Miss Gresham spoke of her match to her dear friends,

her cousins the de Courcys for instance, to Miss Oriel, her sister

Beatrice, and even to Mary Thorne. She had no enthusiasm, she

admitted, but she thought she had good judgment. She thought she

had shown good judgment in accepting Mr Moffat's offer, though she

did not pretend to any romance of affection. And, having so said,

she went to work with considerable mental satisfaction, choosing

furniture, carriages, and clothes, not extravagantly as her mother

would have done, not in deference to sterner dictates of the latest

fashion as her aunt would have done, with none of the girlish glee

in new purchases which Beatrice would have felt, but with sound

judgment. She bought things that were rich, for her husband was to be

rich, and she meant to avail herself of his wealth; she bought things

that were fashionable, for she meant to live in the fashionable

world; but she bought what was good, and strong, and lasting, and

worth its money.

Augusta Gresham had perceived early in life that she could not obtain

success either as an heiress, or as a beauty, nor could she shine

as a wit; she therefore fell back on such qualities as she had, and

determined to win the world as a strong-minded, useful woman. That

which she had of her own was blood; having that, she would in all

ways do what in her lay to enhance its value. Had she not possessed

it, it would to her mind have been the vainest of pretences.

When Mary came in, the wedding preparations were being discussed. The

number and names of the bridesmaids were being settled, the dresses

were on the tapis, the invitations to be given were talked over.

Sensible as Augusta was, she was not above such feminine cares; she

was, indeed, rather anxious that the wedding should go off well. She

was a little ashamed of her tailor's son, and therefore anxious that

things should be as brilliant as possible.

The bridesmaid's names had just been written on a card as Mary

entered the room. There were the Ladies Amelia, Rosina, Margaretta,

and Alexandrina of course at the head of it; then came Beatrice and

the twins; then Miss Oriel, who, though only a parson's sister, was

a person of note, birth, and fortune. After this there had been here

a great discussion whether or not there should be any more. If there

were to be one more there must be two. Now Miss Moffat had expressed

a direct wish, and Augusta, though she would much rather have done

without her, hardly knew how to refuse. Alexandrina--we hope we

may be allowed to drop the "lady" for the sake of brevity, for the

present scene only--was dead against such an unreasonable request.

"We none of us know her, you know; and it would not be comfortable."

Beatrice strongly advocated the future sister-in-law's acceptance

into the bevy; she had her own reasons; she was pained that Mary

Thorne should not be among the number, and if Miss Moffat were

accepted, perhaps Mary might be brought in as her colleague.

"If you have Miss Moffat," said Alexandrina, "you must have dear

Pussy too; and I really think that Pussy is too young; it will be

troublesome." Pussy was the youngest Miss Gresham, who was now only

eight years old, and whose real name was Nina.

"Augusta," said Beatrice, speaking with some slight hesitation, some

soupÃ§on of doubt, before the high authority of her noble cousin, "if

you do have Miss Moffat would you mind asking Mary Thorne to join

her? I think Mary would like it, because, you see, Patience Oriel

is to be one; and we have known Mary much longer than we have known

Patience."

Then out and spake the Lady Alexandrina.

"Beatrice, dear, if you think of what you are asking, I am sure you

will see that it would not do; would not do at all. Miss Thorne is a

very nice girl, I am sure; and, indeed, what little I have seen of

her I highly approve. But, after all, who is she? Mamma, I know,

thinks that Aunt Arabella has been wrong to let her be here so much,

but--"

Beatrice became rather red in the face, and, in spite of the dignity

of her cousin, was preparing to defend her friend.

"Mind, I am not saying a word against Miss Thorne."

"If I am married before her, she shall be one of my bridesmaids,"

said Beatrice.

"That will probably depend on circumstances," said the Lady

Alexandrina; I find that I cannot bring my courteous pen to drop the

title. "But Augusta is very peculiarly situated. Mr Moffat is, you

see, not of the very highest birth; and, therefore, she should take

care that on her side every one about her is well born."

"Then you cannot have Miss Moffat," said Beatrice.

"No; I would not if I could help it," said the cousin.

"But the Thornes are as good a family as the Greshams," said

Beatrice. She had not quite the courage to say, as good as the de

Courcys.

"I dare say they are; and if this was Miss Thorne of Ullathorne,

Augusta probably would not object to her. But can you tell me who

Miss Mary Thorne is?"

"She is Dr Thorne's niece."

"You mean that she is called so; but do you know who her father

was, or who her mother was? I, for one, must own I do not. Mamma, I

believe, does, but--"

At this moment the door opened gently and Mary Thorne entered the

room.

It may easily be conceived, that while Mary was making her

salutations the three other young ladies were a little cast aback.

The Lady Alexandrina, however, quickly recovered herself, and, by her

inimitable presence of mind and facile grace of manner, soon put the

matter on a proper footing.

"We were discussing Miss Gresham's marriage," said she; "I am sure I

may mention to an acquaintance of so long standing as Miss Thorne,

that the first of September has been now fixed for the wedding."

Miss Gresham! Acquaintance of so long standing! Why, Mary and Augusta

Gresham had for years, we will hardly say now for how many, passed

their mornings together in the same schoolroom; had quarrelled, and

squabbled, and caressed and kissed, and been all but as sisters to

each other. Acquaintance indeed! Beatrice felt that her ears were

tingling, and even Augusta was a little ashamed. Mary, however,

knew that the cold words had come from a de Courcy, and not from a

Gresham, and did not, therefore, resent them.

"So it's settled, Augusta, is it?" said she; "the first of September.

I wish you joy with all my heart," and, coming round, she put her arm

over Augusta's shoulder and kissed her. The Lady Alexandrina could

not but think that the doctor's niece uttered her congratulations

very much as though she were speaking to an equal; very much as

though she had a father and mother of her own.

"You will have delicious weather," continued Mary. "September, and

the beginning of October, is the nicest time of the year. If I were

going honeymooning it is just the time of year I would choose."

"I wish you were, Mary," said Beatrice.

"So do not I, dear, till I have found some decent sort of a body to

honeymoon along with me. I won't stir out of Greshamsbury till I have

sent you off before me, at any rate. And where will you go, Augusta?"

"We have not settled that," said Augusta. "Mr Moffat talks of Paris."

"Who ever heard of going to Paris in September?" said the Lady

Alexandrina.

"Or who ever heard of the gentleman having anything to say on the

matter?" said the doctor's niece. "Of course Mr Moffat will go

wherever you are pleased to take him."

The Lady Alexandrina was not pleased to find how completely the

doctor's niece took upon herself to talk, and sit, and act at

Greshamsbury as though she was on a par with the young ladies of

the family. That Beatrice should have allowed this would not have

surprised her; but it was to be expected that Augusta would have

shown better judgment.

"These things require some tact in their management; some delicacy

when high interests are at stake," said she; "I agree with Miss

Thorne in thinking that, in ordinary circumstances, with ordinary

people, perhaps, the lady should have her way. Rank, however, has its

drawbacks, Miss Thorne, as well as its privileges."

"I should not object to the drawbacks," said the doctor's niece,

"presuming them to be of some use; but I fear I might fail in getting

on so well with the privileges."

The Lady Alexandrina looked at her as though not fully aware whether

she intended to be pert. In truth, the Lady Alexandrina was rather in

the dark on the subject. It was almost impossible, it was incredible,

that a fatherless, motherless, doctor's niece should be pert to an

earl's daughter at Greshamsbury, seeing that that earl's daughter was

the cousin of the Miss Greshams. And yet the Lady Alexandrina hardly

knew what other construction to put on the words she had just heard.

It was at any rate clear to her that it was not becoming that she

should just then stay any longer in that room. Whether she intended

to be pert or not, Miss Mary Thorne was, to say the least, very free.

The de Courcy ladies knew what was due to them--no ladies better;

and, therefore, the Lady Alexandrina made up her mind at once to go

to her own bedroom.

"Augusta," she said, rising slowly from her chair with much stately

composure, "it is nearly time to dress; will you come with me? We

have a great deal to settle, you know."

So she swam out of the room, and Augusta, telling Mary that she would

see her again at dinner, swam--no, tried to swim--after her. Miss

Gresham had had great advantages; but she had not been absolutely

brought up at Courcy Castle, and could not as yet quite assume the

Courcy style of swimming.

"There," said Mary, as the door closed behind the rustling muslins

of the ladies. "There, I have made an enemy for ever, perhaps two;

that's satisfactory."

"And why have you done it, Mary? When I am fighting your battles

behind your back, why do you come and upset it all by making the

whole family of the de Courcys dislike you? In such a matter as that,

they'll all go together."

"I am sure they will," said Mary; "whether they would be equally

unanimous in a case of love and charity, that, indeed, is another

question."

"But why should you try to make my cousin angry; you that ought to

have so much sense? Don't you remember what you were saying yourself

the other day, of the absurdity of combatting pretences which the

world sanctions?"

"I do, Trichy, I do; don't scold me now. It is so much easier to

preach than to practise. I do so wish I was a clergyman."

"But you have done so much harm, Mary."

"Have I?" said Mary, kneeling down on the ground at her friend's

feet. "If I humble myself very low; if I kneel through the whole

evening in a corner; if I put my neck down and let all your cousins

trample on it, and then your aunt, would not that make atonement? I

would not object to wearing sackcloth, either; and I'd eat a little

ashes--or, at any rate, I'd try."

"I know you're clever, Mary; but still I think you're a fool. I do,

indeed."

"I am a fool, Trichy, I do confess it; and am not a bit clever; but

don't scold me; you see how humble I am; not only humble but umble,

which I look upon to be the comparative, or, indeed, superlative

degree. Or perhaps there are four degrees; humble, umble, stumble,

tumble; and then, when one is absolutely in the dirt at their feet,

perhaps these big people won't wish one to stoop any further."

"Oh, Mary!"

"And, oh, Trichy! you don't mean to say I mayn't speak out before

you. There, perhaps you'd like to put your foot on my neck." And then

she put her head down to the footstool and kissed Beatrice's feet.

"I'd like, if I dared, to put my hand on your cheek and give you a

good slap for being such a goose."

"Do; do, Trichy: you shall tread on me, or slap me, or kiss me;

whichever you like."

"I can't tell you how vexed I am," said Beatrice; "I wanted to

arrange something."

"Arrange something! What? arrange what? I love arranging. I fancy

myself qualified to be an arranger-general in female matters. I

mean pots and pans, and such like. Of course I don't allude to

extraordinary people and extraordinary circumstances that require

tact, and delicacy, and drawbacks, and that sort of thing."

"Very well, Mary."

"But it's not very well; it's very bad if you look like that. Well,

my pet, there I won't. I won't allude to the noble blood of your

noble relatives either in joke or in earnest. What is it you want to

arrange, Trichy?"

"I want you to be one of Augusta's bridesmaids."

"Good heavens, Beatrice! Are you mad? What! Put me, even for a

morning, into the same category of finery as the noble blood from

Courcy Castle!"

"Patience is to be one."

"But that is no reason why Impatience should be another, and I should

be very impatient under such honours. No, Trichy; joking apart, do

not think of it. Even if Augusta wished it I should refuse. I should

be obliged to refuse. I, too, suffer from pride; a pride quite as

unpardonable as that of others: I could not stand with your four

lady-cousins behind your sister at the altar. In such a galaxy they

would be the stars and I--"

"Why, Mary, all the world knows that you are prettier than any of

them!"

"I am all the world's very humble servant. But, Trichy, I should

not object if I were as ugly as the veiled prophet and they all as

beautiful as Zuleika. The glory of that galaxy will be held to depend

not on its beauty, but on its birth. You know how they would look at

me; how they would scorn me; and there, in church, at the altar, with

all that is solemn round us, I could not return their scorn as I

might do elsewhere. In a room I'm not a bit afraid of them all." And

Mary was again allowing herself to be absorbed by that feeling of

indomitable pride, of antagonism to the pride of others, which she

herself in her cooler moments was the first to blame.

"You often say, Mary, that that sort of arrogance should be despised

and passed over without notice."

"So it should, Trichy. I tell you that as a clergyman tells you to

hate riches. But though the clergyman tells you so, he is not the

less anxious to be rich himself."

"I particularly wish you to be one of Augusta's bridesmaids."

"And I particularly wish to decline the honour; which honour has

not been, and will not be, offered to me. No, Trichy. I will not be

Augusta's bridesmaid, but--but--but--"

"But what, dearest?"

"But, Trichy, when some one else is married, when the new wing has

been built to a house that you know of--"

"Now, Mary, hold your tongue, or you know you'll make me angry."

"I do so like to see you angry. And when that time comes, when that

wedding does take place, then I will be a bridesmaid, Trichy. Yes!

even though I am not invited. Yes! though all the de Courcys in

Barsetshire should tread upon me and obliterate me. Though I should

be as dust among the stars, though I should creep up in calico among

their satins and lace, I will nevertheless be there; close, close to

the bride; to hold something for her, to touch her dress, to feel

that I am near to her, to--to--to--" and she threw her arms round her

companion, and kissed her over and over again. "No, Trichy; I won't

be Augusta's bridesmaid; I'll bide my time for bridesmaiding."

What protestations Beatrice made against the probability of such an

event as foreshadowed in her friend's promise we will not repeat. The

afternoon was advancing, and the ladies also had to dress for dinner,

to do honour to the young heir.

CHAPTER V

Frank Gresham's First Speech

We have said, that over and above those assembled in the house, there

came to the Greshamsbury dinner on Frank's birthday the Jacksons

of the Grange, consisting of Mr and Mrs Jackson; the Batesons from

Annesgrove, viz., Mr and Mrs Bateson, and Miss Bateson, their

daughter--an unmarried lady of about fifty; the Bakers of Mill Hill,

father and son; and Mr Caleb Oriel, the rector, with his beautiful

sister, Patience. Dr Thorne, and his niece Mary, we count among those

already assembled at Greshamsbury.

There was nothing very magnificent in the number of the guests thus

brought together to do honour to young Frank; but he, perhaps, was

called on to take a more prominent part in the proceedings, to be

made more of a hero than would have been the case had half the county

been there. In that case the importance of the guests would have been

so great that Frank would have got off with a half-muttered speech or

two; but now he had to make a separate oration to every one, and very

weary work he found it.

The Batesons, Bakers, and Jacksons were very civil; no doubt the more

so from an unconscious feeling on their part, that as the squire was

known to be a little out at elbows as regards money, any deficiency

on their part might be considered as owing to the present state

of affairs at Greshamsbury. Fourteen thousand a year will receive

honour; in that case there is no doubt, and the man absolutely

possessing it is not apt to be suspicious as to the treatment he may

receive; but the ghost of fourteen thousand a year is not always so

self-assured. Mr Baker, with his moderate income, was a very much

richer man than the squire; and, therefore, he was peculiarly forward

in congratulating Frank on the brilliancy of his prospects.

Poor Frank had hardly anticipated what there would be to do, and

before dinner was announced he was very tired of it. He had no warmer

feeling for any of the grand cousins than a very ordinary cousinly

love; and he had resolved, forgetful of birth and blood, and all

those gigantic considerations which, now that manhood had come upon

him, he was bound always to bear in mind,--he had resolved to sneak

out to dinner comfortably with Mary Thorne if possible; and if not

with Mary, then with his other love, Patience Oriel.

Great, therefore, was his consternation at finding that, after being

kept continually in the foreground for half an hour before dinner, he

had to walk out to the dining-room with his aunt the countess, and

take his father's place for the day at the bottom of the table.

"It will now depend altogether upon yourself, Frank, whether you

maintain or lose that high position in the county which has been held

by the Greshams for so many years," said the countess, as she walked

through the spacious hall, resolving to lose no time in teaching

to her nephew that great lesson which it was so imperative that he

should learn.

Frank took this as an ordinary lecture, meant to inculcate general

good conduct, such as old bores of aunts are apt to inflict on

youthful victims in the shape of nephews and nieces.

"Yes," said Frank; "I suppose so; and I mean to go along all square,

aunt, and no mistake. When I get back to Cambridge, I'll read like

bricks."

His aunt did not care two straws about his reading. It was not by

reading that the Greshams of Greshamsbury had held their heads up in

the county, but by having high blood and plenty of money. The blood

had come naturally to this young man; but it behoved him to look for

the money in a great measure himself. She, Lady de Courcy, could

doubtless help him; she might probably be able to fit him with a wife

who would bring her money onto his birth. His reading was a matter in

which she could in no way assist him; whether his taste might lead

him to prefer books or pictures, or dogs and horses, or turnips in

drills, or old Italian plates and dishes, was a matter which did not

much signify; with which it was not at all necessary that his noble

aunt should trouble herself.

"Oh! you are going to Cambridge again, are you? Well, if your father

wishes it;--though very little is ever gained now by a university

connexion."

"I am to take my degree in October, aunt; and I am determined, at any

rate, that I won't be plucked."

"Plucked!"

"No; I won't be plucked. Baker was plucked last year, and all because

he got into the wrong set at John's. He's an excellent fellow if you

knew him. He got among a set of men who did nothing but smoke and

drink beer. Malthusians, we call them."

"Malthusians!"

"'Malt,' you know, aunt, and 'use;' meaning that they drink beer. So

poor Harry Baker got plucked. I don't know that a fellow's any the

worse; however, I won't get plucked."

By this time the party had taken their place round the long board,

Mr Gresham sitting at the top, in the place usually occupied by Lady

Arabella. She, on the present occasion, sat next to her son on the

one side, as the countess did on the other. If, therefore, Frank now

went astray, it would not be from want of proper leading.

"Aunt, will you have some beef?" said he, as soon as the soup

and fish had been disposed of, anxious to perform the rites of

hospitality now for the first time committed to his charge.

"Do not be in a hurry, Frank," said his mother; "the servants will--"

"Oh! ah! I forgot; there are cutlets and those sort of things. My

hand is not in yet for this work, aunt. Well, as I was saying about

Cambridge--"

"Is Frank to go back to Cambridge, Arabella?" said the countess to

her sister-in-law, speaking across her nephew.

"So his father seems to say."

"Is it not a waste of time?" asked the countess.

"You know I never interfere," said the Lady Arabella; "I never liked

the idea of Cambridge myself at all. All the de Courcys were Christ

Church men; but the Greshams, it seems, were always at Cambridge."

"Would it not be better to send him abroad at once?"

"Much better, I would think," said the Lady Arabella; "but you know,

I never interfere: perhaps you would speak to Mr Gresham."

The countess smiled grimly, and shook her head with a decidedly

negative shake. Had she said out loud to the young man, "Your father

is such an obstinate, pig-headed, ignorant fool, that it is no use

speaking to him; it would be wasting fragrance on the desert air,"

she could not have spoken more plainly. The effect on Frank was this:

that he said to himself, speaking quite as plainly as Lady de Courcy

had spoken by her shake of the face, "My mother and aunt are always

down on the governor, always; but the more they are down on him the

more I'll stick to him. I certainly will take my degree: I will read

like bricks; and I'll begin to-morrow."

"Now will you take some beef, aunt?" This was said out loud.

The Countess de Courcy was very anxious to go on with her lesson

without loss of time; but she could not, while surrounded by guests

and servants, enunciate the great secret: "You must marry money,

Frank; that is your one great duty; that is the matter to be borne

steadfastly in your mind." She could not now, with sufficient weight

and impress of emphasis, pour this wisdom into his ears; the more

especially as he was standing up to his work of carving, and was deep

to his elbows in horse-radish, fat, and gravy. So the countess sat

silent while the banquet proceeded.

"Beef, Harry?" shouted the young heir to his friend Baker. "Oh! but I

see it isn't your turn yet. I beg your pardon, Miss Bateson," and he

sent to that lady a pound and a half of excellent meat, cut out with

great energy in one slice, about half an inch thick.

And so the banquet went on.

Before dinner Frank had found himself obliged to make numerous small

speeches in answer to the numerous individual congratulations of his

friends; but these were as nothing to the one great accumulated onus

of an oration which he had long known that he should have to sustain

after the cloth was taken away. Someone of course would propose his

health, and then there would be a clatter of voices, ladies and

gentlemen, men and girls; and when that was done he would find

himself standing on his legs, with the room about him, going round

and round and round.

Having had a previous hint of this, he had sought advice from his

cousin, the Honourable George, whom he regarded as a dab at speaking;

at least, so he had heard the Honourable George say of himself.

"What the deuce is a fellow to say, George, when he stands up after

the clatter is done?"

"Oh, it's the easiest thing in life," said the cousin. "Only remember

this: you mustn't get astray; that is what they call presence of

mind, you know. I'll tell you what I do, and I'm often called up, you

know; at our agriculturals I always propose the farmers' daughters:

well, what I do is this--I keep my eye steadfastly fixed on one of

the bottles, and never move it."

"On one of the bottles!" said Frank; "wouldn't it be better if I made

a mark of some old covey's head? I don't like looking at the table."

"The old covey'd move, and then you'd be done; besides there isn't

the least use in the world in looking up. I've heard people say, who

go to those sort of dinners every day of their lives, that whenever

anything witty is said; the fellow who says it is sure to be looking

at the mahogany."

"Oh, you know I shan't say anything witty; I'll be quite the other

way."

"But there's no reason you shouldn't learn the manner. That's the way

I succeeded. Fix your eye on one of the bottles; put your thumbs in

your waist-coat pockets; stick out your elbows, bend your knees a

little, and then go ahead."

"Oh, ah! go ahead; that's all very well; but you can't go ahead if

you haven't got any steam."

"A very little does it. There can be nothing so easy as your speech.

When one has to say something new every year about the farmers'

daughters, why one has to use one's brains a bit. Let's see: how will

you begin? Of course, you'll say that you are not accustomed to this

sort of thing; that the honour conferred upon you is too much for

your feelings; that the bright array of beauty and talent around

you quite overpowers your tongue, and all that sort of thing. Then

declare you're a Gresham to the backbone."

"Oh, they know that."

"Well, tell them again. Then of course you must say something about

us; or you'll have the countess as black as old Nick."

"Abut my aunt, George? What on earth can I say about her when she's

there herself before me?"

"Before you! of course; that's just the reason. Oh, say any lie you

can think of; you must say something about us. You know we've come

down from London on purpose."

Frank, in spite of the benefit he was receiving from his cousin's

erudition, could not help wishing in his heart that they had all

remained in London; but this he kept to himself. He thanked his

cousin for his hints, and though he did not feel that the trouble

of his mind was completely cured, he began to hope that he might go

through the ordeal without disgracing himself.

Nevertheless, he felt rather sick at heart when Mr Baker got up to

propose the toast as soon as the servants were gone. The servants,

that is, were gone officially; but they were there in a body, men

and women, nurses, cooks, and ladies' maids, coachmen, grooms, and

footmen, standing in two doorways to hear what Master Frank would

say. The old housekeeper headed the maids at one door, standing

boldly inside the room; and the butler controlled the men at the

other, marshalling them back with a drawn corkscrew.

Mr Baker did not say much; but what he did say, he said well. They

had all seen Frank Gresham grow up from a child; and were now

required to welcome as a man amongst them one who was well qualified

to carry on the honour of that loved and respected family. His

young friend, Frank, was every inch a Gresham. Mr Baker omitted to

make mention of the infusion of de Courcy blood, and the countess,

therefore, drew herself up on her chair and looked as though she were

extremely bored. He then alluded tenderly to his own long friendship

with the present squire, Francis Newbold Gresham the elder; and sat

down, begging them to drink health, prosperity, long life, and an

excellent wife to their dear young friend, Francis Newbold Gresham

the younger.

There was a great jingling of glasses, of course; made the merrier

and the louder by the fact that the ladies were still there as

well as the gentlemen. Ladies don't drink toasts frequently; and,

therefore, the occasion coming rarely was the more enjoyed. "God

bless you, Frank!" "Your good health, Frank!" "And especially a

good wife, Frank!" "Two or three of them, Frank!" "Good health and

prosperity to you, Mr Gresham!" "More power to you, Frank, my boy!"

"May God bless you and preserve you, my dear boy!" and then a merry,

sweet, eager voice from the far end of the table, "Frank! Frank! Do

look at me, pray do Frank; I am drinking your health in real wine;

ain't I, papa?" Such were the addresses which greeted Mr Francis

Newbold Gresham the younger as he essayed to rise up on his feet for

the first time since he had come to man's estate.

When the clatter was at an end, and he was fairly on his legs, he

cast a glance before him on the table, to look for a decanter. He

had not much liked his cousin's theory of sticking to the bottle;

nevertheless, in the difficulty of the moment, it was well to have

any system to go by. But, as misfortune would have it, though the

table was covered with bottles, his eye could not catch one. Indeed,

his eye first could catch nothing, for the things swam before him,

and the guests all seemed to dance in their chairs.

Up he got, however, and commenced his speech. As he could not follow

his preceptor's advice as touching the bottle, he adopted his own

crude plan of "making a mark on some old covey's head," and therefore

looked dead at the doctor.

"Upon my word, I am very much obliged to you, gentlemen and ladies,

ladies and gentlemen, I should say, for drinking my health, and

doing me so much honour, and all that sort of thing. Upon my word I

am. Especially to Mr Baker. I don't mean you, Harry, you're not Mr

Baker."

"As much as you're Mr Gresham, Master Frank."

"But I am not Mr Gresham; and I don't mean to be for many a long year

if I can help it; not at any rate till we have had another coming of

age here."

"Bravo, Frank; and whose will that be?"

"That will be my son, and a very fine lad he will be; and I hope

he'll make a better speech than his father. Mr Baker said I was every

inch a Gresham. Well, I hope I am." Here the countess began to look

cold and angry. "I hope the day will never come when my father won't

own me for one."

"There's no fear, no fear," said the doctor, who was almost put out

of countenance by the orator's intense gaze. The countess looked

colder and more angry, and muttered something to herself about a

bear-garden.

"Gardez Gresham; eh? Harry! mind that when you're sticking in a gap

and I'm coming after you. Well, I am sure I am very obliged to you

for the honour you have all done me, especially the ladies, who don't

do this sort of thing on ordinary occasions. I wish they did; don't

you, doctor? And talking of the ladies, my aunt and cousins have come

all the way from London to hear me make this speech, which certainly

is not worth the trouble; but, all the same I am very much obliged

to them." And he looked round and made a little bow at the countess.

"And so I am to Mr and Mrs Jackson, and Mr and Mrs and Miss Bateson,

and Mr Baker--I'm not at all obliged to you, Harry--and to Mr Oriel

and Miss Oriel, and to Mr Umbleby, and to Dr Thorne, and to Mary--I

beg her pardon, I mean Miss Thorne." And then he sat down, amid the

loud plaudits of the company, and a string of blessings which came

from the servants behind him.

After this the ladies rose and departed. As she went, Lady Arabella,

kissed her son's forehead, and then his sisters kissed him, and one

or two of his lady-cousins; and then Miss Bateson shook him by the

hand. "Oh, Miss Bateson," said he, "I thought the kissing was to go

all round." So Miss Bateson laughed and went her way; and Patience

Oriel nodded at him, but Mary Thorne, as she quietly left the room,

almost hidden among the extensive draperies of the grander ladies,

hardly allowed her eyes to meet his.

He got up to hold the door for them as they passed; and as they went,

he managed to take Patience by the hand; he took her hand and pressed

it for a moment, but dropped it quickly, in order that he might go

through the same ceremony with Mary, but Mary was too quick for him.

"Frank," said Mr Gresham, as soon as the door was closed, "bring

your glass here, my boy;" and the father made room for his son close

beside himself. "The ceremony is now over, so you may have your place

of dignity." Frank sat himself down where he was told, and Mr Gresham

put his hand on his son's shoulder and half caressed him, while the

tears stood in his eyes. "I think the doctor is right, Baker, I think

he'll never make us ashamed of him."

"I am sure he never will," said Mr Baker.

"I don't think he ever will," said Dr Thorne.

The tones of the men's voices were very different. Mr Baker did not

care a straw about it; why should he? He had an heir of his own as

well as the squire; one also who was the apple of \_his\_ eye. But the

doctor,--he did care; he had a niece, to be sure, whom he loved,

perhaps as well as these men loved their sons; but there was room in

his heart also for young Frank Gresham.

After this small exposÃ© of feeling they sat silent for a moment or

two. But silence was not dear to the heart of the Honourable John,

and so he took up the running.

"That's a niceish nag you gave Frank this morning," he said to his

uncle. "I was looking at him before dinner. He is a Monsoon, isn't

he?"

"Well I can't say I know how he was bred," said the squire. "He shows

a good deal of breeding."

"He's a Monsoon, I'm sure," said the Honourable John. "They've all

those ears, and that peculiar dip in the back. I suppose you gave a

goodish figure for him?"

"Not so very much," said the squire.

"He's a trained hunter, I suppose?"

"If not, he soon will be," said the squire.

"Let Frank alone for that," said Harry Baker.

"He jumps beautifully, sir," said Frank. "I haven't tried him myself,

but Peter made him go over the bar two or three times this morning."

The Honourable John was determined to give his cousin a helping hand,

as he considered it. He thought that Frank was very ill-used in being

put off with so incomplete a stud, and thinking also that the son had

not spirit enough to attack his father himself on the subject, the

Honourable John determined to do it for him.

"He's the making of a very nice horse, I don't doubt. I wish you had

a string like him, Frank."

Frank felt the blood rush to his face. He would not for worlds have

his father think that he was discontented, or otherwise than pleased

with the present he had received that morning. He was heartily

ashamed of himself in that he had listened with a certain degree of

complacency to his cousin's tempting; but he had no idea that the

subject would be repeated--and then repeated, too, before his father,

in a manner to vex him on such a day as this, before such people as

were assembled there. He was very angry with his cousin, and for a

moment forgot all his hereditary respect for a de Courcy.

"I tell you what, John," said he, "do you choose your day, some day

early in the season, and come out on the best thing you have, and

I'll bring, not the black horse, but my old mare; and then do you try

and keep near me. If I don't leave you at the back of Godspeed before

long, I'll give you the mare and the horse too."

The Honourable John was not known in Barsetshire as one of the most

forward of its riders. He was a man much addicted to hunting, as far

as the get-up of the thing was concerned; he was great in boots and

breeches; wondrously conversant with bits and bridles; he had quite

a collection of saddles; and patronised every newest invention for

carrying spare shoes, sandwiches, and flasks of sherry. He was

prominent at the cover side;--some people, including the master

of hounds, thought him perhaps a little too loudly prominent;

he affected a familiarity with the dogs, and was on speaking

acquaintance with every man's horse. But when the work was cut out,

when the pace began to be sharp, when it behoved a man either to ride

or visibly to decline to ride, then--so at least said they who had

not the de Courcy interest quite closely at heart--then, in those

heart-stirring moments, the Honourable John was too often found

deficient.

There was, therefore, a considerable laugh at his expense when Frank,

instigated to his innocent boast by a desire to save his father,

challenged his cousin to a trial of prowess. The Honourable John

was not, perhaps, as much accustomed to the ready use of his tongue

as was his honourable brother, seeing that it was not his annual

business to depict the glories of the farmers' daughters; at any

rate, on this occasion he seemed to be at some loss for words; he

shut up, as the slang phrase goes, and made no further allusion to

the necessity of supplying young Gresham with a proper string of

hunters.

But the old squire had understood it all; had understood the meaning

of his nephew's attack; had thoroughly understood also the meaning of

his son's defence, and the feeling which actuated it. He also had

thought of the stableful of horses which had belonged to himself when

he came of age; and of the much more humble position which his son

would have to fill than that which \_his\_ father had prepared for him.

He thought of this, and was sad enough, though he had sufficient

spirit to hide from his friends around him the fact, that the

Honourable John's arrow had not been discharged in vain.

"He shall have Champion," said the father to himself. "It is time for

me to give it up."

Now Champion was one of the two fine old hunters which the squire

kept for his own use. And it might have been said of him now, at the

period of which we are speaking, that the only really happy moments

of his life were those which he spent in the field. So much as to its

being time for him to give up.

CHAPTER VI

Frank Gresham's Early Loves

It was, we have said, the first of July, and such being the time of

the year, the ladies, after sitting in the drawing-room for half an

hour or so, began to think that they might as well go through the

drawing-room windows on to the lawn. First one slipped out a little

way, and then another; and then they got on to the lawn; and then

they talked of their hats; till, by degrees, the younger ones of the

party, and at last of the elder also, found themselves dressed for

walking.

The windows, both of the drawing-room and the dining-room, looked out

on to the lawn; and it was only natural that the girls should walk

from the former to the latter. It was only natural that they, being

there, should tempt their swains to come to them by the sight of

their broad-brimmed hats and evening dresses; and natural, also, that

the temptation should not be resisted. The squire, therefore, and the

elder male guests soon found themselves alone round their wine.

"Upon my word, we were enchanted by your eloquence, Mr Gresham, were

we not?" said Miss Oriel, turning to one of the de Courcy girls who

was with her.

Miss Oriel was a very pretty girl; a little older than Frank

Gresham,--perhaps a year or so. She had dark hair, large round dark

eyes, a nose a little too broad, a pretty mouth, a beautiful chin,

and, as we have said before, a large fortune;--that is, moderately

large--let us say twenty thousand pounds, there or thereabouts.

She and her brother had been living at Greshamsbury for the last

two years, the living having been purchased for him--such were

Mr Gresham's necessities--during the lifetime of the last old

incumbent. Miss Oriel was in every respect a nice neighbour; she was

good-humoured, lady-like, lively, neither too clever nor too stupid,

belonging to a good family, sufficiently fond of this world's good

things, as became a pretty young lady so endowed, and sufficiently

fond, also, of the other world's good things, as became the mistress

of a clergyman's house.

"Indeed, yes," said the Lady Margaretta. "Frank is very eloquent.

When he described our rapid journey from London, he nearly moved me

to tears. But well as he talks, I think he carves better."

"I wish you'd had to do it, Margaretta; both the carving and

talking."

"Thank you, Frank; you're very civil."

"But there's one comfort, Miss Oriel; it's over now, and done. A

fellow can't be made to come of age twice."

"But you'll take your degree, Mr Gresham; and then, of course,

there'll be another speech; and then you'll get married, and there

will be two or three more."

"I'll speak at your wedding, Miss Oriel, long before I do at my own."

"I shall not have the slightest objection. It will be so kind of you

to patronise my husband."

"But, by Jove, will he patronise me? I know you'll marry some awful

bigwig, or some terribly clever fellow; won't she, Margaretta?"

"Miss Oriel was saying so much in praise of you before you came out,"

said Margaretta, "that I began to think that her mind was intent on

remaining at Greshamsbury all her life."

Frank blushed, and Patience laughed. There was but a year's

difference in their age; Frank, however, was still a boy, though

Patience was fully a woman.

"I am ambitious, Lady Margaretta," said she. "I own it; but I am

moderate in my ambition. I do love Greshamsbury, and if Mr Gresham

had a younger brother, perhaps, you know--"

"Another just like myself, I suppose," said Frank.

"Oh, yes. I could not possibly wish for any change."

"Just as eloquent as you are, Frank," said the Lady Margaretta.

"And as good a carver," said Patience.

"Miss Bateson has lost her heart to him for ever, because of his

carving," said the Lady Margaretta.

"But perfection never repeats itself," said Patience.

"Well, you see, I have not got any brothers," said Frank; "so all I

can do is to sacrifice myself."

"Upon my word, Mr Gresham, I am under more than ordinary obligations

to you; I am indeed," and Miss Oriel stood still in the path, and

made a very graceful curtsy. "Dear me! only think, Lady Margaretta,

that I should be honoured with an offer from the heir the very moment

he is legally entitled to make one."

"And done with so much true gallantry, too," said the other;

"expressing himself quite willing to postpone any views of his own or

your advantage."

"Yes," said Patience; "that's what I value so much: had he loved me

now, there would have been no merit on his part; but a sacrifice, you

know--"

"Yes, ladies are so fond of such sacrifices, Frank, upon my word, I

had no idea you were so very excellent at making speeches."

"Well," said Frank, "I shouldn't have said sacrifice, that was a

slip; what I meant was--"

"Oh, dear me," said Patience, "wait a minute; now we are going

to have a regular declaration. Lady Margaretta, you haven't got

a scent-bottle, have you? And if I should faint, where's the

garden-chair?"

"Oh, but I'm not going to make a declaration at all," said Frank.

"Are you not? Oh! Now, Lady Margaretta, I appeal to you; did you not

understand him to say something very particular?"

"Certainly, I thought nothing could be plainer," said the Lady

Margaretta.

"And so, Mr Gresham, I am to be told, that after all it means

nothing," said Patience, putting her handkerchief up to her eyes.

"It means that you are an excellent hand at quizzing a fellow like

me."

"Quizzing! No; but you are an excellent hand at deceiving a poor

girl like me. Well, remember I have got a witness; here is Lady

Margaretta, who heard it all. What a pity it is that my brother is

a clergyman. You calculated on that, I know; or you would never had

served me so."

She said so just as her brother joined them, or rather just as he

had joined Lady Margaretta de Courcy; for her ladyship and Mr Oriel

walked on in advance by themselves. Lady Margaretta had found it

rather dull work, making a third in Miss Oriel's flirtation with her

cousin; the more so as she was quite accustomed to take a principal

part herself in all such transactions. She therefore not unwillingly

walked on with Mr Oriel. Mr Oriel, it must be conceived, was not a

common, everyday parson, but had points about him which made him

quite fit to associate with an earl's daughter. And as it was known

that he was not a marrying man, having very exalted ideas on that

point connected with his profession, the Lady Margaretta, of course,

had the less objection to trust herself alone with him.

But directly she was gone, Miss Oriel's tone of banter ceased. It was

very well making a fool of a lad of twenty-one when others were by;

but there might be danger in it when they were alone together.

"I don't know any position on earth more enviable than yours, Mr

Gresham," said she, quite soberly and earnestly; "how happy you ought

to be."

"What, in being laughed at by you, Miss Oriel, for pretending to be

a man, when you choose to make out that I am only a boy? I can bear

to be laughed at pretty well generally, but I can't say that your

laughing at me makes me feel so happy as you say I ought to be."

Frank was evidently of an opinion totally different from that of Miss

Oriel. Miss Oriel, when she found herself \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ with him,

thought it was time to give over flirting; Frank, however, imagined

that it was just the moment for him to begin. So he spoke and looked

very languishing, and put on him quite the airs of an Orlando.

"Oh, Mr Gresham, such good friends as you and I may laugh at each

other, may we not?"

"You may do what you like, Miss Oriel: beautiful women I believe

always may; but you remember what the spider said to the fly, 'That

which is sport to you, may be death to me.'" Anyone looking at

Frank's face as he said this, might well have imagined that he was

breaking his very heart for love of Miss Oriel. Oh, Master Frank!

Master Frank! if you act thus in the green leaf, what will you do in

the dry?

While Frank Gresham was thus misbehaving himself, and going on as

though to him belonged the privilege of falling in love with pretty

faces, as it does to ploughboys and other ordinary people, his great

interests were not forgotten by those guardian saints who were so

anxious to shower down on his head all manner of temporal blessings.

Another conversation had taken place in the Greshamsbury gardens,

in which nothing light had been allowed to present itself; nothing

frivolous had been spoken. The countess, the Lady Arabella, and Miss

Gresham had been talking over Greshamsbury affairs, and they had

latterly been assisted by the Lady Amelia, than whom no de Courcy

ever born was more wise, more solemn, more prudent, or more proud.

The ponderosity of her qualifications for nobility was sometimes too

much even for her mother, and her devotion to the peerage was such,

that she would certainly have declined a seat in heaven if offered to

her without the promise that it should be in the upper house.

The subject first discussed had been Augusta's prospects. Mr Moffat

had been invited to Courcy Castle, and Augusta had been taken thither

to meet him, with the express intention on the part of the countess,

that they should be man and wife. The countess had been careful to

make it intelligible to her sister-in-law and niece, that though Mr

Moffat would do excellently well for a daughter of Greshamsbury, he

could not be allowed to raise his eyes to a female scion of Courcy

Castle.

"Not that we personally dislike him," said the Lady Amelia; "but rank

has its drawbacks, Augusta." As the Lady Amelia was now somewhat

nearer forty than thirty, and was still allowed to walk,

"In maiden meditation, fancy free,"

it may be presumed that in her case rank had been found to have

serious drawbacks.

To this Augusta said nothing in objection. Whether desirable by a

de Courcy or not, the match was to be hers, and there was no doubt

whatever as to the wealth of the man whose name she was to take; the

offer had been made, not to her, but to her aunt; the acceptance

had been expressed, not by her, but by her aunt. Had she thought of

recapitulating in her memory all that had ever passed between Mr

Moffat and herself, she would have found that it did not amount to

more than the most ordinary conversation between chance partners

in a ball-room. Nevertheless, she was to be Mrs Moffat. All that Mr

Gresham knew of him was, that when he met the young man for the first

and only time in his life, he found him extremely hard to deal with

in the matter of money. He had insisted on having ten thousand pounds

with his wife, and at last refused to go on with the match unless

he got six thousand pounds. This latter sum the poor squire had

undertaken to pay him.

Mr Moffat had been for a year or two M.P. for Barchester; having

been assisted in his views on that ancient city by all the de

Courcy interest. He was a Whig, of course. Not only had Barchester,

departing from the light of other days, returned a Whig member of

Parliament, but it was declared, that at the next election, now near

at hand, a Radical would be sent up, a man pledged to the ballot, to

economies of all sorts, one who would carry out Barchester politics

in all their abrupt, obnoxious, pestilent virulence. This was one

Scatcherd, a great railway contractor, a man who was a native of

Barchester, who had bought property in the neighbourhood, and who had

achieved a sort of popularity there and elsewhere by the violence of

his democratic opposition to the aristocracy. According to this man's

political tenets, the Conservatives should be laughed at as fools,

but the Whigs should be hated as knaves.

Mr Moffat was now coming down to Courcy Castle to look after his

electioneering interests, and Miss Gresham was to return with her

aunt to meet him. The countess was very anxious that Frank should

also accompany them. Her great doctrine, that he must marry money,

had been laid down with authority, and received without doubt. She

now pushed it further, and said that no time should be lost; that

he should not only marry money, but do so very early in life; there

was always danger in delay. The Greshams--of course she alluded only

to the males of the family--were foolishly soft-hearted; no one

could say what might happen. There was that Miss Thorne always at

Greshamsbury.

This was more than the Lady Arabella could stand. She protested

that there was at least no ground for supposing that Frank would

absolutely disgrace his family.

Still the countess persisted: "Perhaps not," she said; "but when

young people of perfectly different ranks were allowed to associate

together, there was no saying what danger might arise. They all knew

that old Mr Bateson--the present Mr Bateson's father--had gone off

with the governess; and young Mr Everbeery, near Taunton, had only

the other day married a cook-maid."

"But Mr Everbeery was always drunk, aunt," said Augusta, feeling

called upon to say something for her brother.

"Never mind, my dear; these things do happen, and they are very

dreadful."

"Horrible!" said the Lady Amelia; "diluting the best blood of the

country, and paving the way for revolutions." This was very grand;

but, nevertheless, Augusta could not but feel that she perhaps might

be about to dilute the blood of her coming children in marrying the

tailor's son. She consoled herself by trusting that, at any rate, she

paved the way for no revolutions.

"When a thing is so necessary," said the countess, "it cannot be done

too soon. Now, Arabella, I don't say that anything will come of it;

but it may: Miss Dunstable is coming down to us next week. Now, we

all know that when old Dunstable died last year, he left over two

hundred thousand to his daughter."

"It is a great deal of money, certainly," said Lady Arabella.

"It would pay off everything, and a great deal more," said the

countess.

"It was ointment, was it not, aunt?" said Augusta.

"I believe so, my dear; something called the ointment of Lebanon, or

something of that sort: but there's no doubt about the money."

"But how old is she, Rosina?" asked the anxious mother.

"About thirty, I suppose; but I don't think that much signifies."

"Thirty," said Lady Arabella, rather dolefully. "And what is she

like? I think that Frank already begins to like girls that are young

and pretty."

"But surely, aunt," said the Lady Amelia, "now that he has come to

man's discretion, he will not refuse to consider all that he owes to

his family. A Mr Gresham of Greshamsbury has a position to support."

The de Courcy scion spoke these last words in the sort of tone that a

parish clergyman would use, in warning some young farmer's son that

he should not put himself on an equal footing with the ploughboys.

It was at last decided that the countess should herself convey to

Frank a special invitation to Courcy Castle, and that when she got

him there, she should do all that lay in her power to prevent his

return to Cambridge, and to further the Dunstable marriage.

"We did think of Miss Dunstable for Porlock, once," she said,

naÃ¯vely; "but when we found that it wasn't much over two hundred

thousand, why, that idea fell to the ground." The terms on which the

de Courcy blood might be allowed to dilute itself were, it must be

presumed, very high indeed.

Augusta was sent off to find her brother, and to send him to the

countess in the small drawing-room. Here the countess was to have

her tea, apart from the outer common world, and here, without

interruption, she was to teach her great lesson to her nephew.

Augusta did find her brother, and found him in the worst of bad

society--so at least the stern de Courcys would have thought. Old Mr

Bateson and the governess, Mr Everbeery and his cook's diluted blood,

and ways paved for revolutions, all presented themselves to Augusta's

mind when she found her brother walking with no other company than

Mary Thorne, and walking with her, too, in much too close proximity.

How he had contrived to be off with the old love and so soon on with

the new, or rather, to be off with the new love and again on with the

old, we will not stop to inquire. Had Lady Arabella, in truth, known

all her son's doings in this way, could she have guessed how very

nigh he had approached the iniquity of old Mr Bateson, and to the

folly of young Mr Everbeery, she would in truth have been in a hurry

to send him off to Courcy Castle and Miss Dunstable. Some days

before the commencement of our story, young Frank had sworn in sober

earnest--in what he intended for his most sober earnest, his most

earnest sobriety--that he loved Mary Thorne with a love for which

words could find no sufficient expression--with a love that could

never die, never grow dim, never become less, which no opposition on

the part of others could extinguish, which no opposition on her part

could repel; that he might, could, would, and should have her for his

wife, and that if she told him she didn't love him, he would--

"Oh, oh! Mary; do you love me? Don't you love me? Won't you love me?

Say you will. Oh, Mary, dearest Mary, will you? won't you? do you?

don't you? Come now, you have a right to give a fellow an answer."

With such eloquence had the heir of Greshamsbury, when not yet

twenty-one years of age, attempted to possess himself of the

affections of the doctor's niece. And yet three days afterwards he

was quite ready to flirt with Miss Oriel.

If such things are done in the green wood, what will be done in the

dry?

And what had Mary said when these fervent protestations of an undying

love had been thrown at her feet? Mary, it must be remembered, was

very nearly of the same age as Frank; but, as I and others have so

often said before, "Women grow on the sunny side of the wall." Though

Frank was only a boy, it behoved Mary to be something more than a

girl. Frank might be allowed, without laying himself open to much

just reproach, to throw all of what he believed to be his heart into

a protestation of what he believed to be love; but Mary was in duty

bound to be more thoughtful, more reticent, more aware of the facts

of their position, more careful of her own feelings, and more careful

also of his.

And yet she could not put him down as another young lady might put

down another young gentleman. It is very seldom that a young man,

unless he be tipsy, assumes an unwelcome familiarity in his early

acquaintance with any girl; but when acquaintance has been long and

intimate, familiarity must follow as a matter of course. Frank and

Mary had been so much together in his holidays, had so constantly

consorted together as boys and girls, that, as regarded her, he had

not that innate fear of a woman which represses a young man's tongue;

and she was so used to his good-humour, his fun, and high jovial

spirits, and was, withal, so fond of them and him, that it was very

difficult for her to mark with accurate feeling, and stop with

reserved brow, the shade of change from a boy's liking to a man's

love.

And Beatrice, too, had done harm in this matter. With a spirit

painfully unequal to that of her grand relatives, she had quizzed

Mary and Frank about their early flirtations. This she had done; but

had instinctively avoided doing so before her mother and sister, and

had thus made a secret of it, as it were, between herself, Mary, and

her brother;--had given currency, as it were, to the idea that there

might be something serious between the two. Not that Beatrice had

ever wished to promote a marriage between them, or had even thought

of such a thing. She was girlish, thoughtless, imprudent, inartistic,

and very unlike a de Courcy. Very unlike a de Courcy she was in all

that; but, nevertheless, she had the de Courcy veneration for blood,

and, more than that, she had the Gresham feeling joined to that of

the de Courcys. The Lady Amelia would not for worlds have had the

de Courcy blood defiled; but gold she thought could not defile.

Now Beatrice was ashamed of her sister's marriage, and had often

declared, within her own heart, that nothing could have made her

marry a Mr Moffat.

She had said so also to Mary, and Mary had told her that she was

right. Mary also was proud of blood, was proud of her uncle's blood,

and the two girls talked together in all the warmth of girlish

confidence, of the great glories of family traditions and family

honours. Beatrice had talked in utter ignorance as to her friend's

birth; and Mary, poor Mary, she had talked, being as ignorant; but

not without a strong suspicion that, at some future time, a day of

sorrow would tell her some fearful truth.

On one point Mary's mind was strongly made up. No wealth, no mere

worldly advantage could make any one her superior. If she were born

a gentlewoman, then was she fit to match with any gentleman. Let

the most wealthy man in Europe pour all his wealth at her feet, she

could, if so inclined, give him back at any rate more than that.

That offered at her feet she knew she would never tempt her to yield

up the fortress of her heart, the guardianship of her soul, the

possession of her mind; not that alone, nor that, even, as any

possible slightest fraction of a make-weight.

If she were born a gentlewoman! And then came to her mind those

curious questions; what makes a gentleman? what makes a gentlewoman?

What is the inner reality, the spiritualised quintessence of that

privilege in the world which men call rank, which forces the

thousands and hundreds of thousands to bow down before the few elect?

What gives, or can give it, or should give it?

And she answered the question. Absolute, intrinsic, acknowledged,

individual merit must give it to its possessor, let him be whom, and

what, and whence he might. So far the spirit of democracy was strong

with her. Beyond this it could be had but by inheritance, received

as it were second-hand, or twenty-second-hand. And so far the spirit

of aristocracy was strong within her. All this she had, as may be

imagined, learnt in early years from her uncle; and all this she was

at great pains to teach Beatrice Gresham, the chosen of her heart.

When Frank declared that Mary had a right to give him an answer,

he meant that he had a right to expect one. Mary acknowledged this

right, and gave it to him.

"Mr Gresham," she said.

"Oh, Mary; Mr Gresham!"

"Yes, Mr Gresham. It must be Mr Gresham after that. And, moreover, it

must be Miss Thorne as well."

"I'll be shot if it shall, Mary."

"Well; I can't say that I shall be shot if it be not so; but if it be

not so, if you do not agree that it shall be so, I shall be turned

out of Greshamsbury."

"What! you mean my mother?" said Frank.

"Indeed, I mean no such thing," said Mary, with a flash from her eye

that made Frank almost start. "I mean no such thing. I mean you, not

your mother. I am not in the least afraid of Lady Arabella; but I am

afraid of you."

"Afraid of me, Mary!"

"Miss Thorne; pray, pray, remember. It must be Miss Thorne. Do not

turn me out of Greshamsbury. Do not separate me from Beatrice. It

is you that will drive me out; no one else. I could stand my ground

against your mother--I feel I could; but I cannot stand against you

if you treat me otherwise than--than--"

"Otherwise than what? I want to treat you as the girl I have chosen

from all the world as my wife."

"I am sorry you should so soon have found it necessary to make a

choice. But, Mr Gresham, we must not joke about this at present. I am

sure you would not willingly injure me; but if you speak to me, or of

me, again in that way, you will injure me, injure me so much that I

shall be forced to leave Greshamsbury in my own defence. I know you

are too generous to drive me to that."

And so the interview had ended. Frank, of course, went upstairs to

see if his new pocket-pistols were all ready, properly cleaned,

loaded, and capped, should he find, after a few days' experience,

that prolonged existence was unendurable.

However, he managed to live through the subsequent period; doubtless

with a view of preventing any disappointment to his father's guests.

CHAPTER VII

The Doctor's Garden

Mary had contrived to quiet her lover with considerable propriety

of demeanour. Then came on her the somewhat harder task of quieting

herself. Young ladies, on the whole, are perhaps quite as susceptible

of the softer feelings as young gentlemen are. Now Frank Gresham was

handsome, amiable, by no means a fool in intellect, excellent in

heart; and he was, moreover, a gentleman, being the son of Mr Gresham

of Greshamsbury. Mary had been, as it were, brought up to love him.

Had aught but good happened to him, she would have cried as for a

brother. It must not therefore be supposed that when Frank Gresham

told her that he loved her, she had heard it altogether unconcerned.

He had not, perhaps, made his declaration with that propriety of

language in which such scenes are generally described as being

carried on. Ladies may perhaps think that Mary should have been

deterred, by the very boyishness of his manner, from thinking at all

seriously on the subject. His "will you, won't you--do you, don't

you?" does not sound like the poetic raptures of a highly inspired

lover. But, nevertheless, there had been warmth, and a reality in it

not in itself repulsive; and Mary's anger--anger? no, not anger--her

objections to the declarations were probably not based on the

absurdity of her lover's language.

We are inclined to think that these matters are not always discussed

by mortal lovers in the poetically passionate phraseology which is

generally thought to be appropriate for their description. A man

cannot well describe that which he has never seen nor heard; but

the absolute words and acts of one such scene did once come to the

author's knowledge. The couple were by no means plebeian, or below

the proper standard of high bearing and high breeding; they were

a handsome pair, living among educated people, sufficiently given

to mental pursuits, and in every way what a pair of polite lovers

ought to be. The all-important conversation passed in this wise. The

site of the passionate scene was the sea-shore, on which they were

walking, in autumn.

Gentleman. "Well, Miss ----, the long and short of it is this: here

I am; you can take me or leave me."

Lady--scratching a gutter on the sand with her parasol, so as to

allow a little salt water to run out of one hole into another. "Of

course, I know that's all nonsense."

Gentleman. "Nonsense! By Jove, it isn't nonsense at all: come, Jane;

here I am: come, at any rate you can say something."

Lady. "Yes, I suppose I can say something."

Gentleman. "Well, which is it to be; take me or leave me?"

Lady--very slowly, and with a voice perhaps hardly articulate,

carrying on, at the same time, her engineering works on a wider

scale. "Well, I don't exactly want to leave you."

And so the matter was settled: settled with much propriety and

satisfaction; and both the lady and gentleman would have thought, had

they ever thought about the matter at all, that this, the sweetest

moment of their lives, had been graced by all the poetry by which

such moments ought to be hallowed.

When Mary had, as she thought, properly subdued young Frank, the

offer of whose love she, at any rate, knew was, at such a period of

his life, an utter absurdity, then she found it necessary to subdue

herself. What happiness on earth could be greater than the possession

of such a love, had the true possession been justly and honestly

within her reach? What man could be more lovable than such a man as

would grow from such a boy? And then, did she not love him,--love him

already, without waiting for any change? Did she not feel that there

was that about him, about him and about herself, too, which might so

well fit them for each other? It would be so sweet to be the sister

of Beatrice, the daughter of the squire, to belong to Greshamsbury as

a part and parcel of itself.

But though she could not restrain these thoughts, it never for a

moment occurred to her to take Frank's offer in earnest. Though she

was a grown woman, he was still a boy. He would have to see the world

before he settled in it, and would change his mind about woman half a

score of times before he married. Then, too, though she did not like

the Lady Arabella, she felt that she owed something, if not to her

kindness, at least to her forbearance; and she knew, felt inwardly

certain, that she would be doing wrong, that the world would say

she was doing wrong, that her uncle would think her wrong, if she

endeavoured to take advantage of what had passed.

She had not for an instant doubted; not for a moment had she

contemplated it as possible that she should ever become Mrs Gresham

because Frank had offered to make her so; but, nevertheless, she

could not help thinking of what had occurred--of thinking of it, most

probably much more than Frank did himself.

A day or two afterwards, on the evening before Frank's birthday, she

was alone with her uncle, walking in the garden behind their house,

and she then essayed to question him, with the object of learning if

she were fitted by her birth to be the wife of such a one as Frank

Gresham. They were in the habit of walking there together when he

happened to be at home of a summer's evening. This was not often the

case, for his hours of labour extended much beyond those usual to the

upper working world, the hours, namely, between breakfast and dinner;

but those minutes that they did thus pass together, the doctor

regarded as perhaps the pleasantest of his life.

"Uncle," said she, after a while, "what do you think of this marriage

of Miss Gresham's?"

"Well, Minnie"--such was his name of endearment for her--"I can't say

I have thought much about it, and I don't suppose anybody else has

either."

"She must think about it, of course; and so must he, I suppose."

"I'm not so sure of that. Some folks would never get married if they

had to trouble themselves with thinking about it."

"I suppose that's why you never got married, uncle?"

"Either that, or thinking of it too much. One is as bad as the

other."

Mary had not contrived to get at all near her point as yet; so she

had to draw off, and after a while begin again.

"Well, I have been thinking about it, at any rate, uncle."

"That's very good of you; that will save me the trouble; and perhaps

save Miss Gresham too. If you have thought it over thoroughly, that

will do for all."

"I believe Mr Moffat is a man of no family."

"He'll mend in that point, no doubt, when he has got a wife."

"Uncle, you're a goose; and what is worse, a very provoking goose."

"Niece, you're a gander; and what is worse, a very silly gander. What

is Mr Moffat's family to you and me? Mr Moffat has that which ranks

above family honours. He is a very rich man."

"Yes," said Mary, "I know he is rich; and a rich man I suppose can

buy anything--except a woman that is worth having."

"A rich man can buy anything," said the doctor; "not that I meant to

say that Mr Moffat has bought Miss Gresham. I have no doubt that they

will suit each other very well," he added with an air of decisive

authority, as though he had finished the subject.

But his niece was determined not to let him pass so. "Now, uncle,"

said she, "you know you are pretending to a great deal of worldly

wisdom, which, after all, is not wisdom at all in your eyes."

"Am I?"

"You know you are: and as for the impropriety of discussing Miss

Gresham's marriage--"

"I did not say it was improper."

"Oh, yes, you did; of course such things must be discussed. How is

one to have an opinion if one does not get it by looking at the

things which happen around us?"

"Now I am going to be blown up," said Dr Thorne.

"Dear uncle, do be serious with me."

"Well, then, seriously, I hope Miss Gresham will be very happy as Mrs

Moffat."

"Of course you do: so do I. I hope it as much as I can hope what I

don't at all see ground for expecting."

"People constantly hope without any such ground."

"Well, then, I'll hope in this case. But, uncle--"

"Well, my dear?"

"I want your opinion, truly and really. If you were a girl--"

"I am perfectly unable to give any opinion founded on so strange an

hypothesis."

"Well; but if you were a marrying man."

"The hypothesis is quite as much out of my way."

"But, uncle, I am a girl, and perhaps I may marry;--or at any rate

think of marrying some day."

"The latter alternative is certainly possible enough."

"Therefore, in seeing a friend taking such a step, I cannot but

speculate on the matter as though I were myself in her place. If I

were Miss Gresham, should I be right?"

"But, Minnie, you are not Miss Gresham."

"No, I am Mary Thorne; it is a very different thing, I know. I

suppose \_I\_ might marry any one without degrading myself."

It was almost ill-natured of her to say this; but she had not meant

to say it in the sense which the sounds seemed to bear. She had

failed in being able to bring her uncle to the point she wished

by the road she had planned, and in seeking another road, she had

abruptly fallen into unpleasant places.

"I should be very sorry that my niece should think so," said he; "and

am sorry, too, that she should say so. But, Mary, to tell the truth,

I hardly know at what you are driving. You are, I think, not so clear

minded--certainly, not so clear worded--as is usual with you."

"I will tell you, uncle;" and, instead of looking up into his face,

she turned her eyes down on the green lawn beneath her feet.

"Well, Minnie, what is it?" and he took both her hands in his.

"I think that Miss Gresham should not marry Mr Moffat. I think so

because her family is high and noble, and because he is low and

ignoble. When one has an opinion on such matters, one cannot but

apply it to things and people around one; and having applied my

opinion to her, the next step naturally is to apply it to myself.

Were I Miss Gresham, I would not marry Mr Moffat though he rolled

in gold. I know where to rank Miss Gresham. What I want to know is,

where I ought to rank myself?"

They had been standing when she commenced her last speech; but as

she finished it, the doctor moved on again, and she moved with him.

He walked on slowly without answering her; and she, out of her full

mind, pursued aloud the tenor of her thoughts.

"If a woman feels that she would not lower herself by marrying in

a rank beneath herself, she ought also to feel that she would not

lower a man that she might love by allowing him to marry into a rank

beneath his own--that is, to marry her."

"That does not follow," said the doctor quickly. "A man raises a

woman to his own standard, but a woman must take that of the man she

marries."

Again they were silent, and again they walked on, Mary holding her

uncle's arm with both her hands. She was determined, however, to come

to the point, and after considering for a while how best she might

do it, she ceased to beat any longer about the bush, and asked him a

plain question.

"The Thornes are as good a family as the Greshams, are they not?"

"In absolute genealogy they are, my dear. That is, when I choose to

be an old fool and talk of such matters in a sense different from

that in which they are spoken of by the world at large, I may say

that the Thornes are as good, or perhaps better, than the Greshams,

but I should be sorry to say so seriously to any one. The Greshams

now stand much higher in the county than the Thornes do."

"But they are of the same class."

"Yes, yes; Wilfred Thorne of Ullathorne, and our friend the squire

here, are of the same class."

"But, uncle, I and Augusta Gresham--are we of the same class?"

"Well, Minnie, you would hardly have me boast that I am the same

class with the squire--I, a poor country doctor?"

"You are not answering me fairly, dear uncle; dearest uncle, do you

not know that you are not answering me fairly? You know what I mean.

Have I a right to call the Thornes of Ullathorne my cousins?"

"Mary, Mary, Mary!" said he after a minute's pause, still allowing

his arm to hang loose, that she might hold it with both her hands.

"Mary, Mary, Mary! I would that you had spared me this!"

"I could not have spared it to you for ever, uncle."

"I would that you could have done so; I would that you could!"

"It is over now, uncle: it is told now. I will grieve you no more.

Dear, dear, dearest! I should love you more than ever now; I would,

I would, I would if that were possible. What should I be but for

you? What must I have been but for you?" And she threw herself on

his breast, and clinging with her arms round his neck, kissed his

forehead, cheeks, and lips.

There was nothing more said then on the subject between them. Mary

asked no further question, nor did the doctor volunteer further

information. She would have been most anxious to ask about her

mother's history had she dared to do so; but she did not dare to ask;

she could not bear to be told that her mother had been, perhaps was,

a worthless woman. That she was truly a daughter of a brother of the

doctor, that she did know. Little as she had heard of her relatives

in her early youth, few as had been the words which had fallen from

her uncle in her hearing as to her parentage, she did know this, that

she was the daughter of Henry Thorne, a brother of the doctor, and a

son of the old prebendary. Trifling little things that had occurred,

accidents which could not be prevented, had told her this; but not

a word had ever passed any one's lips as to her mother. The doctor,

when speaking of his youth, had spoken of her father; but no one had

spoken of her mother. She had long known that she was the child of a

Thorne; now she knew also that she was no cousin of the Thornes of

Ullathorne; no cousin, at least, in the world's ordinary language, no

niece indeed of her uncle, unless by his special permission that she

should be so.

When the interview was over, she went up alone to the drawing-room,

and there she sat thinking. She had not been there long before her

uncle came up to her. He did not sit down, or even take off the hat

which he still wore; but coming close to her, and still standing, he

spoke thus:--

"Mary, after what has passed I should be very unjust and very cruel

to you not to tell you one thing more than you have now learned. Your

mother was unfortunate in much, not in everything; but the world,

which is very often stern in such matters, never judged her to have

disgraced herself. I tell you this, my child, in order that you may

respect her memory;" and so saying, he again left her without giving

her time to speak a word.

What he then told her he had told in mercy. He felt what must be her

feelings when she reflected that she had to blush for her mother;

that not only could she not speak of her mother, but that she might

hardly think of her with innocence; and to mitigate such sorrow as

this, and also to do justice to the woman whom his brother had so

wronged, he had forced himself to reveal so much as is stated above.

And then he walked slowly by himself, backwards and forwards through

the garden, thinking of what he had done with reference to this girl,

and doubting whether he had done wisely and well. He had resolved,

when first the little infant was given over to his charge, that

nothing should be known of her or by her as to her mother. He was

willing to devote himself to this orphan child of his brother, this

last seedling of his father's house; but he was not willing so to do

this as to bring himself in any manner into familiar contact with the

Scatcherds. He had boasted to himself that he, at any rate, was a

gentleman; and that she, if she were to live in his house, sit at his

table, and share his hearth, must be a lady. He would tell no lie

about her; he would not to any one make her out to be aught other or

aught better than she was; people would talk about her of course,

only let them not talk to him; he conceived of himself--and the

conception was not without due ground--that should any do so, he

had that within him which would silence them. He would never claim

for this little creature--thus brought into the world without a

legitimate position in which to stand--he would never claim for her

any station that would not properly be her own. He would make for her

a station as best he could. As he might sink or swim, so should she.

So he had resolved; but things had arranged themselves, as they often

do, rather than been arranged by him. During ten or twelve years no

one had heard of Mary Thorne; the memory of Henry Thorne and his

tragic death had passed away; the knowledge that an infant had been

born whose birth was connected with that tragedy, a knowledge never

widely spread, had faded down into utter ignorance. At the end of

these twelve years, Dr Thorne had announced, that a young niece, a

child of a brother long since dead, was coming to live with him. As

he had contemplated, no one spoke to him; but some people did no

doubt talk among themselves. Whether or not the exact truth was

surmised by any, it matters not to say; with absolute exactness,

probably not; with great approach to it, probably yes. By one person,

at any rate, no guess whatever was made; no thought relative to Dr

Thorne's niece ever troubled him; no idea that Mary Scatcherd had

left a child in England ever occurred to him; and that person was

Roger Scatcherd, Mary's brother.

To one friend, and only one, did the doctor tell the whole truth,

and that was to the old squire. "I have told you," said the doctor,

"partly that you may know that the child has no right to mix with

your children if you think much of such things. Do you, however, see

to this. I would rather that no one else should be told."

No one else had been told; and the squire had "seen to it," by

accustoming himself to look at Mary Thorne running about the house

with his own children as though she were of the same brood. Indeed,

the squire had always been fond of Mary, had personally noticed her,

and, in the affair of Mam'selle Larron, had declared that he would

have her placed at once on the bench of magistrates;--much to the

disgust of the Lady Arabella.

And so things had gone on and on, and had not been thought of with

much downright thinking; till now, when she was one-and-twenty

years of age, his niece came to him, asking as to her position, and

inquiring in what rank of life she was to look for a husband.

And so the doctor walked backwards and forwards through the garden,

slowly, thinking now with some earnestness what if, after all, he

had been wrong about his niece? What if by endeavouring to place her

in the position of a lady, he had falsely so placed her, and robbed

her of all legitimate position? What if there was no rank of life to

which she could now properly attach herself?

And then, how had it answered, that plan of his of keeping her all

to himself? He, Dr Thorne, was still a poor man; the gift of saving

money had not been his; he had ever had a comfortable house for her

to live in, and, in spite of Doctors Fillgrave, Century, Rerechild,

and others, had made from his profession an income sufficient for

their joint wants; but he had not done as others do: he had no three

or four thousand pounds in the Three per Cents. on which Mary might

live in some comfort when he should die. Late in life he had insured

his life for eight hundred pounds; and to that, and that only, had

he to trust for Mary's future maintenance. How had it answered,

then, this plan of letting her be unknown to, and undreamed of by,

those who were as near to her on her mother's side as he was on the

father's? On that side, though there had been utter poverty, there

was now absolute wealth.

But when he took her to himself, had he not rescued her from the very

depths of the lowest misery: from the degradation of the workhouse;

from the scorn of honest-born charity-children; from the lowest of

the world's low conditions? Was she not now the apple of his eye, his

one great sovereign comfort--his pride, his happiness, his glory?

Was he to make her over, to make any portion of her over to others,

if, by doing so, she might be able to share the wealth, as well as

the coarse manners and uncouth society of her at present unknown

connexions? He, who had never worshipped wealth on his own behalf;

he, who had scorned the idol of gold, and had ever been teaching her

to scorn it; was he now to show that his philosophy had all been

false as soon as the temptation to do so was put in his way?

But yet, what man would marry this bastard child, without a sixpence,

and bring not only poverty, but ill blood also on his own children?

It might be very well for him, Dr Thorne; for him whose career was

made, whose name, at any rate, was his own; for him who had a fixed

standing-ground in the world; it might be well for him to indulge in

large views of a philosophy antagonistic to the world's practice; but

had he a right to do it for his niece? What man would marry a girl

so placed? For those among whom she might have legitimately found

a level, education had now utterly unfitted her. And then, he well

knew that she would never put out her hand in token of love to any

one without telling all she knew and all she surmised as to her own

birth.

And that question of this evening; had it not been instigated by some

appeal to her heart? Was there not already within her breast some

cause for disquietude which had made her so pertinacious? Why else

had she told him then, for the first time, that she did not know

where to rank herself? If such an appeal had been made to her, it

must have come from young Frank Gresham. What, in such case, would it

behove him to do? Should he pack up his all, his lancet-cases, pestle

and mortar, and seek anew fresh ground in a new world, leaving behind

a huge triumph to those learned enemies of his, Fillgrave, Century,

and Rerechild? Better that than remain at Greshamsbury at the cost of

his child's heart and pride.

And so he walked slowly backwards and forwards through his garden,

meditating these things painfully enough.

CHAPTER VIII

Matrimonial Prospects

It will of course be remembered that Mary's interview with the other

girls at Greshamsbury took place some two or three days subsequently

to Frank's generous offer of his hand and heart. Mary had quite made

up her mind that the whole thing was to be regarded as a folly, and

that it was not to be spoken of to any one; but yet her heart was

sore enough. She was full of pride, and yet she knew she must bow her

neck to the pride of others. Being, as she was herself, nameless, she

could not but feel a stern, unflinching antagonism, the antagonism of

a democrat, to the pretensions of others who were blessed with that

of which she had been deprived. She had this feeling; and yet, of

all the things that she coveted, she most coveted that, for glorying

in which, she was determined to heap scorn on others. She said to

herself, proudly, that God's handiwork was the inner man, the inner

woman, the naked creature animated by a living soul; that all other

adjuncts were but man's clothing for the creature; all others,

whether stitched by tailors or contrived by kings. Was it not within

her capacity to do as nobly, to love as truly, to worship her God in

heaven with as perfect a faith, and her god on earth with as leal a

troth, as though blood had descended to her purely through scores

of purely born progenitors? So to herself she spoke; and yet, as

she said it, she knew that were she a man, such a man as the heir

of Greshamsbury should be, nothing would tempt her to sully her

children's blood by mating herself with any one that was base born.

She felt that were she an Augusta Gresham, no Mr Moffat, let his

wealth be what it might, should win her hand unless he too could tell

of family honours and a line of ancestors.

And so, with a mind at war with itself, she came forth armed to do

battle against the world's prejudices, those prejudices she herself

loved so well.

And was she to give up her old affections, her feminine loves,

because she found that she was a cousin to nobody? Was she no longer

to pour out her heart to Beatrice Gresham with all the girlish

volubility of an equal? Was she to be severed from Patience Oriel,

and banished--or rather was she to banish herself--from the free

place she had maintained in the various youthful female conclaves

held within that parish of Greshamsbury?

Hitherto, what Mary Thorne would say, what Miss Thorne suggested in

such or such a matter, was quite as frequently asked as any opinion

from Augusta Gresham--quite as frequently, unless when it chanced

that any of the de Courcy girls were at the house. Was this to be

given up? These feelings had grown up among them since they were

children, and had not hitherto been questioned among them. Now they

were questioned by Mary Thorne. Was she in fact to find that her

position had been a false one, and must be changed?

Such had been her feelings when she protested that she would not be

Augusta Gresham's bridesmaid, and offered to put her neck beneath

Beatrice's foot; when she drove the Lady Margaretta out of the room,

and gave her own opinion as to the proper grammatical construction of

the word humble; such also had been her feelings when she kept her

hand so rigidly to herself while Frank held the dining-room door open

for her to pass through.

"Patience Oriel," said she to herself, "can talk to him of her father

and mother: let Patience take his hand; let her talk to him;" and

then, not long afterwards, she saw that Patience did talk to him; and

seeing it, she walked along silent, among some of the old people, and

with much effort did prevent a tear from falling down her cheek.

But why was the tear in her eye? Had she not proudly told Frank that

his love-making was nothing but a boy's silly rhapsody? Had she not

said so while she had yet reason to hope that her blood was as good

as his own? Had she not seen at a glance that his love tirade was

worthy of ridicule, and of no other notice? And yet there was a tear

now in her eye because this boy, whom she had scolded from her, whose

hand, offered in pure friendship, she had just refused, because he,

so rebuffed by her, had carried his fun and gallantry to one who

would be less cross to him!

She could hear as she was walking, that while Lady Margaretta was

with them, their voices were loud and merry; and her sharp ear could

also hear, when Lady Margaretta left them, that Frank's voice became

low and tender. So she walked on, saying nothing, looking straight

before her, and by degrees separating herself from all the others.

The Greshamsbury grounds were on one side somewhat too closely hemmed

in by the village. On this side was a path running the length of one

of the streets of the village; and far down the path, near to the

extremity of the gardens, and near also to a wicket-gate which led

out into the village, and which could be opened from the inside, was

a seat, under a big yew-tree, from which, through a breach in the

houses, might be seen the parish church, standing in the park on the

other side. Hither Mary walked alone, and here she seated herself,

determined to get rid of her tears and their traces before she again

showed herself to the world.

"I shall never be happy here again," said she to herself; "never. I

am no longer one of them, and I cannot live among them unless I am

so." And then an idea came across her mind that she hated Patience

Oriel; and then, instantly another idea followed it--quick as such

thoughts are quick--that she did not hate Patience Oriel at all; that

she liked her, nay, loved her; that Patience Oriel was a sweet girl;

and that she hoped the time would come when she might see her the

lady of Greshamsbury. And then the tear, which had been no whit

controlled, which indeed had now made itself master of her, came to a

head, and, bursting through the floodgates of the eye, came rolling

down, and in its fall, wetted her hand as it lay on her lap. "What a

fool! what an idiot! what an empty-headed cowardly fool I am!" said

she, springing up from the bench on her feet.

As she did so, she heard voices close to her, at the little gate.

They were those of her uncle and Frank Gresham.

"God bless you, Frank!" said the doctor, as he passed out of the

grounds. "You will excuse a lecture, won't you, from so old a

friend?--though you are a man now, and discreet, of course, by Act of

Parliament."

"Indeed I will, doctor," said Frank. "I will excuse a longer lecture

than that from you."

"At any rate it won't be to-night," said the doctor, as he

disappeared. "And if you see Mary, tell her that I am obliged to go;

and that I will send Janet down to fetch her."

Now Janet was the doctor's ancient maid-servant.

Mary could not move on without being perceived; she therefore stood

still till she heard the click of the door, and then began walking

rapidly back to the house by the path which had brought her thither.

The moment, however, that she did so, she found that she was

followed; and in a very few moments Frank was alongside of her.

"Oh, Mary!" said he, calling to her, but not loudly, before he quite

overtook her, "how odd that I should come across you just when I have

a message for you! and why are you all alone?"

Mary's first impulse was to reiterate her command to him to call her

no more by her Christian name; but her second impulse told her that

such an injunction at the present moment would not be prudent on her

part. The traces of her tears were still there; and she well knew

that a very little, the slightest show of tenderness on his part, the

slightest effort on her own to appear indifferent, would bring down

more than one other such intruder. It would, moreover, be better

for her to drop all outward sign that she remembered what had taken

place. So long, then, as he and she were at Greshamsbury together, he

should call her Mary if he pleased. He would soon be gone; and while

he remained, she would keep out of his way.

"Your uncle has been obliged to go away to see an old woman at

Silverbridge."

"At Silverbridge! why, he won't be back all night. Why could not the

old woman send for Dr Century?"

"I suppose she thought two old women could not get on well together."

Mary could not help smiling. She did not like her uncle going off so

late on such a journey; but it was always felt as a triumph when he

was invited into the strongholds of his enemies.

"And Janet is to come over for you. However, I told him it was quite

unnecessary to disturb another old woman, for that I should of course

see you home."

"Oh, no, Mr Gresham; indeed you'll not do that."

"Indeed, and indeed, I shall."

"What! on this great day, when every lady is looking for you, and

talking of you. I suppose you want to set the countess against me for

ever. Think, too, how angry Lady Arabella will be if you are absent

on such an errand as this."

"To hear you talk, Mary, one would think that you were going to

Silverbridge yourself."

"Perhaps I am."

"If I did not go with you, some of the other fellows would. John, or

George--"

"Good gracious, Frank! Fancy either of the Mr de Courcys walking home

with me!"

She had forgotten herself, and the strict propriety on which she had

resolved, in the impossibility of forgoing her little joke against

the de Courcy grandeur; she had forgotten herself, and had called

him Frank in her old, former, eager, free tone of voice; and then,

remembering she had done so, she drew herself up, but her lips, and

determined to be doubly on her guard in the future.

"Well, it shall be either one of them or I," said Frank: "perhaps you

would prefer my cousin George to me?"

"I should prefer Janet to either, seeing that with her I should not

suffer the extreme nuisance of knowing that I was a bore."

"A bore! Mary, to me?"

"Yes, Mr Gresham, a bore to you. Having to walk home through the mud

with village young ladies is boring. All gentlemen feel it to be so."

"There is no mud; if there were you would not be allowed to walk at

all."

"Oh! village young ladies never care for such things, though

fashionable gentlemen do."

"I would carry you home, Mary, if it would do you a service," said

Frank, with considerable pathos in his voice.

"Oh, dear me! pray do not, Mr Gresham. I should not like it at all,"

said she: "a wheelbarrow would be preferable to that."

"Of course. Anything would be preferable to my arm, I know."

"Certainly; anything in the way of a conveyance. If I were to act

baby; and you were to act nurse, it really would not be comfortable

for either of us."

Frank Gresham felt disconcerted, though he hardly knew why. He was

striving to say something tender to his lady-love; but every word

that he spoke she turned into joke. Mary did not answer him coldly

or unkindly; but, nevertheless, he was displeased. One does not like

to have one's little offerings of sentimental service turned into

burlesque when one is in love in earnest. Mary's jokes had appeared

so easy too; they seemed to come from a heart so little troubled.

This, also, was cause of vexation to Frank. If he could but have

known all, he would, perhaps, have been better pleased.

He determined not to be absolutely laughed out of his tenderness.

When, three days ago, he had been repulsed, he had gone away owning

to himself that he had been beaten; owning so much, but owning it

with great sorrow and much shame. Since that he had come of age;

since that he had made speeches, and speeches had been made to him;

since that he had gained courage by flirting with Patience Oriel. No

faint heart ever won a fair lady, as he was well aware; he resolved,

therefore, that his heart should not be faint, and that he would see

whether the fair lady might not be won by becoming audacity.

"Mary," said he, stopping in the path--for they were now near the

spot where it broke out upon the lawn, and they could already hear

the voices of the guests--"Mary, you are unkind to me."

"I am not aware of it, Mr Gresham; but if I am, do not you retaliate.

I am weaker than you, and in your power; do not you, therefore, be

unkind to me."

"You refused my hand just now," continued he. "Of all the people here

at Greshamsbury, you are the only one that has not wished me joy; the

only one--"

"I do wish you joy; I will wish you joy; there is my hand," and she

frankly put out her ungloved hand. "You are quite man enough to

understand me: there is my hand; I trust you use it only as it is

meant to be used."

He took it in his and pressed it cordially, as he might have done

that of any other friend in such a case; and then--did not drop it

as he should have done. He was not a St Anthony, and it was most

imprudent in Miss Thorne to subject him to such a temptation.

"Mary," said he; "dear Mary! dearest Mary! if you did but know how I

love you!"

As he said this, holding Miss Thorne's hand, he stood on the pathway

with his back towards the lawn and house, and, therefore, did not at

first see his sister Augusta, who had just at that moment come upon

them. Mary blushed up to her straw hat, and, with a quick jerk,

recovered her hand. Augusta saw the motion, and Mary saw that Augusta

had seen it.

From my tedious way of telling it, the reader will be led to imagine

that the hand-squeezing had been protracted to a duration quite

incompatible with any objection to such an arrangement on the part of

the lady; but the fault is mine: in no part hers. Were I possessed

of a quick spasmodic style of narrative, I should have been able

to include it all--Frank's misbehaviour, Mary's immediate anger,

Augusta's arrival, and keen, Argus-eyed inspection, and then Mary's

subsequent misery--in five words and half a dozen dashes and inverted

commas. The thing should have been so told; for, to do Mary justice,

she did not leave her hand in Frank's a moment longer than she could

help herself.

Frank, feeling the hand withdrawn, and hearing, when it was too late,

the step on the gravel, turned sharply round. "Oh, it's you, is it,

Augusta? Well, what do you want?"

Augusta was not naturally very ill-natured, seeing that in her veins

the high de Courcy blood was somewhat tempered by an admixture of

the Gresham attributes; nor was she predisposed to make her brother

her enemy by publishing to the world any of his little tender

peccadilloes; but she could not but bethink herself of what her aunt

had been saying as to the danger of any such encounters as that she

just now had beheld; she could not but start at seeing her brother

thus, on the very brink of the precipice of which the countess had

specially forewarned her mother. She, Augusta, was, as she well knew,

doing her duty by her family by marrying a tailor's son for whom she

did not care a chip, seeing the tailor's son was possessed of untold

wealth. Now when one member of a household is making a struggle for a

family, it is painful to see the benefit of that struggle negatived

by the folly of another member. The future Mrs Moffat did feel

aggrieved by the fatuity of the young heir, and, consequently, took

upon herself to look as much like her Aunt de Courcy as she could do.

"Well, what is it?" said Frank, looking rather disgusted. "What makes

you stick your chin up and look in that way?" Frank had hitherto been

rather a despot among his sisters, and forgot that the eldest of

them was now passing altogether from under his sway to that of the

tailor's son.

"Frank," said Augusta, in a tone of voice which did honour to the

great lessons she had lately received. "Aunt de Courcy wants to see

you immediately in the small drawing-room;" and, as she said so, she

resolved to say a few words of advice to Miss Thorne as soon as her

brother should have left them.

"In the small drawing-room, does she? Well, Mary, we may as well go

together, for I suppose it is tea-time now."

"You had better go at once, Frank," said Augusta; "the countess will

be angry if you keep her waiting. She has been expecting you these

twenty minutes. Mary Thorne and I can return together."

There was something in the tone in which the words, "Mary Thorne,"

were uttered, which made Mary at once draw herself up. "I hope," said

she, "that Mary Thorne will never be any hindrance to either of you."

Frank's ear had also perceived that there was something in the tone

of his sister's voice not boding comfort to Mary; he perceived that

the de Courcy blood in Augusta's veins was already rebelling against

the doctor's niece on his part, though it had condescended to submit

itself to the tailor's son on her own part.

"Well, I am going," said he; "but look here Augusta, if you say one

word of Mary--"

Oh, Frank! Frank! you boy, you very boy! you goose, you silly goose!

Is that the way you make love, desiring one girl not to tell of

another, as though you were three children, tearing your frocks and

trousers in getting through the same hedge together? Oh, Frank!

Frank! you, the full-blown heir of Greshamsbury? You, a man already

endowed with a man's discretion? You, the forward rider, that did but

now threaten young Harry Baker and the Honourable John to eclipse

them by prowess in the field? You, of age? Why, thou canst not as yet

have left thy mother's apron-string!

"If you say one word of Mary--"

So far had he got in his injunction to his sister, but further than

that, in such a case, was he never destined to proceed. Mary's

indignation flashed upon him, striking him dumb long before the sound

of her voice reached his ears; and yet she spoke as quick as the

words would come to her call, and somewhat loudly too.

"Say one word of Mary, Mr Gresham! And why should she not say as many

words of Mary as she may please? I must tell you all now, Augusta!

and I must also beg you not to be silent for my sake. As far as I am

concerned, tell it to whom you please. This was the second time your

brother--"

"Mary, Mary," said Frank, deprecating her loquacity.

"I beg your pardon, Mr Gresham; you have made it necessary that I

should tell your sister all. He has now twice thought it well to

amuse himself by saying to me words which it was ill-natured in him

to speak, and--"

"Ill-natured, Mary!"

"Ill-natured in him to speak," continued Mary, "and to which it would

be absurd for me to listen. He probably does the same to others," she

added, being unable in heart to forget that sharpest of her wounds,

that flirtation of his with Patience Oriel; "but to me it is almost

cruel. Another girl might laugh at him, or listen to him, as she

would choose; but I can do neither. I shall now keep away from

Greshamsbury, at any rate till he has left it; and, Augusta, I can

only beg you to understand, that, as far as I am concerned, there is

nothing which may not be told to all the world."

And, so saying, she walked on a little in advance of them, as proud

as a queen. Had Lady de Courcy herself met her at this moment, she

would almost have felt herself forced to shrink out of the pathway.

"Not say a word of me!" she repeated to herself, but still out loud.

"No word need be left unsaid on my account; none, none."

Augusta followed her, dumfounded at her indignation; and Frank also

followed, but not in silence. When his first surprise at Mary's

great anger was over, he felt himself called upon to say some word

that might tend to exonerate his lady-love; and some word also of

protestation as to his own purpose.

"There is nothing to be told, nothing, at least of Mary," he said,

speaking to his sister; "but of me, you may tell this, if you choose

to disoblige your brother--that I love Mary Thorne with all my heart;

and that I will never love any one else."

By this time they had reached the lawn, and Mary was able to turn

away from the path which led up to the house. As she left them she

said in a voice, now low enough, "I cannot prevent him from talking

nonsense, Augusta; but you will bear me witness, that I do not

willingly hear it." And, so saying, she started off almost in a run

towards the distant part of the gardens, in which she saw Beatrice.

Frank, as he walked up to the house with his sister, endeavoured to

induce her to give him a promise that she would tell no tales as to

what she had heard and seen.

"Of course, Frank, it must be all nonsense," she had said; "and you

shouldn't amuse yourself in such a way."

"Well, but, Guss, come, we have always been friends; don't let us

quarrel just when you are going to be married." But Augusta would

make no promise.

Frank, when he reached the house, found the countess waiting for him,

sitting in the little drawing-room by herself,--somewhat impatiently.

As he entered he became aware that there was some peculiar gravity

attached to the coming interview. Three persons, his mother, one of

his younger sisters, and the Lady Amelia, each stopped him to let

him know that the countess was waiting; and he perceived that a

sort of guard was kept upon the door to save her ladyship from any

undesirable intrusion.

The countess frowned at the moment of his entrance, but soon smoothed

her brow, and invited him to take a chair ready prepared for him

opposite to the elbow of the sofa on which she was leaning. She had a

small table before her, on which was her teacup, so that she was able

to preach at him nearly as well as though she had been ensconced in a

pulpit.

"My dear Frank," said she, in a voice thoroughly suitable to the

importance of the communication, "you have to-day come of age."

Frank remarked that he understood that such was the case, and added

that "that was the reason for all the fuss."

"Yes; you have to-day come of age. Perhaps I should have been glad to

see such an occasion noticed at Greshamsbury with some more suitable

signs of rejoicing."

"Oh, aunt! I think we did it all very well."

"Greshamsbury, Frank, is, or at any rate ought to be, the seat of the

first commoner in Barsetshire.

"Well; so it is. I am quite sure there isn't a better fellow than

father anywhere in the county."

The countess sighed. Her opinion of the poor squire was very

different from Frank's. "It is no use now," said she, "looking back

to that which cannot be cured. The first commoner in Barsetshire

should hold a position--I will not of course say equal to that of a

peer."

"Oh dear no; of course not," said Frank; and a bystander might have

thought that there was a touch of satire in his tone.

"No, not equal to that of a peer; but still of very paramount

importance. Of course my first ambition is bound up in Porlock."

"Of course," said Frank, thinking how very weak was the staff on

which his aunt's ambition rested; for Lord Porlock's youthful career

had not been such as to give unmitigated satisfaction to his parents.

"Is bound up in Porlock:" and then the countess plumed herself; but

the mother sighed. "And next to Porlock, Frank, my anxiety is about

you."

"Upon my honour, aunt, I am very much obliged. I shall be all right,

you'll see."

"Greshamsbury, my dear boy, is not now what it used to be."

"Isn't it?" asked Frank.

"No, Frank; by no means. I do not wish to say a word against your

father. It may, perhaps have been his misfortune, rather than his

fault--"

"She is always down on the governor; always," said Frank to himself;

resolving to stick bravely to the side of the house to which he had

elected to belong.

"But there is the fact, Frank, too plain to us all; Greshamsbury is

not what it was. It is your duty to restore it to its former

importance."

"My duty!" said Frank, rather puzzled.

"Yes, Frank, your duty. It all depends on you now. Of course you know

that your father owes a great deal of money."

Frank muttered something. Tidings had in some shape reached his ear

that his father was not comfortably circumstances as regarded money.

"And then, he has sold Boxall Hill. It cannot be expected that Boxall

Hill shall be repurchased, as some horrid man, a railway-maker, I

believe--"

"Yes; that's Scatcherd."

"Well, he has built a house there, I'm told; so I presume that it

cannot be bought back: but it will be your duty, Frank, to pay all

the debts that there are on the property, and to purchase what, at

any rate, will be equal to Boxall Hill."

Frank opened his eyes wide and stared at his aunt, as though doubting

much whether or no she were in her right mind. He pay off the

family debts! He buy up property of four thousand pounds a year!

He remained, however, quite quiet, waiting the elucidation of the

mystery.

"Frank, of course you understand me."

Frank was obliged to declare, that just at the present moment he did

not find his aunt so clear as usual.

"You have but one line of conduct left you, Frank: your position,

as heir to Greshamsbury, is a good one; but your father has

unfortunately so hampered you with regard to money, that unless you

set the matter right yourself, you can never enjoy that position. Of

course you must marry money."

"Marry money!" said he, considering for the first time that in all

probability Mary Thorne's fortune would not be extensive. "Marry

money!"

"Yes, Frank. I know no man whose position so imperatively demands it;

and luckily for you, no man can have more facility for doing so. In

the first place you are very handsome."

Frank blushed like a girl of sixteen.

"And then, as the matter is made plain to you at so early an age,

you are not of course hampered by any indiscreet tie; by any absurd

engagement."

Frank blushed again; and then saying to himself, "How much the old

girl knows about it!" felt a little proud of his passion for Mary

Thorne, and of the declaration he had made to her.

"And your connexion with Courcy Castle," continued the countess, now

carrying up the list of Frank's advantages to its great climax, "will

make the matter so easy for you, that really, you will hardly have

any difficulty."

Frank could not but say how much obliged he felt to Courcy Castle and

its inmates.

"Of course I would not wish to interfere with you in any underhand

way, Frank; but I will tell you what has occurred to me. You have

heard, probably, of Miss Dunstable?"

"The daughter of the ointment of Lebanon man?"

"And of course you know that her fortune is immense," continued

the countess, not deigning to notice her nephew's allusion to the

ointment. "Quite immense when compared with the wants and position of

any commoner. Now she is coming to Courcy Castle, and I wish you to

come and meet her."

"But, aunt, just at this moment I have to read for my degree like

anything. I go up, you know, in October."

"Degree!" said the countess. "Why, Frank, I am talking to you of

your prospects in life, of your future position, of that on which

everything hangs, and you tell me of your degree!"

Frank, however, obstinately persisted that he must take his degree,

and that he should commence reading hard at six a.m. to-morrow

morning.

"You can read just as well at Courcy Castle. Miss Dunstable will

not interfere with that," said his aunt, who knew the expediency of

yielding occasionally; "but I must beg you will come over and meet

her. You will find her a most charming young woman, remarkably well

educated I am told, and--"

"How old is she?" asked Frank.

"I really cannot say exactly," said the countess; "but it is not, I

imagine, matter of much moment."

"Is she thirty?" asked Frank, who looked upon an unmarried woman of

that age as quite an old maid.

"I dare say she may be about that age," said the countess, who

regarded the subject from a very different point of view.

"Thirty!" said Frank out loud, but speaking, nevertheless, as though

to himself.

"It is a matter of no moment," said his aunt, almost angrily. "When

the subject itself is of such vital importance, objections of no

real weight should not be brought into view. If you wish to hold up

your head in the country; if you wish to represent your county in

Parliament, as has been done by your father, your grandfather, and

your great-grandfathers; if you wish to keep a house over your head,

and to leave Greshamsbury to your son after you, you must marry

money. What does it signify whether Miss Dunstable be twenty-eight

or thirty? She has got money; and if you marry her, you may then

consider that your position in life is made."

Frank was astonished at his aunt's eloquence; but, in spite of

that eloquence, he made up his mind that he would not marry Miss

Dunstable. How could he, indeed, seeing that his troth was already

plighted to Mary Thorne in the presence of his sister? This

circumstance, however, he did not choose to plead to his aunt, so he

recapitulated any other objections that presented themselves to his

mind.

In the first place, he was so anxious about his degree that he could

not think of marrying at present; then he suggested that it might be

better to postpone the question till the season's hunting should be

over; he declared that he could not visit Courcy Castle till he got a

new suit of clothes home from the tailor; and ultimately remembered

that he had a particular engagement to go fly-fishing with Mr Oriel

on that day week.

None, however, of these valid reasons were sufficiently potent to

turn the countess from her point.

"Nonsense, Frank," said she, "I wonder that you can talk of

fly-fishing when the property of Greshamsbury is at stake. You will

go with Augusta and myself to Courcy Castle to-morrow."

"To-morrow, aunt!" he said, in the tone in which a condemned criminal

might make his ejaculation on hearing that a very near day had been

named for his execution. "To-morrow!"

"Yes, we return to-morrow, and shall be happy to have your company.

My friends, including Miss Dunstable, come on Thursday. I am quite

sure you will like Miss Dunstable. I have settled all that with your

mother, so we need say nothing further about it. And now, good-night,

Frank."

Frank, finding that there was nothing more to be said, took his

departure, and went out to look for Mary. But Mary had gone home with

Janet half an hour since, so he betook himself to his sister

Beatrice.

"Beatrice," said he, "I am to go to Courcy Castle to-morrow."

"So I heard mamma say."

"Well; I only came of age to-day, and I will not begin by running

counter to them. But I tell you what, I won't stay above a week

at Courcy Castle for all the de Courcys in Barsetshire. Tell me,

Beatrice, did you ever hear of a Miss Dunstable?"

CHAPTER IX

Sir Roger Scatcherd

Enough has been said in this narrative to explain to the reader that

Roger Scatcherd, who was whilom a drunken stone-mason in Barchester,

and who had been so prompt to avenge the injury done to his sister,

had become a great man in the world. He had become a contractor,

first for little things, such as half a mile or so of a railway

embankment, or three or four canal bridges, and then a contractor for

great things, such as Government hospitals, locks, docks, and quays,

and had latterly had in his hands the making of whole lines of

railway.

He had been occasionally in partnership with one man for one thing,

and then with another for another; but had, on the whole, kept his

interests to himself, and now at the time of our story, he was a very

rich man.

And he had acquired more than wealth. There had been a time when the

Government wanted the immediate performance of some extraordinary

piece of work, and Roger Scatcherd had been the man to do it. There

had been some extremely necessary bit of a railway to be made in half

the time that such work would properly demand, some speculation to

be incurred requiring great means and courage as well, and Roger

Scatcherd had been found to be the man for the time. He was then

elevated for the moment to the dizzy pinnacle of a newspaper hero,

and became one of those "whom the king delighteth to honour." He went

up one day to kiss Her Majesty's hand, and come down to his new grand

house at Boxall Hill, Sir Roger Scatcherd, Bart.

"And now, my lady," said he, when he explained to his wife the high

state to which she had been called by his exertions and the Queen's

prerogative, "let's have a bit of dinner, and a drop of som'at hot."

Now the drop of som'at hot signified a dose of alcohol sufficient to

send three ordinary men very drunk to bed.

While conquering the world Roger Scatcherd had not conquered his old

bad habits. Indeed, he was the same man at all points that he had

been when formerly seen about the streets of Barchester with his

stone-mason's apron tucked up round his waist. The apron he had

abandoned, but not the heavy prominent thoughtful brow, with the

wildly flashing eye beneath it. He was still the same good companion,

and still also the same hard-working hero. In this only had he

changed, that now he would work, and some said equally well, whether

he were drunk or sober. Those who were mostly inclined to make a

miracle of him--and there was a school of worshippers ready to adore

him as their idea of a divine, superhuman, miracle-moving, inspired

prophet--declared that his wondrous work was best done, his

calculations most quickly and most truly made, that he saw with most

accurate eye into the far-distant balance of profit and loss, when

he was under the influence of the rosy god. To these worshippers his

breakings-out, as his periods of intemperance were called in his own

set, were his moments of peculiar inspiration--his divine frenzies,

in which he communicated most closely with those deities who preside

over trade transactions; his Eleusinian mysteries, to approach him in

which was permitted only to a few of the most favoured.

"Scatcherd has been drunk this week past," they would say one to

another, when the moment came at which it was to be decided whose

offer should be accepted for constructing a harbour to hold all the

commerce of Lancashire, or to make a railway from Bombay to Canton.

"Scatcherd has been drunk this week past; I am told that he has taken

over three gallons of brandy." And then they felt sure that none but

Scatcherd would be called upon to construct the dock or make the

railway.

But be this as it may, be it true or false that Sir Roger was most

efficacious when in his cups, there can be no doubt that he could not

wallow for a week in brandy, six or seven times every year, without

in a great measure injuring, and permanently injuring, the outward

man. Whatever immediate effect such symposiums might have on the

inner mind--symposiums indeed they were not; posiums I will call

them, if I may be allowed; for in latter life, when he drank heavily,

he drank alone--however little for evil, or however much for good the

working of his brain might be affected, his body suffered greatly. It

was not that he became feeble or emaciated, old-looking or inactive,

that his hand shook, or that his eye was watery; but that in the

moments of his intemperance his life was often not worth a day's

purchase. The frame which God had given to him was powerful beyond

the power of ordinary men; powerful to act in spite of these violent

perturbations; powerful to repress and conquer the qualms and

headaches and inward sicknesses to which the votaries of Bacchus are

ordinarily subject; but this power was not without its limit. If

encroached on too far, it would break and fall and come asunder, and

then the strong man would at once become a corpse.

Scatcherd had but one friend in the world. And, indeed, this friend

was no friend in the ordinary acceptance of the word. He neither ate

with him nor drank with him, nor even frequently talked with him.

Their pursuits in life were wide asunder. Their tastes were all

different. The society in which each moved very seldom came together.

Scatcherd had nothing in unison with this solitary friend; but he

trusted him, and he trusted no other living creature on God's earth.

He trusted this man; but even him he did not trust thoroughly; not at

least as one friend should trust another. He believed that this man

would not rob him; would probably not lie to him; would not endeavour

to make money of him; would not count him up or speculate on him, and

make out a balance of profit and loss; and, therefore, he determined

to use him. But he put no trust whatever in his friend's counsel, in

his modes of thought; none in his theory, and none in his practice.

He disliked his friend's counsel, and, in fact, disliked his

society, for his friend was somewhat apt to speak to him in a manner

approaching to severity. Now Roger Scatcherd had done many things

in the world, and made much money; whereas his friend had done but

few things, and made no money. It was not to be endured that the

practical, efficient man should be taken to task by the man who

proved himself to be neither practical nor efficient; not to be

endured, certainly, by Roger Scatcherd, who looked on men of his own

class as the men of the day, and on himself as by no means the least

among them.

The friend was our friend Dr Thorne.

The doctor's first acquaintance with Scatcherd has been already

explained. He was necessarily thrown into communication with the man

at the time of the trial, and Scatcherd then had not only sufficient

sense, but sufficient feeling also to know that the doctor behaved

very well. This communication had in different ways been kept up

between them. Soon after the trial Scatcherd had begun to rise, and

his first savings had been entrusted to the doctor's care. This had

been the beginning of a pecuniary connexion which had never wholly

ceased, and which had led to the purchase of Boxall Hill, and to the

loan of large sums of money to the squire.

In another way also there had been a close alliance between them, and

one not always of a very pleasant description. The doctor was, and

long had been, Sir Roger's medical attendant, and, in his unceasing

attempts to rescue the drunkard from the fate which was so much to

be dreaded, he not unfrequently was driven into a quarrel with his

patient.

One thing further must be told of Sir Roger. In politics he was as

violent a Radical as ever, and was very anxious to obtain a position

in which he could bring his violence to bear. With this view he was

about to contest his native borough of Barchester, in the hope of

being returned in opposition to the de Courcy candidate; and with

this object he had now come down to Boxall Hill.

Nor were his claims to sit for Barchester such as could be despised.

If money were to be of avail, he had plenty of it, and was prepared

to spend it; whereas, rumour said that Mr Moffat was equally

determined to do nothing so foolish. Then again, Sir Roger had a sort

of rough eloquence, and was able to address the men of Barchester in

language that would come home to their hearts, in words that would

endear him to one party while they made him offensively odious to the

other; but Mr Moffat could make neither friends nor enemies by his

eloquence. The Barchester roughs called him a dumb dog that could not

bark, and sometimes sarcastically added that neither could he bite.

The de Courcy interest, however, was at his back, and he had also the

advantage of possession. Sir Roger, therefore, knew that the battle

was not to be won without a struggle.

Dr Thorne got safely back from Silverbridge that evening, and found

Mary waiting to give him his tea. He had been called there to a

consultation with Dr Century, that amiable old gentleman having so

far fallen away from the high Fillgrave tenets as to consent to the

occasional endurance of such degradation.

The next morning he breakfasted early, and, having mounted his strong

iron-grey cob, started for Boxall Hill. Not only had he there to

negotiate the squire's further loan, but also to exercise his medical

skill. Sir Roger having been declared contractor for cutting a canal

from sea to sea, through the Isthmus of Panama, had been making a

week of it; and the result was that Lady Scatcherd had written rather

peremptorily to her husband's medical friend.

The doctor consequently trotted off to Boxall Hill on his iron-grey

cob. Among his other merits was that of being a good horseman, and

he did much of his work on horseback. The fact that he occasionally

took a day with the East Barsetshires, and that when he did so he

thoroughly enjoyed it, had probably not failed to add something to

the strength of the squire's friendship.

"Well, my lady, how is he? Not much the matter, I hope?" said the

doctor, as he shook hands with the titled mistress of Boxall Hill in

a small breakfast-parlour in the rear of the house. The show-rooms

of Boxall Hill were furnished most magnificently, but they were set

apart for company; and as the company never came--seeing that they

were never invited--the grand rooms and the grand furniture were not

of much material use to Lady Scatcherd.

"Indeed then, doctor, he's just bad enough," said her ladyship, not

in a very happy tone of voice; "just bad enough. There's been some'at

at the back of his head, rapping, and rapping, and rapping; and if

you don't do something, I'm thinking it will rap him too hard yet."

"Is he in bed?"

"Why, yes, he is in bed; for when he was first took he couldn't very

well help hisself, so we put him to bed. And then, he don't seem to

be quite right yet about the legs, so he hasn't got up; but he's got

that Winterbones with him to write for him, and when Winterbones is

there, Scatcherd might as well be up for any good that bed'll do

him."

Mr Winterbones was confidential clerk to Sir Roger. That is to say,

he was a writing-machine of which Sir Roger made use to do certain

work which could not well be adjusted without some contrivance. He

was a little, withered, dissipated, broken-down man, whom gin and

poverty had nearly burnt to a cinder, and dried to an ash. Mind he

had none left, nor care for earthly things, except the smallest

modicum of substantial food, and the largest allowance of liquid

sustenance. All that he had ever known he had forgotten, except how

to count up figures and to write: the results of his counting and his

writing never stayed with him from one hour to another; nay, not from

one folio to another. Let him, however, be adequately screwed up with

gin, and adequately screwed down by the presence of his master, and

then no amount of counting and writing would be too much for him.

This was Mr Winterbones, confidential clerk to the great Sir Roger

Scatcherd.

"We must send Winterbones away, I take it," said the doctor.

"Indeed, doctor, I wish you would. I wish you'd send him to Bath, or

anywhere else out of the way. There is Scatcherd, he takes brandy;

and there is Winterbones, he takes gin; and it'd puzzle a woman to

say which is worst, master or man."

It will seem from this, that Lady Scatcherd and the doctor were on

very familiar terms as regarded her little domestic inconveniences.

"Tell Sir Roger I am here, will you?" said the doctor.

"You'll take a drop of sherry before you go up?" said the lady.

"Not a drop, thank you," said the doctor.

"Or, perhaps, a little cordial?"

"Not of drop of anything, thank you; I never do, you know."

"Just a thimbleful of this?" said the lady, producing from some

recess under a sideboard a bottle of brandy; "just a thimbleful? It's

what he takes himself."

When Lady Scatcherd found that even this argument failed, she led the

way to the great man's bedroom.

"Well, doctor! well, doctor! well, doctor!" was the greeting with

which our son of Galen was saluted some time before he entered the

sick-room. His approaching step was heard, and thus the ci-devant

Barchester stone-mason saluted his coming friend. The voice was loud

and powerful, but not clear and sonorous. What voice that is nurtured

on brandy can ever be clear? It had about it a peculiar huskiness, a

dissipated guttural tone, which Thorne immediately recognised, and

recognised as being more marked, more guttural, and more husky than

heretofore.

"So you've smelt me out, have you, and come for your fee? Ha! ha!

ha! Well, I have had a sharpish bout of it, as her ladyship there

no doubt has told you. Let her alone to make the worst of it. But,

you see, you're too late, man. I've bilked the old gentleman again

without troubling you."

"Anyway, I'm glad you're something better, Scatcherd."

"Something! I don't know what you call something. I never was better

in my life. Ask Winterbones there."

"Indeed, now, Scatcherd, you ain't; you're bad enough if you only

knew it. And as for Winterbones, he has no business here up in your

bedroom, which stinks of gin so, it does. Don't you believe him,

doctor; he ain't well, nor yet nigh well."

Winterbones, when the above ill-natured allusion was made to

the aroma coming from his libations, might be seen to deposit

surreptitiously beneath the little table at which he sat, the cup

with which he had performed them.

The doctor, in the meantime, had taken Sir Roger's hand on the

pretext of feeling his pulse, but was drawing quite as much

information from the touch of the sick man's skin, and the look of

the sick man's eye.

"I think Mr Winterbones had better go back to the London office,"

said he. "Lady Scatcherd will be your best clerk for some time, Sir

Roger."

"Then I'll be d---- if Mr Winterbones does anything of the kind,"

said he; "so there's an end of that."

"Very well," said the doctor. "A man can die but once. It is my duty

to suggest measures for putting off the ceremony as long as possible.

Perhaps, however, you may wish to hasten it."

"Well, I am not very anxious about it, one way or the other," said

Scatcherd. And as he spoke there came a fierce gleam from his eye,

which seemed to say--"If that's the bugbear with which you wish to

frighten me, you will find that you are mistaken."

"Now, doctor, don't let him talk that way, don't," said Lady

Scatcherd, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Now, my lady, do you cut it; cut at once," said Sir Roger, turning

hastily round to his better-half; and his better-half, knowing that

the province of a woman is to obey, did cut it. But as she went she

gave the doctor a pull by the coat's sleeve, so that thereby his

healing faculties might be sharpened to the very utmost.

"The best woman in the world, doctor; the very best," said he, as the

door closed behind the wife of his bosom.

"I'm sure of it," said the doctor.

"Yes, till you find a better one," said Scatcherd. "Ha! ha! ha! but

good or bad, there are some things which a woman can't understand,

and some things which she ought not to be let to understand."

"It's natural she should be anxious about your health, you know."

"I don't know that," said the contractor. "She'll be very well off.

All that whining won't keep a man alive, at any rate."

There was a pause, during which the doctor continued his medical

examination. To this the patient submitted with a bad grace; but

still he did submit.

"We must turn over a new leaf, Sir Roger; indeed we must."

"Bother," said Sir Roger.

"Well, Scatcherd; I must do my duty to you, whether you like it or

not."

"That is to say, I am to pay you for trying to frighten me."

"No human nature can stand such shocks as these much longer."

"Winterbones," said the contractor, turning to his clerk, "go down,

go down, I say; but don't be out of the way. If you go to the

public-house, by G----, you may stay there for me. When I take a

drop,--that is if I ever do, it does not stand in the way of work."

So Mr Winterbones, picking up his cup again, and concealing it in

some way beneath his coat flap, retreated out of the room, and the

two friends were alone.

"Scatcherd," said the doctor, "you have been as near your God, as any

man ever was who afterwards ate and drank in this world."

"Have I, now?" said the railway hero, apparently somewhat startled.

"Indeed you have; indeed you have."

"And now I'm all right again?"

"All right! How can you be all right, when you know that your limbs

refuse to carry you? All right! why the blood is still beating round

your brain with a violence that would destroy any other brain but

yours."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Scatcherd. He was very proud of thinking

himself to be differently organised from other men. "Ha! ha! ha!

Well, and what am I to do now?"

The whole of the doctor's prescription we will not give at length.

To some of his ordinances Sir Roger promised obedience; to others he

objected violently, and to one or two he flatly refused to listen.

The great stumbling-block was this, that total abstinence from

business for two weeks was enjoined; and that it was impossible, so

Sir Roger said, that he should abstain for two days.

"If you work," said the doctor, "in your present state, you will

certainly have recourse to the stimulus of drink; and if you drink,

most assuredly you will die."

"Stimulus! Why do you think I can't work without Dutch courage?"

"Scatcherd, I know that there is brandy in the room at this moment,

and that you have been taking it within these two hours."

"You smell that fellow's gin," said Scatcherd.

"I feel the alcohol working within your veins," said the doctor, who

still had his hand on his patient's arm.

Sir Roger turned himself roughly in the bed so as to get away from

his Mentor, and then he began to threaten in his turn.

"I'll tell you what it is, doctor; I've made up my mind, and I'll do

it. I'll send for Fillgrave."

"Very well," said he of Greshamsbury, "send for Fillgrave. Your case

is one in which even he can hardly go wrong."

"You think you can hector me, and do as you like because you had me

under your thumb in other days. You're a very good fellow, Thorne,

but I ain't sure that you are the best doctor in all England."

"You may be sure I am not; you may take me for the worst if you will.

But while I am here as your medical adviser, I can only tell you the

truth to the best of my thinking. Now the truth is this, that another

bout of drinking will in all probability kill you; and any recourse

to stimulus in your present condition may do so."

"I'll send for Fillgrave--"

"Well, send for Fillgrave, only do it at once. Believe me at any

rate in this, that whatever you do, you should do at once. Oblige

me in this; let Lady Scatcherd take away that brandy bottle till Dr

Fillgrave comes."

"I'm d---- if I do. Do you think I can't have a bottle of brandy in

my room without swigging?"

"I think you'll be less likely to swig it if you can't get at it."

Sir Roger made another angry turn in his bed as well as his

half-paralysed limbs would let him; and then, after a few moments'

peace, renewed his threats with increased violence.

"Yes; I'll have Fillgrave over here. If a man be ill, really ill,

he should have the best advice he can get. I'll have Fillgrave, and

I'll have that other fellow from Silverbridge to meet him. What's his

name?--Century."

The doctor turned his head away; for though the occasion was serious,

he could not help smiling at the malicious vengeance with which his

friend proposed to gratify himself.

"I will; and Rerechild too. What's the expense? I suppose five or six

pound apiece will do it; eh, Thorne?"

"Oh, yes; that will be liberal I should say. But, Sir Roger, will you

allow me to suggest what you ought to do? I don't know how far you

may be joking--"

"Joking!" shouted the baronet; "you tell a man he's dying and joking

in the same breath. You'll find I'm not joking."

"Well I dare say not. But if you have not full confidence in me--"

"I have no confidence in you at all."

"Then why not send to London? Expense is no object to you."

"It is an object; a great object."

"Nonsense! Send to London for Sir Omicron Pie: send for some man whom

you will really trust when you see him.

"There's not one of the lot I'd trust as soon as Fillgrave. I've

known Fillgrave all my life, and I trust him. I'll send for Fillgrave

and put my case in his hands. If any one can do anything for me,

Fillgrave is the man."

"Then in God's name send for Fillgrave," said the doctor. "And now,

good-bye, Scatcherd; and as you do send for him, give him a fair

chance. Do not destroy yourself by more brandy before he comes."

"That's my affair, and his; not yours," said the patient.

"So be it; give me your hand, at any rate, before I go. I wish you

well through it, and when you are well, I'll come and see you."

"Good-bye--good-bye; and look here, Thorne, you'll be talking to Lady

Scatcherd downstairs I know; now, no nonsense. You understand me, eh?

no nonsense, you know."

CHAPTER X

Sir Roger's Will

Dr Thorne left the room and went downstairs, being fully aware that

he could not leave the house without having some communication with

Lady Scatcherd. He was not sooner within the passage than he heard

the sick man's bell ring violently; and then the servant, passing

him on the staircase, received orders to send a mounted messenger

immediately to Barchester. Dr Fillgrave was to be summoned to come as

quickly as possible to the sick man's room, and Mr Winterbones was to

be sent up to write the note.

Sir Roger was quite right in supposing that there would be some words

between the doctor and her ladyship. How, indeed, was the doctor to

get out of the house without such, let him wish it ever so much?

There were words; and these were protracted, while the doctor's

cob was being ordered round, till very many were uttered which the

contractor would probably have regarded as nonsense.

Lady Scatcherd was no fit associate for the wives of English

baronets;--was no doubt by education and manners much better fitted

to sit in their servants' halls; but not on that account was she a

bad wife or a bad woman. She was painfully, fearfully, anxious for

that husband of hers, whom she honoured and worshipped, as it behoved

her to do, above all other men. She was fearfully anxious as to his

life, and faithfully believed, that if any man could prolong it, it

was that old and faithful friend whom she had known to be true to her

lord since their early married troubles.

When, therefore, she found that he had been dismissed, and that a

stranger was to be sent for in his place, her heart sank low within

her.

"But, doctor," she said, with her apron up to her eyes, "you ain't

going to leave him, are you?"

Dr Thorne did not find it easy to explain to her ladyship that

medical etiquette would not permit him to remain in attendance on her

husband after he had been dismissed and another physician called in

his place.

"Etiquette!" said she, crying. "What's etiquette to do with it when a

man is a-killing hisself with brandy?"

"Fillgrave will forbid that quite as strongly as I can do."

"Fillgrave!" said she. "Fiddlesticks! Fillgrave, indeed!"

Dr Thorne could almost have embraced her for the strong feeling of

thorough confidence on the one side, and thorough distrust on the

other, which she contrived to throw into those few words.

"I'll tell you what, doctor; I won't let the messenger go. I'll bear

the brunt of it. He can't do much now he ain't up, you know. I'll

stop the boy; we won't have no Fillgraves here."

This, however, was a step to which Dr Thorne would not assent. He

endeavoured to explain to the anxious wife, that after what had

passed he could not tender his medical services till they were again

asked for.

"But you can slip in as a friend, you know; and then by degrees you

can come round him, eh? can't you now, doctor? And as to the

payment--"

All that Dr Thorne said on the subject may easily be imagined. And in

this way, and in partaking of the lunch which was forced upon him, an

hour had nearly passed between his leaving Sir Roger's bedroom and

putting his foot in the stirrup. But no sooner had the cob begun to

move on the gravel-sweep before the house, than one of the upper

windows opened, and the doctor was summoned to another conference

with the sick man.

"He says you are to come back, whether or no," said Mr Winterbones,

screeching out of the window, and putting all his emphasis on the

last words.

"Thorne! Thorne! Thorne!" shouted the sick man from his sick-bed, so

loudly that the doctor heard him, seated as he was on horseback out

before the house.

"You're to come back, whether or no," repeated Winterbones, with

more emphasis, evidently conceiving that there was a strength of

injunction in that "whether or no" which would be found quite

invincible.

Whether actuated by these magic words, or by some internal process of

thought, we will not say; but the doctor did slowly, and as though

unwillingly, dismount again from his steed, and slowly retrace his

steps into the house.

"It is no use," he said to himself, "for that messenger has already

gone to Barchester."

"I have sent for Dr Fillgrave," were the first words which the

contractor said to him when he again found himself by the bedside.

"Did you call me back to tell me that?" said Thorne, who now realy

felt angry at the impertinent petulance of the man before him: "you

should consider, Scatcherd, that my time may be of value to others,

if not to you."

"Now don't be angry, old fellow," said Scatcherd, turning to him,

and looking at him with a countenance quite different from any that

he had shown that day; a countenance in which there was a show of

manhood,--some show also of affection. "You ain't angry now because

I've sent for Fillgrave?"

"Not in the least," said the doctor very complacently. "Not in the

least. Fillgrave will do as much good as I can do you."

"And that's none at all, I suppose; eh, Thorne?"

"That depends on yourself. He will do you good if you will tell him

the truth, and will then be guided by him. Your wife, your servant,

any one can be as good a doctor to you as either he or I; as good,

that is, in the main point. But you have sent for Fillgrave now; and

of course you must see him. I have much to do, and you must let me

go."

Scatcherd, however, would not let him go, but held his hand fast.

"Thorne," said he, "if you like it, I'll make them put Fillgrave

under the pump directly he comes here. I will indeed, and pay all the

damage myself."

This was another proposition to which the doctor could not consent;

but he was utterly unable to refrain from laughing. There was an

earnest look of entreaty about Sir Roger's face as he made the

suggestion; and, joined to this, there was a gleam of comic

satisfaction in his eye which seemed to promise, that if he received

the least encouragement he would put his threat into execution. Now

our doctor was not inclined to taking any steps towards subjecting

his learned brother to pump discipline; but he could not but admit to

himself that the idea was not a bad one.

"I'll have it done, I will, by heavens! if you'll only say the word,"

protested Sir Roger.

But the doctor did not say the word, and so the idea was passed off.

"You shouldn't be so testy with a man when he is ill," said

Scatcherd, still holding the doctor's hand, of which he had again got

possession; "specially not an old friend; and specially again when

you're been a-blowing of him up."

It was not worth the doctor's while to aver that the testiness

had all been on the other side, and that he had never lost his

good-humour; so he merely smiled, and asked Sir Roger if he could do

anything further for him.

"Indeed you can, doctor; and that's why I sent for you,--why I sent

for you yesterday. Get out of the room, Winterbones," he then said,

gruffly, as though he were dismissing from his chamber a dirty

dog. Winterbones, not a whit offended, again hid his cup under his

coat-tail and vanished.

"Sit down, Thorne, sit down," said the contractor, speaking quite in

a different manner from any that he had yet assumed. "I know you're

in a hurry, but you must give me half an hour. I may be dead before

you can give me another; who knows?"

The doctor of course declared that he hoped to have many a

half-hour's chat with him for many a year to come.

"Well, that's as may be. You must stop now, at any rate. You can make

the cob pay for it, you know."

The doctor took a chair and sat down. Thus entreated to stop, he had

hardly any alternative but to do so.

"It wasn't because I'm ill that I sent for you, or rather let her

ladyship send for you. Lord bless you, Thorne; do you think I don't

know what it is that makes me like this? When I see that poor wretch,

Winterbones, killing himself with gin, do you think I don't know

what's coming to myself as well as him?

"Why do you take it then? Why do you do it? Your life is not like

his. Oh, Scatcherd! Scatcherd!" and the doctor prepared to pour out

the flood of his eloquence in beseeching this singular man to abstain

from his well-known poison.

"Is that all you know of human nature, doctor? Abstain. Can you

abstain from breathing, and live like a fish does under water?"

"But Nature has not ordered you to drink, Scatcherd."

"Habit is second nature, man; and a stronger nature than the first.

And why should I not drink? What else has the world given me for

all that I have done for it? What other resource have I? What other

gratification?"

"Oh, my God! Have you not unbounded wealth? Can you not do anything

you wish? be anything you choose?"

"No," and the sick man shrieked with an energy that made him audible

all through the house. "I can do nothing that I would choose to do;

be nothing that I would wish to be! What can I do? What can I be?

What gratification can I have except the brandy bottle? If I go among

gentlemen, can I talk to them? If they have anything to say about

a railway, they will ask me a question: if they speak to me beyond

that, I must be dumb. If I go among my workmen, can they talk to me?

No; I am their master, and a stern master. They bob their heads and

shake in their shoes when they see me. Where are my friends? Here!"

said he, and he dragged a bottle from under his very pillow. "Where

are my amusements? Here!" and he brandished the bottle almost in the

doctor's face. "Where is my one resource, my one gratification, my

only comfort after all my toils. Here, doctor; here, here, here!"

and, so saying, he replaced his treasure beneath his pillow.

There was something so horrifying in this, that Dr Thorne shrank back

amazed, and was for a moment unable to speak.

"But, Scatcherd," he said at last; "surely you would not die for such

a passion as that?"

"Die for it? Aye, would I. Live for it while I can live; and die for

it when I can live no longer. Die for it! What is that for a man to

do? Do not men die for a shilling a day? What is a man the worse for

dying? What can I be the worse for dying? A man can die but once, you

said just now. I'd die ten times for this."

"You are speaking now either in madness, or else in folly, to startle

me."

"Folly enough, perhaps, and madness enough, also. Such a life as mine

makes a man a fool, and makes him mad too. What have I about me that

I should be afraid to die? I'm worth three hundred thousand pounds;

and I'd give it all to be able to go to work to-morrow with a hod and

mortar, and have a fellow clap his hand upon my shoulder, and say:

'Well, Roger, shall us have that 'ere other half-pint this morning?'

I'll tell you what, Thorne, when a man has made three hundred

thousand pounds, there's nothing left for him but to die. It's all

he's good for then. When money's been made, the next thing is to

spend it. Now the man who makes it has not the heart to do that."

The doctor, of course, in hearing all this, said something of a

tendency to comfort and console the mind of his patient. Not that

anything he could say would comfort or console the man; but that it

was impossible to sit there and hear such fearful truths--for as

regarded Scatcherd they were truths--without making some answer.

"This is as good as a play, isn't, doctor?" said the baronet. "You

didn't know how I could come out like one of those actor fellows.

Well, now, come; at last I'll tell you why I have sent for you.

Before that last burst of mine I made my will."

"You had a will made before that."

"Yes, I had. That will is destroyed. I burnt it with my own hand, so

that there should be no mistake about it. In that will I had named

two executors, you and Jackson. I was then partner with Jackson in

the York and Yeovil Grand Central. I thought a deal of Jackson then.

He's not worth a shilling now."

"Well, I'm exactly in the same category."

"No, you're not. Jackson is nothing without money; but money'll never

make you."

"No, nor I shan't make money," said the doctor.

"No, you never will. Nevertheless, there's my other will, there,

under that desk there; and I've put you in as sole executor."

"You must alter that, Scatcherd; you must indeed; with three hundred

thousand pounds to be disposed of, the trust is far too much for any

one man: besides you must name a younger man; you and I are of the

same age, and I may die the first."

"Now, doctor, doctor, no humbug; let's have no humbug from you.

Remember this; if you're not true, you're nothing."

"Well, but, Scatcherd--"

"Well, but doctor, there's the will, it's already made. I don't want

to consult you about that. You are named as executor, and if you have

the heart to refuse to act when I'm dead, why, of course, you can do

so."

The doctor was no lawyer, and hardly knew whether he had any means

of extricating himself from this position in which his friend was

determined to place him.

"You'll have to see that will carried out, Thorne. Now I'll tell you

what I have done."

"You're not going to tell me how you have disposed of your property?"

"Not exactly; at least not all of it. One hundred thousand I've left

in legacies, including, you know, what Lady Scatcherd will have."

"Have you not left the house to Lady Scatcherd?"

"No; what the devil would she do with a house like this? She doesn't

know how to live in it now she has got it. I have provided for her;

it matters not how. The house and the estate, and the remainder of my

money, I have left to Louis Philippe."

"What! two hundred thousand pounds?" said the doctor.

"And why shouldn't I leave two hundred thousand pounds to my son,

even to my eldest son if I had more than one? Does not Mr Gresham

leave all his property to his heir? Why should not I make an eldest

son as well as Lord de Courcy or the Duke of Omnium? I suppose a

railway contractor ought not to be allowed an eldest son by Act of

Parliament! Won't my son have a title to keep up? And that's more

than the Greshams have among them."

The doctor explained away what he said as well as he could. He could

not explain that what he had really meant was this, that Sir Roger

Scatcherd's son was not a man fit to be trusted with the entire

control of an enormous fortune.

Sir Roger Scatcherd had but one child; that child which had been born

in the days of his early troubles, and had been dismissed from his

mother's breast in order that the mother's milk might nourish the

young heir of Greshamsbury. The boy had grown up, but had become

strong neither in mind nor body. His father had determined to make

a gentleman of him, and had sent to Eton and to Cambridge. But

even this receipt, generally as it is recognised, will not make a

gentleman. It is hard, indeed, to define what receipt will do so,

though people do have in their own minds some certain undefined, but

yet tolerably correct ideas on the subject. Be that as it may, two

years at Eton, and three terms at Cambridge, did not make a gentleman

of Louis Philippe Scatcherd.

Yes; he was christened Louis Philippe, after the King of the French.

If one wishes to look out in the world for royal nomenclature, to

find children who have been christened after kings and queens, or

the uncles and aunts of kings and queens, the search should be made

in the families of democrats. None have so servile a deference for

the very nail-parings of royalty; none feel so wondering an awe at

the exaltation of a crowned head; none are so anxious to secure

themselves some shred or fragment that has been consecrated by the

royal touch. It is the distance which they feel to exist between

themselves and the throne which makes them covet the crumbs of

majesty, the odds and ends and chance splinters of royalty.

There was nothing royal about Louis Philippe Scatcherd but his

name. He had now come to man's estate, and his father, finding the

Cambridge receipt to be inefficacious, had sent him abroad to travel

with a tutor. The doctor had from time to time heard tidings of this

youth; he knew that he had already shown symptoms of his father's

vices, but no symptoms of his father's talents; he knew that he had

begun life by being dissipated, without being generous; and that at

the age of twenty-one he had already suffered from delirium tremens.

It was on this account that he had expressed disapprobation, rather

than surprise, when he heard that his father intended to bequeath

the bulk of his large fortune to the uncontrolled will of this

unfortunate boy.

"I have toiled for my money hard, and I have a right to do as I like

with it. What other satisfaction can it give me?"

The doctor assured him that he did not at all mean to dispute this.

"Louis Philippe will do well enough, you'll find," continued the

baronet, understanding what was passing within his companion's

breast. "Let a young fellow sow his wild oats while he is young, and

he'll be steady enough when he grows old."

"But what if he never lives to get through the sowing?" thought the

doctor to himself. "What if the wild-oats operation is carried on

in so violent a manner as to leave no strength in the soil for the

product of a more valuable crop?" It was of no use saying this,

however, so he allowed Scatcherd to continue.

"If I'd had a free fling when I was a youngster, I shouldn't have

been so fond of the brandy bottle now. But any way, my son shall be

my heir. I've had the gumption to make the money, but I haven't the

gumption to spend it. My son, however, shall be able to ruffle it

with the best of them. I'll go bail he shall hold his head higher

than ever young Gresham will be able to hold his. They are much of

the same age, as well I have cause to remember;--and so has her

ladyship there."

Now the fact was, that Sir Roger Scatcherd felt in his heart no

special love for young Gresham; but with her ladyship it might almost

be a question whether she did not love the youth whom she had nursed

almost as well as that other one who was her own proper offspring.

"And will you not put any check on thoughtless expenditure? If

you live ten or twenty years, as we hope you may, it will become

unnecessary; but in making a will, a man should always remember he

may go off suddenly."

"Especially if he goes to bed with a brandy bottle under his head;

eh, doctor? But, mind, that's a medical secret, you know; not a word

of that out of the bedroom."

Dr Thorne could but sigh. What could he say on such a subject to such

a man as this?

"Yes, I have put a check on his expenditure. I will not let his daily

bread depend on any man; I have therefore left him five hundred a

year at his own disposal, from the day of my death. Let him make what

ducks and drakes of that he can."

"Five hundred a year certainly is not much," said the doctor.

"No; nor do I want to keep him to that. Let him have whatever he

wants if he sets about spending it properly. But the bulk of the

property--this estate of Boxall Hill, and the Greshamsbury mortgage,

and those other mortgages--I have tied up in this way: they shall be

all his at twenty-five; and up to that age it shall be in your power

to give him what he wants. If he shall die without children before

he shall be twenty-five years of age, they are all to go to Mary's

eldest child."

Now Mary was Sir Roger's sister, the mother, therefore, of Miss

Thorne, and, consequently, the wife of the respectable ironmonger who

went to America, and the mother of a family there.

"Mary's eldest child!" said the doctor, feeling that the perspiration

had nearly broken out on his forehead, and that he could hardly

control his feelings. "Mary's eldest child! Scatcherd, you should

be more particular in your description, or you will leave your best

legacy to the lawyers."

"I don't know, and never heard the name of one of them."

"But do you mean a boy or a girl?"

"They may be all girls for what I know, or all boys; besides, I

don't care which it is. A girl would probably do best with it. Only

you'd have to see that she married some decent fellow; you'd be her

guardian."

"Pooh, nonsense," said the doctor. "Louis will be five-and-twenty in

a year or two."

"In about four years."

"And for all that's come and gone yet, Scatcherd, you are not going

to leave us yourself quite so soon as all that."

"Not if I can help it, doctor; but that's as may be."

"The chances are ten to one that such a clause in your will will

never come to bear."

"Quite so, quite so. If I die, Louis Philippe won't; but I thought it

right to put in something to prevent his squandering it all before he

comes to his senses."

"Oh! quite right, quite right. I think I would have named a later age

than twenty-five."

"So would not I. Louis Philippe will be all right by that time.

That's my lookout. And now, doctor, you know my will; and if I die

to-morrow, you will know what I want you to do for me."

"You have merely said the eldest child, Scatcherd?"

"That's all; give it here, and I'll read it to you."

"No, no; never mind. The eldest child! You should be more particular,

Scatcherd; you should, indeed. Consider what an enormous interest may

have to depend on those words."

"Why, what the devil could I say? I don't know their names; never

even heard them. But the eldest is the eldest, all the world over.

Perhaps I ought to say the youngest, seeing that I am only a railway

contractor."

Scatcherd began to think that the doctor might now as well go away

and leave him to the society of Winterbones and the brandy; but, much

as our friend had before expressed himself in a hurry, he now seemed

inclined to move very leisurely. He sat there by the bedside, resting

his hands on his knees and gazing unconsciously at the counterpane.

At last he gave a deep sigh, and then he said, "Scatcherd, you must

be more particular in this. If I am to have anything to do with it,

you must, indeed, be more explicit."

"Why, how the deuce can I be more explicit? Isn't her eldest living

child plain enough, whether he be Jack, or she be Gill?"

"What did your lawyer say to this, Scatcherd?"

"Lawyer! You don't suppose I let my lawyer know what I was putting.

No; I got the form and the paper, and all that from him, and had him

here, in one room, while Winterbones and I did it in another. It's

all right enough. Though Winterbones wrote it, he did it in such a

way he did not know what he was writing."

The doctor sat a while longer, still looking at the counterpane,

and then got up to depart. "I'll see you again soon," said he;

"to-morrow, probably."

"To-morrow!" said Sir Roger, not at all understanding why Dr Thorne

should talk of returning so soon. "To-morrow! why I ain't so bad as

that, man, am I? If you come so often as that you'll ruin me."

"Oh, not as a medical man; not as that; but about this will,

Scatcherd. I must think if over; I must, indeed."

"You need not give yourself the least trouble in the world about my

will till I'm dead; not the least. And who knows--maybe, I may be

settling your affairs yet; eh, doctor? looking after your niece when

you're dead and gone, and getting a husband for her, eh? Ha! ha! ha!"

And then, without further speech, the doctor went his way.

CHAPTER XI

The Doctor Drinks His Tea

The doctor got on his cob and went his way, returning duly to

Greshamsbury. But, in truth, as he went he hardly knew whither he was

going, or what he was doing. Sir Roger had hinted that the cob would

be compelled to make up for lost time by extra exertion on the road;

but the cob had never been permitted to have his own way as to pace

more satisfactorily than on the present occasion. The doctor, indeed,

hardly knew that he was on horseback, so completely was he enveloped

in the cloud of his own thoughts.

In the first place, that alternative which it had become him to put

before the baronet as one unlikely to occur--that of the speedy death

of both father and son--was one which he felt in his heart of hearts

might very probably come to pass.

"The chances are ten to one that such a clause will never be brought

to bear." This he had said partly to himself, so as to ease the

thoughts which came crowding on his brain; partly, also, in pity for

the patient and the father. But now that he thought the matter over,

he felt that there were no such odds. Were not the odds the other

way? Was it not almost probable that both these men might be gathered

to their long account within the next four years? One, the elder, was

a strong man, indeed; one who might yet live for years to come if he

would but give himself fair play. But then, he himself protested,

and protested with a truth too surely grounded, that fair play to

himself was beyond his own power to give. The other, the younger,

had everything against him. Not only was he a poor, puny creature,

without physical strength, one of whose life a friend could never

feel sure under any circumstances, but he also was already addicted

to his father's vices; he also was already killing himself with

alcohol.

And then, if these two men did die within the prescribed period, if

this clause in Sir Roger's will were brought to bear, if it should

become his, Dr Thorne's, duty to see that clause carried out, how

would he be bound to act? That woman's eldest child was his own

niece, his adopted bairn, his darling, the pride of his heart, the

cynosure of his eye, his child also, his own Mary. Of all his duties

on this earth, next to that one great duty to his God and conscience,

was his duty to her. What, under these circumstances, did his duty to

her require of him?

But then, that one great duty, that duty which she would be the first

to expect from him; what did that demand of him? Had Scatcherd made

his will without saying what its clauses were, it seemed to Thorne

that Mary must have been the heiress, should that clause become

necessarily operative. Whether she were so or not would at any rate

be for lawyers to decide. But now the case was very different.

This rich man had confided in him, and would it not be a breach of

confidence, an act of absolute dishonesty--an act of dishonesty both

to Scatcherd and to that far-distant American family, to that father,

who, in former days, had behaved so nobly, and to that eldest child

of his, would it not be gross dishonesty to them all if he allowed

this man to leave a will by which his property might go to a person

never intended to be his heir?

Long before he had arrived at Greshamsbury his mind on this point

had been made up. Indeed, it had been made up while sitting there by

Scatcherd's bedside. It had not been difficult to make up his mind to

so much; but then, his way out of this dishonesty was not so easy for

him to find. How should he set this matter right so as to inflict no

injury on his niece, and no sorrow to himself--if that indeed could

be avoided?

And then other thoughts crowded on his brain. He had always

professed--professed at any rate to himself and to her--that of all

the vile objects of a man's ambition, wealth, wealth merely for its

own sake, was the vilest. They, in their joint school of inherent

philosophy, had progressed to ideas which they might find it not easy

to carry out, should they be called on by events to do so. And if

this would have been difficult to either when acting on behalf of

self alone, how much more difficult when one might have to act for

the other! This difficulty had now come to the uncle. Should he, in

this emergency, take upon himself to fling away the golden chance

which might accrue to his niece if Scatcherd should be encouraged to

make her partly his heir?

"He'd want her to go and live there--to live with him and his wife.

All the money in the Bank of England would not pay her for such

misery," said the doctor to himself, as he slowly rode into is own

yard.

On one point, and one only, had he definitely made up his mind. On

the following day he would go over again to Boxall Hill, and would

tell Scatcherd the whole truth. Come what might, the truth must be

the best. And so, with some gleam of comfort, he went into the house,

and found his niece in the drawing-room with Patience Oriel.

"Mary and I have been quarrelling," said Patience. "She says the

doctor is the greatest man in a village; and I say the parson is, of

course."

"I only say that the doctor is the most looked after," said Mary.

"There's another horrid message for you to go to Silverbridge, uncle.

Why can't that Dr Century manage his own people?"

"She says," continued Miss Oriel, "that if a parson was away for a

month, no one would miss him; but that a doctor is so precious that

his very minutes are counted."

"I am sure uncle's are. They begrudge him his meals. Mr Oriel never

gets called away to Silverbridge."

"No; we in the Church manage our parish arrangements better than you

do. We don't let strange practitioners in among our flocks because

the sheep may chance to fancy them. Our sheep have to put up with our

spiritual doses whether they like them or not. In that respect we are

much the best off. I advise you, Mary, to marry a clergyman, by all

means."

"I will when you marry a doctor," said she.

"I am sure nothing on earth would give me greater pleasure," said

Miss Oriel, getting up and curtseying very low to Dr Thorne; "but I

am not quite prepared for the agitation of an offer this morning, so

I'll run away."

And so she went; and the doctor, getting on his other horse, started

again for Silverbridge, wearily enough. "She's happy now where she

is," said he to himself, as he rode along. "They all treat her there

as an equal at Greshamsbury. What though she be no cousin to the

Thornes of Ullathorne. She has found her place there among them all,

and keeps it on equal terms with the best of them. There is Miss

Oriel; her family is high; she is rich, fashionable, a beauty,

courted by every one; but yet she does not look down on Mary. They

are equal friends together. But how would it be if she were taken to

Boxall Hill, even as a recognised niece of the rich man there? Would

Patience Oriel and Beatrice Gresham go there after her? Could she be

happy there as she is in my house here, poor though it be? It would

kill her to pass a month with Lady Scatcherd and put up with that

man's humours, to see his mode of life, to be dependent on him, to

belong to him." And then the doctor, hurrying on to Silverbridge,

again met Dr Century at the old lady's bedside, and having made his

endeavours to stave off the inexorable coming of the grim visitor,

again returned to his own niece and his own drawing-room.

"You must be dead, uncle," said Mary, as she poured out his tea for

him, and prepared the comforts of that most comfortable meal--tea,

dinner, and supper, all in one. "I wish Silverbridge was fifty miles

off."

"That would only make the journey worse; but I am not dead yet, and,

what is more to the purpose, neither is my patient." And as he spoke

he contrived to swallow a jorum of scalding tea, containing in

measure somewhat near a pint. Mary, not a whit amazed at this feat,

merely refilled the jorum without any observation; and the doctor

went on stirring the mixture with his spoon, evidently oblivious that

any ceremony had been performed by either of them since the first

supply had been administered to him.

When the clatter of knives and forks was over, the doctor turned

himself to the hearthrug, and putting one leg over the other, he

began to nurse it as he looked with complacency at his third cup of

tea, which stood untasted beside him. The fragments of the solid

banquet had been removed, but no sacrilegious hand had been laid on

the teapot and the cream-jug.

"Mary," said he, "suppose you were to find out to-morrow morning

that, by some accident, you had become a great heiress, would you be

able to suppress your exultation?"

"The first thing I'd do, would be to pronounce a positive edict that

you should never go to Silverbridge again; at least without a day's

notice."

"Well, and what next? what would you do next?"

"The next thing--the next thing would be to send to Paris for a

French bonnet exactly like the one Patience Oriel had on. Did you see

it?"

"Well I can't say I did; bonnets are invisible now; besides I never

remark anybody's clothes, except yours."

"Oh! do look at Miss Oriel's bonnet the next time you see her. I

cannot understand why it should be so, but I am sure of this--no

English fingers could put together such a bonnet as that; and I am

nearly sure that no French fingers could do it in England."

"But you don't care so much about bonnets, Mary!" This the doctor

said as an assertion; but there was, nevertheless, somewhat of a

question involved in it.

"Don't I, though?" said she. "I do care very much about bonnets;

especially since I saw Patience this morning. I asked how much it

cost--guess."

"Oh! I don't know--a pound?"

"A pound, uncle!"

"What! a great deal more? Ten pounds?"

"Oh, uncle."

"What! more than ten pounds? Then I don't think even Patience Oriel

ought to give it."

"No, of course she would not; but, uncle, it really cost a hundred

francs!"

"Oh! a hundred francs; that's four pounds, isn't it? Well, and how

much did your last new bonnet cost?"

"Mine! oh, nothing--five and ninepence, perhaps; I trimmed it myself.

If I were left a great fortune, I'd send to Paris to-morrow; no,

I'd go myself to Paris to buy a bonnet, and I'd take you with me to

choose it."

The doctor sat silent for a while meditating about this, during

which he unconsciously absorbed the tea beside him; and Mary again

replenished his cup.

"Come, Mary," said he at last, "I'm in a generous mood; and as I am

rather more rich than usual, we'll send to Paris for a French bonnet.

The going for it must wait a while longer I am afraid."

"You're joking."

"No, indeed. If you know the way to send--that I must confess would

puzzle me; but if you'll manage the sending, I'll manage the paying;

and you shall have a French bonnet."

"Uncle!" said she, looking up at him.

"Oh, I'm not joking; I owe you a present, and I'll give you that."

"And if you do, I'll tell you what I'll do with it. I'll cut it into

fragments, and burn them before your face. Why, uncle, what do you

take me for? You're not a bit nice to-night to make such an offer as

that to me; not a bit, not a bit." And then she came over from her

seat at the tea-tray and sat down on a foot-stool close at his knee.

"Because I'd have a French bonnet if I had a large fortune, is that a

reason why I should like one now? if you were to pay four pounds for

a bonnet for me, it would scorch my head every time I put it on."

"I don't see that: four pounds would not ruin me. However, I don't

think you'd look a bit better if you had it; and, certainly, I should

not like to scorch these locks," and putting his hand upon her

shoulders, he played with her hair.

"Patience has a pony-phaeton, and I'd have one if I were rich; and

I'd have all my books bound as she does; and, perhaps, I'd give fifty

guineas for a dressing-case."

"Fifty guineas!"

"Patience did not tell me; but so Beatrice says. Patience showed it

to me once, and it is a darling. I think I'd have the dressing-case

before the bonnet. But, uncle--"

"Well?"

"You don't suppose I want such things?"

"Not improperly. I am sure you do not."

"Not properly, or improperly; not much, or little. I covet many

things; but nothing of that sort. You know, or should know, that I do

not. Why did you talk of buying a French bonnet for me?"

Dr Thorne did not answer this question, but went on nursing his leg.

"After all," said he, "money is a fine thing."

"Very fine, when it is well come by," she answered; "that is, without

detriment to the heart or soul."

"I should be a happier man if you were provided for as is Miss Oriel.

Suppose, now, I could give you up to a rich man who would be able to

insure you against all wants?"

"Insure me against all wants! Oh, that would be a man. That would be

selling me, wouldn't it, uncle? Yes, selling me; and the price you

would receive would be freedom from future apprehensions as regards

me. It would be a cowardly sale for you to make; and then, as to

me--me the victim. No, uncle; you must bear the misery of having to

provide for me--bonnets and all. We are in the same boat, and you

shan't turn me overboard."

"But if I were to die, what would you do then?"

"And if I were to die, what would you do? People must be bound

together. They must depend on each other. Of course, misfortunes may

come; but it is cowardly to be afraid of them beforehand. You and I

are bound together, uncle; and though you say these things to tease

me, I know you do not wish to get rid of me."

"Well, well; we shall win through, doubtless; if not in one way, then

in another."

"Win through! Of course we shall; who doubts our winning? but,

uncle--"

"But, Mary."

"Well?"

"You haven't got another cup of tea, have you?"

"Oh, uncle! you have had five."

"No, my dear! not five; only four--only four, I assure you; I have

been very particular to count. I had one while I was--"

"Five uncle; indeed and indeed."

"Well, then, as I hate the prejudice which attaches luck to an odd

number, I'll have a sixth to show that I am not superstitious."

While Mary was preparing the sixth jorum, there came a knock at the

door. Those late summonses were hateful to Mary's ear, for they were

usually the forerunners of a midnight ride through the dark lanes to

some farmer's house. The doctor had been in the saddle all day, and,

as Janet brought the note into the room, Mary stood up as though to

defend her uncle from any further invasion on his rest.

"A note from the house, miss," said Janet: now "the house," in

Greshamsbury parlance, always meant the squire's mansion.

"No one ill at the house, I hope," said the doctor, taking the note

from Mary's hand. "Oh--ah--yes; it's from the squire--there's nobody

ill: wait a minute, Janet, and I'll write a line. Mary, lend me your

desk."

The squire, anxious as usual for money, had written to ask what

success the doctor had had in negotiating the new loan with Sir

Roger. The fact, however, was, that in his visit at Boxall Hill, the

doctor had been altogether unable to bring on the carpet the matter

of this loan. Subjects had crowded themselves in too quickly during

that interview--those two interviews at Sir Roger's bedside; and he

had been obliged to leave without even alluding to the question.

"I must at any rate go back now," said he to himself. So he wrote to

the squire, saying that he was to be at Boxall Hill again on the

following day, and that he would call at the house on his return.

"That's settled, at any rate," said he.

"What's settled?" said Mary.

"Why, I must go to Boxall Hill again to-morrow. I must go early, too,

so we'd better both be off to bed. Tell Janet I must breakfast at

half-past seven."

"You couldn't take me, could you? I should so like to see that Sir

Roger."

"To see Sir Roger! Why, he's ill in bed."

"That's an objection, certainly; but some day, when he's well, could

not you take me over? I have the greatest desire to see a man like

that; a man who began with nothing and now has more than enough to

buy the whole parish of Greshamsbury."

"I don't think you'd like him at all."

"Why not? I am sure I should; I am sure I should like him, and Lady

Scatcherd, too. I've heard you say that she is an excellent woman."

"Yes, in her way; and he, too, is good in his way; but they are

neither of them in your way: they are extremely vulgar--"

"Oh! I don't mind that; that would make them more amusing; one

doesn't go to those sort of people for polished manners."

"I don't think you'd find the Scatcherds pleasant acquaintances at

all," said the doctor, taking his bed-candle, and kissing his niece's

forehead as he left the room.

CHAPTER XII

When Greek Meets Greek, Then Comes the Tug of War

The doctor, that is our doctor, had thought nothing more of the

message which had been sent to that other doctor, Dr Fillgrave; nor

in truth did the baronet. Lady Scatcherd had thought of it, but her

husband during the rest of the day was not in a humour which allowed

her to remind him that he would soon have a new physician on his

hands; so she left the difficulty to arrange itself, waiting in some

little trepidation till Dr Fillgrave should show himself.

It was well that Sir Roger was not dying for want of his assistance,

for when the message reached Barchester, Dr Fillgrave was some five

or six miles out of town, at Plumstead; and as he did not get back

till late in the evening, he felt himself necessitated to put off his

visit to Boxall Hill till next morning. Had he chanced to have been

made acquainted with that little conversation about the pump, he

would probably have postponed it even yet a while longer.

He was, however, by no means sorry to be summoned to the bedside of

Sir Roger Scatcherd. It was well known at Barchester, and very well

known to Dr Fillgrave, that Sir Roger and Dr Thorne were old friends.

It was very well known to him also, that Sir Roger, in all his bodily

ailments, had hitherto been contented to entrust his safety to the

skill of his old friend. Sir Roger was in his way a great man, and

much talked of in Barchester, and rumour had already reached the

ears of the Barchester Galen, that the great railway contractor was

ill. When, therefore, he received a peremptory summons to go over to

Boxall Hill, he could not but think that some pure light had broken

in upon Sir Roger's darkness, and taught him at last where to look

for true medical accomplishment.

And then, also, Sir Roger was the richest man in the county, and to

county practitioners a new patient with large means is a godsend; how

much greater a godsend when he be not only acquired, but taken also

from some rival practitioner, need hardly be explained.

Dr Fillgrave, therefore, was somewhat elated when, after a very early

breakfast, he stepped into the post-chaise which was to carry him

to Boxall Hill. Dr Fillgrave's professional advancement had been

sufficient to justify the establishment of a brougham, in which he

paid his ordinary visits round Barchester; but this was a special

occasion, requiring special speed, and about to produce no doubt a

special guerdon, and therefore a pair of post-horses were put into

request.

It was hardly yet nine when the post-boy somewhat loudly rang the

bell at Sir Roger's door; and then Dr Fillgrave, for the first time,

found himself in the new grand hall of Boxall Hill house.

"I'll tell my lady," said the servant, showing him into the grand

dining-room; and there for some fifteen minutes or twenty minutes Dr

Fillgrave walked up and down the length of the Turkey carpet all

alone.

Dr Fillgrave was not a tall man, and was perhaps rather more inclined

to corpulence than became his height. In his stocking-feet, according

to the usually received style of measurement, he was five feet five;

and he had a little round abdominal protuberance, which an inch and a

half added to the heels of his boots hardly enabled him to carry off

as well as he himself would have wished. Of this he was apparently

conscious, and it gave to him an air of not being entirely at his

ease. There was, however, a personal dignity in his demeanour, a

propriety in his gait, and an air of authority in his gestures which

should prohibit one from stigmatizing those efforts at altitude as a

failure. No doubt he did achieve much; but, nevertheless, the effort

would occasionally betray itself, and the story of the frog and the

ox would irresistibly force itself into one's mind at those moments

when it most behoved Dr Fillgrave to be magnificent.

But if the bulgy roundness of his person and the shortness of his

legs in any way detracted from his personal importance, these

trifling defects were, he was well aware, more than atoned for by the

peculiar dignity of his countenance. If his legs were short, his face

was not; if there was any undue preponderance below the waistcoat,

all was in due symmetry above the necktie. His hair was grey, not

grizzled nor white, but properly grey; and stood up straight from off

his temples on each side with an unbending determination of purpose.

His whiskers, which were of an admirable shape, coming down and

turning gracefully at the angle of his jaw, were grey also, but

somewhat darker than his hair. His enemies in Barchester declared

that their perfect shade was produced by a leaden comb. His eyes were

not brilliant, but were very effective, and well under command. He

was rather short-sighted, and a pair of eye-glasses was always on his

nose, or in his hand. His nose was long, and well pronounced, and his

chin, also, was sufficiently prominent; but the great feature of his

face was his mouth. The amount of secret medical knowledge of which

he could give assurance by the pressure of those lips was truly

wonderful. By his lips, also, he could be most exquisitely courteous,

or most sternly forbidding. And not only could he be either the one

or the other; but he could at his will assume any shade of difference

between the two, and produce any mixture of sentiment.

When Dr Fillgrave was first shown into Sir Roger's dining-room, he

walked up and down the room for a while with easy, jaunty step, with

his hands joined together behind his back, calculating the price

of the furniture, and counting the heads which might be adequately

entertained in a room of such noble proportions; but in seven or

eight minutes an air of impatience might have been seen to suffuse

his face. Why could he not be shown into the sick man's room? What

necessity could there be for keeping him there, as though he were

some apothecary with a box of leeches in his pocket? He then rang

the bell, perhaps a little violently. "Does Sir Roger know that I am

here?" he said to the servant. "I'll tell my lady," said the man,

again vanishing.

For five minutes more he walked up and down, calculating no longer

the value of the furniture, but rather that of his own importance.

He was not wont to be kept waiting in this way; and though Sir Roger

Scatcherd was at present a great and rich man, Dr Fillgrave had

remembered him a very small and a very poor man. He now began to

think of Sir Roger as the stone-mason, and to chafe somewhat more

violently at being so kept by such a man.

When one is impatient, five minutes is as the duration of all time,

and a quarter of an hour is eternity. At the end of twenty minutes

the step of Dr Fillgrave up and down the room had become very quick,

and he had just made up his mind that he would not stay there all

day to the serious detriment, perhaps fatal injury, of his other

expectant patients. His hand was again on the bell, and was about to

be used with vigour, when the door opened and Lady Scatcherd entered.

The door opened and Lady Scatcherd entered; but she did so very

slowly, as though she were afraid to come into her own dining-room.

We must go back a little and see how she had been employed during

those twenty minutes.

"Oh, laws!" Such had been her first exclamation on hearing that the

doctor was in the dining-room. She was standing at the time with her

housekeeper in a small room in which she kept her linen and jam,

and in which, in company with the same housekeeper, she spent the

happiest moments of her life.

"Oh laws! now, Hannah, what shall we do?"

"Send 'un up at once to master, my lady! let John take 'un up."

"There'll be such a row in the house, Hannah; I know there will."

"But sure-ly didn't he send for 'un? Let the master have the row

himself, then; that's what I'd do, my lady," added Hannah, seeing

that her ladyship still stood trembling in doubt, biting her

thumb-nail.

"You couldn't go up to the master yourself, could you now, Hannah?"

said Lady Scatcherd in her most persuasive tone.

"Why no," said Hannah, after a little deliberation; "no, I'm afeard I

couldn't."

"Then I must just face it myself." And up went the wife to tell her

lord that the physician for whom he had sent had come to attend his

bidding.

In the interview which then took place the baronet had not indeed

been violent, but he had been very determined. Nothing on earth, he

said, should induce him to see Dr Fillgrave and offend his dear old

friend Dr Thorne.

"But Roger," said her ladyship, half crying, or rather pretending to

cry in her vexation, "what shall I do with the man? How shall I get

him out of the house?"

"Put him under the pump," said the baronet; and he laughed his

peculiar low guttural laugh, which told so plainly of the havoc which

brandy had made in his throat.

"That's nonsense, Roger; you know I can't put him under the pump. Now

you are ill, and you'd better see him just for five minutes. I'll

make it all right with Dr Thorne."

"I'll be d---- if I do, my lady." All the people about Boxall Hill

called poor Lady Scatcherd "my lady" as if there was some excellent

joke in it; and, so, indeed, there was.

"You know you needn't mind nothing he says, nor yet take nothing he

sends: and I'll tell him not to come no more. Now do 'ee see him,

Roger."

But there was no coaxing Roger over now, or indeed ever: he was a

wilful, headstrong, masterful man; a tyrant always though never

a cruel one; and accustomed to rule his wife and household as

despotically as he did his gangs of workmen. Such men it is not easy

to coax over.

"You go down and tell him I don't want him, and won't see him, and

that's an end of it. If he chose to earn his money, why didn't he

come yesterday when he was sent for? I'm well now, and don't want

him; and what's more, I won't have him. Winterbones, lock the door."

So Winterbones, who during this interview had been at work at his

little table, got up to lock the door, and Lady Scatcherd had no

alternative but to pass through it before the last edict was obeyed.

Lady Scatcherd, with slow step, went downstairs and again sought

counsel with Hannah, and the two, putting their heads together,

agreed that the only cure for the present evil was to found in a

good fee. So Lady Scatcherd, with a five-pound note in her hand, and

trembling in every limb, went forth to encounter the august presence

of Dr Fillgrave.

As the door opened, Dr Fillgrave dropped the bell-rope which was in

his hand, and bowed low to the lady. Those who knew the doctor well,

would have known from his bow that he was not well pleased; it was

as much as though he said, "Lady Scatcherd, I am your most obedient

humble servant; at any rate it appears that it is your pleasure to

treat me as such."

Lady Scatcherd did not understand all this; but she perceived at once

that the man was angry.

"I hope Sir Roger does not find himself worse," said the doctor. "The

morning is getting on; shall I step up and see him?"

"Hem! ha! oh! Why, you see, Dr Fillgrave, Sir Roger finds hisself

vastly better this morning, vastly so."

"I'm very glad to hear it; but as the morning is getting on, shall I

step up to see Sir Roger?"

"Why, Dr Fillgrave, sir, you see, he finds hisself so much hisself

this morning, that he a'most thinks it would be a shame to trouble

you."

"A shame to trouble me!" This was the sort of shame which Dr

Fillgrave did not at all comprehend. "A shame to trouble me! Why Lady

Scatcherd--"

Lady Scatcherd saw that she had nothing for it but to make the whole

matter intelligible. Moreover, seeing that she appreciated more

thoroughly the smallness of Dr Fillgrave's person than she did the

peculiar greatness of his demeanour, she began to be a shade less

afraid of him than she had thought she should have been.

"Yes, Dr Fillgrave; you see, when a man like he gets well, he can't

abide the idea of doctors: now, yesterday, he was all for sending for

you; but to-day he comes to hisself, and don't seem to want no doctor

at all."

Then did Dr Fillgrave seem to grow out of his boots, so suddenly did

he take upon himself sundry modes of expansive attitude;--to grow out

of his boots and to swell upwards, till his angry eyes almost looked

down on Lady Scatcherd, and each erect hair bristled up towards the

heavens.

"This is very singular, very singular, Lady Scatcherd; very singular,

indeed; very singular; quite unusual. I have come here from

Barchester, at some considerable inconvenience, at some very

considerable inconvenience, I may say, to my regular patients;

and--and--and--I don't know that anything so very singular ever

occurred to me before." And then Dr Fillgrave, with a compression of

his lips which almost made the poor woman sink into the ground, moved

towards the door.

Then Lady Scatcherd bethought her of her great panacea. "It isn't

about the money, you know, doctor," said she; "of course Sir Roger

don't expect you to come here with post-horses for nothing." In this,

by the by, Lady Scatcherd did not stick quite close to veracity,

for Sir Roger, had he known it, would by no means have assented to

any payment; and the note which her ladyship held in her hand was

taken from her own private purse. "It ain't at all about the money,

doctor;" and then she tendered the bank-note, which she thought would

immediately make all things smooth.

Now Dr Fillgrave dearly loved a five-pound fee. What physician is so

unnatural as not to love it? He dearly loved a five-pound fee; but he

loved his dignity better. He was angry also; and like all angry men,

he loved his grievance. He felt that he had been badly treated; but

if he took the money he would throw away his right to indulge in any

such feeling. At that moment his outraged dignity and his cherished

anger were worth more than a five-pound note. He looked at it with

wishful but still averted eyes, and then sternly refused the tender.

"No, madam," said he; "no, no;" and with his right hand raised with

his eye-glasses in it, he motioned away the tempting paper. "No; I

should have been happy to have given Sir Roger the benefit of any

medical skill I may have, seeing that I was specially called in--"

"But, doctor; if the man's well, you know--"

"Oh, of course; if he's well, and does not choose to see me, there's

an end of it. Should he have any relapse, as my time is valuable, he

will perhaps oblige me by sending elsewhere. Madam, good morning.

I will, if you will allow me, ring for my carriage--that is,

post-chaise."

"But, doctor, you'll take the money; you must take the money; indeed

you'll take the money," said Lady Scatcherd, who had now become

really unhappy at the idea that her husband's unpardonable whim had

brought this man with post-horses all the way from Barchester, and

that he was to be paid nothing for his time nor costs.

"No, madam, no. I could not think of it. Sir Roger, I have no doubt,

will know better another time. It is not a question of money; not at

all."

"But it is a question of money, doctor; and you really shall, you

must." And poor Lady Scatcherd, in her anxiety to acquit herself at

any rate of any pecuniary debt to the doctor, came to personal close

quarters with him, with the view of forcing the note into his hands.

"Quite impossible, quite impossible," said the doctor, still

cherishing his grievance, and valiantly rejecting the root of all

evil. "I shall not do anything of the kind, Lady Scatcherd."

"Now doctor, do 'ee; to oblige me."

"Quite out of the question." And so, with his hands and hat behind

his back, in token of his utter refusal to accept any pecuniary

accommodation of his injury, he made his way backwards to the door,

her ladyship perseveringly pressing him in front. So eager had been

the attack on him, that he had not waited to give his order about the

post-chaise, but made his way at once towards the hall.

"Now, do 'ee take it, do 'ee," pressed Lady Scatcherd.

"Utterly out of the question," said Dr Fillgrave, with great

deliberation, as he backed his way into the hall. As he did so, of

course he turned round,--and he found himself almost in the arms of

Dr Thorne.

As Burley must have glared at Bothwell when they rushed together in

the dread encounter on the mountain side; as Achilles may have glared

at Hector when at last they met, each resolved to test in fatal

conflict the prowess of the other, so did Dr Fillgrave glare at his

foe from Greshamsbury, when, on turning round on his exalted heel,

he found his nose on a level with the top button of Dr Thorne's

waistcoat.

And here, if it be not too tedious, let us pause a while to

recapitulate and add up the undoubted grievances of the Barchester

practitioner. He had made no effort to ingratiate himself into the

sheepfold of that other shepherd-dog; it was not by his seeking that

he was now at Boxall Hill; much as he hated Dr Thorne, full sure

as he felt of that man's utter ignorance, of his incapacity to

administer properly even a black dose, of his murdering propensities

and his low, mean, unprofessional style of practice; nevertheless, he

had done nothing to undermine him with these Scatcherds. Dr Thorne

might have sent every mother's son at Boxall Hill to his long

account, and Dr Fillgrave would not have interfered;--would not have

interfered unless specially and duly called upon to do so.

But he had been specially and duly called on. Before such a step was

taken some words must undoubtedly have passed on the subject between

Thorne and the Scatcherds. Thorne must have known what was to be

done. Having been so called, Dr Fillgrave had come--had come all the

way in a post-chaise--had been refused admittance to the sick man's

room, on the plea that the sick man was no longer sick; and just as

he was about to retire fee-less--for the want of the fee was not

the less a grievance from the fact of its having been tendered and

refused--fee-less, dishonoured, and in dudgeon, he encountered this

other doctor--this very rival whom he had been sent to supplant; he

encountered him in the very act of going to the sick man's room.

What mad fanatic Burley, what god-succoured insolent Achilles,

ever had such cause to swell with wrath as at that moment had Dr

Fillgrave? Had I the pen of Moliere, I could fitly tell of such

medical anger, but with no other pen can it be fitly told. He did

swell, and when the huge bulk of his wrath was added to his natural

proportions, he loomed gigantic before the eyes of the surrounding

followers of Sir Roger.

Dr Thorne stepped back three steps and took his hat from his head,

having, in the passage from the hall-door to the dining-room,

hitherto omitted to do so. It must be borne in mind that he had no

conception whatever that Sir Roger had declined to see the physician

for whom he had sent; none whatever that the physician was now about

to return, fee-less, to Barchester.

Dr Thorne and Dr Fillgrave were doubtless well-known enemies. All

the world of Barchester, and all that portion of the world of London

which is concerned with the lancet and the scalping-knife, were well

aware of this: they were continually writing against each other;

continually speaking against each other; but yet they had never

hitherto come to that positive personal collision which is held to

justify a cut direct. They very rarely saw each other; and when they

did meet, it was in some casual way in the streets of Barchester or

elsewhere, and on such occasions their habit had been to bow with

very cold propriety.

On the present occasion, Dr Thorne of course felt that Dr Fillgrave

had the whip-hand of him; and, with a sort of manly feeling on

such a point, he conceived it to be most compatible with his own

dignity to show, under such circumstances, more than his usual

courtesy--something, perhaps, amounting almost to cordiality. He

had been supplanted, \_quoad\_ doctor, in the house of this rich,

eccentric, railway baronet, and he would show that he bore no malice

on that account.

So he smiled blandly as he took off his hat, and in a civil speech he

expressed a hope that Dr Fillgrave had not found his patient to be in

any very unfavourable state.

Here was an aggravation to the already lacerated feelings of the

injured man. He had been brought thither to be scoffed at and scorned

at, that he might be a laughing-stock to his enemies, and food

for mirth to the vile-minded. He swelled with noble anger till he

would have burst, had it not been for the opportune padding of his

frock-coat.

"Sir," said he; "sir:" and he could hardly get his lips open to give

vent to the tumult of his heart. Perhaps he was not wrong; for it may

be that his lips were more eloquent than would have been his words.

"What's the matter?" said Dr Thorne, opening his eyes wide, and

addressing Lady Scatcherd over the head and across the hairs of the

irritated man below him. "What on earth is the matter? Is anything

wrong with Sir Roger?"

"Oh, laws, doctor!" said her ladyship. "Oh, laws; I'm sure it ain't

my fault. Here's Dr Fillgrave in a taking, and I'm quite ready to

pay him,--quite. If a man gets paid, what more can he want?" And she

again held out the five-pound note over Dr Fillgrave's head.

What more, indeed, Lady Scatcherd, can any of us want, if only

we could keep our tempers and feelings a little in abeyance? Dr

Fillgrave, however, could not so keep his; and, therefore, he did

want something more, though at the present moment he could have

hardly said what.

Lady Scatcherd's courage was somewhat resuscitated by the presence of

her ancient trusty ally; and, moreover, she began to conceive that

the little man before her was unreasonable beyond all conscience in

his anger, seeing that that for which he was ready to work had been

offered to him without any work at all.

"Madam," said he, again turning round at Lady Scatcherd, "I was

never before treated in such a way in any house in Barchester--

never--never."

"Good heavens, Dr Fillgrave!" said he of Greshamsbury, "what is the

matter?"

"I'll let you know what is the matter, sir," said he, turning round

again as quickly as before. "I'll let you know what is the matter.

I'll publish this, sir, to the medical world;" and as he shrieked

out the words of the threat, he stood on tiptoes and brandished his

eye-glasses up almost into his enemy's face.

"Don't be angry with Dr Thorne," said Lady Scatcherd. "Any ways, you

needn't be angry with him. If you must be angry with anybody--"

"I shall be angry with him, madam," ejaculated Dr Fillgrave, making

another sudden demi-pirouette. "I am angry with him--or, rather, I

despise him;" and completing the circle, Dr Fillgrave again brought

himself round in full front of his foe.

Dr Thorne raised his eyebrows and looked inquiringly at Lady

Scatcherd; but there was a quiet sarcastic motion round his mouth

which by no means had the effect of throwing oil on the troubled

waters.

"I'll publish the whole of this transaction to the medical world, Dr

Thorne--the whole of it; and if that has not the effect of rescuing

the people of Greshamsbury out of your hands, then--then--then, I

don't know what will. Is my carriage--that is, post-chaise there?"

and Dr Fillgrave, speaking very loudly, turned majestically to one of

the servants.

"What have I done to you, Dr Fillgrave," said Dr Thorne, now

absolutely laughing, "that you should determined to take my bread out

of my mouth? I am not interfering with your patient. I have come here

simply with reference to money matters appertaining to Sir Roger."

"Money matters! Very well--very well; money matters. That is your

idea of medical practice! Very well--very well. Is my post-chaise at

the door? I'll publish it all to the medical world--every word--every

word of it, every word of it."

"Publish what, you unreasonable man?"

"Man! sir; whom do you call a man? I'll let you know whether I'm a

man--post-chaise there!"

"Don't 'ee call him names now, doctor; don't 'ee, pray don't 'ee,"

said Lady Scatcherd.

By this time they had all got somewhere nearer the hall-door; but the

Scatcherd retainers were too fond of the row to absent themselves

willingly at Dr Fillgrave's bidding, and it did not appear that any

one went in search of the post-chaise.

"Man! sir; I'll let you know what it is to speak to me in that style.

I think, sir, you hardly know who I am."

"All that I know of you at present is, that you are my friend Sir

Roger's physician, and I cannot conceive what has occurred to make

you so angry." And as he spoke, Dr Thorne looked carefully at him to

see whether that pump-discipline had in truth been applied. There

were no signs whatever that cold water had been thrown upon Dr

Fillgrave.

"My post-chaise--is my post-chaise there? The medical world shall

know all; you may be sure, sir, the medical world shall know it all;"

and thus, ordering his post-chaise, and threatening Dr Thorne with

the medical world, Dr Fillgrave made his way to the door.

But the moment he put on his hat he returned. "No, madam," said

he. "No; it is quite out of the question: such an affair is not

to be arranged by such means. I'll publish it all to the medical

world--post-chaise there!" and then, using all his force, he flung

as far as he could into the hall a light bit of paper. It fell at Dr

Thorne's feet, who, raising it, found that it was a five-pound note.

"I put it into his hat just while he was in his tantrum," said Lady

Scatcherd. "And I thought that perhaps he would not find it till he

got to Barchester. Well I wish he'd been paid, certainly, although

Sir Roger wouldn't see him;" and in this manner Dr Thorne got some

glimpse of understanding into the cause of the great offence.

"I wonder whether Sir Roger will see \_me\_," said he, laughing.

CHAPTER XIII

The Two Uncles

"Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Sir Roger, lustily, as Dr Thorne

entered the room. "Well, if that ain't rich, I don't know what is.

Ha! ha! ha! But why did they not put him under the pump, doctor?"

The doctor, however, had too much tact, and too many things of

importance to say, to allow of his giving up much time to the

discussion of Dr Fillgrave's wrath. He had come determined to open

the baronet's eyes as to what would be the real effect of his will,

and he had also to negotiate a loan for Mr Gresham, if that might be

possible. Dr Thorne therefore began about the loan, that being the

easier subject, and found that Sir Roger was quite clear-headed as to

his money concerns, in spite of his illness. Sir Roger was willing

enough to lend Mr Gresham more money--six, eight, ten, twenty

thousand; but then, in doing so, he should insist on obtaining

possession of the title-deeds.

"What! the title-deeds of Greshamsbury for a few thousand pounds?"

said the doctor.

"I don't know whether you call ninety thousand pounds a few

thousands; but the debt will about amount to that."

"Ah! that's the old debt."

"Old and new together, of course; every shilling I lend more weakens

my security for what I have lent before."

"But you have the first claim, Sir Roger."

"It ought to be first and last to cover such a debt as that. If he

wants further accommodation, he must part with his deeds, doctor."

The point was argued backwards and forwards for some time without

avail, and the doctor then thought it well to introduce the other

subject.

"Well, Sir Roger, you're a hard man."

"No I ain't," said Sir Roger; "not a bit hard; that is, not a bit too

hard. Money is always hard. I know I found it hard to come by; and

there is no reason why Squire Gresham should expect to find me so

very soft."

"Very well; there is an end of that. I thought you would have done as

much to oblige me, that is all."

"What! take bad security to oblige you?"

"Well, there's an end of that."

"I'll tell you what; I'll do as much to oblige a friend as any one.

I'll lend you five thousand pounds, you yourself, without security at

all, if you want it."

"But you know I don't want it; or, at any rate, shan't take it."

"But to ask me to go on lending money to a third party, and he over

head and ears in debt, by way of obliging you, why, it's a little too

much."

"Well, there's and end of it. Now I've something to say to you about

that will of yours."

"Oh! that's settled."

"No, Scatcherd; it isn't settled. It must be a great deal more

settled before we have done with it, as you'll find when you hear

what I have to tell you."

"What you have to tell me!" said Sir Roger, sitting up in bed; "and

what have you to tell me?"

"Your will says you sister's eldest child."

"Yes; but that's only in the event of Louis Philippe dying before he

is twenty-five."

"Exactly; and now I know something about your sister's eldest child,

and, therefore, I have come to tell you."

"You know something about Mary's eldest child?"

"I do, Scatcherd; it is a strange story, and maybe it will make you

angry. I cannot help it if it does so. I should not tell you this if

I could avoid it; but as I do tell you, for your sake, as you will

see, and not for my own, I must implore you not to tell my secret to

others."

Sir Roger now looked at him with an altered countenance. There was

something in his voice of the authoritative tone of other days,

something in the doctor's look which had on the baronet the same

effect which in former days it had sometimes had on the stone-mason.

"Can you give me a promise, Scatcherd, that what I am about to tell

you shall not be repeated?"

"A promise! Well, I don't know what it's about, you know. I don't

like promises in the dark."

"Then I must leave it to your honour; for what I have to say must be

said. You remember my brother, Scatcherd?"

Remember his brother! thought the rich man to himself. The name of

the doctor's brother had not been alluded to between them since the

days of that trial; but still it was impossible but that Scatcherd

should well remember him.

"Yes, yes; certainly. I remember your brother," said he. "I remember

him well; there's no doubt about that."

"Well, Scatcherd," and, as he spoke, the doctor laid his hand with

kindness on the other's arm. "Mary's eldest child was my brother's

child as well.

"But there is no such child living," said Sir Roger; and, in his

violence, as he spoke he threw from off him the bedclothes, and tried

to stand upon the floor. He found, however, that he had no strength

for such an effort, and was obliged to remain leaning on the bed and

resting on the doctor's arm.

"There was no such child ever lived," said he. "What do you mean by

this?"

Dr Thorne would say nothing further till he had got the man into bed

again. This he at last effected, and then he went on with the story

in his own way.

"Yes, Scatcherd, that child is alive; and for fear that you should

unintentionally make her your heir, I have thought it right to tell

you this."

"A girl, is it?"

"Yes, a girl."

"And why should you want to spite her? If she is Mary's child, she is

your brother's child also. If she is my niece, she must be your niece

too. Why should you want to spite her? Why should you try to do her

such a terrible injury?"

"I do not want to spite her."

"Where is she? Who is she? What is she called? Where does she live?"

The doctor did not at once answer all these questions. He had made

up his mind that he would tell Sir Roger that this child was living,

but he had not as yet resolved to make known all the circumstances

of her history. He was not even yet quite aware whether it would be

necessary to say that this foundling orphan was the cherished darling

of his own house.

"Such a child, is, at any rate, living," said he; "of that I give

you my assurance; and under your will, as now worded, it might come

to pass that that child should be your heir. I do not want to spite

her, but I should be wrong to let you make your will without such

knowledge, seeing that I am possessed of it myself."

"But where is the girl?"

"I do not know that that signifies."

"Signifies! Yes; it does signify a great deal. But, Thorne, Thorne,

now that I remember it, now that I can think of things, it was--was

it not you yourself who told me that the baby did not live?"

"Very possibly."

"And was it a lie that you told me?"

"If so, yes. But it is no lie that I tell you now."

"I believed you then, Thorne; then, when I was a poor, broken-down

day-labourer, lying in jail, rotting there; but I tell you fairly, I

do not believe you now. You have some scheme in this."

"Whatever scheme I may have, you can frustrate by making another

will. What can I gain by telling you this? I only do so to induce you

to be more explicit in naming your heir."

They both remained silent for a while, during which the baronet

poured out from his hidden resource a glass of brandy and swallowed

it.

"When a man is taken aback suddenly by such tidings as these, he must

take a drop of something, eh, doctor?"

Dr Thorne did not see the necessity; but the present, he felt, was no

time for arguing the point.

"Come, Thorne, where is the girl? You must tell me that. She is my

niece, and I have a right to know. She shall come here, and I will do

something for her. By the Lord! I would as soon she had the money as

any one else, if she is anything of a good 'un;--some of it, that is.

Is she a good 'un?"

"Good!" said the doctor, turning away his face. "Yes; she is good

enough."

"She must be grown up by now. None of your light skirts, eh?"

"She is a good girl," said the doctor somewhat loudly and sternly. He

could hardly trust himself to say much on this point.

"Mary was a good girl, a very good girl, till"--and Sir Roger raised

himself up in his bed with his fist clenched, as though he were again

about to strike that fatal blow at the farm-yard gate. "But come,

it's no good thinking of that; you behaved well and manly, always.

And so poor Mary's child is alive; at least, you say so."

"I say so, and you may believe it. Why should I deceive you?"

"No, no; I don't see why. But then why did you deceive me before?"

To this the doctor chose to make no answer, and again there was

silence for a while.

"What do you call her, doctor?"

"Her name is Mary."

"The prettiest women's name going; there's no name like it," said the

contractor, with an unusual tenderness in his voice. "Mary--yes; but

Mary what? What other name does she go by?"

Here the doctor hesitated.

"Mary Scatcherd--eh?"

"No. Not Mary Scatcherd."

"Not Mary Scatcherd! Mary what, then? You, with your d---- pride,

wouldn't let her be called Mary Thorne, I know."

This was too much for the doctor. He felt that there were tears in

his eyes, so he walked away to the window to dry them, unseen. Had he

had fifty names, each more sacred than the other, the most sacred of

them all would hardly have been good enough for her.

"Mary what, doctor? Come, if the girl is to belong to me, if I am to

provide for her, I must know what to call her, and where to look for

her."

"Who talked of your providing for her?" said the doctor, turning

round at the rival uncle. "Who said that she was to belong to you?

She will be no burden to you; you are only told of this that you

may not leave your money to her without knowing it. She is provided

for--that is, she wants nothing; she will do well enough; you need

not trouble yourself about her."

"But if she's Mary's child, Mary's child in real truth, I will

trouble myself about her. Who else should do so? For the matter of

that, I'd as soon say her as any of those others in America. What do

I care about blood? I shan't mind her being a bastard. That is to

say, of course, if she's decently good. Did she ever get any kind of

teaching; book-learning, or anything of that sort?"

Dr Thorne at this moment hated his friend the baronet with almost a

deadly hatred; that he, rough brute as he was--for he was a rough

brute--that he should speak in such language of the angel who gave to

that home in Greshamsbury so many of the joys of Paradise--that he

should speak of her as in some degree his own, that he should inquire

doubtingly as to her attributes and her virtues. And then the doctor

thought of her Italian and French readings, of her music, of her nice

books, and sweet lady ways, of her happy companionship with Patience

Oriel, and her dear, bosom friendship with Beatrice Gresham. He

thought of her grace, and winning manners, and soft, polished

feminine beauty; and, as he did so, he hated Sir Roger Scatcherd, and

regarded him with loathing, as he might have regarded a wallowing

hog.

At last a light seemed to break in upon Sir Roger's mind. Dr Thorne,

he perceived, did not answer his last question. He perceived, also,

that the doctor was affected with some more than ordinary emotion.

Why should it be that this subject of Mary Scatcherd's child moved

him so deeply? Sir Roger had never been at the doctor's house at

Greshamsbury, had never seen Mary Thorne, but he had heard that

there lived with the doctor some young female relative; and thus a

glimmering light seemed to come in upon Sir Roger's bed.

He had twitted the doctor with his pride; had said that it was

impossible that the girl should be called Mary Thorne. What if she

were so called? What if she were now warming herself at the doctor's

hearth?

"Well, come, Thorne, what is it you call her? Tell it out, man. And,

look you, if it's your name she bears, I shall think more of you, a

deal more than ever I did yet. Come, Thorne, I'm her uncle too. I

have a right to know. She is Mary Thorne, isn't she?"

The doctor had not the hardihood nor the resolution to deny it.

"Yes," said he, "that is her name; she lives with me."

"Yes, and lives with all those grand folks at Greshamsbury too. I

have heard of that."

"She lives with me, and belongs to me, and is as my daughter."

"She shall come over here. Lady Scatcherd shall have her to stay with

her. She shall come to us. And as for my will, I'll make another.

I'll--"

"Yes, make another will--or else alter that one. But as to Miss

Thorne coming here--"

"What! Mary--"

"Well, Mary. As to Mary Thorne coming here, that I fear will not be

possible. She cannot have two homes. She has cast her lot with one of

her uncles, and she must remain with him now."

"Do you mean to say that she must never have any relation but one?"

"But one such as I am. She would not be happy over here. She does not

like new faces. You have enough depending on you; I have but her."

"Enough! why, I have only Louis Philippe. I could provide for a dozen

girls."

"Well, well, well, we will not talk about that."

"Ah! but, Thorne, you have told me of this girl now, and I cannot but

talk of her. If you wished to keep the matter dark, you should have

said nothing about it. She is my niece as much as yours. And, Thorne,

I loved my sister Mary quite as well as you loved your brother; quite

as well."

Any one who might now have heard and seen the contractor would have

hardly thought him to be the same man who, a few hours before, was

urging that the Barchester physician should be put under the pump.

"You have your son, Scatcherd. I have no one but that girl."

"I don't want to take her from you. I don't want to take her; but

surely there can be no harm in her coming here to see us? I can

provide for her, Thorne, remember that. I can provide for her without

reference to Louis Philippe. What are ten or fifteen thousand pounds

to me? Remember that, Thorne."

Dr Thorne did remember it. In that interview he remembered many

things, and much passed through his mind on which he felt himself

compelled to resolve somewhat too suddenly. Would he be justified

in rejecting, on behalf of Mary, the offer of pecuniary provision

which this rich relative seemed so well inclined to make? Or, if he

accepted it, would he in truth be studying her interests? Scatcherd

was a self-willed, obstinate man--now indeed touched by unwonted

tenderness; but he was one to whose lasting tenderness Dr Thorne

would be very unwilling to trust his darling. He did resolve, that on

the whole he should best discharge his duty, even to her, by keeping

her to himself, and rejecting, on her behalf, any participation in

the baronet's wealth. As Mary herself had said, "some people must

be bound together;" and their destiny, that of himself and his

niece, seemed to have so bound them. She had found her place at

Greshamsbury, her place in the world; and it would be better for

her now to keep it, than to go forth and seek another that would be

richer, but at the same time less suited to her.

"No, Scatcherd," he said at last, "she cannot come here; she would

not be happy here, and, to tell the truth, I do not wish her to know

that she has other relatives."

"Ah! she would be ashamed of her mother, you mean, and of her

mother's brother too, eh? She's too fine a lady, I suppose, to take

me by the hand and give me a kiss, and call me her uncle? I and Lady

Scatcherd would not be grand enough for her, eh?"

"You may say what you please, Scatcherd: I of course cannot stop

you."

"But I don't know how you'll reconcile what you are doing to your

conscience. What right can you have to throw away the girl's chance,

now that she has a chance? What fortune can you give her?"

"I have done what little I could," said Thorne, proudly.

"Well, well, well, well, I never heard such a thing in my life;

never. Mary's child, my own Mary's child, and I'm not to see her!

But, Thorne, I tell you what; I will see her. I'll go over to her,

I'll go to Greshamsbury, and tell her who I am, and what I can do

for her. I tell you fairly I will. You shall not keep her away from

those who belong to her, and can do her a good turn. Mary's daughter;

another Mary Scatcherd! I almost wish she were called Mary Scatcherd.

Is she like her, Thorne? Come tell me that; is she like her mother."

"I do not remember her mother; at least not in health."

"Not remember her! ah, well. She was the handsomest girl in

Barchester, anyhow. That was given up to her. Well, I didn't think to

be talking of her again. Thorne, you cannot but expect that I shall

go over and see Mary's child?"

"Now, Scatcherd, look here," and the doctor, coming away from the

window, where he had been standing, sat himself down by the bedside,

"you must not come over to Greshamsbury."

"Oh! but I shall."

"Listen to me, Scatcherd. I do not want to praise myself in any way;

but when that girl was an infant, six months old, she was like to be

a thorough obstacle to her mother's fortune in life. Tomlinson was

willing to marry your sister, but he would not marry the child too.

Then I took the baby, and I promised her mother that I would be to

her as a father. I have kept my word as fairly as I have been able.

She has sat at my hearth, and drunk of my cup, and been to me as my

own child. After that, I have a right to judge what is best for her.

Her life is not like your life, and her ways are not as your ways--"

"Ah, that is just it; we are too vulgar for her."

"You may take it as you will," said the doctor, who was too much in

earnest to be in the least afraid of offending his companion. "I have

not said so; but I do say that you and she are unlike in your way of

living."

"She wouldn't like an uncle with a brandy bottle under his head, eh?"

"You could not see her without letting her know what is the connexion

between you; of that I wish to keep her in ignorance."

"I never knew any one yet who was ashamed of a rich connexion. How do

you mean to get a husband for her, eh?"

"I have told you of her existence," continued the doctor, not

appearing to notice what the baronet had last said, "because I found

it necessary that you should know the fact of your sister having left

this child behind her; you would otherwise have made a will different

from that intended, and there might have been a lawsuit, and mischief

and misery when we are gone. You must perceive that I have done this

in honesty to you; and you yourself are too honest to repay me by

taking advantage of this knowledge to make me unhappy."

"Oh, very well, doctor. At any rate, you are a brick, I will say

that. But I'll think of all this, I'll think of it; but it does

startle me to find that poor Mary has a child living so near to me."

"And now, Scatcherd, I will say good-bye. We part as friends, don't

we?"

"Oh, but doctor, you ain't going to leave me so. What am I to do?

What doses shall I take? How much brandy may I drink? May I have a

grill for dinner? D---- me, doctor, you have turned Fillgrave out of

the house. You mustn't go and desert me."

Dr Thorne laughed, and then, sitting himself down to write medically,

gave such prescriptions and ordinances as he found to be necessary.

They amounted but to this: that the man was to drink, if possible, no

brandy; and if that were not possible, then as little as might be.

This having been done, the doctor again proceeded to take his leave;

but when he got to the door he was called back. "Thorne! Thorne!

About that money for Mr Gresham; do what you like, do just what

you like. Ten thousand, is it? Well, he shall have it. I'll make

Winterbones write about it at once. Five per cent., isn't it? No,

four and a half. Well, he shall have ten thousand more."

"Thank you, Scatcherd, thank you, I am really very much obliged to

you, I am indeed. I wouldn't ask it if I was not sure your money is

safe. Good-bye, old fellow, and get rid of that bedfellow of yours,"

and again he was at the door.

"Thorne," said Sir Roger once more. "Thorne, just come back for a

minute. You wouldn't let me send a present would you,--fifty pounds

or so,--just to buy a few flounces?"

The doctor contrived to escape without giving a definite answer

to this question; and then, having paid his compliments to Lady

Scatcherd, remounted his cob and rode back to Greshamsbury.

CHAPTER XIV

Sentence of Exile

Dr Thorne did not at once go home to his own house. When he reached

the Greshamsbury gates, he sent his horse to its own stable by one of

the people at the lodge, and then walked on to the mansion. He had

to see the squire on the subject of the forthcoming loan, and he had

also to see Lady Arabella.

The Lady Arabella, though she was not personally attached to the

doctor with quite so much warmth as some others of her family, still

had reasons of her own for not dispensing with his visits to the

house. She was one of his patients, and a patient fearful of the

disease with which she was threatened. Though she thought the doctor

to be arrogant, deficient as to properly submissive demeanour

towards herself, an instigator to marital parsimony in her lord,

one altogether opposed to herself and her interest in Greshamsbury

politics, nevertheless, she did feel trust in him as a medical man.

She had no wish to be rescued out of his hands by any Dr Fillgrave,

as regarded that complaint of hers, much as she may have desired,

and did desire, to sever him from all Greshamsbury councils in all

matters not touching the healing art.

Now the complaint of which the Lady Arabella was afraid, was cancer:

and her only present confidant in this matter was Dr Thorne.

The first of the Greshamsbury circle whom he saw was Beatrice, and he

met her in the garden.

"Oh, doctor," said she, "where has Mary been this age? She has not

been up here since Frank's birthday."

"Well, that was only three days ago. Why don't you go down and ferret

her out in the village?"

"So I have done. I was there just now, and found her out. She was out

with Patience Oriel. Patience is all and all with her now. Patience

is all very well, but if they throw me over--"

"My dear Miss Gresham, Patience is and always was a virtue."

"A poor, beggarly, sneaking virtue after all, doctor. They should

have come up, seeing how deserted I am here. There's absolutely

nobody left."

"Has Lady de Courcy gone?"

"Oh, yes! All the de Courcys have gone. I think, between ourselves,

Mary stays away because she does not love them too well. They have

all gone, and taken Augusta and Frank with them."

"Has Frank gone to Courcy Castle?"

"Oh, yes; did you not hear? There was rather a fight about it. Master

Frank wanted to get off, and was as hard to catch as an eel, and then

the countess was offended; and papa said he didn't see why Frank was

to go if he didn't like it. Papa is very anxious about his degree,

you know."

The doctor understood it all as well as though it had been described

to him at full length. The countess had claimed her prey, in order

that she might carry him off to Miss Dunstable's golden embrace. The

prey, not yet old enough and wise enough to connect the worship of

Plutus with that of Venus, had made sundry futile feints and dodges

in the vain hope of escape. Then the anxious mother had enforced the

de Courcy behests with all a mother's authority. But the father,

whose ideas on the subject of Miss Dunstable's wealth had probably

not been consulted, had, as a matter of course, taken exactly the

other side of the question. The doctor did not require to be told all

this in order to know how the battle had raged. He had not yet heard

of the great Dunstable scheme; but he was sufficiently acquainted

with Greshamsbury tactics to understand that the war had been carried

on somewhat after this fashion.

As a rule, when the squire took a point warmly to heart, he was

wont to carry his way against the de Courcy interest. He could be

obstinate enough when it so pleased him, and had before now gone so

far as to tell his wife, that her thrice-noble sister-in-law might

remain at home at Courcy Castle--or, at any rate, not come to

Greshamsbury--if she could not do so without striving to rule him and

every one else when she got here. This had of course been repeated to

the countess, who had merely replied to it by a sisterly whisper, in

which she sorrowfully intimated that some men were born brutes, and

always would remain so.

"I think they all are," the Lady Arabella had replied; wishing,

perhaps, to remind her sister-in-law that the breed of brutes was as

rampant in West Barsetshire as in the eastern division of the county.

The squire, however, had not fought on this occasion with all his

vigour. There had, of course, been some passages between him and his

son, and it had been agreed that Frank should go for a fortnight to

Courcy Castle.

"We mustn't quarrel with them, you know, if we can help it," said the

father; "and, therefore, you must go sooner or later."

"Well, I suppose so; but you don't know how dull it is, governor."

"Don't I!" said Gresham.

"There's a Miss Dunstable to be there; did you ever hear of her,

sir?"

"No, never."

"She's a girl whose father used to make ointment, or something of

that sort."

"Oh, yes, to be sure; the ointment of Lebanon. He used to cover all

the walls in London. I haven't heard of him this year past."

"No; that's because he's dead. Well, she carries on the ointment now,

I believe; at any rate, she has got all the money. I wonder what

she's like."

"You'd better go and see," said the father, who now began to have

some inkling of an idea why the two ladies were so anxious to carry

his son off to Courcy Castle at this exact time. And so Frank had

packed up his best clothes, given a last fond look at the new black

horse, repeated his last special injunctions to Peter, and had then

made one of the stately \_cortÃ¨ge\_ which proceeded through the county

from Greshamsbury to Courcy Castle.

"I am very glad of that, very," said the squire, when he heard that

the money was to be forthcoming. "I shall get it on easier terms from

him than elsewhere; and it kills me to have continual bother about

such things." And Mr Gresham, feeling that that difficulty was tided

over for a time, and that the immediate pressure of little debts

would be abated, stretched himself on his easy chair as though he

were quite comfortable;--one may say almost elated.

How frequent it is that men on their road to ruin feel elation such

as this! A man signs away a moiety of his substance; nay, that were

nothing; but a moiety of the substance of his children; he puts

his pen to the paper that ruins him and them; but in doing so he

frees himself from a score of immediate little pestering, stinging

troubles: and, therefore, feels as though fortune has been almost

kind to him.

The doctor felt angry with himself for what he had done when he saw

how easily the squire adapted himself to this new loan. "It will make

Scatcherd's claim upon you very heavy," said he.

Mr Gresham at once read all that was passing through the doctor's

mind. "Well, what else can I do?" said he. "You wouldn't have me

allow my daughter to lose this match for the sake of a few thousand

pounds? It will be well at any rate to have one of them settled. Look

at that letter from Moffat."

The doctor took the letter and read it. It was a long, wordy,

ill-written rigmarole, in which that amorous gentleman spoke with

much rapture of his love and devotion for Miss Gresham; but at the

same time declared, and most positively swore, that the adverse

cruelty of his circumstances was such, that it would not allow him to

stand up like a man at the hymeneal altar until six thousand pounds

hard cash had been paid down at his banker's.

"It may be all right," said the squire; "but in my time gentlemen

were not used to write such letters as that to each other."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. He did not know how far he would

be justified in saying much, even to his friend the squire, in

dispraise of his future son-in-law.

"I told him that he should have the money; and one would have thought

that that would have been enough for him. Well: I suppose Augusta

likes him. I suppose she wishes the match; otherwise, I would give

him such an answer to that letter as would startle him a little."

"What settlement is he to make?" said Thorne.

"Oh, that's satisfactory enough; couldn't be more so; a thousand a

year and the house at Wimbledon for her; that's all very well. But

such a lie, you know, Thorne. He's rolling in money, and yet he talks

of this beggarly sum as though he couldn't possibly stir without it."

"If I might venture to speak my mind," said Thorne.

"Well?" said the squire, looking at him earnestly.

"I should be inclined to say that Mr Moffat wants to cry off,

himself."

"Oh, impossible; quite impossible. In the first place, he was so very

anxious for the match. In the next place, it is such a great thing

for him. And then, he would never dare; you see, he is dependent on

the de Courcys for his seat."

"But suppose he loses his seat?"

"But there is not much fear of that, I think. Scatcherd may be a very

fine fellow, but I think they'll hardly return him at Barchester."

"I don't understand much about it," said Thorne; "but such things do

happen."

"And you believe that this man absolutely wants to get off the match;

absolutely thinks of playing such a trick as that on my daughter;--on

me?"

"I don't say he intends to do it; but it looks to me as though he

were making a door for himself, or trying to make a door: if so, your

having the money will stop him there."

"But, Thorne, don't you think he loves the girl? If I thought not--"

The doctor stood silent for a moment, and then he said, "I am not a

love-making man myself, but I think that if I were much in love with

a young lady I should not write such a letter as that to her father."

"By heavens! If I thought so," said the squire--"but, Thorne, we

can't judge of those fellows as one does of gentlemen; they are so

used to making money, and seeing money made, that they have an eye to

business in everything."

"Perhaps so, perhaps so," muttered the doctor, showing evidently that

he still doubted the warmth of Mr Moffat's affection.

"The match was none of my making, and I cannot interfere now to break

it off: it will give her a good position in the world; for, after

all, money goes a great way, and it is something to be in Parliament.

I can only hope she likes him. I do truly hope she likes him;" and

the squire also showed by the tone of his voice that, though he might

hope that his daughter was in love with her intended husband, he

hardly conceived it to be possible that she should be so.

And what was the truth of the matter? Miss Gresham was no more in

love with Mr Moffat than you are--oh, sweet, young, blooming beauty!

Not a whit more; not, at least, in your sense of the word, nor in

mine. She had by no means resolved within her heart that of all the

men whom she had ever seen, or ever could see, he was far away the

nicest and best. That is what you will do when you are in love, if

you be good for anything. She had no longing to sit near to him--the

nearer the better; she had no thought of his taste and his choice

when she bought her ribbons and bonnets; she had no indescribable

desire that all her female friends should be ever talking to her

about him. When she wrote to him, she did not copy her letters again

and again, so that she might be, as it were, ever speaking to him;

she took no special pride in herself because he had chosen her to

be his life's partner. In point of fact, she did not care one straw

about him.

And yet she thought she loved him; was, indeed, quite confident

that she did so; told her mother that she was sure Gustavus would

wish this, she knew Gustavus would like that, and so on; but as for

Gustavus himself, she did not care a chip for him.

She was in love with her match just as farmers are in love with

wheat at eighty shillings a quarter; or shareholders--innocent

gudgeons--with seven and half per cent. interest on their paid-up

capital. Eighty shillings a quarter, and seven and half per cent.

interest, such were the returns which she had been taught to look

for in exchange for her young heart; and, having obtained them, or

being thus about to obtain them, why should not her young heart be

satisfied? Had she not sat herself down obediently at the feet of her

lady Gamaliel, and should she not be rewarded? Yes, indeed, she shall

be rewarded.

And then the doctor went to the lady. On their medical secrets we

will not intrude; but there were other matters bearing on the course

of our narrative, as to which Lady Arabella found it necessary to say

a word or so to the doctor; and it is essential that we should know

what was the tenor of those few words so spoken.

How the aspirations, and instincts, and feelings of a household

become changed as the young birds begin to flutter with feathered

wings, and have half-formed thoughts of leaving the parental nest! A

few months back, Frank had reigned almost autocratic over the lesser

subjects of the kingdom of Greshamsbury. The servants, for instance,

always obeyed him, and his sisters never dreamed of telling anything

which he directed should not be told. All his mischief, all his

troubles, and all his loves were confided to them, with the sure

conviction that they would never be made to stand in evidence against

him.

Trusting to this well-ascertained state of things, he had not

hesitated to declare his love for Miss Thorne before his sister

Augusta. But his sister Augusta had now, as it were, been received

into the upper house; having duly received, and duly profited by the

lessons of her great instructress, she was now admitted to sit in

conclave with the higher powers: her sympathies, of course, became

changed, and her confidence was removed from the young and giddy

and given to the ancient and discreet. She was as a schoolboy, who,

having finished his schooling, and being fairly forced by necessity

into the stern bread-earning world, undertakes the new duties of

tutoring. Yesterday he was taught, and fought, of course, against the

schoolmaster; to-day he teaches, and fights as keenly for him. So

it was with Augusta Gresham, when, with careful brow, she whispered

to her mother that there was something wrong between Frank and Mary

Thorne.

"Stop it at once, Arabella: stop it at once," the countess had said;

"that, indeed, will be ruin. If he does not marry money, he is lost.

Good heavens! the doctor's niece! A girl that nobody knows where she

comes from!"

"He's going with you to-morrow, you know," said the anxious mother.

"Yes; and that is so far well: if he will be led by me, the evil

may be remedied before he returns; but it is very, very hard to

lead young men. Arabella, you must forbid that girl to come to

Greshamsbury again on any pretext whatever. The evil must be stopped

at once."

"But she is here so much as a matter of course."

"Then she must be here as a matter of course no more: there has been

folly, very great folly, in having her here. Of course she would turn

out to be a designing creature with such temptation before her; with

such a prize within her reach, how could she help it?"

"I must say, aunt, she answered him very properly," said Augusta.

"Nonsense," said the countess; "before you, of course she did.

Arabella, the matter must not be left to the girl's propriety. I

never knew the propriety of a girl of that sort to be fit to be

depended upon yet. If you wish to save the whole family from ruin,

you must take steps to keep her away from Greshamsbury now at once.

Now is the time; now that Frank is to be away. Where so much, so very

much depends on a young man's marrying money, not one day ought to be

lost."

Instigated in this manner, Lady Arabella resolved to open her mind

to the doctor, and to make it intelligible to him that, under

present circumstances, Mary's visits at Greshamsbury had better be

discontinued. She would have given much, however, to have escaped

this business. She had in her time tried one or two falls with the

doctor, and she was conscious that she had never yet got the better

of him: and then she was in a slight degree afraid of Mary herself.

She had a presentiment that it would not be so easy to banish Mary

from Greshamsbury: she was not sure that that young lady would not

boldly assert her right to her place in the school-room; appeal

loudly to the squire, and perhaps, declare her determination of

marrying the heir, out before them all. The squire would be sure to

uphold her in that, or in anything else.

And then, too, there would be the greatest difficulty in wording her

request to the doctor; and Lady Arabella was sufficiently conscious

of her own weakness to know that she was not always very good at

words. But the doctor, when hard pressed, was never at fault: he

could say the bitterest things in the quietest tone, and Lady

Arabella had a great dread of these bitter things. What, also, if he

should desert her himself; withdraw from her his skill and knowledge

of her bodily wants and ailments now that he was so necessary to her?

She had once before taken that measure of sending to Barchester for

Dr Fillgrave, but it had answered with her hardly better than with

Sir Roger and Lady Scatcherd.

When, therefore, Lady Arabella found herself alone with the doctor,

and called upon to say out her say in what best language she could

select for the occasion, she did not feel to very much at her ease.

There was that about the man before her which cowed her, in spite of

her being the wife of the squire, the sister of an earl, a person

quite acknowledged to be of the great world, and the mother of the

very important young man whose affections were now about to be called

in question. Nevertheless, there was the task to be done, and with a

mother's courage she essayed it.

"Dr Thorne," said she, as soon as their medical conference was at

an end, "I am very glad you came over to-day, for I had something

special which I wanted to say to you:" so far she got, and then

stopped; but, as the doctor did not seem inclined to give her any

assistance, she was forced to flounder on as best she could.

"Something very particular indeed. You know what a respect and

esteem, and I may say affection, we all have for you,"--here the

doctor made a low bow--"and I may say for Mary also;" here the

doctor bowed himself again. "We have done what little we could to be

pleasant neighbours, and I think you'll believe me when I say that I

am a true friend to you and dear Mary--"

The doctor knew that something very unpleasant was coming, but he

could not at all guess what might be its nature. He felt, however,

that he must say something; so he expressed a hope that he was duly

sensible of all the acts of kindness he had ever received from the

squire and the family at large.

"I hope, therefore, my dear doctor, you won't take amiss what I am

going to say."

"Well, Lady Arabella, I'll endeavour not to do so."

"I am sure I would not give any pain if I could help it, much less

to you. But there are occasions, doctor, in which duty must be

paramount; paramount to all other considerations, you know, and,

certainly, this occasion is one of them."

"But what is the occasion, Lady Arabella?"

"I'll tell you, doctor. You know what Frank's position is?"

"Frank's position! as regards what?"

"Why, his position in life; an only son, you know."

"Oh, yes; I know his position in that respect; an only son, and his

father's heir; and a very fine fellow, he is. You have but one son,

Lady Arabella, and you may well be proud of him."

Lady Arabella sighed. She did not wish at the present moment to

express herself as being in any way proud of Frank. She was desirous

rather, on the other hand, of showing that she was a good deal

ashamed of him; only not quite so much ashamed of him as it behoved

the doctor to be of his niece.

"Well, perhaps so; yes," said Lady Arabella, "he is, I believe, a

very good young man, with an excellent disposition; but, doctor, his

position is very precarious; and he is just at that time of life when

every caution is necessary."

To the doctor's ears, Lady Arabella was now talking of her son as a

mother might of her infant when whooping-cough was abroad or croup

imminent. "There is nothing on earth the matter with him, I should

say," said the doctor. "He has every possible sign of perfect

health."

"Oh yes; his health! Yes, thank God, his health is good; that is a

great blessing." And Lady Arabella thought of her four flowerets that

had already faded. "I am sure I am most thankful to see him growing

up so strong. But it is not that I mean, doctor."

"Then what is it, Lady Arabella?"

"Why, doctor, you know the squire's position with regard to money

matters?"

Now the doctor undoubtedly did know the squire's position with regard

to money matters,--knew it much better than did Lady Arabella; but

he was by no means inclined to talk on that subject to her ladyship.

He remained quite silent, therefore, although Lady Arabella's last

speech had taken the form of a question. Lady Arabella was a little

offended at this want of freedom on his part, and become somewhat

sterner in her tone--a thought less condescending in her manner.

"The squire has unfortunately embarrassed the property, and Frank

must look forward to inherit it with very heavy encumbrances; I

fear very heavy indeed, though of what exact nature I am kept in

ignorance."

Looking at the doctor's face, she perceived that there was no

probability whatever that her ignorance would be enlightened by him.

"And, therefore, it is highly necessary that Frank should be very

careful."

"As to his private expenditure, you mean?" said the doctor.

"No; not exactly that: though of course he must be careful as to

that, too; that's of course. But that is not what I mean, doctor; his

only hope of retrieving his circumstances is by marrying money."

"With every other conjugal blessing that a man can have, I hope he

may have that also." So the doctor replied with imperturbable face;

but not the less did he begin to have a shade of suspicion of what

might be the coming subject of the conference. It would be untrue to

say that he had ever thought it probable that the young heir should

fall in love with his niece; that he had ever looked forward to such

a chance, either with complacency or with fear; nevertheless, the

idea had of late passed through his mind. Some word had fallen from

Mary, some closely watched expression of her eye, or some quiver

in her lip when Frank's name was mentioned, had of late made him

involuntarily think that such might not be impossible; and then, when

the chance of Mary becoming the heiress to so large a fortune had

been forced upon his consideration, he had been unable to prevent

himself from building happy castles in the air, as he rode slowly

home from Boxall Hill. But not a whit the more on that account was

he prepared to be untrue to the squire's interest or to encourage a

feeling which must be distasteful to all the squire's friends.

"Yes, doctor; he must marry money."

"And worth, Lady Arabella; and a pure feminine heart; and youth and

beauty. I hope he will marry them all."

Could it be possible, that in speaking of a pure feminine heart, and

youth and beauty, and such like gewgaws, the doctor was thinking of

his niece? Could it be that he had absolutely made up his mind to

foster and encourage this odious match?

The bare idea made Lady Arabella wrathful, and her wrath gave her

courage. "He must marry money, or he will be a ruined man. Now,

doctor, I am informed that things--words that is--have passed between

him and Mary which never ought to have been allowed."

And now also the doctor was wrathful. "What things? what words?" said

he, appearing to Lady Arabella as though he rose in his anger nearly

a foot in altitude before her eyes. "What has passed between them?

and who says so?"

"Doctor, there have been love-makings, you may take my word for it;

love-makings of a very, very, very advanced description."

This, the doctor could not stand. No, not for Greshamsbury and its

heir; not for the squire and all his misfortunes; not for Lady

Arabella and the blood of all the de Courcys could he stand quiet

and hear Mary thus accused. He sprang up another foot in height, and

expanded equally in width as he flung back the insinuation.

"Who says so? Whoever says so, whoever speaks of Miss Thorne in such

language, says what is not true. I will pledge my word--"

"My dear doctor, my dear doctor, what took place was quite clearly

heard; there was no mistake about it, indeed."

"What took place? What was heard?"

"Well, then, I don't want, you know, to make more of it than can be

helped. The thing must be stopped, that is all."

"What thing? Speak out, Lady Arabella. I will not have Mary's conduct

impugned by innuendoes. What is it that eavesdroppers have heard?"

"Dr Thorne, there have been no eavesdroppers."

"And no talebearers either? Will you ladyship oblige me by letting me

know what is the accusation which you bring against my niece?"

"There has been most positively an offer made, Dr Thorne."

"And who made it?"

"Oh, of course I am not going to say but what Frank must have been

very imprudent. Of course he has been to blame. There has been fault

on both sides, no doubt."

"I utterly deny it. I positively deny it. I know nothing of the

circumstances; have heard nothing about it--"

"Then of course you can't say," said Lady Arabella.

"I know nothing of the circumstance; have heard nothing about it,"

continued Dr Thorne; "but I do know my niece, and am ready to assert

that there has not been fault on both sides. Whether there has been

any fault on any side, that I do not yet know."

"I can assure you, Dr Thorne, that an offer was made by Frank;

such an offer cannot be without its allurements to a young lady

circumstanced like your niece."

"Allurements!" almost shouted the doctor, and, as he did so, Lady

Arabella stepped back a pace or two, retreating from the fire which

shot out of his eyes. "But the truth is, Lady Arabella, you do not

know my niece. If you will have the goodness to let me understand

what it is that you desire I will tell you whether I can comply with

your wishes."

"Of course it will be very inexpedient that the young people should

be thrown together again;--for the present, I mean."

"Well!"

"Frank has now gone to Courcy Castle; and he talks of going from

thence to Cambridge. But he will doubtless be here, backwards and

forwards; and perhaps it will be better for all parties--safer,

that is, doctor--if Miss Thorne were to discontinue her visits to

Greshamsbury for a while."

"Very well!" thundered out the doctor. "Her visits to Greshamsbury

shall be discontinued."

"Of course, doctor, this won't change the intercourse between us;

between you and the family."

"Not change it!" said he. "Do you think that I will break bread in a

house from whence she has been ignominiously banished? Do you think

that I can sit down in friendship with those who have spoken of her

as you have now spoken? You have many daughters; what would you say

if I accused one of them as you have accused her?"

"Accused, doctor! No, I don't accuse her. But prudence, you know,

does sometimes require us--"

"Very well; prudence requires you to look after those who belong

to you; and prudence requires me to look after my one lamb. Good

morning, Lady Arabella."

"But, doctor, you are not going to quarrel with us? You will come

when we want you; eh! won't you?"

Quarrel! quarrel with Greshamsbury! Angry as he was, the doctor felt

that he could ill bear to quarrel with Greshamsbury. A man past fifty

cannot easily throw over the ties that have taken twenty years to

form, and wrench himself away from the various close ligatures with

which, in such a period, he has become bound. He could not quarrel

with the squire; he could ill bear to quarrel with Frank; though he

now began to conceive that Frank had used him badly, he could not do

so; he could not quarrel with the children, who had almost been born

into his arms; nor even with the very walls, and trees, and grassy

knolls with which he was so dearly intimate. He could not proclaim

himself an enemy to Greshamsbury; and yet he felt that fealty to Mary

required of him that, for the present, he should put on an enemy's

guise.

"If you want me, Lady Arabella, and send for me, I will come to you;

otherwise I will, if you please, share the sentence which has been

passed on Mary. I will now wish you good morning." And then bowing

low to her, he left the room and the house, and sauntered slowly away

to his own home.

What was he to say to Mary? He walked very slowly down the

Greshamsbury avenue, with his hands clasped behind his back, thinking

over the whole matter; thinking of it, or rather trying to think

of it. When a man's heart is warmly concerned in any matter, it

is almost useless for him to endeavour to think of it. Instead of

thinking, he gives play to his feelings, and feeds his passion by

indulging it. "Allurements!" he said to himself, repeating Lady

Arabella's words. "A girl circumstanced like my niece! How utterly

incapable is such a woman as that to understand the mind, and heart,

and soul of such a one as Mary Thorne!" And then his thoughts

recurred to Frank. "It has been ill done of him; ill done of him:

young as he is, he should have had feeling enough to have spared me

this. A thoughtless word has been spoken which will now make her

miserable!" And then, as he walked on, he could not divest his mind

of the remembrance of what had passed between him and Sir Roger.

What, if after all, Mary should become the heiress to all that money?

What, if she should become, in fact, the owner of Greshamsbury? for,

indeed it seemed too possible that Sir Roger's heir would be the

owner of Greshamsbury.

The idea was one which he disliked to entertain, but it would recur

to him again and again. It might be, that a marriage between his

niece and the nominal heir to the estate might be of all the matches

the best for young Gresham to make. How sweet would be the revenge,

how glorious the retaliation on Lady Arabella, if, after what had

now been said, it should come to pass that all the difficulties of

Greshamsbury should be made smooth by Mary's love, and Mary's hand!

It was a dangerous subject on which to ponder; and, as he sauntered

down the road, the doctor did his best to banish it from his

mind,--not altogether successfully.

But as he went he again encountered Beatrice. "Tell Mary I went to

her to-day," said she, "and that I expect her up here to-morrow. If

she does not come, I shall be savage."

"Do not be savage," said he, putting out his hand, "even though she

should not come."

Beatrice immediately saw that his manner with her was not playful,

and that his face was serious. "I was only in joke," said she; "of

course I was only joking. But is anything the matter? Is Mary ill?"

"Oh, no; not ill at all; but she will not be here to-morrow, nor

probably for some time. But, Miss Gresham, you must not be savage

with her."

Beatrice tried to interrogate him, but he would not wait to answer

her questions. While she was speaking he bowed to her in his usual

old-fashioned courteous way, and passed on out of hearing. "She will

not come up for some time," said Beatrice to herself. "Then mamma

must have quarrelled with her." And at once in her heart she

acquitted her friend of all blame in the matter, whatever it might

be, and condemned her mother unheard.

The doctor, when he arrived at his own house, had in nowise made

up his mind as to the manner in which he would break the matter to

Mary; but by the time that he had reached the drawing-room, he had

made up his mind to this, that he would put off the evil hour till

the morrow. He would sleep on the matter--lie awake on it, more

probably--and then at breakfast, as best he could, tell her what had

been said of her.

Mary that evening was more than usually inclined to be playful.

She had not been quite certain till the morning, whether Frank had

absolutely left Greshamsbury, and had, therefore, preferred the

company of Miss Oriel to going up to the house. There was a peculiar

cheerfulness about her friend Patience, a feeling of satisfaction

with the world and those in it, which Mary always shared with her;

and now she had brought home to the doctor's fireside, in spite of

her young troubles, a smiling face, if not a heart altogether happy.

"Uncle," she said at last, "what makes you so sombre? Shall I read to

you?"

"No; not to-night, dearest."

"Why, uncle; what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"Ah, but it is something, and you shall tell me;" getting up, she

came over to his arm-chair, and leant over his shoulder.

He looked at her for a minute in silence, and then, getting up from

his chair, passed his arm round her waist, and pressed her closely to

his heart.

"My darling!" he said, almost convulsively. "My best own, truest

darling!" and Mary, looking up into his face, saw that big tears were

running down his cheeks.

But still he told her nothing that night.

CHAPTER XV

Courcy

When Frank Gresham expressed to his father an opinion that Courcy

Castle was dull, the squire, as may be remembered, did not pretend to

differ from him. To men such as the squire, and such as the squire's

son, Courcy Castle was dull. To what class of men it would not be

dull the author is not prepared to say; but it may be presumed that

the de Courcys found it to their liking, or they would have made it

other than it was.

The castle itself was a huge brick pile, built in the days of William

III, which, though they were grand for days of the construction of

the Constitution, were not very grand for architecture of a more

material description. It had, no doubt, a perfect right to be called

a castle, as it was entered by a castle-gate which led into a court,

the porter's lodge for which was built as it were into the wall;

there were attached to it also two round, stumpy adjuncts, which

were, perhaps properly, called towers, though they did not do much in

the way of towering; and, moreover, along one side of the house, over

what would otherwise have been the cornice, there ran a castellated

parapet, through the assistance of which, the imagination no doubt

was intended to supply the muzzles of defiant artillery. But any

artillery which would have so presented its muzzle must have been

very small, and it may be doubted whether even a bowman could have

obtained shelter there.

The grounds about the castle were not very inviting, nor, as grounds,

very extensive; though, no doubt, the entire domain was such as

suited the importance of so puissant a nobleman as Earl de Courcy.

What, indeed, should have been the park was divided out into various

large paddocks. The surface was flat and unbroken; and though

there were magnificent elm-trees standing in straight lines, like

hedgerows, the timber had not that beautiful, wild, scattered look

which generally gives the great charm to English scenery.

The town of Courcy--for the place claimed to rank as a town--was

in many particulars like the castle. It was built of dingy-red

brick--almost more brown than red--and was solid, dull-looking, ugly

and comfortable. It consisted of four streets, which were formed by

two roads crossing each other, making at the point of junction a

centre for the town. Here stood the Red Lion; had it been called the

brown lion, the nomenclature would have been more strictly correct;

and here, in the old days of coaching, some life had been wont to

stir itself at those hours in the day and night when the Freetraders,

Tallyhoes, and Royal Mails changed their horses. But now there was a

railway station a mile and a half distant, and the moving life of the

town of Courcy was confined to the Red Lion omnibus, which seemed to

pass its entire time in going up and down between the town and the

station, quite unembarrassed by any great weight of passengers.

There were, so said the Courcyites when away from Courcy, excellent

shops in the place; but they were not the less accustomed, when

at home among themselves, to complain to each other of the vile

extortion with which they were treated by their neighbours. The

ironmonger, therefore, though he loudly asserted that he could beat

Bristol in the quality of his wares in one direction, and undersell

Gloucester in another, bought his tea and sugar on the sly in one

of those larger towns; and the grocer, on the other hand, equally

distrusted the pots and pans of home production. Trade, therefore, at

Courcy, had not thriven since the railway had opened: and, indeed,

had any patient inquirer stood at the cross through one entire day,

counting customers who entered the neighbouring shops, he might well

have wondered that any shops in Courcy could be kept open.

And how changed has been the bustle of that once noisy inn to the

present death-like silence of its green courtyard! There, a lame

ostler crawls about with his hands thrust into the capacious pockets

of his jacket, feeding on memory. That weary pair of omnibus jades,

and three sorry posters, are all that now grace those stables where

horses used to be stalled in close contiguity by the dozen; where

twenty grains apiece, abstracted from every feed of oats consumed

during the day, would have afforded a daily quart to the lucky

pilferer.

Come, my friend, and discourse with me. Let us know what are thy

ideas of the inestimable benefits which science has conferred on us

in these, our latter days. How dost thou, among others, appreciate

railways and the power of steam, telegraphs, telegrams, and our new

expresses? But indifferently, you say. "Time was I've zeed vifteen

pair o' 'osses go out of this 'ere yard in vour-and-twenty hour;

and now there be'ant vifteen, no, not ten, in vour-and-twenty days!

There was the duik--not this 'un; he be'ant no gude; but this 'un's

vather--why, when he'd come down the road, the cattle did be a-going,

vour days an eend. Here'd be the tooter and the young gen'lmen, and

the governess and the young leddies, and then the servants--they'd

be al'ays the grandest folk of all--and then the duik and the

doochess--Lord love 'ee, zur; the money did fly in them days! But

now--" and the feeling of scorn and contempt which the lame ostler

was enabled by his native talent to throw into the word "now," was

quite as eloquent against the power of steam as anything that has

been spoken at dinners, or written in pamphlets by the keenest

admirers of latter-day lights.

"Why, luke at this 'ere town," continued he of the sieve, "the grass

be a-growing in the very streets;--that can't be no gude. Why, luke

'ee here, zur; I do be a-standing at this 'ere gateway, just this

way, hour arter hour, and my heyes is hopen mostly;--I zees who's

a-coming and who's a-going. Nobody's a-coming and nobody's a-going;

that can't be no gude. Luke at that there homnibus; why, darn me--"

and now, in his eloquence at this peculiar point, my friend became

more loud and powerful than ever--"why, darn me, if maister harns

enough with that there bus to put hiron on them 'osses' feet,

I'll--be--blowed!" And as he uttered this hypothetical denunciation

on himself he spoke very slowly, bringing out every word as it were

separately, and lowering himself at his knees at every sound, moving

at the same time his right hand up and down. When he had finished,

he fixed his eyes upon the ground, pointing downwards, as if there

was to be the site of his doom if the curse that he had called down

upon himself should ever come to pass; and then, waiting no further

converse, he hobbled away, melancholy, to his deserted stables.

Oh, my friend! my poor lame friend! it will avail nothing to tell

thee of Liverpool and Manchester; of the glories of Glasgow, with her

flourishing banks; of London, with its third millions of inhabitants;

of the great things which commerce is doing for this nation of thine!

What is commerce to thee, unless it be commerce in posting on that

worn-out, all but useless great western turnpike-road? There is

nothing left for thee but to be carted away as rubbish--for thee

and for many of us in these now prosperous days; oh, my melancholy,

care-ridden friend!

Courcy Castle was certainly a dull place to look at, and Frank, in

his former visits, had found that the appearance did not belie the

reality. He had been but little there when the earl had been at

Courcy; and as he had always felt from his childhood a peculiar

distaste to the governance of his aunt the countess, this perhaps may

have added to his feeling of dislike. Now, however, the castle was

to be fuller than he had ever before known it; the earl was to be at

home; there was some talk of the Duke of Omnium coming for a day or

two, though that seemed doubtful; there was some faint doubt of Lord

Porlock; Mr Moffat, intent on the coming election--and also, let us

hope, on his coming bliss--was to be one of the guests; and there was

also to be the great Miss Dunstable.

Frank, however, found that those grandees were not expected quite

immediately. "I might go back to Greshamsbury for three or four days

as she is not to be here," he said naÃ¯vely to his aunt, expressing,

with tolerable perspicuity, his feeling, that he regarded his visit

to Courcy Castle quite as a matter of business. But the countess

would hear of no such arrangement. Now that she had got him, she

was not going to let him fall back into the perils of Miss Thorne's

intrigues, or even of Miss Thorne's propriety. "It is quite

essential," she said, "that you should be here a few days before her,

so that she may see that you are at home." Frank did not understand

the reasoning; but he felt himself unable to rebel, and he therefore,

remained there, comforting himself, as best he might, with the

eloquence of the Honourable George, and the sporting humours of the

Honourable John.

Mr Moffat's was the earliest arrival of any importance. Frank had

not hitherto made the acquaintance of his future brother-in-law, and

there was, therefore, some little interest in the first interview. Mr

Moffat was shown into the drawing-room before the ladies had gone up

to dress, and it so happened that Frank was there also. As no one

else was in the room but his sister and two of his cousins, he had

expected to see the lovers rush into each other's arms. But Mr Moffat

restrained his ardour, and Miss Gresham seemed contented that he

should do so.

He was a nice, dapper man, rather above the middle height, and

good-looking enough had he had a little more expression in his face.

He had dark hair, very nicely brushed, small black whiskers, and a

small black moustache. His boots were excellently well made, and

his hands were very white. He simpered gently as he took hold of

Augusta's fingers, and expressed a hope that she had been quite well

since last he had the pleasure of seeing her. Then he touched the

hands of the Lady Rosina and the Lady Margaretta.

"Mr Moffat, allow me to introduce you to my brother?"

"Most happy, I'm sure," said Mr Moffat, again putting out his hand,

and allowing it to slip through Frank's grasp, as he spoke in a

pretty, mincing voice: "Lady Arabella quite well?--and your father,

and sisters? Very warm isn't it?--quite hot in town, I do assure

you."

"I hope Augusta likes him," said Frank to himself, arguing on the

subject exactly as his father had done; "but for an engaged lover he

seems to me to have a very queer way with him." Frank, poor fellow!

who was of a coarser mould, would, under such circumstances, have

been all for kissing--sometimes, indeed, even under other

circumstances.

Mr Moffat did not do much towards improving the conviviality of

the castle. He was, of course, a good deal intent upon his coming

election, and spent much of his time with Mr Nearthewinde, the

celebrated parliamentary agent. It behoved him to be a good deal

at Barchester, canvassing the electors and undermining, by Mr

Nearthewinde's aid, the mines for blowing him out of his seat, which

were daily being contrived by Mr Closerstil, on behalf of Sir Roger.

The battle was to be fought on the internecine principle, no quarter

being given or taken on either side; and of course this gave Mr

Moffat as much as he knew how to do.

Mr Closerstil was well known to be the sharpest man at his business

in all England, unless the palm should be given to his great rival

Mr Nearthewinde; and in this instance he was to be assisted in the

battle by a very clever young barrister, Mr Romer, who was an admirer

of Sir Roger's career in life. Some people in Barchester, when they

saw Sir Roger, Closerstil and Mr Romer saunter down the High Street,

arm in arm, declared that it was all up with poor Moffat; but others,

in whose head the bump of veneration was strongly pronounced,

whispered to each other that great shibboleth--the name of the Duke

of Omnium--and mildly asserted it to be impossible that the duke's

nominee should be thrown out.

Our poor friend the squire did not take much interest in the matter,

except in so far that he liked his son-in-law to be in Parliament.

Both the candidates were in his eye equally wrong in their opinions.

He had long since recanted those errors of his early youth, which

had cost him his seat for the county, and had abjured the de Courcy

politics. He was staunch enough as a Tory now that his being so would

no longer be of the slightest use to him; but the Duke of Omnium,

and Lord de Courcy, and Mr Moffat were all Whigs; Whigs, however,

differing altogether in politics from Sir Roger, who belonged to

the Manchester school, and whose pretensions, through some of those

inscrutable twists in modern politics which are quite unintelligible

to the minds of ordinary men outside the circle, were on this

occasion secretly favoured by the high Conservative party.

How Mr Moffat, who had been brought into the political world by Lord

de Courcy, obtained all the weight of the duke's interest I never

could exactly learn. For the duke and the earl did not generally act

as twin-brothers on such occasions.

There is a great difference in Whigs. Lord de Courcy was a Court

Whig, following the fortunes, and enjoying, when he could get it, the

sunshine of the throne. He was a sojourner at Windsor, and a visitor

at Balmoral. He delighted in gold sticks, and was never so happy as

when holding some cap of maintenance or spur of precedence with due

dignity and acknowledged grace in the presence of all the Court.

His means had been somewhat embarrassed by early extravagance; and,

therefore, as it was to his taste to shine, it suited him to shine at

the cost of the Court rather than at his own.

The Duke of Omnium was a Whig of a very different calibre. He rarely

went near the presence of majesty, and when he did do so, he did it

merely as a disagreeable duty incident to his position. He was very

willing that the Queen should be queen so long as he was allowed to

be Duke of Omnium. Nor had he begrudged Prince Albert any of his

honours till he was called Prince Consort. Then, indeed, he had,

to his own intimate friends, made some remark in three words, not

flattering to the discretion of the Prime Minister. The Queen might

be queen so long as he was Duke of Omnium. Their revenues were

about the same, with the exception, that the duke's were his own,

and he could do what he liked with them. This remembrance did not

unfrequently present itself to the duke's mind. In person, he was a

plain, thin man, tall, but undistinguished in appearance, except that

there was a gleam of pride in his eye which seemed every moment to be

saying, "I am the Duke of Omnium." He was unmarried, and, if report

said true, a great debauchee; but if so he had always kept his

debaucheries decently away from the eyes of the world, and was not,

therefore, open to that loud condemnation which should fall like a

hailstorm round the ears of some more open sinners.

Why these two mighty nobles put their heads together in order that

the tailor's son should represent Barchester in Parliament, I cannot

explain. Mr Moffat, was, as has been said, Lord de Courcy's friend;

and it may be that Lord de Courcy was able to repay the duke for his

kindness, as touching Barchester, with some little assistance in the

county representation.

The next arrival was that of the Bishop of Barchester; a meek, good,

worthy man, much attached to his wife, and somewhat addicted to his

ease. She, apparently, was made in a different mould, and by her

energy and diligence atoned for any want in those qualities which

might be observed in the bishop himself. When asked his opinion, his

lordship would generally reply by saying--"Mrs Proudie and I think so

and so." But before that opinion was given, Mrs Proudie would take

up the tale, and she, in her more concise manner, was not wont to

quote the bishop as having at all assisted in the consideration of

the subject. It was well known in Barsetshire that no married pair

consorted more closely or more tenderly together; and the example of

such conjugal affection among persons in the upper classes is worth

mentioning, as it is believed by those below them, and too often with

truth, that the sweet bliss of connubial reciprocity is not so common

as it should be among the magnates of the earth.

But the arrival even of the bishop and his wife did not make the

place cheerful to Frank Gresham, and he began to long for Miss

Dunstable, in order that he might have something to do. He could not

get on at all with Mr Moffat. He had expected that the man would at

once have called him Frank, and that he would have called the man

Gustavus; but they did not even get beyond Mr Moffat and Mr Gresham.

"Very hot in Barchester to-day, very," was the nearest approach to

conversation which Frank could attain with him; and as far as he,

Frank, could see, Augusta never got much beyond it. There might be

\_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ meetings between them, but, if so, Frank could not

detect when they took place; and so, opening his heart at last to the

Honourable George, for the want of a better confidant, he expressed

his opinion that his future brother-in-law was a muff.

"A muff--I believe you too. What do you think now? I have been with

him and Nearthewinde in Barchester these three days past, looking up

the electors' wives and daughters, and that kind of thing."

"I say, if there is any fun in it you might as well take me with

you."

"Oh, there is not much fun; they are mostly so slobbered and dirty. A

sharp fellow in Nearthewinde, and knows what he is about well."

"Does he look up the wives and daughters too?"

"Oh, he goes on every tack, just as it's wanted. But there was

Moffat, yesterday, in a room behind the milliner's shop near

Cuthbert's Gate; I was with him. The woman's husband is one of the

choristers and an elector, you know, and Moffat went to look for his

vote. Now, there was no one there when we got there but the three

young women, the wife, that is, and her two girls--very pretty women

they are too."

"I say, George, I'll go and get the chorister's vote for Moffat; I

ought to do it as he's to be my brother-in-law."

"But what do you think Moffat said to the women?"

"Can't guess--he didn't kiss any of them, did he?"

"Kiss any of them? No; but he begged to give them his positive

assurance as a gentleman, that if he was returned to Parliament he

would vote for an extension of the franchise, and the admission of

the Jews into Parliament."

"Well, he is a muff!" said Frank.

CHAPTER XVI

Miss Dunstable

At last the great Miss Dunstable came. Frank, when he heard that

the heiress had arrived, felt some slight palpitation at his heart.

He had not the remotest idea in the world of marrying her; indeed,

during the last week past, absence had so heightened his love for

Mary Thorne that he was more than ever resolved that he would never

marry any one but her. He knew that he had made her a formal offer

for her hand, and that it behoved him to keep to it, let the charms

of Miss Dunstable be what they might; but, nevertheless, he was

prepared to go through a certain amount of courtship, in obedience

to his aunt's behests, and he felt a little nervous at being brought

up in that way, face to face, to do battle with two hundred thousand

pounds.

"Miss Dunstable has arrived," said his aunt to him, with great

complacency, on his return from an electioneering visit to the

beauties of Barchester which he made with his cousin George on the

day after the conversation which was repeated at the end of the last

chapter. "She has arrived, and is looking remarkably well; she has

quite a \_distinguÃ©\_ air, and will grace any circle to which she may

be introduced. I will introduce you before dinner, and you can take

her out."

"I couldn't propose to her to-night, I suppose?" said Frank,

maliciously.

"Don't talk nonsense, Frank," said the countess, angrily. "I am doing

what I can for you, and taking on an infinity of trouble to endeavour

to place you in an independent position; and now you talk nonsense to

me."

Frank muttered some sort of apology, and then went to prepare himself

for the encounter.

Miss Dunstable, though she had come by train, had brought with her

her own carriage, her own horses, her own coachman and footman, and

her own maid, of course. She had also brought with her half a score

of trunks, full of wearing apparel; some of them nearly as rich as

that wonderful box which was stolen a short time since from the top

of a cab. But she brought all these things, not in the least because

she wanted them herself, but because she had been instructed to do

so.

Frank was a little more than ordinarily careful in dressing. He

spoilt a couple of white neckties before he was satisfied, and was

rather fastidious as the set of his hair. There was not much of the

dandy about him in the ordinary meaning of the word; but he felt that

it was incumbent on him to look his best, seeing what it was expected

that he should now do. He certainly did not mean to marry Miss

Dunstable; but as he was to have a flirtation with her, it was well

that he should do so under the best possible auspices.

When he entered the drawing-room he perceived at once that the lady

was there. She was seated between the countess and Mrs Proudie; and

mammon, in her person, was receiving worship from the temporalities

and spiritualities of the land. He tried to look unconcerned, and

remained in the farther part of the room, talking with some of his

cousins; but he could not keep his eye off the future possible Mrs

Frank Gresham; and it seemed as though she was as much constrained to

scrutinise him as he felt to scrutinise her.

Lady de Courcy had declared that she was looking extremely well, and

had particularly alluded to her \_distinguÃ©\_ appearance. Frank at once

felt that he could not altogether go along with his aunt in this

opinion. Miss Dunstable might be very well; but her style of beauty

was one which did not quite meet with his warmest admiration.

In age she was about thirty; but Frank, who was no great judge in

these matters, and who was accustomed to have very young girls round

him, at once put her down as being ten years older. She had a very

high colour, very red cheeks, a large mouth, big white teeth, a broad

nose, and bright, small, black eyes. Her hair also was black and

bright, but very crisp, and strong, and was combed close round her

face in small crisp black ringlets. Since she had been brought out

into the fashionable world some one of her instructors in fashion

had given her to understand that curls were not the thing. "They'll

always pass muster," Miss Dunstable had replied, "when they are done

up with bank-notes." It may therefore be presumed that Miss Dunstable

had a will of her own.

"Frank," said the countess, in the most natural and unpremeditated

way, as soon as she caught her nephew's eye, "come here. I want to

introduce you to Miss Dunstable." The introduction was then made.

"Mrs Proudie, would you excuse me? I must positively go and say a few

words to Mrs Barlow, or the poor woman will feel herself huffed;"

and, so saying, she moved off, leaving the coast clear for Master

Frank.

He of course slipped into his aunt's place, and expressed a hope that

Miss Dunstable was not fatigued by her journey.

"Fatigued!" said she, in a voice rather loud, but very good-humoured,

and not altogether unpleasing; "I am not to be fatigued by such a

thing as that. Why, in May we came through all the way from Rome to

Paris without sleeping--that is, without sleeping in a bed--and we

were upset three times out of the sledges coming over the Simplon. It

was such fun! Why, I wasn't to say tired even then."

"All the way from Rome to Paris!" said Mrs Proudie--in a tone of

astonishment, meant to flatter the heiress--"and what made you in

such a hurry?"

"Something about money matters," said Miss Dunstable, speaking rather

louder than usual. "Something to do with the ointment. I was selling

the business just then."

Mrs Proudie bowed, and immediately changed the conversation.

"Idolatry is, I believe, more rampant than ever in Rome," said she;

"and I fear there is no such thing at all as Sabbath observance."

"Oh, not in the least," said Miss Dunstable, with rather a joyous

air; "Sundays and week-days are all the same there."

"How very frightful!" said Mrs Proudie.

"But it's a delicious place. I do like Rome, I must say. And as for

the Pope, if he wasn't quite so fat he would be the nicest old fellow

in the world. Have you been in Rome, Mrs Proudie?"

Mrs Proudie sighed as she replied in the negative, and declared her

belief that danger was to be apprehended from such visits.

"Oh!--ah!--the malaria--of course--yes; if you go at the wrong time;

but nobody is such a fool as that now."

"I was thinking of the soul, Miss Dunstable," said the lady-bishop,

in her peculiar, grave tone. "A place where there are no Sabbath

observances--"

"And have you been in Rome, Mr Gresham?" said the young lady, turning

almost abruptly round to Frank, and giving a somewhat uncivilly cold

shoulder to Mrs Proudie's exhortation. She, poor lady, was forced to

finish her speech to the Honourable George, who was standing near to

her. He having an idea that bishops and all their belongings, like

other things appertaining to religion, should, if possible, be

avoided; but if that were not possible, should be treated with

much assumed gravity, immediately put on a long face, and remarked

that--"it was a deuced shame: for his part he always liked to see

people go quiet on Sundays. The parsons had only one day out of

seven, and he thought they were fully entitled to that." Satisfied

with which, or not satisfied, Mrs Proudie had to remain silent till

dinner-time.

"No," said Frank; "I never was in Rome. I was in Paris once, and

that's all." And then, feeling a not unnatural anxiety as to the

present state of Miss Dunstable's worldly concerns, he took an

opportunity of falling back on that part of the conversation which

Mrs Proudie had exercised so much tact in avoiding.

"And was it sold?" said he.

"Sold! what sold?"

"You were saying about the business--that you came back without going

to bed because of selling the business."

"Oh!--the ointment. No; it was not sold. After all, the affair did

not come off, and I might have remained and had another roll in the

snow. Wasn't it a pity?"

"So," said Frank to himself, "if I should do it, I should be owner of

the ointment of Lebanon: how odd!" And then he gave her his arm and

handed her down to dinner.

He certainly found that the dinner was less dull than any other he

had sat down to at Courcy Castle. He did not fancy that he should

ever fall in love with Miss Dunstable; but she certainly was an

agreeable companion. She told him of her tour, and the fun she had in

her journeys; how she took a physician with her for the benefit of

her health, whom she generally was forced to nurse; of the trouble it

was to her to look after and wait upon her numerous servants; of the

tricks she played to bamboozle people who came to stare at her; and,

lastly, she told him of a lover who followed her from country to

country, and was now in hot pursuit of her, having arrived in London

the evening before she left.

"A lover?" said Frank, somewhat startled by the suddenness of the

confidence.

"A lover--yes--Mr Gresham; why should I not have a lover?"

"Oh!--no--of course not. I dare say you have a good many."

"Only three or four, upon my word; that is, only three or four that I

favour. One is not bound to reckon the others, you know."

"No, they'd be too numerous. And so you have three whom you favour,

Miss Dunstable;" and Frank sighed, as though he intended to say that

the number was too many for his peace of mind.

"Is not that quite enough? But of course I change them sometimes;"

and she smiled on him very good-naturedly. "It would be very dull if

I were always to keep the same."

"Very dull indeed," said Frank, who did not quite know what to say.

"Do you think the countess would mind my having one or two of them

here if I were to ask her?"

"I am quite sure she would," said Frank, very briskly. "She would not

approve of it at all; nor should I."

"You--why, what have you to do with it?"

"A great deal--so much so that I positively forbid it; but, Miss

Dunstable--"

"Well, Mr Gresham?"

"We will contrive to make up for the deficiency as well as possible,

if you will permit us to do so. Now for myself--"

"Well, for yourself?"

At this moment the countess gleamed her accomplished eye round the

table, and Miss Dunstable rose from her chair as Frank was preparing

his attack, and accompanied the other ladies into the drawing-room.

His aunt, as she passed him, touched his arm lightly with her fan, so

lightly that the action was perceived by no one else. But Frank well

understood the meaning of the touch, and appreciated the approbation

which it conveyed. He merely blushed, however, at his own

dissimulation; for he felt more certain that ever that he would never

marry Miss Dunstable, and he felt nearly equally sure that Miss

Dunstable would never marry him.

Lord de Courcy was now at home; but his presence did not add much

hilarity to the claret-cup. The young men, however, were very keen

about the election, and Mr Nearthewinde, who was one of the party,

was full of the most sanguine hopes.

"I have done one good at any rate," said Frank; "I have secured the

chorister's vote."

"What! Bagley?" said Nearthewinde. "The fellow kept out of my way,

and I couldn't see him."

"I haven't exactly seen him," said Frank; "but I've got his vote all

the same."

"What! by a letter?" said Mr Moffat.

"No, not by letter," said Frank, speaking rather low as he looked at

the bishop and the earl; "I got a promise from his wife: I think he's

a little in the henpecked line."

"Ha--ha--ha!" laughed the good bishop, who, in spite of Frank's

modulation of voice, had overheard what had passed. "Is that the way

you manage electioneering matters in our cathedral city? Ha--ha--ha!"

The idea of one of his choristers being in the henpecked line was

very amusing to the bishop.

"Oh, I got a distinct promise," said Frank, in his pride; and then

added incautiously, "but I had to order bonnets for the whole

family."

"Hush-h-h-h-h!" said Mr Nearthewinde, absolutely flabbergasted by

such imprudence on the part of one of his client's friends. "I am

quite sure that your order had no effect, and was intended to have no

effect on Mr Bagley's vote."

"Is that wrong?" said Frank; "upon my word I thought that it was

quite legitimate."

"One should never admit anything in electioneering matters, should

one?" said George, turning to Mr Nearthewinde.

"Very little, Mr de Courcy; very little indeed--the less the better.

It's hard to say in these days what is wrong and what is not. Now,

there's Reddypalm, the publican, the man who has the Brown Bear.

Well, I was there, of course: he's a voter, and if any man in

Barchester ought to feel himself bound to vote for a friend of the

duke's, he ought. Now, I was so thirsty when I was in that man's

house that I was dying for a glass of beer; but for the life of me I

didn't dare order one."

"Why not?" said Frank, whose mind was only just beginning to be

enlightened by the great doctrine of purity of election as practised

in English provincial towns.

"Oh, Closerstil had some fellow looking at me; why, I can't walk down

that town without having my very steps counted. I like sharp fighting

myself, but I never go so sharp as that."

"Nevertheless I got Bagley's vote," said Frank, persisting in praise

of his own electioneering prowess; "and you may be sure of this, Mr

Nearthewinde, none of Closerstil's men were looking at me when I got

it."

"Who'll pay for the bonnets, Frank?" said George.

"Oh, I'll pay for them if Moffat won't. I think I shall keep an

account there; they seem to have good gloves and those sort of

things."

"Very good, I have no doubt," said George.

"I suppose your lordship will be in town soon after the meeting of

Parliament?" said the bishop, questioning the earl.

"Oh! yes; I suppose I must be there. I am never allowed to remain

very long in quiet. It is a great nuisance; but it is too late to

think of that now."

"Men in high places, my lord, never were, and never will be, allowed

to consider themselves. They burn their torches not in their own

behalf," said the bishop, thinking, perhaps, as much of himself as he

did of his noble friend. "Rest and quiet are the comforts of those

who have been content to remain in obscurity."

"Perhaps so," said the earl, finishing his glass of claret with

an air of virtuous resignation. "Perhaps so." His own martyrdom,

however, had not been severe, for the rest and quiet of home had

never been peculiarly satisfactory to his tastes. Soon after this

they all went to the ladies.

It was some little time before Frank could find an opportunity of

recommencing his allotted task with Miss Dunstable. She got into

conversation with the bishop and some other people, and, except that

he took her teacup and nearly managed to squeeze one of her fingers

as he did so, he made very little further progress till towards the

close of the evening.

At last he found her so nearly alone as to admit of his speaking to

her in his low confidential voice.

"Have you managed that matter with my aunt?"

"What matter?" said Miss Dunstable; and her voice was not low, nor

particularly confidential.

"About those three or four gentlemen whom you wish to invite here?"

"Oh! my attendant knights! no, indeed; you gave me such very slight

hope of success; besides, you said something about my not wanting

them."

"Yes I did; I really think they'd be quite unnecessary. If you should

want any one to defend you--"

"At these coming elections, for instance."

"Then, or at any other time, there are plenty here who will be ready

to stand up for you."

"Plenty! I don't want plenty: one good lance in the olden days was

always worth more than a score of ordinary men-at-arms."

"But you talked about three or four."

"Yes; but then you see, Mr Gresham, I have never yet found the one

good lance--at least, not good enough to suit my ideas of true

prowess."

What could Frank do but declare that he was ready to lay his own in

rest, now and always in her behalf? His aunt had been quite angry

with him, and had thought that he turned her into ridicule, when he

spoke of making an offer to her guest that very evening; and yet here

he was so placed that he had hardly an alternative. Let his inward

resolution to abjure the heiress be ever so strong, he was now in a

position which allowed him no choice in the matter. Even Mary Thorne

could hardly have blamed him for saying, that so far as his own

prowess went, it was quite at Miss Dunstable's service. Had Mary been

looking on, she, perhaps, might have thought that he could have done

so with less of that look of devotion which he threw into his eyes.

"Well, Mr Gresham, that's very civil--very civil indeed," said Miss

Dunstable. "Upon my word, if a lady wanted a true knight she might

do worse than trust to you. Only I fear that your courage is of so

exalted a nature that you would be ever ready to do battle for any

beauty who might be in distress--or, indeed, who might not. You could

never confine your valour to the protection of one maiden."

"Oh, yes! but I would though if I liked her," said Frank. "There

isn't a more constant fellow in the world than I am in that way--you

try me, Miss Dunstable."

"When young ladies make such trials as that, they sometimes find it

too late to go back if the trial doesn't succeed, Mr Gresham."

"Oh, of course there's always some risk. It's like hunting; there

would be no fun if there was no danger."

"But if you get a tumble one day you can retrieve your honour the

next; but a poor girl, if she once trusts a man who says that he

loves her, has no such chance. For myself, I would never listen to a

man unless I'd known him for seven years at least."

"Seven years!" said Frank, who could not help thinking that in seven

years' time Miss Dunstable would be almost an old woman. "Seven days

is enough to know any person."

"Or perhaps seven hours; eh, Mr Gresham?"

"Seven hours--well, perhaps seven hours, if they happen to be a good

deal together during the time."

"There's nothing after all like love at first sight, is there, Mr

Gresham?"

Frank knew well enough that she was quizzing him, and could not

resist the temptation he felt to be revenged on her. "I am sure it's

very pleasant," said he; "but as for myself, I have never experienced

it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Miss Dunstable. "Upon my word, Mr Gresham, I

like you amazingly. I didn't expect to meet anybody down here that

I should like half so much. You must come and see me in London, and

I'll introduce you to my three knights," and so saying, she moved

away and fell into conversation with some of the higher powers.

Frank felt himself to be rather snubbed, in spite of the strong

expression which Miss Dunstable had made in his favour. It was not

quite clear to him that she did not take him for a boy. He was, to be

sure, avenged on her for that by taking her for a middle-aged woman;

but, nevertheless, he was hardly satisfied with himself; "I might

give her a heartache yet," said he to himself, "and she might find

afterwards that she was left in the lurch with all her money." And

so he retired, solitary, into a far part of the room, and began to

think of Mary Thorne. As he did so, and as his eyes fell upon Miss

Dunstable's stiff curls, he almost shuddered.

And then the ladies retired. His aunt, with a good-natured smile on

her face, come to him as she was leaving the room, the last of the

bevy, and putting her hand on his arm, led him out into a small

unoccupied chamber which opened from the grand saloon.

"Upon my word, Master Frank," said she, "you seem to be losing no

time with the heiress. You have quite made an impression already."

"I don't know much about that, aunt," said he, looking rather

sheepish.

"Oh, I declare you have; but, Frank, my dear boy, you should not

precipitate these sort of things too much. It is well to take a

little more time: it is more valued; and perhaps, you know, on the

whole--"

Perhaps Frank might know; but it was clear that Lady de Courcy did

not: at any rate, she did not know how to express herself. Had she

said out her mind plainly, she would probably have spoken thus: "I

want you to make love to Miss Dunstable, certainly; or at any rate to

make an offer to her; but you need not make a show of yourself and of

her, too, by doing it so openly as all that." The countess, however,

did not want to reprimand her obedient nephew, and therefore did not

speak out her thoughts.

"Well?" said Frank, looking up into her face.

"Take a \_leetle\_ more time--that is all, my dear boy; slow and sure,

you know;" so the countess again patted his arm and went away to bed.

"Old fool!" muttered Frank to himself, as he returned to the room

where the men were still standing. He was right in this: she was an

old fool, or she would have seen that there was no chance whatever

that her nephew and Miss Dunstable should become man and wife.

"Well Frank," said the Honourable John; "so you're after the heiress

already."

"He won't give any of us a chance," said the Honourable George.

"If he goes on in that way she'll be Mrs Gresham before a month is

over. But, Frank, what will she say of your manner of looking for

Barchester votes?"

"Mr Gresham is certainly an excellent hand at canvassing," said Mr

Nearthewinde; "only a little too open in his manner of proceeding."

"I got that chorister for you at any rate," said Frank. "And you

would never have had him without me."

"I don't think half so much of the chorister's vote as that of Miss

Dunstable," said the Honourable George: "that's the interest that is

really worth looking after."

"But, surely," said Mr Moffat, "Miss Dunstable has no property in

Barchester?" Poor man! his heart was so intent on his election that

he had not a moment to devote to the claims of love.

CHAPTER XVII

The Election

And now the important day of the election had arrived, and some men's

hearts beat quickly enough. To be or not to a member of the British

Parliament is a question of very considerable moment in a man's mind.

Much is often said of the great penalties which the ambitious pay for

enjoying this honour; of the tremendous expenses of elections; of the

long, tedious hours of unpaid labour: of the weary days passed in the

House; but, nevertheless, the prize is one very well worth the price

paid for it--well worth any price that can be paid for it short of

wading through dirt and dishonour.

No other great European nation has anything like it to offer to the

ambition of its citizens; for in no other great country of Europe,

not even in those which are free, has the popular constitution

obtained, as with us, true sovereignty and power of rule. Here it is

so; and when a man lays himself out to be a member of Parliament, he

plays the highest game and for the highest stakes which the country

affords.

To some men, born silver-spooned, a seat in Parliament comes as

a matter of course. From the time of their early manhood they

hardly know what it is not to sit there; and the honour is hardly

appreciated, being too much a matter of course. As a rule, they

never know how great a thing it is to be in Parliament; though, when

reverse comes, as reverses occasionally will come, they fully feel

how dreadful it is to be left out.

But to men aspiring to be members, or to those who having been

once fortunate have again to fight the battle without assurance of

success, the coming election must be matter of dread concern. Oh, how

delightful to hear that the long-talked-of rival has declined the

contest, and that the course is clear! or to find by a short canvass

that one's majority is safe, and the pleasures of crowing over an

unlucky, friendless foe quite secured!

No such gratification as this filled the bosom of Mr Moffat on

the morning of the Barchester election. To him had been brought

no positive assurance of success by his indefatigable agent, Mr

Nearthewinde. It was admitted on all sides that the contest would be

a very close one; and Mr Nearthewinde would not do more than assert

that they ought to win unless things went very wrong with them.

Mr Nearthewinde had other elections to attend to, and had not been

remaining at Courcy Castle ever since the coming of Miss Dunstable:

but he had been there, and at Barchester, as often as possible, and

Mr Moffat was made greatly uneasy by reflecting how very high the

bill would be.

The two parties had outdone each other in the loudness of their

assertions, that each would on his side conduct the election in

strict conformity to law. There was to be no bribery. Bribery! who,

indeed, in these days would dare to bribe; to give absolute money for

an absolute vote, and pay for such an article in downright palpable

sovereigns? No. Purity was much too rampant for that, and the means

of detection too well understood. But purity was to be carried much

further than this. There should be no treating; no hiring of two

hundred voters to act as messengers at twenty shillings a day in

looking up some four hundred other voters; no bands were to be paid

for; no carriages furnished; no ribbons supplied. British voters were

to vote, if vote they would, for the love and respect they bore to

their chosen candidate. If so actuated, they would not vote, they

might stay away; no other inducement would be offered.

So much was said loudly--very loudly--by each party; but,

nevertheless, Mr Moffat, early in these election days, began to have

some misgivings about the bill. The proclaimed arrangement had been

one exactly suitable to his taste; for Mr Moffat loved his money. He

was a man in whose breast the ambition of being great in the world,

and of joining himself to aristocratic people was continually at war

with the great cost which such tastes occasioned. His last election

had not been a cheap triumph. In one way or another money had

been dragged from him for purposes which had been to his mind

unintelligible; and when, about the middle of his first session, he

had, with much grumbling, settled all demands, he had questioned with

himself whether his whistle was worth its cost.

He was therefore a great stickler for purity of election; although,

had he considered the matter, he should have known that with him

money was his only passport into that Elysium in which he had now

lived for two years. He probably did not consider it; for when, in

those canvassing days immediately preceding the election, he had

seen that all the beer-houses were open, and half the population

was drunk, he had asked Mr Nearthewinde whether this violation of

the treaty was taking place only on the part of his opponent, and

whether, in such case, it would not be duly noticed with a view to a

possible future petition.

Mr Nearthewinde assured him triumphantly that half at least of the

wallowing swine were his own especial friends; and that somewhat

more than half of the publicans of the town were eagerly engaged in

fighting his, Mr Moffat's battle. Mr Moffat groaned, and would have

expostulated had Mr Nearthewinde been willing to hear him. But that

gentleman's services had been put into requisition by Lord de Courcy

rather than by the candidate. For the candidate he cared but little.

To pay the bill would be enough for him. He, Mr Nearthewinde, was

doing his business as he well knew how to do it; and it was not

likely that he should submit to be lectured by such as Mr Moffat on a

trumpery score of expense.

It certainly did appear on the morning of the election as though some

great change had been made in that resolution of the candidates to be

very pure. From an early hour rough bands of music were to be heard

in every part of the usually quiet town; carts and gigs, omnibuses

and flys, all the old carriages from all the inn-yards, and every

vehicle of any description which could be pressed into the service

were in motion; if the horses and post-boys were not to be paid for

by the candidates, the voters themselves were certainly very liberal

in their mode of bringing themselves to the poll. The election

district of the city of Barchester extended for some miles on each

side of the city, so that the omnibuses and flys had enough to do.

Beer was to be had at the public-houses, almost without question, by

all who chose to ask for it; and rum and brandy were dispensed to

select circles within the bars with equal profusion. As for ribbons,

the mercers' shops must have been emptied of that article, as far as

scarlet and yellow were concerned. Scarlet was Sir Roger's colour,

while the friends of Mr Moffat were decked with yellow. Seeing what

he did see, Mr Moffat might well ask whether there had not been a

violation of the treaty of purity!

At the time of this election there was some question whether England

should go to war with all her energy; or whether it would not be

better for her to save her breath to cool her porridge, and not

meddle more than could be helped with foreign quarrels. The last view

of the matter was advocated by Sir Roger, and his motto of course

proclaimed the merits of domestic peace and quiet. "Peace abroad and

a big loaf at home," was consequently displayed on four or five huge

scarlet banners, and carried waving over the heads of the people. But

Mr Moffat was a staunch supporter of the Government, who were already

inclined to be belligerent, and "England's honour" was therefore the

legend under which he selected to do battle. It may, however, be

doubted whether there was in all Barchester one inhabitant--let alone

one elector--so fatuous as to suppose that England's honour was in

any special manner dear to Mr Moffat; or that he would be a whit more

sure of a big loaf than he was now, should Sir Roger happily become a

member of the legislature.

And then the fine arts were resorted to, seeing that language fell

short in telling all that was found necessary to be told. Poor Sir

Roger's failing as regards the bottle was too well known; and it was

also known that, in acquiring his title, he had not quite laid aside

the rough mode of speech which he had used in his early years. There

was, consequently, a great daub painted up on sundry walls, on which

a navvy, with a pimply, bloated face, was to be seen standing on a

railway bank, leaning on a spade holding a bottle in one hand, while

he invited a comrade to drink. "Come, Jack, shall us have a drop of

some'at short?" were the words coming out of the navvy's mouth; and

under this was painted in huge letters,

"THE LAST NEW BARONET."

But Mr Moffat hardly escaped on easier terms. The trade by which his

father had made his money was as well known as that of the railway

contractor; and every possible symbol of tailordom was displayed in

graphic portraiture on the walls and hoardings of the city. He was

drawn with his goose, with his scissors, with his needle, with his

tapes; he might be seen measuring, cutting, stitching, pressing,

carrying home his bundle, and presenting his little bill; and under

each of these representations was repeated his own motto: "England's

honour."

Such were the pleasant little amenities with which the people of

Barchester greeted the two candidates who were desirous of the honour

of serving them in Parliament.

The polling went on briskly and merrily. There were somewhat above

nine hundred registered voters, of whom the greater portion recorded

their votes early in the day. At two o'clock, according to Sir

Roger's committee, the numbers were as follows:--

Scatcherd 275

Moffat 268

Whereas, by the light afforded by Mr Moffat's people, they stood in a

slightly different ratio to each other, being written thus:--

Moffat 277

Scatcherd 269

This naturally heightened the excitement, and gave additional delight

to the proceedings. At half-past two it was agreed by both sides that

Mr Moffat was ahead; the Moffatites claiming a majority of twelve,

and the Scatcherdites allowing a majority of one. But by three

o'clock sundry good men and true, belonging to the railway interest,

had made their way to the booth in spite of the efforts of a band

of roughs from Courcy, and Sir Roger was again leading, by ten or a

dozen, according to his own showing.

One little transaction which took place in the earlier part of the

day deserves to be recorded. There was in Barchester an honest

publican--honest as the world of publicans goes--who not only was

possessed of a vote, but possessed also of a son who was a voter.

He was one Reddypalm, and in former days, before he had learned to

appreciate the full value of an Englishman's franchise, he had been a

declared Liberal and an early friend of Roger Scatcherd's. In latter

days he had governed his political feelings with more decorum, and

had not allowed himself to be carried away by such foolish fervour as

he had evinced in his youth. On this special occasion, however, his

line of conduct was so mysterious as for a while to baffle even those

who knew him best.

His house was apparently open in Sir Roger's interest. Beer, at any

rate, was flowing there as elsewhere; and scarlet ribbons going

in--not, perhaps, in a state of perfect steadiness--came out more

unsteady than before. Still had Mr Reddypalm been deaf to the voice

of that charmer, Closerstil, though he had charmed with all his

wisdom. Mr Reddypalm had stated, first his unwillingness to vote at

all:--he had, he said, given over politics, and was not inclined to

trouble his mind again with the subject; then he had spoken of his

great devotion to the Duke of Omnium, under whose grandfathers his

grandfather had been bred: Mr Nearthewinde had, as he said, been

with him, and proved to him beyond a shadow of a doubt that it would

show the deepest ingratitude on his part to vote against the duke's

candidate.

Mr Closerstil thought he understood all this, and sent more, and

still more men to drink beer. He even caused--taking infinite trouble

to secure secrecy in the matter--three gallons of British brandy to

be ordered and paid for as the best French. But, nevertheless, Mr

Reddypalm made no sign to show that he considered that the right

thing had been done. On the evening before the election, he told

one of Mr Closerstil's confidential men, that he had thought a good

deal about it, and that he believed he should be constrained by his

conscience to vote for Mr Moffat.

We have said that Mr Closerstil was accompanied by a learned friend

of his, one Mr Romer, a barrister, who was greatly interested in Sir

Roger, and who, being a strong Liberal, was assisting in the canvass

with much energy. He, hearing how matters were likely to go with

this conscientious publican, and feeling himself peculiarly capable

of dealing with such delicate scruples, undertook to look into the

case in hand. Early, therefore, on the morning of the election, he

sauntered down the cross street in which hung out the sign of the

Brown Bear, and, as he expected, found Mr Reddypalm near his own

door.

Now it was quite an understood thing that there was to be no bribery.

This was understood by no one better than by Mr Romer, who had, in

truth, drawn up many of the published assurances to that effect. And,

to give him his due, he was fully minded to act in accordance with

these assurances. The object of all the parties was to make it worth

the voters' while to give their votes; but to do so without bribery.

Mr Romer had repeatedly declared that he would have nothing to do

with any illegal practising; but he had also declared that, as long

as all was done according to law, he was ready to lend his best

efforts to assist Sir Roger. How he assisted Sir Roger, and adhered

to the law, will now be seen.

Oh, Mr Romer! Mr Romer! is it not the case with thee that thou

"wouldst not play false, and yet wouldst wrongly win?" Not in

electioneering, Mr Romer, any more than in other pursuits, can a man

touch pitch and not be defiled; as thou, innocent as thou art, wilt

soon learn to thy terrible cost.

"Well, Reddypalm," said Mr Romer, shaking hands with him. Mr Romer

had not been equally cautious as Nearthewinde, and had already drunk

sundry glasses of ale at the Brown Bear, in the hope of softening the

stern Bear-warden. "How is it to be to-day? Which is to be the man?"

"If any one knows that, Mr Romer, you must be the man. A poor

numbskull like me knows nothing of them matters. How should I?

All I looks to, Mr Romer, is selling a trifle of drink now and

then--selling it, and getting paid for it, you know, Mr Romer."

"Yes, that's important, no doubt. But come, Reddypalm, such an old

friend of Sir Roger as you are, a man he speaks of as one of his

intimate friends, I wonder how you can hesitate about it? Now with

another man, I should think that he wanted to be paid for voting--"

"Oh, Mr Romer!--fie--fie--fie!"

"I know it's not the case with you. It would be an insult to offer

you money, even if money were going. I should not mention this, only

as money is not going, neither on our side nor on the other, no harm

can be done."

"Mr Romer, if you speak of such a thing, you'll hurt me. I know the

value of an Englishman's franchise too well to wish to sell it. I

would not demean myself so low; no, not though five-and-twenty pound

a vote was going, as there was in the good old times--and that's not

so long ago neither."

"I am sure you wouldn't, Reddypalm; I'm sure you wouldn't. But an

honest man like you should stick to old friends. Now, tell me," and

putting his arm through Reddypalm's, he walked with him into the

passage of his own house; "Now, tell me--is there anything wrong?

It's between friends, you know. Is there anything wrong?"

"I wouldn't sell my vote for untold gold," said Reddypalm, who was

perhaps aware that untold gold would hardly be offered to him for it.

"I am sure you would not," said Mr Romer.

"But," said Reddypalm, "a man likes to be paid his little bill."

"Surely, surely," said the barrister.

"And I did say two years since, when your friend Mr Closerstil

brought a friend of his down to stand here--it wasn't Sir Roger

then--but when he brought a friend of his down, and when I drew

two or three hogsheads of ale on their side, and when my bill was

questioned and only half-settled, I did say that I wouldn't interfere

with no election no more. And no more I will, Mr Romer--unless it be

to give a quiet vote for the nobleman under whom I and mine always

lived respectable."

"Oh!" said Mr Romer.

"A man do like to have his bill paid, you know, Mr Romer."

Mr Romer could not but acknowledge that this was a natural feeling on

the part of an ordinary mortal publican.

"It goes agin the grain with a man not to have his little bill paid,

and specially at election time," again urged Mr Reddypalm.

Mr Romer had not much time to think about it; but he knew well that

matters were so nearly balanced, that the votes of Mr Reddypalm and

his son were of inestimable value.

"If it's only about your bill," said Mr Romer, "I'll see to have that

settled. I'll speak to Closerstil about that."

"All right!" said Reddypalm, seizing the young barrister's hand, and

shaking it warmly; "all right!" And late in the afternoon when a vote

or two became matter of intense interest, Mr Reddypalm and his son

came up to the hustings and boldly tendered theirs for their old

friend, Sir Roger.

There was a great deal of eloquence heard in Barchester on that day.

Sir Roger had by this time so far recovered as to be able to go

through the dreadfully hard work of canvassing and addressing the

electors from eight in the morning till near sunset. A very perfect

recovery, most men will say. Yes; a perfect recovery as regarded the

temporary use of his faculties, both physical and mental; though

it may be doubted whether there can be any permanent recovery from

such disease as his. What amount of brandy he consumed to enable

him to perform this election work, and what lurking evil effect the

excitement might have on him--of these matters no record was kept in

the history of those proceedings.

Sir Roger's eloquence was of a rough kind; but not perhaps the less

operative on those for whom it was intended. The aristocracy of

Barchester consisted chiefly of clerical dignitaries, bishops, deans,

prebendaries, and such like: on them and theirs it was not probable

that anything said by Sir Roger would have much effect. Those men

would either abstain from voting, or vote for the railway hero,

with the view of keeping out the de Courcy candidate. Then came the

shopkeepers, who might also be regarded as a stiff-necked generation,

impervious to electioneering eloquence. They would, generally,

support Mr Moffat. But there was an inferior class of voters,

ten-pound freeholders, and such like, who, at this period, were

somewhat given to have an opinion of their own, and over them it was

supposed that Sir Roger did obtain some power by his gift of talking.

"Now, gentlemen, will you tell me this," said he, bawling at the top

of his voice from off the portico which graced the door of the Dragon

of Wantley, at which celebrated inn Sir Roger's committee sat:--"Who

is Mr Moffat, and what has he done for us? There have been some

picture-makers about the town this week past. The Lord knows who

they are; I don't. These clever fellows do tell you who I am, and

what I've done. I ain't very proud of the way they've painted me,

though there's something about it I ain't ashamed of either. See

here," and he held up on one side of him one of the great daubs of

himself--"just hold it there till I can explain it," and he handed

the paper to one of his friends. "That's me," said Sir Roger, putting

up his stick, and pointing to the pimply-nosed representation of

himself.

"Hurrah! Hur-r-rah! more power to you--we all know who you are,

Roger. You're the boy! When did you get drunk last?" Such-like

greetings, together with a dead cat which was flung at him from the

crowd, and which he dexterously parried with his stick, were the

answers which he received to this exordium.

"Yes," said he, quite undismayed by this little missile which had

so nearly reached him: "that's me. And look here; this brown,

dirty-looking broad streak here is intended for a railway; and that

thing in my hand--not the right hand; I'll come to that presently--"

"How about the brandy, Roger?"

"I'll come to that presently. I'll tell you about the brandy in good

time. But that thing in my left hand is a spade. Now, I never handled

a spade, and never could; but, boys, I handled a chisel and mallet;

and many a hundred block of stone has come out smooth from under that

hand;" and Sir Roger lifted up his great broad palm wide open.

"So you did, Roger, and well we minds it."

"The meaning, however, of that spade is to show that I made the

railway. Now I'm very much obliged to those gentlemen over at the

White Horse for putting up this picture of me. It's a true picture,

and it tells you who I am. I did make that railway. I have made

thousands of miles of railway; I am making thousands of miles of

railways--some in Europe, some in Asia, some in America. It's a

true picture," and he poked his stick through it and held it up to

the crowd. "A true picture: but for that spade and that railway, I

shouldn't be now here asking your votes; and, when next February

comes, I shouldn't be sitting in Westminster to represent you, as, by

God's grace, I certainly will do. That tells you who I am. But now,

will you tell me who Mr Moffat is?"

"How about the brandy, Roger?"

"Oh, yes, the brandy! I was forgetting that and the little speech

that is coming out of my mouth--a deal shorter speech, and a better

one than what I am making now. Here, in the right hand you see a

brandy bottle. Well, boys, I'm not a bit ashamed of that; as long

as a man does his work--and the spade shows that--it's only fair he

should have something to comfort him. I'm always able to work, and

few men work much harder. I'm always able to work, and no man has a

right to expect more of me. I never expect more than that from those

who work for me."

"No more you don't, Roger: a little drop's very good, ain't it,

Roger? Keeps the cold from the stomach, eh, Roger?"

"Then as to this speech, 'Come, Jack, let's have a drop of some'at

short.' Why, that's a good speech too. When I do drink I like to

share with a friend; and I don't care how humble that friend is."

"Hurrah! more power. That's true too, Roger; may you never be without

a drop to wet your whistle."

"They say I'm the last new baronet. Well, I ain't ashamed of that;

not a bit. When will Mr Moffat get himself made a baronet? No man

can truly say I'm too proud of it. I have never stuck myself up; no,

nor stuck my wife up either: but I don't see much to be ashamed of

because the bigwigs chose to make a baronet of me."

"Nor, no more thee h'ant, Roger. We'd all be barrownites if so be we

knew the way."

"But now, having polished off this bit of picture, let me ask you who

Mr Moffat is? There are pictures enough about him, too; though Heaven

knows where they all come from. I think Sir Edwin Landseer must have

done this one of the goose; it is so deadly natural. Look at it;

there he is. Upon my word, whoever did that ought to make his fortune

at some of these exhibitions. Here he is again, with a big pair

of scissors. He calls himself 'England's honour;' what the deuce

England's honour has to do with tailoring, I can't tell you: perhaps

Mr Moffat can. But mind you, my friends, I don't say anything against

tailoring: some of you are tailors, I dare say."

"Yes, we be," said a little squeaking voice from out of the crowd.

"And a good trade it is. When I first knew Barchester there were

tailors here could lick any stone-mason in the trade; I say nothing

against tailors. But it isn't enough for a man to be a tailor unless

he's something else along with it. You're not so fond of tailors that

you'll send one up to Parliament merely because he is a tailor."

"We won't have no tailors. No; nor yet no cabbaging. Take a go of

brandy, Roger; you're blown."

"No, I'm not blown yet. I've a deal more to say about Mr Moffat

before I shall be blown. What has he done to entitle him to come here

before you and ask you to send him to Parliament? Why; he isn't even

a tailor. I wish he were. There's always some good in a fellow who

knows how to earn his own bread. But he isn't a tailor; he can't even

put a stitch in towards mending England's honour. His father was a

tailor; not a Barchester tailor, mind you, so as to give him any

claim on your affections; but a London tailor. Now the question is,

do you want to send the son of a London tailor up to Parliament to

represent you?"

"No, we don't; nor yet we won't either."

"I rather think not. You've had him once, and what has he done for

you? Has he said much for you in the House of Commons? Why, he's so

dumb a dog that he can't bark even for a bone. I'm told it's quite

painful to hear him fumbling and mumbling and trying to get up a

speech there over at the White Horse. He doesn't belong to the city;

he hasn't done anything for the city; and he hasn't the power to do

anything for the city. Then, why on earth does he come here? I'll

tell you. The Earl de Courcy brings him. He's going to marry the

Earl de Courcy's niece; for they say he's very rich--this tailor's

son--only they do say also that he doesn't much like to spend his

money. He's going to marry Lord de Courcy's niece, and Lord de Courcy

wishes that his nephew should be in Parliament. There, that's the

claim which Mr Moffat has here on the people of Barchester. He's Lord

de Courcy's nominee, and those who feel themselves bound hand and

foot, heart and soul, to Lord de Courcy, had better vote for him.

Such men have my leave. If there are enough of such at Barchester to

send him to Parliament, the city in which I was born must be very

much altered since I was a young man."

And so finishing his speech, Sir Roger retired within, and recruited

himself in the usual manner.

Such was the flood of eloquence at the Dragon of Wantly. At the White

Horse, meanwhile, the friends of the de Courcy interest were treated

perhaps to sounder political views; though not expressed in periods

so intelligibly fluent as those of Sir Roger.

Mr Moffat was a young man, and there was no knowing to what

proficiency in the Parliamentary gift of public talking he might yet

attain; but hitherto his proficiency was not great. He had, however,

endeavoured to make up by study for any want of readiness of speech,

and had come to Barchester daily, for the last four days, fortified

with a very pretty harangue, which he had prepared for himself in

the solitude of his chamber. On the three previous days matters

had been allowed to progress with tolerable smoothness, and he had

been permitted to deliver himself of his elaborate eloquence with

few other interruptions than those occasioned by his own want of

practice. But on this, the day of days, the Barchesterian roughs were

not so complaisant. It appeared to Mr Moffat, when he essayed to

speak, that he was surrounded by enemies rather than friends; and in

his heart he gave great blame to Mr Nearthewinde for not managing

matters better for him.

"Men of Barchester," he began, in a voice which was every now and

then preternaturally loud, but which, at each fourth or fifth word,

gave way from want of power, and descended to its natural weak tone.

"Men of Barchester--electors and non-electors--"

"We is hall electors; hall on us, my young kiddy."

"Electors and non-electors, I now ask your suffrages, not for the

first time--"

"Oh! we've tried you. We know what you're made on. Go on, Snip; don't

you let 'em put you down."

"I've had the honour of representing you in Parliament for the last

two years and--"

"And a deuced deal you did for us, didn't you?"

"What could you expect from the ninth part of a man? Never mind,

Snip--go on; don't you be out by any of them. Stick to your wax and

thread like a man--like the ninth part of a man--go on a little

faster, Snip."

"For the last two years--and--and--" Here Mr Moffat looked round to

his friends for some little support, and the Honourable George, who

stood close behind him, suggested that he had gone through it like a

brick.

"And--and I went through it like a brick," said Mr Moffat, with the

gravest possible face, taking up in his utter confusion the words

that were put into his mouth.

"Hurray!--so you did--you're the real brick. Well done, Snip; go it

again with the wax and thread!"

"I am a thorough-paced reformer," continued Mr Moffat, somewhat

reassured by the effect of the opportune words which his friend had

whispered into his ear. "A thorough-paced reformer--a thorough-paced

reformer--"

"Go on, Snip. We all know what that means."

"A thorough-paced reformer--"

"Never mind your paces, man; but get on. Tell us something new. We're

all reformers, we are."

Poor Mr Moffat was a little thrown back. It wasn't so easy to tell

these gentlemen anything new, harnessed as he was at this moment; so

he looked back at his honourable supporter for some further hint.

"Say something about their daughters," whispered George, whose own

flights of oratory were always on that subject. Had he counselled Mr

Moffat to say a word or two about the tides, his advice would not

have been less to the purpose.

"Gentlemen," he began again--"you all know that I am a thorough-paced

reformer--"

"Oh, drat your reform. He's a dumb dog. Go back to your goose,

Snippy; you never were made for this work. Go to Courcy Castle and

reform that."

Mr Moffat, grieved in his soul, was becoming inextricably bewildered

by such facetiÃ¦ as these, when an egg,--and it may be feared not a

fresh egg,--flung with unerring precision, struck him on the open

part of his well-plaited shirt, and reduced him to speechless

despair.

An egg is a means of delightful support when properly administered;

but it is not calculated to add much spirit to a man's eloquence, or

to ensure his powers of endurance, when supplied in the manner above

described. Men there are, doubtless, whose tongues would not be

stopped even by such an argument as this; but Mr Moffat was not one

of them. As the insidious fluid trickled down beneath his waistcoat,

he felt that all further powers of coaxing the electors out of their

votes, by words flowing from his tongue sweeter than honey, was

for that occasion denied to him. He could not be self-confident,

energetic, witty, and good-humoured with a rotten egg drying through

his clothes. He was forced, therefore, to give way, and with sadly

disconcerted air retired from the open window at which he had been

standing.

It was in vain that the Honourable George, Mr Nearthewinde, and Frank

endeavoured again to bring him to the charge. He was like a beaten

prize-fighter, whose pluck has been cowed out of him, and who, if he

stands up, only stands up to fall. Mr Moffat got sulky also, and when

he was pressed, said that Barchester and the people in it might be

d----. "With all my heart," said Mr Nearthewinde. "That wouldn't have

any effect on their votes."

But, in truth, it mattered very little whether Mr Moffat spoke,

or whether he didn't speak. Four o'clock was the hour for closing

the poll, and that was now fast coming. Tremendous exertions had

been made about half-past three, by a safe emissary sent from

Nearthewinde, to prove to Mr Reddypalm that all manner of contingent

advantages would accrue to the Brown Bear if it should turn out that

Mr Moffat should take his seat for Barchester. No bribe was, of

course, offered or even hinted at. The purity of Barchester was not

contaminated during the day by one such curse as this. But a man, and

a publican, would be required to do some great deed in the public

line; to open some colossal tap; to draw beer for the million; and no

one would be so fit as Mr Reddypalm--if only it might turn out that

Mr Moffat should, in the coming February, take his seat as member for

Barchester.

But Mr Reddypalm was a man of humble desires, whose ambitions soared

no higher than this--that his little bills should be duly settled. It

is wonderful what love an innkeeper has for his bill in its entirety.

An account, with a respectable total of five or six pounds, is

brought to you, and you complain but of one article; that fire in the

bedroom was never lighted; or that second glass of brandy and water

was never called for. You desire to have the shilling expunged, and

all your host's pleasure in the whole transaction is destroyed. Oh!

my friends, pay for the brandy and water, though you never drank it;

suffer the fire to pass, though it never warmed you. Why make a good

man miserable for such a trifle?

It became notified to Reddypalm with sufficient clearness that his

bill for the past election should be paid without further question;

and, therefore, at five o'clock the Mayor of Barchester proclaimed

the results of the contest in the following figures:--

Scatcherd 378

Moffat 376

Mr Reddypalm's two votes had decided the question. Mr Nearthewinde

immediately went up to town; and the dinner party at Courcy Castle

that evening was not a particularly pleasant meal.

This much, however, had been absolutely decided before the yellow

committee concluded their labour at the White Horse: there should be

a petition. Mr Nearthewinde had not been asleep, and already knew

something of the manner in which Mr Reddypalm's mind had been

quieted.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Rivals

The intimacy between Frank and Miss Dunstable grew and prospered.

That is to say, it prospered as an intimacy, though perhaps hardly

as a love affair. There was a continued succession of jokes between

them, which no one else in the castle understood; but the very fact

of there being such a good understanding between them rather stood

in the way of, than assisted, that consummation which the countess

desired. People, when they are in love with each other, or even when

they pretend to be, do not generally show it by loud laughter. Nor is

it frequently the case that a wife with two hundred thousand pounds

can be won without some little preliminary despair. Now there was no

despair at all about Frank Gresham.

Lady de Courcy, who thoroughly understood that portion of the world

in which she herself lived, saw that things were not going quite as

they should do, and gave much and repeated advice to Frank on the

subject. She was the more eager in doing this, because she imagined

Frank had done what he could to obey her first precepts. He had not

turned up his nose at Miss Dunstable's curls, nor found fault with

her loud voice: he had not objected to her as ugly, nor even shown

any dislike to her age. A young man who had been so amenable to

reason was worthy of further assistance; and so Lady de Courcy did

what she could to assist him.

"Frank, my dear boy," she would say, "you are a little too noisy, I

think. I don't mean for myself, you know; I don't mind it. But Miss

Dunstable would like it better if you were a little more quiet with

her."

"Would she, aunt?" said Frank, looking demurely up into the

countess's face. "I rather think she likes fun and noise, and that

sort of thing. You know she's not very quiet herself."

"Ah!--but Frank, there are times, you know, when that sort of thing

should be laid aside. Fun, as you call it, is all very well in its

place. Indeed, no one likes it better than I do. But that's not the

way to show admiration. Young ladies like to be admired; and if

you'll be a little more soft-mannered with Miss Dunstable, I'm sure

you'll find it will answer better."

And so the old bird taught the young bird how to fly--very

needlessly--for in this matter of flying, Nature gives her own

lessons thoroughly; and the ducklings will take the water, even

though the maternal hen warn them against the perfidious element

never so loudly.

Soon after this, Lady de Courcy began to be not very well pleased

in the matter. She took it into her head that Miss Dunstable was

sometimes almost inclined to laugh at her; and on one or two

occasions it almost seemed as though Frank was joining Miss Dunstable

in doing so. The fact indeed was, that Miss Dunstable was fond of

fun; and, endowed as she was with all the privileges which two

hundred thousand pounds may be supposed to give to a young lady,

did not very much care at whom she laughed. She was able to make a

tolerably correct guess at Lady de Courcy's plan towards herself;

but she did not for a moment think that Frank had any intention

of furthering his aunt's views. She was, therefore, not at all

ill-inclined to have her revenge on the countess.

"How very fond your aunt is of you!" she said to him one wet morning,

as he was sauntering through the house; now laughing, and almost

romping with her--then teasing his sister about Mr Moffat--and then

bothering his lady-cousins out of all their propriety.

"Oh, very!" said Frank: "she is a dear, good woman, is my Aunt de

Courcy."

"I declare she takes more notice of you and your doings than of any

of your cousins. I wonder they ain't jealous."

"Oh! they're such good people. Bless me, they'd never be jealous."

"You are so much younger than they are, that I suppose she thinks you

want more of her care."

"Yes; that's it. You see she's fond of having a baby to nurse."

"Tell me, Mr Gresham, what was it she was saying to you last night? I

know we had been misbehaving ourselves dreadfully. It was all your

fault; you would make me laugh so."

"That's just what I said to her."

"She was talking about me, then?"

"How on earth should she talk of any one else as long as you are

here? Don't you know that all the world is talking about you?"

"Is it?--dear me, how kind! But I don't care a straw about any world

just at present but Lady de Courcy's world. What did she say?"

"She said you were very beautiful--"

"Did she?--how good of her!"

"No; I forgot. It--it was I that said that; and she said--what was

it she said? She said, that after all, beauty was but skin deep--and

that she valued you for your virtues and prudence rather than your

good looks."

"Virtues and prudence! She said I was prudent and virtuous?"

"Yes."

"And you talked of my beauty? That was so kind of you. You didn't

either of you say anything about other matters?"

"What other matters?"

"Oh! I don't know. Only some people are sometimes valued rather for

what they've got than for any good qualities belonging to themselves

intrinsically."

"That can never be the case with Miss Dunstable; especially not at

Courcy Castle," said Frank, bowing easily from the corner of the sofa

over which he was leaning.

"Of course not," said Miss Dunstable; and Frank at once perceived

that she spoke in a tone of voice differing much from that

half-bantering, half-good-humoured manner that was customary with

her. "Of course not: any such idea would be quite out of the question

with Lady de Courcy." She paused for a moment, and then added

in a tone different again, and unlike any that he had yet heard

from her:--"It is, at any rate, out of the question with Mr Frank

Gresham--of that I am quite sure."

Frank ought to have understood her, and have appreciated the good

opinion which she intended to convey; but he did not entirely do so.

He was hardly honest himself towards her; and he could not at first

perceive that she intended to say that she thought him so. He knew

very well that she was alluding to her own huge fortune, and was

alluding also to the fact that people of fashion sought her because

of it; but he did not know that she intended to express a true

acquittal as regarded him of any such baseness.

And did he deserve to be acquitted? Yes, upon the whole he did;--to

be acquitted of that special sin. His desire to make Miss Dunstable

temporarily subject to his sway arose, not from a hankering after her

fortune, but from an ambition to get the better of a contest in which

other men around him seemed to be failing.

For it must not be imagined that, with such a prize to be struggled

for, all others stood aloof and allowed him to have his own way

with the heiress, undisputed. The chance of a wife with two hundred

thousand pounds is a godsend which comes in a man's life too seldom

to be neglected, let that chance be never so remote.

Frank was the heir to a large embarrassed property; and, therefore,

the heads of families, putting their wisdoms together, had thought it

most meet that this daughter of Plutus should, if possible, fall to

his lot. But not so thought the Honourable George; and not so thought

another gentleman who was at that time an inmate of Courcy Castle.

These suitors perhaps somewhat despised their young rival's efforts.

It may be that they had sufficient worldly wisdom to know that so

important a crisis of life is not settled among quips and jokes, and

that Frank was too much in jest to be in earnest. But be that as it

may, his love-making did not stand in the way of their love-making;

nor his hopes, if he had any, in the way of their hopes.

The Honourable George had discussed the matter with the Honourable

John in a properly fraternal manner. It may be that John had also

an eye to the heiress; but, if so, he had ceded his views to his

brother's superior claims; for it came about that they understood

each other very well, and John favoured George with salutary advice

on the occasion.

"If it is to be done at all, it should be done very sharp," said

John.

"As sharp as you like," said George. "I'm not the fellow to be

studying three months in what attitude I'll fall at a girl's feet."

"No: and when you are there you mustn't take three months more to

study how you'll get up again. If you do it at all, you must do it

sharp," repeated John, putting great stress on his advice.

"I have said a few soft words to her already, and she didn't seem to

take them badly," said George.

"She's no chicken, you know," remarked John; "and with a woman like

that, beating about the bush never does any good. The chances are she

won't have you--that's of course; plums like that don't fall into a

man's mouth merely for shaking the tree. But it's possible she may;

and if she will, she's as likely to take you to-day as this day six

months. If I were you I'd write her a letter."

"Write her a letter--eh?" said George, who did not altogether dislike

the advice, for it seemed to take from his shoulders the burden of

preparing a spoken address. Though he was so glib in speaking about

the farmers' daughters, he felt that he should have some little

difficulty in making known his passion to Miss Dunstable by word of

mouth.

"Yes; write a letter. If she'll take you at all, she'll take you that

way; half the matches going are made up by writing letters. Write her

a letter and get it put on her dressing-table." George said that he

would, and so he did.

George spoke quite truly when he hinted that he had said a few soft

things to Miss Dunstable. Miss Dunstable, however, was accustomed to

hear soft things. She had been carried much about in society among

fashionable people since, on the settlement of her father's will, she

had been pronounced heiress to all the ointment of Lebanon; and many

men had made calculations respecting her similar to those which were

now animating the brain of the Honourable George de Courcy. She was

already quite accustomed to being the target at which spendthrifts

and the needy rich might shoot their arrows: accustomed to being shot

at, and tolerably accustomed to protect herself without making scenes

in the world, or rejecting the advantageous establishments offered

to her with any loud expressions of disdain. The Honourable George,

therefore, had been permitted to say soft things very much as a

matter of course.

And very little more outward fracas arose from the correspondence

which followed than had arisen from the soft things so said. George

wrote the letter, and had it duly conveyed to Miss Dunstable's

bed-chamber. Miss Dunstable duly received it, and had her answer

conveyed back discreetly to George's hands. The correspondence ran as

follows:--

Courcy Castle, Aug. --, 185--.

MY DEAREST MISS DUNSTABLE,

I cannot but flatter myself that you must have perceived

from my manner that you are not indifferent to me. Indeed,

indeed, you are not. I may truly say, and swear [these

last strong words had been put in by the special counsel

of the Honourable John], that if ever a man loved a woman

truly, I truly love you. You may think it very odd that

I should say this in a letter instead of speaking it out

before your face; but your powers of raillery are so great

["touch her up about her wit" had been the advice of the

Honourable John] that I am all but afraid to encounter

them. Dearest, dearest Martha--oh do not blame me for so

addressing you!--if you will trust your happiness to me

you shall never find that you have been deceived. My

ambition shall be to make you shine in that circle which

you are so well qualified to adorn, and to see you firmly

fixed in that sphere of fashion for which all your tastes

adapt you.

I may safely assert--and I do assert it with my hand on

my heart--that I am actuated by no mercenary motives. Far

be it from me to marry any woman--no, not a princess--on

account of her money. No marriage can be happy without

mutual affection; and I do fully trust--no, not trust, but

hope--that there may be such between you and me, dearest

Miss Dunstable. Whatever settlements you might propose,

I should accede to. It is you, your sweet person, that I

love, not your money.

For myself, I need not remind you that I am the second son

of my father; and that, as such, I hold no inconsiderable

station in the world. My intention is to get into

Parliament, and to make a name for myself, if I can, among

those who shine in the House of Commons. My elder brother,

Lord Porlock, is, you are aware, unmarried; and we

all fear that the family honours are not likely to be

perpetuated by him, as he has all manner of troublesome

liaisons which will probably prevent his settling in life.

There is nothing at all of that kind in my way. It will

indeed be a delight to place a coronet on the head of my

lovely Martha: a coronet which can give no fresh grace to

her, but which will be so much adorned by her wearing it.

Dearest Miss Dunstable, I shall wait with the utmost

impatience for your answer; and now, burning with hope

that it may not be altogether unfavourable to my love, I

beg permission to sign myself--

Your own most devoted,

GEORGE DE COURCY.

The ardent lover had not to wait long for an answer from his

mistress. She found this letter on her toilet-table one night as she

went to bed. The next morning she came down to breakfast and met her

swain with the most unconcerned air in the world; so much so that

he began to think, as he munched his toast with rather a shamefaced

look, that the letter on which so much was to depend had not yet come

safely to hand. But his suspense was not of a prolonged duration.

After breakfast, as was his wont, he went out to the stables with his

brother and Frank Gresham; and while there, Miss Dunstable's man,

coming up to him, touched his hat, and put a letter into his hand.

Frank, who knew the man, glanced at the letter and looked at his

cousin; but he said nothing. He was, however, a little jealous, and

felt that an injury was done to him by any correspondence between

Miss Dunstable and his cousin George.

Miss Dunstable's reply was as follows; and it may be remarked that

it was written in a very clear and well-penned hand, and one which

certainly did not betray much emotion of the heart:--

MY DEAR MR DE COURCY,

I am sorry to say that I had not perceived from your

manner that you entertained any peculiar feelings towards

me; as, had I done so, I should at once have endeavoured

to put an end to them. I am much flattered by the way in

which you speak of me; but I am in too humble a position

to return your affection; and can, therefore, only express

a hope that you may be soon able to eradicate it from your

bosom. A letter is a very good way of making an offer, and

as such I do not think it at all odd; but I certainly did

not expect such an honour last night. As to my raillery, I

trust it has never yet hurt you. I can assure you it never

shall. I hope you will soon have a worthier ambition than

that to which you allude; for I am well aware that no

attempt will ever make me shine anywhere.

I am quite sure you have had no mercenary motives: such

motives in marriage are very base, and quite below your

name and lineage. Any little fortune that I may have must

be a matter of indifference to one who looks forward, as

you do, to put a coronet on his wife's brow. Nevertheless,

for the sake of the family, I trust that Lord Porlock, in

spite of his obstacles, may live to do the same for a wife

of his own some of these days. I am glad to hear that

there is nothing to interfere with your own prospects of

domestic felicity.

Sincerely hoping that you may be perfectly successful in

your proud ambition to shine in Parliament, and regretting

extremely that I cannot share that ambition with you, I

beg to subscribe myself, with very great respect,--

Your sincere well-wisher,

MARTHA DUNSTABLE.

The Honourable George, with that modesty which so well became him,

accepted Miss Dunstable's reply as a final answer to his little

proposition, and troubled her with no further courtship. As he said

to his brother John, no harm had been done, and he might have better

luck next time. But there was an inmate of Courcy Castle who was

somewhat more pertinacious in his search after love and wealth. This

was no other than Mr Moffat: a gentleman whose ambition was not

satisfied by the cares of his Barchester contest, or the possession

of one affianced bride.

Mr Moffat was, as we have said, a man of wealth; but we all know,

from the lessons of early youth, how the love of money increases and

gains strength by its own success. Nor was he a man of so mean a

spirit as to be satisfied with mere wealth. He desired also place and

station, and gracious countenance among the great ones of the earth.

Hence had come his adherence to the de Courcys; hence his seat in

Parliament; and hence, also, his perhaps ill-considered match with

Miss Gresham.

There is no doubt but that the privilege of matrimony offers

opportunities to money-loving young men which ought not to be lightly

abused. Too many young men marry without giving any consideration to

the matter whatever. It is not that they are indifferent to money,

but that they recklessly miscalculate their own value, and omit to

look around and see how much is done by those who are more careful.

A man can be young but once, and, except in cases of a special

interposition of Providence, can marry but once. The chance once

thrown away may be said to be irrevocable! How, in after-life, do

men toil and turmoil through long years to attain some prospect of

doubtful advancement! Half that trouble, half that care, a tithe of

that circumspection would, in early youth, have probably secured to

them the enduring comfort of a wife's wealth.

You will see men labouring night and day to become bank directors;

and even a bank direction may only be the road to ruin. Others will

spend years in degrading subserviency to obtain a niche in a will;

and the niche, when at last obtained and enjoyed, is but a sorry

payment for all that has been endured. Others, again, struggle

harder still, and go through even deeper waters: they make wills for

themselves, forge stock-shares, and fight with unremitting, painful

labour to appear to be the thing that they are not. Now, in many

of these cases, all this might have been spared had the men made

adequate use of those opportunities which youth and youthful charms

afford once--and once only. There is no road to wealth so easy and

respectable as that of matrimony; that, is of course, provided that

the aspirant declines the slow course of honest work. But then, we

can so seldom put old heads on young shoulders!

In the case of Mr Moffat, we may perhaps say that a specimen was

produced of this bird, so rare in the land. His shoulders were

certainly young, seeing that he was not yet six-and-twenty; but

his head had ever been old. From the moment when he was first put

forth to go alone--at the age of twenty-one--his life had been one

calculation how he could make the most of himself. He had allowed

himself to be betrayed into no folly by an unguarded heart; no

youthful indiscretion had marred his prospects. He had made the

most of himself. Without wit, or depth, or any mental gift--without

honesty of purpose or industry for good work--he had been for two

years sitting member for Barchester; was the guest of Lord de Courcy;

was engaged to the eldest daughter of one of the best commoners'

families in England; and was, when he first began to think of Miss

Dunstable, sanguine that his re-election to Parliament was secure.

When, however, at this period he began to calculate what his position

in the world really was, it occurred to him that he was doing an

ill-judged thing in marrying Miss Gresham. Why marry a penniless

girl--for Augusta's trifle of a fortune was not a penny in his

estimation--while there was Miss Dunstable in the world to be won?

His own six or seven thousand a year, quite unembarrassed as it was,

was certainly a great thing; but what might he not do if to that

he could add the almost fabulous wealth of the great heiress? Was

she not here, put absolutely in his path? Would it not be a wilful

throwing away of a chance not to avail himself of it? He must, to

be sure, lose the de Courcy friendship; but if he should then have

secured his Barchester seat for the usual term of parliamentary

session, he might be able to spare that. He would also, perhaps,

encounter some Gresham enmity: this was a point on which he did think

more than once: but what will not a man encounter for the sake of two

hundred thousand pounds?

It was thus that Mr Moffat argued with himself, with much prudence,

and brought himself to resolve that he would at any rate become a

candidate for the great prize. He also, therefore, began to say

soft things; and it must be admitted that he said them with more

considerate propriety than had the Honourable George. Mr Moffat had

an idea that Miss Dunstable was not a fool, and that in order to

catch her he must do more than endeavour to lay salt on her tail,

in the guise of flattery. It was evident to him that she was a bird

of some cunning, not to be caught by an ordinary gin, such as those

commonly in use with the Honourable Georges of Society.

It seemed to Mr Moffat, that though Miss Dunstable was so sprightly,

so full of fun, and so ready to chatter on all subjects, she well

knew the value of her own money, and of her position as dependent on

it: he perceived that she never flattered the countess, and seemed

to be no whit absorbed by the titled grandeur of her host's family.

He gave her credit, therefore, for an independent spirit: and an

independent spirit in his estimation was one that placed its sole

dependence on a respectable balance at its banker's.

Working on these ideas, Mr Moffat commenced operations in such manner

that his overtures to the heiress should not, if unsuccessful,

interfere with the Greshamsbury engagement. He began by making common

cause with Miss Dunstable: their positions in the world, he said to

her, were closely similar. They had both risen from the lower class

by the strength of honest industry: they were both now wealthy, and

had both hitherto made such use of their wealth as to induce the

highest aristocracy of England to admit them into their circles.

"Yes, Mr Moffat," had Miss Dunstable remarked; "and if all that I

hear be true, to admit you into their very families."

At this Mr Moffat slightly demurred. He would not affect, he said,

to misunderstand what Miss Dunstable meant. There had been something

said on the probability of such an event; but he begged Miss

Dunstable not to believe all that she heard on such subjects.

"I do not believe much," said she; "but I certainly did think that

that might be credited."

Mr Moffat then went on to show how it behoved them both, in holding

out their hands half-way to meet the aristocratic overtures that

were made to them, not to allow themselves to be made use of. The

aristocracy, according to Mr Moffat, were people of a very nice

sort; the best acquaintance in the world; a portion of mankind to be

noticed by whom should be one of the first objects in the life of the

Dunstables and the Moffats. But the Dunstables and Moffats should be

very careful to give little or nothing in return. Much, very much in

return, would be looked for. The aristocracy, said Mr Moffat, were

not a people to allow the light of their countenance to shine forth

without looking for a \_quid pro quo\_, for some compensating value.

In all their intercourse with the Dunstables and Moffats, they would

expect a payment. It was for the Dunstables and Moffats to see that,

at any rate, they did not pay more for the article they got than its

market value.

The way in which she, Miss Dunstable, and he, Mr Moffat, would be

required to pay would be by taking each of them some poor scion of

the aristocracy in marriage; and thus expending their hard-earned

wealth in procuring high-priced pleasures for some well-born pauper.

Against this, peculiar caution was to be used. Of course, the further

induction to be shown was this: that people so circumstanced should

marry among themselves; the Dunstables and the Moffats each with the

other, and not tumble into the pitfalls prepared for them.

Whether these great lessons had any lasting effect on Miss

Dunstable's mind may be doubted. Perhaps she had already made up her

mind on the subject which Mr Moffat so well discussed. She was older

than Mr Moffat, and, in spite of his two years of parliamentary

experience, had perhaps more knowledge of the world with which she

had to deal. But she listened to what he said with complacency;

understood his object as well as she had that of his aristocratic

rival; was no whit offended; but groaned in her spirit as she thought

of the wrongs of Augusta Gresham.

But all this good advice, however, would not win the money for Mr

Moffat without some more decided step; and that step he soon decided

on taking, feeling assured that what he had said would have its due

weight with the heiress.

The party at Courcy Castle was now soon about to be broken up. The

male de Courcys were going down to a Scotch mountain. The female de

Courcys were to be shipped off to an Irish castle. Mr Moffat was to

go up to town to prepare his petition. Miss Dunstable was again about

to start on a foreign tour in behalf of her physician and attendants;

and Frank Gresham was at last to be allowed to go to Cambridge; that

is to say, unless his success with Miss Dunstable should render such

a step on his part quite preposterous.

"I think you may speak now, Frank," said the countess. "I really

think you may: you have known her now for a considerable time; and,

as far as I can judge, she is very fond of you."

"Nonsense, aunt," said Frank; "she doesn't care a button for me."

"I think differently; and lookers-on, you know, always understand the

game best. I suppose you are not afraid to ask her."

"Afraid!" said Frank, in a tone of considerable scorn. He almost made

up his mind that he would ask her to show that he was not afraid.

His only obstacle to doing so was, that he had not the slightest

intention of marrying her.

There was to be but one other great event before the party broke up,

and that was a dinner at the Duke of Omnium's. The duke had already

declined to come to Courcy; but he had in a measure atoned for this

by asking some of the guests to join a great dinner which he was

about to give to his neighbours.

Mr Moffat was to leave Courcy Castle the day after the dinner-party,

and he therefore determined to make his great attempt on the morning

of that day. It was with some difficulty that he brought about an

opportunity; but at last he did so, and found himself alone with Miss

Dunstable in the walks of Courcy Park.

"It is a strange thing, is it not," said he, recurring to his old

view of the same subject, "that I should be going to dine with the

Duke of Omnium--the richest man, they say, among the whole English

aristocracy?"

"Men of that kind entertain everybody, I believe, now and then," said

Miss Dunstable, not very civilly.

"I believe they do; but I am not going as one of the everybodies.

I am going from Lord de Courcy's house with some of his own family.

I have no pride in that--not the least; I have more pride in my

father's honest industry. But it shows what money does in this

country of ours."

"Yes, indeed; money does a great deal many queer things." In saying

this Miss Dunstable could not but think that money had done a very

queer thing in inducing Miss Gresham to fall in love with Mr Moffat.

"Yes; wealth is very powerful: here we are, Miss Dunstable, the most

honoured guests in the house."

"Oh! I don't know about that; you may be, for you are a member of

Parliament, and all that--"

"No; not a member now, Miss Dunstable."

"Well, you will be, and that's all the same; but I have no such title

to honour, thank God."

They walked on in silence for a little while, for Mr Moffat hardly

knew how to manage the business he had in hand. "It is quite

delightful to watch these people," he said at last; "now they accuse

us of being tuft-hunters."

"Do they?" said Miss Dunstable. "Upon my word I didn't know that

anybody ever so accused me."

"I didn't mean you and me personally."

"Oh! I'm glad of that."

"But that is what the world says of persons of our class. Now it

seems to me that the toadying is all on the other side. The countess

here does toady you, and so do the young ladies."

"Do they? if so, upon my word I didn't know it. But, to tell the

truth, I don't think much of such things. I live mostly to myself, Mr

Moffat."

"I see that you do, and I admire you for it; but, Miss Dunstable, you

cannot always live so," and Mr Moffat looked at her in a manner which

gave her the first intimation of his coming burst of tenderness.

"That's as may be, Mr Moffat," said she.

He went on beating about the bush for some time--giving her to

understand how necessary it was that persons situated as they were

should live either for themselves or for each other, and that,

above all things, they should beware of falling into the mouths of

voracious aristocratic lions who go about looking for prey--till they

came to a turn in the grounds; at which Miss Dunstable declared her

determination of going in. She had walked enough, she said. As by

this time Mr Moffat's immediate intentions were becoming visible she

thought it prudent to retire. "Don't let me take you in, Mr Moffat;

but my boots are a little damp, and Dr Easyman will never forgive me

if I do not hurry in as fast as I can."

"Your feet damp?--I hope not: I do hope not," said he, with a look of

the greatest solicitude.

"Oh! it's nothing to signify; but it's well to be prudent, you know.

Good morning, Mr Moffat."

"Miss Dunstable!"

"Eh--yes!" and Miss Dunstable stopped in the grand path. "I won't let

you return with me, Mr Moffat, because I know you were not coming in

so soon."

"Miss Dunstable; I shall be leaving this to-morrow."

"Yes; and I go myself the day after."

"I know it. I am going to town and you are going abroad. It may be

long--very long--before we meet again."

"About Easter," said Miss Dunstable; "that is, if the doctor doesn't

knock up on the road."

"And I had, had wished to say something before we part for so long a

time. Miss Dunstable--"

"Stop!--Mr Moffat. Let me ask you one question. I'll hear anything

that you have got to say, but on one condition: that is, that Miss

Augusta Gresham shall be by while you say it. Will you consent to

that?"

"Miss Augusta Gresham," said he, "has no right to listen to my

private conversation."

"Has she not, Mr Moffat? then I think she should have. I, at any

rate, will not so far interfere with what I look on as her undoubted

privileges as to be a party to any secret in which she may not

participate."

"But, Miss Dunstable--"

"And to tell you fairly, Mr Moffat, any secret that you do tell me, I

shall most undoubtedly repeat to her before dinner. Good morning, Mr

Moffat; my feet are certainly a little damp, and if I stay a moment

longer, Dr Easyman will put off my foreign trip for at least a week."

And so she left him standing alone in the middle of the gravel-walk.

For a moment or two, Mr Moffat consoled himself in his misfortune by

thinking how he might best avenge himself on Miss Dunstable. Soon,

however, such futile ideas left his brain. Why should he give over

the chase because the rich galleon had escaped him on this, his

first cruise in pursuit of her? Such prizes were not to be won so

easily. Her present objection clearly consisted in his engagement to

Miss Gresham, and in that only. Let that engagement be at an end,

notoriously and publicly broken off, and this objection would fall to

the ground. Yes; ships so richly freighted were not to be run down

in one summer morning's plain sailing. Instead of looking for his

revenge on Miss Dunstable, it would be more prudent in him--more in

keeping with his character--to pursue his object, and overcome such

difficulties as he might find in his way.

CHAPTER XIX

The Duke of Omnium

The Duke of Omnium was, as we have said, a bachelor. Not the less on

that account did he on certain rare gala days entertain the beauty

of the county at his magnificent rural seat, or the female fashion

of London in Belgrave Square; but on this occasion the dinner at

Gatherum Castle--for such was the name of his mansion--was to be

confined to the lords of the creation. It was to be one of those days

on which he collected round his board all the notables of the county,

in order that his popularity might not wane, or the established glory

of his hospitable house become dim.

On such an occasion it was not probable that Lord de Courcy would be

one of the guests. The party, indeed, who went from Courcy Castle was

not large, and consisted of the Honourable George, Mr Moffat, and

Frank Gresham. They went in a tax-cart, with a tandem horse, driven

very knowingly by George de Courcy; and the fourth seat on the back

of the vehicle was occupied by a servant, who was to look after the

horses at Gatherum.

The Honourable George drove either well or luckily, for he reached

the duke's house in safety; but he drove very fast. Poor Miss

Dunstable! what would have been her lot had anything but good

happened to that vehicle, so richly freighted with her three lovers!

They did not quarrel as to the prize, and all reached Gatherum Castle

in good humour with each other.

The castle was new building of white stone, lately erected at an

enormous cost by one of the first architects of the day. It was an

immense pile, and seemed to cover ground enough for a moderate-sized

town. But, nevertheless, report said that when it was completed,

the noble owner found that he had no rooms to live in; and that, on

this account, when disposed to study his own comfort, he resided in

a house of perhaps one-tenth the size, built by his grandfather in

another county.

Gatherum Castle would probably be called Italian in its style of

architecture; though it may, I think, be doubted whether any such

edifice, or anything like it, was ever seen in any part of Italy.

It was a vast edifice; irregular in height--or it appeared to be

so--having long wings on each side too high to be passed over by the

eye as mere adjuncts to the mansion, and a portico so large as to

make the house behind it look like another building of a greater

altitude. This portico was supported by Ionic columns, and was in

itself doubtless a beautiful structure. It was approached by a

flight of steps, very broad and very grand; but, as an approach by a

flight of steps hardly suits an Englishman's house, to the immediate

entrance of which it is necessary that his carriage should drive,

there was another front door in one of the wings which was commonly

used. A carriage, however, could on very stupendously grand

occasions--the visits, for instance, of queens and kings, and royal

dukes--be brought up under the portico; as the steps had been so

constructed as to admit of a road, with a rather stiff ascent, being

made close in front of the wing up into the very porch.

Opening from the porch was the grand hall, which extended up to the

top of the house. It was magnificent, indeed; being decorated with

many-coloured marbles, and hung round with various trophies of the

house of Omnium; banners were there, and armour; the sculptured busts

of many noble progenitors; full-length figures in marble of those

who had been especially prominent; and every monument of glory that

wealth, long years, and great achievements could bring together. If

only a man could but live in his hall and be for ever happy there!

But the Duke of Omnium could not live happily in his hall; and the

fact was, that the architect, in contriving this magnificent entrance

for his own honour and fame, had destroyed the duke's house as

regards most of the ordinary purposes of residence.

Nevertheless, Gatherum Castle is a very noble pile; and, standing as

it does on an eminence, has a very fine effect when seen from many a

distant knoll and verdant-wooded hill.

At seven o'clock Mr de Courcy and his friends got down from their

drag at the smaller door--for this was no day on which to mount up

under the portico; nor was that any suitable vehicle to have been

entitled to such honour. Frank felt some excitement a little stronger

than that usual to him at such moments, for he had never yet been in

company with the Duke of Omnium; and he rather puzzled himself to

think on what points he would talk to the man who was the largest

landowner in that county in which he himself had so great an

interest. He, however, made up his mind that he would allow the duke

to choose his own subjects; merely reserving to himself the right of

pointing out how deficient in gorse covers was West Barsetshire--that

being the duke's division.

They were soon divested of their coats and hats, and,

without entering on the magnificence of the great hall, were

conducted through rather a narrow passage into rather a small

drawing-room--small, that is, in proportion to the number of

gentlemen there assembled. There might be about thirty, and Frank was

inclined to think that they were almost crowded. A man came forward

to greet them when their names were announced; but our hero at once

knew that he was not the duke; for this man was fat and short,

whereas the duke was thin and tall.

There was a great hubbub going on; for everybody seemed to be talking

to his neighbour; or, in default of a neighbour, to himself. It

was clear that the exalted rank of their host had put very little

constraint on his guests' tongues, for they chatted away with as much

freedom as farmers at an ordinary.

"Which is the duke?" at last Frank contrived to whisper to his

cousin.

"Oh;--he's not here," said George; "I suppose he'll be in presently.

I believe he never shows till just before dinner."

Frank, of course, had nothing further to say; but he already began to

feel himself a little snubbed: he thought that the duke, duke though

he was, when he asked people to dinner should be there to tell them

that he was glad to see them.

More people flashed into the room, and Frank found himself rather

closely wedged in with a stout clergyman of his acquaintance. He was

not badly off, for Mr Athill was a friend of his own, who had held a

living near Greshamsbury. Lately, however, at the lamented decease

of Dr Stanhope--who had died of apoplexy at his villa in Italy--Mr

Athill had been presented with the better preferment of Eiderdown,

and had, therefore, removed to another part of the county. He was

somewhat of a bon-vivant, and a man who thoroughly understood

dinner-parties; and with much good nature he took Frank under his

special protection.

"You stick to me, Mr Gresham," he said, "when we go into the

dining-room. I'm an old hand at the duke's dinners, and know how to

make a friend comfortable as well as myself."

"But why doesn't the duke come in?" demanded Frank.

"He'll be here as soon as dinner is ready," said Mr Athill. "Or,

rather, the dinner will be ready as soon as he is here. I don't care,

therefore, how soon he comes."

Frank did not understand this, but he had nothing to do but to wait

and see how things went.

He was beginning to be impatient, for the room was now nearly full,

and it seemed evident that no other guests were coming; when suddenly

a bell rang, and a gong was sounded, and at the same instant a door

that had not yet been used flew open, and a very plainly dressed,

plain, tall man entered the room. Frank at once knew that he was at

last in the presence of the Duke of Omnium.

But his grace, late as he was in commencing the duties as host,

seemed in no hurry to make up for lost time. He quietly stood on the

rug, with his back to the empty grate, and spoke one or two words in

a very low voice to one or two gentlemen who stood nearest to him.

The crowd, in the meanwhile, became suddenly silent. Frank, when he

found that the duke did not come and speak to him, felt that he ought

to go and speak to the duke; but no one else did so, and when he

whispered his surprise to Mr Athill, that gentleman told him that

this was the duke's practice on all such occasions.

"Fothergill," said the duke--and it was the only word he had yet

spoken out loud--"I believe we are ready for dinner." Now Mr

Fothergill was the duke's land-agent, and he it was who had greeted

Frank and his friends at their entrance.

Immediately the gong was again sounded, and another door leading out

of the drawing-room into the dining-room was opened. The duke led the

way, and then the guests followed. "Stick close to me, Mr Gresham,"

said Athill, "we'll get about the middle of the table, where we shall

be cosy--and on the other side of the room, out of this dreadful

draught--I know the place well, Mr Gresham; stick to me."

Mr Athill, who was a pleasant, chatty companion, had hardly seated

himself, and was talking to Frank as quickly as he could, when Mr

Fothergill, who sat at the bottom of the table, asked him to say

grace. It seemed to be quite out of the question that the duke should

take any trouble with his guests whatever. Mr Athill consequently

dropped the word he was speaking, and uttered a prayer--if it was a

prayer--that they might all have grateful hearts for that which God

was about to give them.

If it was a prayer! As far as my own experience goes, such utterances

are seldom prayers, seldom can be prayers. And if not prayers, what

then? To me it is unintelligible that the full tide of glibbest

chatter can be stopped at a moment in the midst of profuse good

living, and the Giver thanked becomingly in words of heartfelt

praise. Setting aside for the moment what one daily hears and sees,

may not one declare that a change so sudden is not within the compass

of the human mind? But then, to such reasoning one cannot but add

what one does hear and see; one cannot but judge of the ceremony by

the manner in which one sees it performed--uttered, that is--and

listened to. Clergymen there are--one meets them now and then--who

endeavour to give to the dinner-table grace some of the solemnity of

a church ritual, and what is the effect? Much the same as though one

were to be interrupted for a minute in the midst of one of our church

liturgies to hear a drinking-song.

And it will be argued, that a man need be less thankful because, at

the moment of receiving, he utters no thanksgiving? or will it be

thought that a man is made thankful because what is called a grace is

uttered after dinner? It can hardly be imagined that any one will so

argue, or so think.

Dinner-graces are, probably, the last remaining relic of certain

daily services [1] which the Church in olden days enjoined: nones,

complines, and vespers were others. Of the nones and complines we

have happily got quit; and it might be well if we could get rid of

the dinner-graces also. Let any man ask himself whether, on his own

part, they are acts of prayer and thanksgiving--and if not that, what

then?

[Footnote 1: It is, I know, alleged that graces are said

before dinner, because our Saviour uttered a blessing before

his last supper. I cannot say that the idea of such analogy

is pleasing to me.]

When the large party entered the dining-room one or two gentlemen

might be seen to come in from some other door and set themselves at

the table near to the duke's chair. These were guests of his own, who

were staying in the house, his particular friends, the men with whom

he lived: the others were strangers whom he fed, perhaps once a year,

in order that his name might be known in the land as that of one who

distributed food and wine hospitably through the county. The food

and wine, the attendance also, and the view of the vast repository

of plate he vouchsafed willingly to his county neighbours;--but it

was beyond his good nature to talk to them. To judge by the present

appearance of most of them, they were quite as well satisfied to be

left alone.

Frank was altogether a stranger there, but Mr Athill knew every one

at the table.

"That's Apjohn," said he: "don't you know, Mr Apjohn, the attorney

from Barchester? he's always here; he does some of Fothergill's law

business, and makes himself useful. If any fellow knows the value of

a good dinner, he does. You'll see that the duke's hospitality will

not be thrown away on him."

"It's very much thrown away upon me, I know," said Frank, who could

not at all put up with the idea of sitting down to dinner without

having been spoken to by his host.

"Oh, nonsense!" said his clerical friend; "you'll enjoy yourself

amazingly by and by. There is not such champagne in any other house

in Barsetshire; and then the claret--" And Mr Athill pressed his lips

together, and gently shook his head, meaning to signify by the motion

that the claret of Gatherum Castle was sufficient atonement for any

penance which a man might have to go through in his mode of obtaining

it.

"Who's that funny little man sitting there, next but one to Mr de

Courcy? I never saw such a queer fellow in my life."

"Don't you know old Bolus? Well, I thought every one in Barsetshire

knew Bolus; you especially should do so, as he is such a dear friend

of Dr Thorne."

"A dear friend of Dr Thorne?"

"Yes; he was apothecary at Scarington in the old days, before Dr

Fillgrave came into vogue. I remember when Bolus was thought to be a

very good sort of doctor."

"Is he--is he--" whispered Frank, "is he by way of a gentleman?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Well, I suppose we must be charitable, and say that he

is quite as good, at any rate, as many others there are here--" and

Mr Athill, as he spoke, whispered into Frank's ear, "You see there's

Finnie here, another Barchester attorney. Now, I really think where

Finnie goes Bolus may go too."

"The more the merrier, I suppose," said Frank.

"Well, something a little like that. I wonder why Thorne is not here?

I'm sure he was asked."

"Perhaps he did not particularly wish to meet Finnie and Bolus. Do

you know, Mr Athill, I think he was quite right not to come. As for

myself, I wish I was anywhere else."

"Ha! ha! ha! You don't know the duke's ways yet; and what's more,

you're young, you happy fellow! But Thorne should have more sense; he

ought to show himself here."

The gormandizing was now going on at a tremendous rate. Though the

volubility of their tongues had been for a while stopped by the first

shock of the duke's presence, the guests seemed to feel no such

constraint upon their teeth. They fed, one may almost say, rabidly,

and gave their orders to the servants in an eager manner; much more

impressive than that usual at smaller parties. Mr Apjohn, who sat

immediately opposite to Frank, had, by some well-planned manoeuvre,

contrived to get before him the jowl of a salmon; but, unfortunately,

he was not for a while equally successful in the article of sauce. A

very limited portion--so at least thought Mr Apjohn--had been put on

his plate; and a servant, with a huge sauce tureen, absolutely passed

behind his back inattentive to his audible requests. Poor Mr Apjohn

in his despair turned round to arrest the man by his coat-tails; but

he was a moment too late, and all but fell backwards on the floor. As

he righted himself he muttered an anathema, and looked with a face of

anguish at his plate.

"Anything the matter, Apjohn?" said Mr Fothergill, kindly, seeing

the utter despair written on the poor man's countenance; "can I get

anything for you?"

"The sauce!" said Mr Apjohn, in a voice that would have melted a

hermit; and as he looked at Mr Fothergill, he pointed at the now

distant sinner, who was dispensing his melted ambrosia at least ten

heads upwards, away from the unfortunate supplicant.

Mr Fothergill, however, knew where to look for balm for such wounds,

and in a minute or two, Mr Apjohn was employed quite to his heart's

content.

"Well," said Frank to his neighbour, "it may be very well once in a

way; but I think that on the whole Dr Thorne is right."

"My dear Mr Gresham, see the world on all sides," said Mr Athill,

who had also been somewhat intent on the gratification of his own

appetite, though with an energy less evident than that of the

gentleman opposite. "See the world on all sides if you have an

opportunity; and, believe me, a good dinner now and then is a very

good thing."

"Yes; but I don't like eating it with hogs."

"Whish-h! softly, softly, Mr Gresham, or you'll disturb Mr Apjohn's

digestion. Upon my word, he'll want it all before he has done. Now, I

like this kind of thing once in a way."

"Do you?" said Frank, in a tone that was almost savage.

"Yes; indeed I do. One sees so much character. And after all, what

harm does it do?"

"My idea is that people should live with those whose society is

pleasant to them."

"Live--yes, Mr Gresham--I agree with you there. It wouldn't do for me

to live with the Duke of Omnium; I shouldn't understand, or probably

approve, his ways. Nor should I, perhaps, much like the constant

presence of Mr Apjohn. But now and then--once in a year or so--I do

own I like to see them both. Here's the cup; now, whatever you do, Mr

Gresham, don't pass the cup without tasting it."

And so the dinner passed on, slowly enough as Frank thought, but

all too quickly for Mr Apjohn. It passed away, and the wine came

circulating freely. The tongues again were loosed, the teeth being

released from their labours, and under the influence of the claret

the duke's presence was forgotten.

But very speedily the coffee was brought. "This will soon be over

now," said Frank, to himself, thankfully; for, though he be no means

despised good claret, he had lost his temper too completely to enjoy

it at the present moment. But he was much mistaken; the farce as yet

was only at its commencement. The duke took his cup of coffee, and so

did the few friends who sat close to him; but the beverage did not

seem to be in great request with the majority of the guests. When the

duke had taken his modicum, he rose up and silently retired, saying

no word and making no sign. And then the farce commenced.

"Now, gentlemen," said Mr Fothergill, cheerily, "we are all right.

Apjohn, is there claret there? Mr Bolus, I know you stick to the

Madeira; you are quite right, for there isn't much of it left, and my

belief is there'll never be more like it."

And so the duke's hospitality went on, and the duke's guests drank

merrily for the next two hours.

"Shan't we see any more of him?" asked Frank.

"Any more of whom?" said Mr Athill.

"Of the duke?"

"Oh, no; you'll see no more of him. He always goes when the coffee

comes. It's brought in as an excuse. We've had enough of the light of

his countenance to last till next year. The duke and I are excellent

friends; and have been so these fifteen years; but I never see more

of him than that."

"I shall go away," said Frank.

"Nonsense. Mr de Courcy and your other friend won't stir for this

hour yet."

"I don't care. I shall walk on, and they may catch me. I may be

wrong; but it seems to me that a man insults me when he asks me to

dine with him and never speaks to me. I don't care if he be ten times

Duke of Omnium; he can't be more than a gentleman, and as such I

am his equal." And then, having thus given vent to his feelings in

somewhat high-flown language, he walked forth and trudged away along

the road towards Courcy.

Frank Gresham had been born and bred a Conservative, whereas the

Duke of Omnium was well known as a consistent Whig. There is no one

so devoutly resolved to admit of no superior as your Conservative,

born and bred, no one so inclined to high domestic despotism as your

thoroughgoing consistent old Whig.

When he had proceeded about six miles, Frank was picked up by his

friends; but even then his anger had hardly cooled.

"Was the duke as civil as ever when you took your leave of him?" said

he to his cousin George, as he took his seat on the drag.

"The juke was jeuced jude wine--lem me tell you that, old fella,"

hiccupped out the Honourable George, as he touched up the leader

under the flank.

CHAPTER XX

The Proposal

And now the departures from Courcy Castle came rapidly one after

another, and there remained but one more evening before Miss

Dunstable's carriage was to be packed. The countess, in the early

moments of Frank's courtship, had controlled his ardour and checked

the rapidity of his amorous professions; but as days, and at last

weeks, wore away, she found that it was necessary to stir the fire

which she had before endeavoured to slacken.

"There will be nobody here to-night but our own circle," said she to

him, "and I really think you should tell Miss Dunstable what your

intentions are. She will have fair ground to complain of you if you

do not."

Frank began to feel that he was in a dilemma. He had commenced making

love to Miss Dunstable partly because he liked the amusement, and

partly from a satirical propensity to quiz his aunt by appearing to

fall into her scheme. But he had overshot the mark, and did not know

what answer to give when he was thus called upon to make a downright

proposal. And then, although he did not care two rushes about Miss

Dunstable in the way of love, he nevertheless experienced a sort of

jealousy when he found that she appeared to be indifferent to him,

and that she corresponded the meanwhile with his cousin George.

Though all their flirtations had been carried on on both sides

palpably by way of fun, though Frank had told himself ten times a

day that his heart was true to Mary Thorne, yet he had an undefined

feeling that it behoved Miss Dunstable to be a little in love with

him. He was not quite at ease in that she was not a little melancholy

now that his departure was so nigh; and, above all, he was anxious to

know what were the real facts about that letter. He had in his own

breast threatened Miss Dunstable with a heartache; and now, when the

time for their separation came, he found that his own heart was the

more likely to ache of the two.

"I suppose I must say something to her, or my aunt will never be

satisfied," said he to himself as he sauntered into the little

drawing-room on that last evening. But at the very time he was

ashamed of himself, for he knew he was going to ask badly.

His sister and one of his cousins were in the room, but his aunt, who

was quite on the alert, soon got them out of it, and Frank and Miss

Dunstable were alone.

"So all our fun and all our laughter is come to an end," said she,

beginning the conversation. "I don't know how you feel, but for

myself I really am a little melancholy at the idea of parting;" and

she looked up at him with her laughing black eyes, as though she

never had, and never could have a care in the world.

"Melancholy! oh, yes; you look so," said Frank, who really did feel

somewhat lackadaisically sentimental.

"But how thoroughly glad the countess must be that we are both

going," continued she. "I declare we have treated her most

infamously. Ever since we've been here we've had all the amusement

to ourselves. I've sometimes thought she would turn me out of the

house."

"I wish with all my heart she had."

"Oh, you cruel barbarian! why on earth should you wish that?"

"That I might have joined you in your exile. I hate Courcy Castle,

and should have rejoiced to leave--and--and--"

"And what?"

"And I love Miss Dunstable, and should have doubly, trebly rejoiced

to leave it with her."

Frank's voice quivered a little as he made this gallant profession;

but still Miss Dunstable only laughed the louder. "Upon my word, of

all my knights you are by far the best behaved," said she, "and say

much the prettiest things." Frank became rather red in the face, and

felt that he did so. Miss Dunstable was treating him like a boy.

While she pretended to be so fond of him she was only laughing at

him, and corresponding the while with his cousin George. Now Frank

Gresham already entertained a sort of contempt for his cousin, which

increased the bitterness of his feelings. Could it really be possible

that George had succeeded while he had utterly failed; that his

stupid cousin had touched the heart of the heiress while she was

playing with him as with a boy?

"Of all your knights! Is that the way you talk to me when we are

going to part? When was it, Miss Dunstable, that George de Courcy

became one of them?"

Miss Dunstable for a while looked serious enough. "What makes you ask

that?" said she. "What makes you inquire about Mr de Courcy?"

"Oh, I have eyes, you know, and can't help seeing. Not that I see, or

have seen anything that I could possibly help."

"And what have you seen, Mr Gresham?"

"Why, I know you have been writing to him."

"Did he tell you so?"

"No; he did not tell me; but I know it."

For a moment she sat silent, and then her face again resumed its

usual happy smile. "Come, Mr Gresham, you are not going to quarrel

with me, I hope, even if I did write a letter to your cousin. Why

should I not write to him? I correspond with all manner of people.

I'll write to you some of these days if you'll let me, and will

promise to answer my letters."

Frank threw himself back on the sofa on which he was sitting, and, in

doing so, brought himself somewhat nearer to his companion than he

had been; he then drew his hand slowly across his forehead, pushing

back his thick hair, and as he did so he sighed somewhat plaintively.

"I do not care," said he, "for the privilege of correspondence on

such terms. If my cousin George is to be a correspondent of yours

also, I will give up my claim."

And then he sighed again, so that it was piteous to hear him. He was

certainly an arrant puppy, and an egregious ass into the bargain;

but then, it must be remembered in his favour that he was only

twenty-one, and that much had been done to spoil him. Miss Dunstable

did remember this, and therefore abstained from laughing at him.

"Why, Mr Gresham, what on earth do you mean? In all human probability

I shall never write another line to Mr de Courcy; but, if I did, what

possible harm could it do you?"

"Oh, Miss Dunstable! you do not in the least understand what my

feelings are."

"Don't I? Then I hope I never shall. I thought I did. I thought they

were the feelings of a good, true-hearted friend; feelings that I

could sometimes look back upon with pleasure as being honest when

so much that one meets is false. I have become very fond of you, Mr

Gresham, and I should be sorry to think that I did not understand

your feelings."

This was almost worse and worse. Young ladies like Miss

Dunstable--for she was still to be numbered in the category of young

ladies--do not usually tell young gentlemen that they are very fond

of them. To boys and girls they may make such a declaration. Now

Frank Gresham regarded himself as one who had already fought his

battles, and fought them not without glory; he could not therefore

endure to be thus openly told by Miss Dunstable that she was very

fond of him.

"Fond of me, Miss Dunstable! I wish you were."

"So I am--very."

"You little know how fond I am of you, Miss Dunstable," and he put

out his hand to take hold of hers. She then lifted up her own, and

slapped him lightly on the knuckles.

"And what can you have to say to Miss Dunstable that can make it

necessary that you should pinch her hand? I tell you fairly, Mr

Gresham, if you make a fool of yourself, I shall come to a conclusion

that you are all fools, and that it is hopeless to look out for any

one worth caring for."

Such advice as this, so kindly given, so wisely meant, so clearly

intelligible, he should have taken and understood, young as he was.

But even yet he did not do so.

"A fool of myself! Yes; I suppose I must be a fool if I have so much

regard for Miss Dunstable as to make it painful for me to know that I

am to see her no more: a fool: yes, of course I am a fool--a man is

always a fool when he loves."

Miss Dunstable could not pretend to doubt his meaning any longer; and

was determined to stop him, let it cost what it would. She now put

out her hand, not over white, and, as Frank soon perceived, gifted

with a very fair allowance of strength.

"Now, Mr Gresham," said she, "before you go any further you shall

listen to me. Will you listen to me for a moment without interrupting

me?"

Frank was of course obliged to promise that he would do so.

"You are going--or rather you were going, for I shall stop you--to

make a profession of love."

"A profession!" said Frank making a slight unsuccessful effort to get

his hand free.

"Yes; a profession--a false profession, Mr Gresham,--a false

profession--a false profession. Look into your heart--into your heart

of hearts. I know you at any rate have a heart; look into it closely.

Mr Gresham, you know you do not love me; not as a man should love the

woman whom he swears to love."

Frank was taken aback. So appealed to he found that he could not any

longer say that he did love her. He could only look into her face

with all his eyes, and sit there listening to her.

"How is it possible that you should love me? I am Heaven knows how

many years your senior. I am neither young nor beautiful, nor have I

been brought up as she should be whom you in time will really love

and make your wife. I have nothing that should make you love me;

but--but I am rich."

"It is not that," said Frank, stoutly, feeling himself imperatively

called upon to utter something in his own defence.

"Ah, Mr Gresham, I fear it is that. For what other reason can you

have laid your plans to talk in this way to such a woman as I am?"

"I have laid no plans," said Frank, now getting his hand to himself.

"At any rate, you wrong me there, Miss Dunstable."

"I like you so well--nay, love you, if a woman may talk of love in

the way of friendship--that if money, money alone would make you

happy, you should have it heaped on you. If you want it, Mr Gresham,

you shall have it."

"I have never thought of your money," said Frank, surlily.

"But it grieves me," continued she, "it does grieve me, to think that

you, you, you--so young, so gay, so bright--that you should have

looked for it in this way. From others I have taken it just as the

wind that whistles;" and now two big slow tears escaped from her

eyes, and would have rolled down her rosy cheeks were it not that she

brushed them off with the back of her hand.

"You have utterly mistaken me, Miss Dunstable," said Frank.

"If I have, I will humbly beg your pardon," said she.

"But--but--but--"

"You have; indeed you have."

"How can I have mistaken you? Were you not about to say that you

loved me; to talk absolute nonsense; to make me an offer? If you were

not, if I have mistaken you indeed, I will beg your pardon."

Frank had nothing further to say in his own defence. He had not

wanted Miss Dunstable's money--that was true; but he could not deny

that he had been about to talk that absolute nonsense of which she

spoke with so much scorn.

"You would almost make me think that there are none honest in this

fashionable world of yours. I well know why Lady de Courcy has had

me here: how could I help knowing it? She has been so foolish in

her plans that ten times a day she has told her own secret. But I

have said to myself twenty times, that if she were crafty, you were

honest."

"And am I dishonest?"

"I have laughed in my sleeve to see how she played her game, and to

hear others around playing theirs; all of them thinking that they

could get the money of the poor fool who had come at their beck and

call; but I was able to laugh at them as long as I thought that I had

one true friend to laugh with me. But one cannot laugh with all the

world against one."

"I am not against you, Miss Dunstable."

"Sell yourself for money! why, if I were a man I would not sell one

jot of liberty for mountains of gold. What! tie myself in the heyday

of my youth to a person I could never love, for a price! perjure

myself, destroy myself--and not only myself, but her also, in order

that I might live idly! Oh, heavens! Mr Gresham! can it be that

the words of such a woman as your aunt have sunk so deeply in your

heart; have blackened you so foully as to make you think of such vile

folly as this? Have you forgotten your soul, your spirit, your man's

energy, the treasure of your heart? And you, so young! For shame, Mr

Gresham! for shame--for shame."

Frank found the task before him by no means an easy one. He had to

make Miss Dunstable understand that he had never had the slightest

idea of marrying her, and that he had made love to her merely with

the object of keeping his hand in for the work as it were; with that

object, and the other equally laudable one of interfering with his

cousin George.

And yet there was nothing for him but to get through this task as

best he might. He was goaded to it by the accusations which Miss

Dunstable brought against him; and he began to feel, that though her

invective against him might be bitter when he had told the truth,

they could not be so bitter as those she now kept hinting at under

her mistaken impression as to his views. He had never had any strong

propensity for money-hunting; but now that offence appeared in his

eyes abominable, unmanly, and disgusting. Any imputation would be

better than that.

"Miss Dunstable, I never for a moment thought of doing what

you accuse me of; on my honour, I never did. I have been very

foolish--very wrong--idiotic, I believe; but I have never intended

that."

"Then, Mr Gresham, what did you intend?"

This was rather a difficult question to answer; and Frank was not

very quick in attempting it. "I know you will not forgive me," he

said at last; "and, indeed, I do not see how you can. I don't know

how it came about; but this is certain, Miss Dunstable; I have never

for a moment thought about your fortune; that is, thought about it in

the way of coveting it."

"You never thought of making me your wife, then?"

"Never," said Frank, looking boldly into her face.

"You never intended really to propose to go with me to the altar, and

then make yourself rich by one great perjury?"

"Never for a moment," said he.

"You have never gloated over me as the bird of prey gloats over the

poor beast that is soon to become carrion beneath its claws? You have

not counted me out as equal to so much land, and calculated on me as

a balance at your banker's? Ah, Mr Gresham," she continued, seeing

that he stared as though struck almost with awe by her strong

language; "you little guess what a woman situated as I am has to

suffer."

"I have behaved badly to you, Miss Dunstable, and I beg your pardon;

but I have never thought of your money."

"Then we will be friends again, Mr Gresham, won't we? It is so nice

to have a friend like you. There, I think I understand it now; you

need not tell me."

"It was half by way of making a fool of my aunt," said Frank, in an

apologetic tone.

"There is merit in that, at any rate," said Miss Dunstable. "I

understand it all now; you thought to make a fool of me in real

earnest. Well, I can forgive that; at any rate it is not mean."

It may be, that Miss Dunstable did not feel much acute anger at

finding that this young man had addressed her with words of love in

the course of an ordinary flirtation, although that flirtation had

been unmeaning and silly. This was not the offence against which her

heart and breast had found peculiar cause to arm itself; this was not

the injury from which she had hitherto experienced suffering.

At any rate, she and Frank again became friends, and, before the

evening was over, they perfectly understood each other. Twice during

this long \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ Lady de Courcy came into the room to see how

things were going on, and twice she went out almost unnoticed. It

was quite clear to her that something uncommon had taken place, was

taking place, or would take place; and that should this be for weal

or for woe, no good could now come from her interference. On each

occasion, therefore, she smiled sweetly on the pair of turtle-doves,

and glided out of the room as quietly as she had glided into it.

But at last it became necessary to remove them; for the world had

gone to bed. Frank, in the meantime, had told to Miss Dunstable all

his love for Mary Thorne, and Miss Dunstable had enjoined him to be

true to his vows. To her eyes there was something of heavenly beauty

in young, true love--of beauty that was heavenly because it had been

unknown to her.

"Mind you let me hear, Mr Gresham," said she. "Mind you do; and, Mr

Gresham, never, never forget her for one moment; not for one moment,

Mr Gresham."

Frank was about to swear that he never would--again, when the

countess, for the third time, sailed into the room.

"Young people," said she, "do you know what o'clock it is?"

"Dear me, Lady de Courcy, I declare it is past twelve; I really am

ashamed of myself. How glad you will be to get rid of me to-morrow!"

"No, no, indeed we shan't; shall we, Frank?" and so Miss Dunstable

passed out.

Then once again the aunt tapped her nephew with her fan. It was the

last time in her life that she did so. He looked up in her face, and

his look was enough to tell her that the acres of Greshamsbury were

not to be reclaimed by the ointment of Lebanon.

Nothing further on the subject was said. On the following morning

Miss Dunstable took her departure, not much heeding the rather cold

words of farewell which her hostess gave her; and on the following

day Frank started for Greshamsbury.

CHAPTER XXI

Mr Moffat Falls into Trouble

We will now, with the reader's kind permission, skip over some months

in our narrative. Frank returned from Courcy Castle to Greshamsbury,

and having communicated to his mother--much in the same manner as he

had to the countess--the fact that his mission had been unsuccessful,

he went up after a day or two to Cambridge. During his short stay at

Greshamsbury he did not even catch a glimpse of Mary. He asked for

her, of course, and was told that it was not likely that she would be

at the house just at present. He called at the doctor's, but she was

denied to him there; "she was out," Janet said,--"probably with Miss

Oriel." He went to the parsonage and found Miss Oriel at home; but

Mary had not been seen that morning. He then returned to the house;

and, having come to the conclusion that she had not thus vanished

into air, otherwise than by preconcerted arrangement, he boldly taxed

Beatrice on the subject.

Beatrice looked very demure; declared that no one in the house had

quarrelled with Mary; confessed that it had been thought prudent that

she should for a while stay away from Greshamsbury; and, of course,

ended by telling her brother everything, including all the scenes

that had passed between Mary and herself.

"It is out of the question your thinking of marrying her, Frank,"

said she. "You must know that nobody feels it more strongly than

poor Mary herself;" and Beatrice looked the very personification of

domestic prudence.

"I know nothing of the kind," said he, with the headlong imperative

air that was usual with him in discussing matters with his sisters.

"I know nothing of the kind. Of course I cannot say what Mary's

feelings may be: a pretty life she must have had of it among you. But

you may be sure of this, Beatrice, and so may my mother, that nothing

on earth shall make me give her up--nothing." And Frank, as he made

the protestation, strengthened his own resolution by thinking of all

the counsel that Miss Dunstable had given him.

The brother and sister could hardly agree, as Beatrice was dead

against the match. Not that she would not have liked Mary Thorne for

a sister-in-law, but that she shared to a certain degree the feeling

which was now common to all the Greshams--that Frank must marry

money. It seemed, at any rate, to be imperative that he should either

do that or not marry at all. Poor Beatrice was not very mercenary

in her views: she had no wish to sacrifice her brother to any

Miss Dunstable; but yet she felt, as they all felt--Mary Thorne

included--that such a match as that, of the young heir with the

doctor's niece, was not to be thought of;--not to be spoken of as

a thing that was in any way possible. Therefore, Beatrice, though

she was Mary's great friend, though she was her brother's favourite

sister, could give Frank no encouragement. Poor Frank! circumstances

had made but one bride possible to him: he must marry money.

His mother said nothing to him on the subject: when she learnt that

the affair with Miss Dunstable was not to come off, she merely

remarked that it would perhaps be best for him to return to Cambridge

as soon as possible. Had she spoken her mind out, she would probably

have also advised him to remain there as long as possible. The

countess had not omitted to write to her when Frank left Courcy

Castle; and the countess's letter certainly made the anxious mother

think that her son's education had hardly yet been completed. With

this secondary object, but with that of keeping him out of the way of

Mary Thorne in the first place, Lady Arabella was now quite satisfied

that her son should enjoy such advantages as an education completed

at the university might give him.

With his father Frank had a long conversation; but, alas! the gist of

his father's conversation was this, that it behoved him, Frank, to

marry money. The father, however, did not put it to him in the cold,

callous way in which his lady-aunt had done, and his lady-mother.

He did not bid him go and sell himself to the first female he could

find possessed of wealth. It was with inward self-reproaches, and

true grief of spirit, that the father told the son that it was not

possible for him to do as those may do who are born really rich, or

really poor.

"If you marry a girl without a fortune, Frank, how are you to live?"

the father asked, after having confessed how deep he himself had

injured his own heir.

"I don't care about money, sir," said Frank. "I shall be just as

happy as if Boxall Hill had never been sold. I don't care a straw

about that sort of thing."

"Ah! my boy; but you will care: you will soon find that you do care."

"Let me go into some profession. Let me go to the Bar. I am sure I

could earn my own living. Earn it! of course I could, why not I as

well as others? I should like of all things to be a barrister."

There was much more of the same kind, in which Frank said all that he

could think of to lessen his father's regrets. In their conversation

not a word was spoken about Mary Thorne. Frank was not aware whether

or no his father had been told of the great family danger which was

dreaded in that quarter. That he had been told, we may surmise, as

Lady Arabella was not wont to confine the family dangers to her own

bosom. Moreover, Mary's presence had, of course, been missed. The

truth was, that the squire had been told, with great bitterness, of

what had come to pass, and all the evil had been laid at his door.

He it had been who had encouraged Mary to be regarded almost as a

daughter of the house of Greshamsbury; he it was who taught that

odious doctor--odious in all but his aptitude for good doctoring--to

think himself a fit match for the aristocracy of the county. It had

been his fault, this great necessity that Frank should marry money;

and now it was his fault that Frank was absolutely talking of

marrying a pauper.

By no means in quiescence did the squire hear these charges brought

against him. The Lady Arabella, in each attack, got quite as much as

she gave, and, at last, was driven to retreat in a state of headache,

which she declared to be chronic; and which, so she assured her

daughter Augusta, must prevent her from having any more lengthened

conversations with her lord--at any rate for the next three months.

But though the squire may be said to have come off on the whole as

victor in these combats, they did not perhaps have, on that account,

the less effect upon him. He knew it was true that he had done much

towards ruining his son; and he also could think of no other remedy

than matrimony. It was Frank's doom, pronounced even by the voice of

his father, that he must marry money.

And so, Frank went off again to Cambridge, feeling himself, as he

went, to be a much lesser man in Greshamsbury estimation than he had

been some two months earlier, when his birthday had been celebrated.

Once during his short stay at Greshamsbury he had seen the doctor;

but the meeting had been anything but pleasant. He had been afraid

to ask after Mary; and the doctor had been too diffident of himself

to speak of her. They had met casually on the road, and, though each

in his heart loved the other, the meeting had been anything but

pleasant.

And so Frank went back to Cambridge; and, as he did so, he stoutly

resolved that nothing should make him untrue to Mary Thorne.

"Beatrice," said he, on the morning he went away, when she came into

his room to superintend his packing--"Beatrice, if she ever talks

about me--"

"Oh, Frank, my darling Frank, don't think of it--it is madness; she

knows it is madness."

"Never mind; if she ever talks about me, tell her that the last word

I said was, that I would never forget her. She can do as she likes."

Beatrice made no promise, never hinted that she would give the

message; but it may be taken for granted that she had not been long

in company with Mary Thorne before she did give it.

And then there were other troubles at Greshamsbury. It had been

decided that Augusta's marriage was to take place in September; but

Mr Moffat had, unfortunately, been obliged to postpone the happy day.

He himself had told Augusta--not, of course, without protestations

as to his regret--and had written to this effect to Mr Gresham,

"Electioneering matters, and other troubles had," he said, "made this

peculiarly painful postponement absolutely necessary."

Augusta seemed to bear her misfortune with more equanimity than is,

we believe, usual with young ladies under such circumstances. She

spoke of it to her mother in a very matter-of-fact way, and seemed

almost contented at the idea of remaining at Greshamsbury till

February; which was the time now named for the marriage. But Lady

Arabella was not equally well satisfied, nor was the squire.

"I half believe that fellow is not honest," he had once said out loud

before Frank, and this set Frank a-thinking of what dishonesty in the

matter it was probable that Mr Moffat might be guilty, and what would

be the fitting punishment for such a crime. Nor did he think on the

subject in vain; especially after a conference on the matter which he

had with his friend Harry Baker. This conference took place during

the Christmas vacation.

It should be mentioned, that the time spent by Frank at Courcy Castle

had not done much to assist him in his views as to an early degree,

and that it had at last been settled that he should stay up at

Cambridge another year. When he came home at Christmas he found that

the house was not peculiarly lively. Mary was absent on a visit with

Miss Oriel. Both these young ladies were staying with Miss Oriel's

aunt, in the neighbourhood of London; and Frank soon learnt that

there was no chance that either of them would be home before his

return. No message had been left for him by Mary--none at least had

been left with Beatrice; and he began in his heart to accuse her of

coldness and perfidy;--not, certainly, with much justice, seeing that

she had never given him the slightest encouragement.

The absence of Patience Oriel added to the dullness of the place. It

was certainly hard upon Frank that all the attraction of the village

should be removed to make way and prepare for his return--harder,

perhaps, on them; for, to tell the truth, Miss Oriel's visit had been

entirely planned to enable her to give Mary a comfortable way of

leaving Greshamsbury during the time that Frank should remain at

home. Frank thought himself cruelly used. But what did Mr Oriel think

when doomed to eat his Christmas pudding alone, because the young

squire would be unreasonable in his love? What did the doctor think,

as he sat solitary by his deserted hearth--the doctor, who no

longer permitted himself to enjoy the comforts of the Greshamsbury

dining-table? Frank hinted and grumbled; talked to Beatrice of the

determined constancy of his love, and occasionally consoled himself

by a stray smile from some of the neighbouring belles. The black

horse was made perfect; the old grey pony was by no means discarded;

and much that was satisfactory was done in the sporting line. But

still the house was dull, and Frank felt that he was the cause of

its being so. Of the doctor he saw but little: he never came to

Greshamsbury unless to see Lady Arabella as doctor, or to be closeted

with the squire. There were no social evenings with him; no animated

confabulations at the doctor's house; no discourses between them,

as there had wont to be, about the merits of the different covers,

and the capacities of the different hounds. These were dull days on

the whole for Frank; and sad enough, we may say, for our friend the

doctor.

In February, Frank again went back to college; having settled with

Harry Baker certain affairs which weighed on his mind. He went back

to Cambridge, promising to be home on the 20th of the month, so as to

be present at his sister's wedding. A cold and chilling time had been

named for these hymeneal joys, but one not altogether unsuited to the

feelings of the happy pair. February is certainly not a warm month;

but with the rich it is generally a cosy, comfortable time. Good

fires, winter cheer, groaning tables, and warm blankets, make a

fictitious summer, which, to some tastes, is more delightful than

the long days and the hot sun. And some marriages are especially

winter matches. They depend for their charm on the same substantial

attractions: instead of heart beating to heart in sympathetic unison,

purse chinks to purse. The rich new furniture of the new abode is

looked to instead of the rapture of a pure embrace. The new carriage

is depended on rather than the new heart's companion; and the first

bright gloss, prepared by the upholsterer's hands, stands in lieu of

the rosy tints which young love lends to his true votaries.

Mr Moffat had not spent his Christmas at Greshamsbury. That eternal

election petition, those eternal lawyers, the eternal care of his

well-managed wealth, forbade him the enjoyment of any such pleasures.

He could not come to Greshamsbury for Christmas, nor yet for the

festivities of the new year; but now and then he wrote prettily

worded notes, sending occasionally a silver-gilt pencil-case, or a

small brooch, and informed Lady Arabella that he looked forward to

the 20th of February with great satisfaction. But, in the meanwhile,

the squire became anxious, and at last went up to London; and Frank,

who was at Cambridge, bought the heaviest cutting whip to be found in

that town, and wrote a confidential letter to Harry Baker.

Poor Mr Moffat! It is well known that none but the brave deserve the

fair; but thou, without much excuse for bravery, had secured for

thyself one who, at any rate, was fair enough for thee. Would it

not have been well hadst thou looked into thyself to see what real

bravery might be in thee, before thou hadst prepared to desert this

fair one thou hadst already won? That last achievement, one may say,

did require some special courage.

Poor Mr Moffat! It is wonderful that as he sat in that gig, going to

Gatherum Castle, planning how he would be off with Miss Gresham and

afterwards on with Miss Dunstable, it is wonderful that he should not

then have cast his eye behind him, and looked at that stalwart pair

of shoulders which were so close to his own back. As he afterwards

pondered on his scheme while sipping the duke's claret, it is odd

that he should not have observed the fiery pride of purpose and power

of wrath which was so plainly written on that young man's brow: or,

when he matured, and finished, and carried out his purpose, that he

did not think of that keen grasp which had already squeezed his own

hand with somewhat too warm a vigour, even in the way of friendship.

Poor Mr Moffat! it is probable that he forgot to think of Frank at

all as connected with his promised bride; it is probable that he

looked forward only to the squire's violence and the enmity of the

house of Courcy; and that he found from enquiry at his heart's

pulses, that he was man enough to meet these. Could he have guessed

what a whip Frank Gresham would have bought at Cambridge--could he

have divined what a letter would have been written to Harry Baker--it

is probable, nay, we think we may say certain, that Miss Gresham

would have become Mrs Moffat.

Miss Gresham, however, never did become Mrs Moffat. About two days

after Frank's departure for Cambridge--it is just possible that Mr

Moffat was so prudent as to make himself aware of the fact--but just

two days after Frank's departure, a very long, elaborate, and clearly

explanatory letter was received at Greshamsbury. Mr Moffat was quite

sure that Miss Gresham and her very excellent parents would do him

the justice to believe that he was not actuated, &c., &c., &c.

The long and the short of this was, that Mr Moffat signified his

intention of breaking off the match without offering any intelligible

reason.

Augusta again bore her disappointment well: not, indeed, without

sorrow and heartache, and inward, hidden tears; but still well. She

neither raved, nor fainted, nor walked about by moonlight alone. She

wrote no poetry, and never once thought of suicide. When, indeed, she

remembered the rosy-tinted lining, the unfathomable softness of that

Long-acre carriage, her spirit did for one moment give way; but, on

the whole, she bore it as a strong-minded woman and a de Courcy

should do.

But both Lady Arabella and the squire were greatly vexed. The former

had made the match, and the latter, having consented to it, had

incurred deeper responsibilities to enable him to bring it about.

The money which was to have been given to Mr Moffat was still to the

fore; but alas! how much, how much that he could ill spare, had been

thrown away on bridal preparations! It is, moreover, an unpleasant

thing for a gentleman to have his daughter jilted; perhaps peculiarly

so to have her jilted by a tailor's son.

Lady Arabella's woe was really piteous. It seemed to her as though

cruel fate were heaping misery after misery upon the wretched house

of Greshamsbury. A few weeks since things were going so well with

her! Frank then was all but the accepted husband of almost untold

wealth--so, at least, she was informed by her sister-in-law--whereas,

Augusta, was the accepted wife of wealth, not indeed untold, but of

dimensions quite sufficiently respectable to cause much joy in the

telling. Where now were her golden hopes? Where now the splendid

future of her poor duped children? Augusta was left to pine alone;

and Frank, in a still worse plight, insisted on maintaining his love

for a bastard and a pauper.

For Frank's affair she had received some poor consolation by laying

all the blame on the squire's shoulders. What she had then said

was now repaid to her with interest; for not only had she been the

maker of Augusta's match, but she had boasted of the deed with all a

mother's pride.

It was from Beatrice that Frank had obtained his tidings. This last

resolve on the part of Mr Moffat had not altogether been unsuspected

by some of the Greshams, though altogether unsuspected by the Lady

Arabella. Frank had spoken of it as a possibility to Beatrice,

and was not quite unprepared when the information reached him. He

consequently bought his big cutting whip, and wrote his confidential

letter to Harry Baker.

On the following day Frank and Harry might have been seen, with their

heads nearly close together, leaning over one of the tables in the

large breakfast-room at the Tavistock Hotel in Covent Garden. The

ominous whip, to the handle of which Frank had already made his hand

well accustomed, was lying on the table between them; and ever and

anon Harry Baker would take it up and feel its weight approvingly.

Oh, Mr Moffat! poor Mr Moffat! go not out into the fashionable world

to-day; above all, go not to that club of thine in Pall Mall; but,

oh! especially go not there, as is thy wont to do, at three o'clock

in the afternoon!

With much care did those two young generals lay their plans of

attack. Let it not for a moment be thought that it was ever in the

minds of either of them that two men should attack one. But it

was thought that Mr Moffat might be rather coy in coming out from

his seclusion to meet the proffered hand of his once intended

brother-in-law when he should see that hand armed with a heavy whip.

Baker, therefore, was content to act as a decoy duck, and remarked

that he might no doubt make himself useful in restraining the public

mercy, and, probably, in controlling the interference of policemen.

"It will be deuced hard if I can't get five or six shies at him,"

said Frank, again clutching his weapon almost spasmodically. Oh, Mr

Moffat! five or six shies with such a whip, and such an arm! For

myself, I would sooner join in a second Balaclava gallop than

encounter it.

At ten minutes before four these two heroes might be seen walking up

Pall Mall, towards the ---- Club. Young Baker walked with an eager

disengaged air. Mr Moffat did not know his appearance; he had,

therefore, no anxiety to pass along unnoticed. But Frank had in some

mysterious way drawn his hat very far over his forehead, and had

buttoned his shooting-coat up round his chin. Harry had recommended

to him a great-coat, in order that he might the better conceal his

face; but Frank had found that the great-coat was an encumbrance to

his arm. He put it on, and when thus clothed he had tried the whip,

he found that he cut the air with much less potency than in the

lighter garment. He contented himself, therefore, with looking down

on the pavement as he walked along, letting the long point of the

whip stick up from his pocket, and flattering himself that even Mr

Moffat would not recognise him at the first glance. Poor Mr Moffat!

If he had but had the chance!

And now, having arrived at the front of the club, the two friends for

a moment separate: Frank remains standing on the pavement, under the

shade of the high stone area-railing, while Harry jauntily skips up

three steps at a time, and with a very civil word of inquiry of the

hall porter, sends in his card to Mr Moffat--

MR HARRY BAKER

Mr Moffat, never having heard of such a gentleman in his life,

unwittingly comes out into the hall, and Harry, with the sweetest

smile, addresses him.

Now the plan of the campaign had been settled in this wise: Baker

was to send into the club for Mr Moffat, and invite that gentleman

down into the street. It was probable that the invitation might

be declined; and it had been calculated in such case that the two

gentlemen would retire for parley into the strangers' room, which was

known to be immediately opposite the hall door. Frank was to keep his

eye on the portals, and if he found that Mr Moffat did not appear

as readily as might be desired, he also was to ascend the steps and

hurry into the strangers' room. Then, whether he met Mr Moffat there

or elsewhere, or wherever he might meet him, he was to greet him with

all the friendly vigour in his power, while Harry disposed of the

club porters.

But fortune, who ever favours the brave, specially favoured Frank

Gresham on this occasion. Just as Harry Baker had put his card

into the servant's hand, Mr Moffat, with his hat on, prepared for

the street, appeared in the hall; Mr Baker addressed him with his

sweetest smile, and begged the pleasure of saying a word or two as

they descended into the street. Had not Mr Moffat been going thither

it would have been very improbable that he should have done so at

Harry's instance. But, as it was, he merely looked rather solemn

at his visitor--it was his wont to look solemn--and continued the

descent of the steps.

Frank, his heart leaping the while, saw his prey, and retreated two

steps behind the area-railing, the dread weapon already well poised

in his hand. Oh! Mr Moffat! Mr Moffat! if there be any goddess to

interfere in thy favour, let her come forward now without delay; let

her now bear thee off on a cloud if there be one to whom thou art

sufficiently dear! But there is no such goddess.

Harry smiled blandly till they were well on the pavement, saying some

nothing, and keeping the victim's face averted from the avenging

angel; and then, when the raised hand was sufficiently nigh, he

withdrew two steps towards the nearest lamp-post. Not for him was the

honour of the interview;--unless, indeed, succouring policemen might

give occasion for some gleam of glory.

But succouring policemen were no more to be come by than goddesses.

Where were ye, men, when that savage whip fell about the ears of the

poor ex-legislator? In Scotland Yard, sitting dozing on your benches,

or talking soft nothings to the housemaids round the corner; for ye

were not walking on your beats, nor standing at coign of vantage, to

watch the tumults of the day. But had ye been there what could ye

have done? Had Sir Richard himself been on the spot Frank Gresham

would still, we may say, have had his five shies at that unfortunate

one.

When Harry Baker quickly seceded from the way, Mr Moffat at once saw

the fate before him. His hair doubtless stood on end, and his voice

refused to give the loud screech with which he sought to invoke the

club. An ashy paleness suffused his cheeks, and his tottering steps

were unable to bear him away in flight. Once, and twice, the cutting

whip came well down across his back. Had he been wise enough to stand

still and take his thrashing in that attitude, it would have been

well for him. But men so circumstanced have never such prudence.

After two blows he made a dash at the steps, thinking to get back

into the club; but Harry, who had by no means reclined in idleness

against the lamp-post, here stopped him: "You had better go back into

the street," said Harry; "indeed you had," giving him a shove from

off the second step.

Then of course Frank could not do other than hit him anywhere. When a

gentleman is dancing about with much energy it is hardly possible to

strike him fairly on his back. The blows, therefore, came now on his

legs and now on his head; and Frank unfortunately got more than his

five or six shies before he was interrupted.

The interruption however came, all too soon for Frank's idea of

justice. Though there be no policeman to take part in a London row,

there are always others ready enough to do so; amateur policemen,

who generally sympathise with the wrong side, and, in nine cases

out of ten, expend their generous energy in protecting thieves and

pickpockets. When it was seen with what tremendous ardour that

dread weapon fell about the ears of the poor undefended gentleman,

interference there was at last, in spite of Harry Baker's best

endeavours, and loudest protestations.

"Do not interrupt them, sir," said he; "pray do not. It is a family

affair, and they will neither of them like it."

In the teeth, however, of these assurances, rude people did

interfere, and after some nine or ten shies Frank found himself

encompassed by the arms, and encumbered by the weight of a very stout

gentleman, who hung affectionately about his neck and shoulders;

whereas, Mr Moffat was already receiving consolation from two

motherly females, sitting in a state of syncope on the good-natured

knees of a fishmonger's apprentice.

Frank was thoroughly out of breath: nothing came from his lips but

half-muttered expletives and unintelligible denunciations of the

iniquity of his foe. But still he struggled to be at him again. We

all know how dangerous is the taste of blood; now cruelty will become

a custom even with the most tender-hearted. Frank felt that he had

hardly fleshed his virgin lash: he thought, almost with despair, that

he had not yet at all succeeded as became a man and a brother; his

memory told him of but one or two of the slightest touches that had

gone well home to the offender. He made a desperate effort to throw

off that incubus round his neck and rush again to the combat.

"Harry--Harry; don't let him go--don't let him go," he barely

articulated.

"Do you want to murder the man, sir; to murder him?" said the stout

gentleman over his shoulder, speaking solemnly into his very ear.

"I don't care," said Frank, struggling manfully but uselessly. "Let

me out, I say; I don't care--don't let him go, Harry, whatever you

do."

"He has got it prettily tidily," said Harry; "I think that will

perhaps do for the present."

By this time there was a considerable concourse. The club steps were

crowded with the members; among whom there were many of Mr Moffat's

acquaintance. Policemen also now flocked up, and the question arose

as to what should be done with the originators of the affray. Frank

and Harry found that they were to consider themselves under a gentle

arrest, and Mr Moffat, in a fainting state, was carried into the

interior of the club.

Frank, in his innocence, had intended to have celebrated this little

affair when it was over by a light repast and a bottle of claret

with his friend, and then to have gone back to Cambridge by the mail

train. He found, however, that his schemes in this respect were

frustrated. He had to get bail to attend at Marlborough Street

police-office should he be wanted within the next two or three days;

and was given to understand that he would be under the eye of the

police, at any rate until Mr Moffat should be out of danger.

"Out of danger!" said Frank to his friend with a startled look.

"Why I hardly got at him." Nevertheless, they did have their slight

repast, and also their bottle of claret.

On the second morning after this occurrence, Frank was again sitting

in that public room at the Tavistock, and Harry was again sitting

opposite to him. The whip was not now so conspicuously produced

between them, having been carefully packed up and put away among

Frank's other travelling properties. They were so sitting, rather

glum, when the door swung open, and a heavy, quick step was heard

advancing towards them. It was the squire; whose arrival there had

been momentarily expected.

"Frank," said he--"Frank, what on earth is all this?" and as he spoke

he stretched out both hands, the right to his son and the left to his

friend.

"He has given a blackguard a licking, that is all," said Harry.

Frank felt that his hand was held with a peculiarly warm grasp; and

he could not but think that his father's face, raised though his

eyebrows were--though there was on it an intended expression of

amazement and, perhaps, regret--nevertheless he could not but think

that his father's face looked kindly at him.

"God bless my soul, my dear boy! what have you done to the man?"

"He's not a ha'porth the worse, sir," said Frank, still holding his

father's hand.

"Oh, isn't he!" said Harry, shrugging his shoulders. "He must be made

of some very tough article then."

"But my dear boys, I hope there's no danger. I hope there's no

danger."

"Danger!" said Frank, who could not yet induce himself to believe

that he had been allowed a fair chance with Mr Moffat.

"Oh, Frank! Frank! how could you be so rash? In the middle of Pall

Mall, too. Well! well! well! All the women down at Greshamsbury will

have it that you have killed him."

"I almost wish I had," said Frank.

"Oh, Frank! Frank! But now tell me--"

And then the father sat well pleased while he heard, chiefly from

Harry Baker, the full story of his son's prowess. And then they did

not separate without another slight repast and another bottle of

claret.

Mr Moffat retired to the country for a while, and then went abroad;

having doubtless learnt that the petition was not likely to give him

a seat for the city of Barchester. And this was the end of the wooing

with Miss Gresham.

CHAPTER XXII

Sir Roger Is Unseated

After this, little occurred at Greshamsbury, or among Greshamsbury

people, which it will be necessary for us to record. Some notice was,

of course, taking of Frank's prolonged absence from his college; and

tidings, perhaps exaggerated tidings, of what had happened in Pall

Mall were not slow to reach the High Street of Cambridge. But that

affair was gradually hushed up; and Frank went on with his studies.

He went back to his studies: it then being an understood arrangement

between him and his father that he should not return to Greshamsbury

till the summer vacation. On this occasion, the squire and Lady

Arabella had, strange to say, been of the same mind. They both wished

to keep their son away from Miss Thorne; and both calculated, that

at his age and with his disposition, it was not probable that any

passion would last out a six months' absence. "And when the summer

comes it will be an excellent opportunity for us to go abroad," said

Lady Arabella. "Poor Augusta will require some change to renovate her

spirits."

To this last proposition the squire did not assent. It was, however,

allowed to pass over; and this much was fixed, that Frank was not to

return home till midsummer.

It will be remembered that Sir Roger Scatcherd had been elected

as sitting member for the city of Barchester; but it will also be

remembered that a petition against his return was threatened. Had

that petition depended solely on Mr Moffat, Sir Roger's seat no doubt

would have been saved by Frank Gresham's cutting whip. But such

was not the case. Mr Moffat had been put forward by the de Courcy

interest; and that noble family with its dependants was not to go to

the wall because Mr Moffat had had a thrashing. No; the petition was

to go on; and Mr Nearthewinde declared, that no petition in his hands

had half so good a chance of success. "Chance, no, but certainty,"

said Mr Nearthewinde; for Mr Nearthewinde had learnt something with

reference to that honest publican and the payment of his little bill.

The petition was presented and duly backed; the recognisances were

signed, and all the proper formalities formally executed; and Sir

Roger found that his seat was in jeopardy. His return had been a

great triumph to him; and, unfortunately, he had celebrated that

triumph as he had been in the habit of celebrating most of the very

triumphant occasions of his life. Though he was than hardly yet

recovered from the effects of his last attack, he indulged in another

violent drinking bout; and, strange to say, did so without any

immediate visible bad effects.

In February he took his seat amidst the warm congratulations of

all men of his own class, and early in the month of April his case

came on for trial. Every kind of electioneering sin known to the

electioneering world was brought to his charge; he was accused of

falseness, dishonesty, and bribery of every sort: he had, it was said

in the paper of indictment, bought votes, obtained them by treating,

carried them off by violence, conquered them by strong drink, polled

them twice over, counted those of dead men, stolen them, forged them,

and created them by every possible, fictitious contrivance: there was

no description of wickedness appertaining to the task of procuring

votes of which Sir Roger had not been guilty, either by himself or

by his agents. He was quite horror-struck at the list of his own

enormities. But he was somewhat comforted when Mr Closerstil told him

that the meaning of it all was that Mr Romer, the barrister, had paid

a former bill due to Mr Reddypalm, the publican.

"I fear he was indiscreet, Sir Roger; I really fear he was. Those

young men always are. Being energetic, they work like horses; but

what's the use of energy without discretion, Sir Roger?"

"But, Mr Closerstil, I knew nothing about it from first to last."

"The agency can be proved, Sir Roger," said Mr Closerstil, shaking

his head. And then there was nothing further to be said on the

matter.

In these days of snow-white purity all political delinquency is

abominable in the eyes of British politicians; but no delinquency is

so abominable as that of venality at elections. The sin of bribery is

damnable. It is the one sin for which, in the House of Commons, there

can be no forgiveness. When discovered, it should render the culprit

liable to political death, without hope of pardon. It is treason

against a higher throne than that on which the Queen sits. It is a

heresy which requires an \_auto-da-fÃ©\_. It is a pollution to the whole

House, which can only be cleansed by a great sacrifice. Anathema

maranatha! out with it from amongst us, even though the half of our

heart's blood be poured forth in the conflict! out with it, and for

ever!

Such is the language of patriotic members with regard to bribery;

and doubtless, if sincere, they are in the right. It is a bad thing,

certainly, that a rich man should buy votes; bad also that a poor man

should sell them. By all means let us repudiate such a system with

heartfelt disgust.

With heartfelt disgust, if we can do so, by all means; but not with

disgust pretended only and not felt in the heart at all. The laws

against bribery at elections are now so stringent that an unfortunate

candidate may easily become guilty, even though actuated by the

purest intentions. But not the less on that account does any

gentleman, ambitious of the honour of serving his country in

Parliament, think it necessary as a preliminary measure to provide

a round sum of money at his banker's. A candidate must pay for no

treating, no refreshments, no band of music; he must give neither

ribbons to the girls nor ale to the men. If a huzza be uttered in

his favour, it is at his peril; it may be necessary for him to prove

before a committee that it was the spontaneous result of British

feeling in his favour, and not the purchased result of British beer.

He cannot safely ask any one to share his hotel dinner. Bribery hides

itself now in the most impalpable shapes, and may be effected by the

offer of a glass of sherry. But not the less on this account does a

poor man find that he is quite unable to overcome the difficulties of

a contested election.

We strain at our gnats with a vengeance, but we swallow our camels

with ease. For what purpose is it that we employ those peculiarly

safe men of business--Messrs Nearthewinde and Closerstil--when we

wish to win our path through all obstacles into that sacred recess,

if all be so open, all so easy, all so much above board? Alas! the

money is still necessary, is still prepared, or at any rate expended.

The poor candidate of course knows nothing of the matter till the

attorney's bill is laid before him, when all danger of petitions has

passed away. He little dreamed till then, not he, that there had been

banquetings and junketings, secret doings and deep drinkings at his

expense. Poor candidate! Poor member! Who was so ignorant as he!

'Tis true he has paid such bills before; but 'tis equally true that

he specially begged his managing friend, Mr Nearthewinde, to be

very careful that all was done according to law! He pays the bill,

however, and on the next election will again employ Mr Nearthewinde.

Now and again, at rare intervals, some glimpse into the inner

sanctuary does reach the eyes of ordinary mortal men without;

some slight accidental peep into those mysteries from whence

all corruption has been so thoroughly expelled; and then, how

delightfully refreshing is the sight, when, perhaps, some ex-member,

hurled from his paradise like a fallen peri, reveals the secret of

that pure heaven, and, in the agony of his despair, tells us all

that it cost him to sit for ---- through those few halcyon years!

But Mr Nearthewinde is a safe man, and easy to be employed with but

little danger. All these stringent bribery laws only enhance the

value of such very safe men as Mr Nearthewinde. To him, stringent

laws against bribery are the strongest assurance of valuable

employment. Were these laws of a nature to be evaded with ease, any

indifferent attorney might manage a candidate's affairs and enable

him to take his seat with security.

It would have been well for Sir Roger if he had trusted solely to

Mr Closerstil; well also for Mr Romer had he never fished in those

troubled waters. In due process of time the hearing of the petition

came on, and then who so happy, sitting at his ease at his London

Inn, blowing his cloud from a long pipe, with measureless content, as

Mr Reddypalm? Mr Reddypalm was the one great man of the contest. All

depended on Mr Reddypalm; and well he did his duty.

The result of the petition was declared by the committee to be as

follows:--that Sir Roger's election was null and void--that the

election altogether was null and void--that Sir Roger had, by his

agent, been guilty of bribery in obtaining a vote, by the payment

of a bill alleged to have been previously refused payment--that Sir

Roger himself knew nothing about it;--this is always a matter of

course;--but that Sir Roger's agent, Mr Romer, had been wittingly

guilty of bribery with reference to the transaction above described.

Poor Sir Roger! Poor Mr Romer.

Poor Mr Romer indeed! His fate was perhaps as sad as well might be,

and as foul a blot to the purism of these very pure times in which

we live. Not long after those days, it so happening that some

considerable amount of youthful energy and quidnunc ability were

required to set litigation afloat at Hong-Kong, Mr Romer was sent

thither as the fittest man for such work, with rich assurance of

future guerdon. Who so happy then as Mr Romer! But even among the

pure there is room for envy and detraction. Mr Romer had not yet

ceased to wonder at new worlds, as he skimmed among the islands of

that southern ocean, before the edict had gone forth for his return.

There were men sitting in that huge court of Parliament on whose

breasts it lay as an intolerable burden, that England should be

represented among the antipodes by one who had tampered with the

purity of the franchise. For them there was no rest till this great

disgrace should be wiped out and atoned for. Men they were of that

calibre, that the slightest reflection on them of such a stigma

seemed to themselves to blacken their own character. They could not

break bread with satisfaction till Mr Romer was recalled. He was

recalled, and of course ruined--and the minds of those just men were

then at peace.

To any honourable gentleman who really felt his brow suffused with

a patriotic blush, as he thought of his country dishonoured by Mr

Romer's presence at Hong-Kong--to any such gentleman, if any such

there were, let all honour be given, even though the intensity of his

purity may create amazement to our less finely organised souls. But

if no such blush suffused the brow of any honourable gentleman; if Mr

Romer was recalled from quite other feelings--what then in lieu of

honour shall we allot to those honourable gentlemen who were most

concerned?

Sir Roger, however, lost his seat, and, after three months of the

joys of legislation, found himself reduced by a terrible blow to the

low level of private life.

And the blow to him was very heavy. Men but seldom tell the truth of

what is in them, even to their dearest friends; they are ashamed of

having feelings, or rather of showing that they are troubled by any

intensity of feeling. It is the practice of the time to treat all

pursuits as though they were only half important to us, as though

in what we desire we were only half in earnest. To be visibly eager

seems childish, and is always bad policy; and men, therefore,

nowadays, though they strive as hard as ever in the service of

ambition--harder than ever in that of mammon--usually do so with

a pleasant smile on, as though after all they were but amusing

themselves with the little matter in hand.

Perhaps it had been so with Sir Roger in those electioneering days

when he was looking for votes. At any rate, he had spoken of his seat

in Parliament as but a doubtful good. "He was willing, indeed, to

stand, having been asked; but the thing would interfere wonderfully

with his business; and then, what did he know about Parliament?

Nothing on earth: it was the maddest scheme, but nevertheless, he was

not going to hang back when called upon--he had always been rough and

ready when wanted,--and there he was now ready as ever, and rough

enough too, God knows."

'Twas thus that he had spoken of his coming parliamentary honours;

and men had generally taken him at his word. He had been returned,

and this success had been hailed as a great thing for the cause and

class to which he belonged. But men did not know that his inner heart

was swelling with triumph, and that his bosom could hardly contain

his pride as he reflected that the poor Barchester stone-mason was

now the representative in Parliament of his native city. And so, when

his seat was attacked, he still laughed and joked. "They were welcome

to it for him," he said; "he could keep it or want it; and of the

two, perhaps, the want of it would come most convenient to him. He

did not exactly think that he had bribed any one; but if the bigwigs

chose to say so, it was all one to him. He was rough and ready, now

as ever," &c., &c.

But when the struggle came, it was to him a fearful one; not the

less fearful because there was no one, no, not one friend in all the

world, to whom he could open his mind and speak out honestly what

was in his heart. To Dr Thorne he might perhaps have done so had his

intercourse with the doctor been sufficiently frequent; but it was

only now and again when he was ill, or when the squire wanted to

borrow money, that he saw Dr Thorne. He had plenty of friends, heaps

of friends in the parliamentary sense; friends who talked about

him, and lauded him at public meetings; who shook hands with him on

platforms, and drank his health at dinners; but he had no friend

who could sit with him over his own hearth, in true friendship, and

listen to, and sympathise with, and moderate the sighings of the

inner man. For him there was no sympathy; no tenderness of love; no

retreat, save into himself, from the loud brass band of the outer

world.

The blow hit him terribly hard. It did not come altogether

unexpectedly, and yet, when it did come, it was all but unendurable.

He had made so much of the power of walking into that august chamber,

and sitting shoulder to shoulder in legislative equality with the

sons of dukes and the curled darlings of the nation. Money had given

him nothing, nothing but the mere feeling of brute power: with his

three hundred thousand pounds he had felt himself to be no more

palpably near to the goal of his ambition than when he had chipped

stones for three shillings and sixpence a day. But when he was led up

and introduced at that table, when he shook the old premier's hand

on the floor of the House of Commons, when he heard the honourable

member for Barchester alluded to in grave debate as the greatest

living authority on railway matters, then, indeed, he felt that he

had achieved something.

And now this cup was ravished from his lips, almost before it was

tasted. When he was first told as a certainty that the decision of

the committee was against him, he bore up against the misfortune like

a man. He laughed heartily, and declared himself well rid of a very

profitless profession; cut some little joke about Mr Moffat and his

thrashing, and left on those around him an impression that he was

a man so constituted, so strong in his own resolves, so steadily

pursuant of his own work, that no little contentions of this kind

could affect him. Men admired his easy laughter, as, shuffling his

half-crowns with both his hands in his trouser-pockets, he declared

that Messrs Romer and Reddypalm were the best friends he had known

for this many a day.

But not the less did he walk out from the room in which he was

standing a broken-hearted man. Hope could not buoy him up as she may

do other ex-members in similarly disagreeable circumstances. He could

not afford to look forward to what further favours parliamentary

future might have in store for him after a lapse of five or six

years. Five or six years! Why, his life was not worth four years'

purchase; of that he was perfectly aware: he could not now live

without the stimulus of brandy; and yet, while he took it, he knew he

was killing himself. Death he did not fear; but he would fain have

wished, after his life of labour, to have lived, while yet he could

live, in the blaze of that high world to which for a moment he had

attained.

He laughed loud and cheerily as he left his parliamentary friends,

and, putting himself into the train, went down to Boxall Hill. He

laughed loud and cheerily; but he never laughed again. It had not

been his habit to laugh much at Boxall Hill. It was there he kept his

wife, and Mr Winterbones, and the brandy bottle behind his pillow. He

had not often there found it necessary to assume that loud and cheery

laugh.

On this occasion he was apparently well in health when he got home;

but both Lady Scatcherd and Mr Winterbones found him more than

ordinarily cross. He made an affectation at sitting very hard to

business, and even talked of going abroad to look at some of his

foreign contracts. But even Winterbones found that his patron did not

work as he had been wont to do; and at last, with some misgivings, he

told Lady Scatcherd that he feared that everything was not right.

"He's always at it, my lady, always," said Mr Winterbones.

"Is he?" said Lady Scatcherd, well understanding what Mr

Winterbones's allusion meant.

"Always, my lady. I never saw nothing like it. Now, there's me--I can

always go my half-hour when I've had my drop; but he, why, he don't

go ten minutes, not now."

This was not cheerful to Lady Scatcherd; but what was the poor woman

to do? When she spoke to him on any subject he only snarled at her;

and now that the heavy fit was on him, she did not dare even to

mention the subject of his drinking. She had never known him so

savage in his humour as he was now, so bearish in his habits, so

little inclined to humanity, so determined to rush headlong down,

with his head between his legs, into the bottomless abyss.

She thought of sending for Dr Thorne; but she did not know under what

guise to send for him,--whether as doctor or as friend: under neither

would he now be welcome; and she well knew that Sir Roger was not the

man to accept in good part either a doctor or a friend who might be

unwelcome. She knew that this husband of hers, this man who, with

all his faults, was the best of her friends, whom of all she loved

best--she knew that he was killing himself, and yet she could do

nothing. Sir Roger was his own master, and if kill himself he would,

kill himself he must.

And kill himself he did. Not indeed by one sudden blow. He did not

take one huge dose of his consuming poison and then fall dead upon

the floor. It would perhaps have been better for himself, and better

for those around him, had he done so. No; the doctors had time to

congregate around his bed; Lady Scatcherd was allowed a period of

nurse-tending; the sick man was able to say his last few words and

bid adieu to his portion of the lower world with dying decency. As

these last words will have some lasting effect upon the surviving

personages of our story, the reader must be content to stand for a

short while by the side of Sir Roger's sick-bed, and help us to bid

him God-speed on the journey which lies before him.

CHAPTER XXIII

Retrospective

It was declared in the early pages of this work that Dr Thorne was to

be our hero; but it would appear very much as though he had latterly

been forgotten. Since that evening when he retired to rest without

letting Mary share the grievous weight which was on his mind, we have

neither seen nor heard aught of him.

It was then full midsummer, and it is now early spring: and during the

intervening months the doctor had not had a happy time of it. On that

night, as we have before told, he took his niece to his heart; but

he could not then bring himself to tell her that which it was so

imperative that she should know. Like a coward, he would put off

the evil hour till the next morning, and thus robbed himself of his

night's sleep.

But when the morning came the duty could not be postponed. Lady

Arabella had given him to understand that his niece would no longer

be a guest at Greshamsbury; and it was quite out of the question that

Mary, after this, should be allowed to put her foot within the gate

of the domain without having learnt what Lady Arabella had said. So

he told it her before breakfast, walking round their little garden,

she with her hand in his.

He was perfectly thunderstruck by the collected--nay, cool way in

which she received his tidings. She turned pale, indeed; he felt also

that her hand somewhat trembled in his own, and he perceived that

for a moment her voice shook; but no angry word escaped her lip, nor

did she even deign to repudiate the charge, which was, as it were,

conveyed in Lady Arabella's request. The doctor knew, or thought he

knew--nay, he did know--that Mary was wholly blameless in the matter:

that she had at least given no encouragement to any love on the part

of the young heir; but, nevertheless, he had expected that she would

avouch her own innocence. This, however, she by no means did.

"Lady Arabella is quite right," she said, "quite right; if she has

any fear of that kind, she cannot be too careful."

"She is a selfish, proud woman," said the doctor; "quite indifferent

to the feelings of others; quite careless how deeply she may hurt her

neighbours, if, in doing so, she may possibly benefit herself."

"She will not hurt me, uncle, nor yet you. I can live without going

to Greshamsbury."

"But it is not to be endured that she should dare to cast an

imputation on my darling."

"On me, uncle? She casts no imputation on me. Frank has been foolish:

I have said nothing of it, for it was not worth while to trouble you.

But as Lady Arabella chooses to interfere, I have no right to blame

her. He has said what he should not have said; he has been foolish.

Uncle, you know I could not prevent it."

"Let her send him away then, not you; let her banish him."

"Uncle, he is her son. A mother can hardly send her son away so

easily: could you send me away, uncle?"

He merely answered her by twining his arm round her waist and

pressing her to his side. He was well sure that she was badly

treated; and yet now that she so unaccountably took Lady Arabella's

part, he hardly knew how to make this out plainly to be the case.

"Besides, uncle, Greshamsbury is in a manner his own; how can he be

banished from his father's house? No, uncle; there is an end of my

visits there. They shall find that I will not thrust myself in their

way."

And then Mary, with a calm brow and steady gait, went in and made the

tea.

And what might be the feelings of her heart when she so sententiously

told her uncle that Frank had been foolish? She was of the same age

with him; as impressionable, though more powerful in hiding such

impressions,--as all women should be; her heart was as warm, her

blood as full of life, her innate desire for the companionship of

some much-loved object as strong as his. Frank had been foolish in

avowing his passion. No such folly as that could be laid at her door.

But had she been proof against the other folly? Had she been able to

walk heart-whole by his side, while he chatted his commonplaces about

love? Yes, they are commonplaces when we read of them in novels;

common enough, too, to some of us when we write them; but they are by

no means commonplace when first heard by a young girl in the rich,

balmy fragrance of a July evening stroll.

Nor are they commonplaces when so uttered for the first or second

time at least, or perhaps the third. 'Tis a pity that so heavenly a

pleasure should pall upon the senses.

If it was so that Frank's folly had been listened to with a certain

amount of pleasure, Mary did not even admit so much to herself. But

why should it have been otherwise? Why should she have been less

prone to love than he was? Had he not everything which girls do love?

which girls should love? which God created noble, beautiful, all but

godlike, in order that women, all but goddesslike, might love? To

love thoroughly, truly, heartily, with her whole body, soul, heart,

and strength; should not that be counted for a merit in a woman? And

yet we are wont to make a disgrace of it. We do so most unnaturally,

most unreasonably; for we expect our daughters to get themselves

married off our hands. When the period of that step comes, then love

is proper enough; but up to that--before that--as regards all those

preliminary passages which must, we suppose, be necessary--in all

those it becomes a young lady to be icy-hearted as a river-god in

winter.

O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad!

O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad!

Tho' father and mither and a' should go mad,

O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad!

This is the kind of love which a girl should feel before she puts her

hand proudly in that of her lover, and consents that they two shall

be made one flesh.

Mary felt no such love as this. She, too, had some inner perception

of that dread destiny by which it behoved Frank Gresham to be

forewarned. She, too--though she had never heard so much said in

words--had an almost instinctive knowledge that his fate required him

to marry money. Thinking over this in her own way, she was not slow

to convince herself that it was out of the question that she should

allow herself to love Frank Gresham. However well her heart might

be inclined to such a feeling, it was her duty to repress it. She

resolved, therefore, to do so; and she sometimes flattered herself

that she had kept her resolution.

These were bad times for the doctor, and bad times for Mary too. She

had declared that she could live without going to Greshamsbury; but

she did not find it so easy. She had been going to Greshamsbury all

her life, and it was as customary with her to be there as at home.

Such old customs are not broken without pain. Had she left the place

it would have been far different; but, as it was, she daily passed

the gates, daily saw and spoke to some of the servants, who knew her

as well as they did the young ladies of the family--was in hourly

contact, as it were, with Greshamsbury. It was not only that she

did not go there, but that everyone knew that she had suddenly

discontinued doing so. Yes, she could live without going to

Greshamsbury; but for some time she had but a poor life of it. She

felt, nay, almost heard, that every man and woman, boy and girl, in

the village was telling his and her neighbour that Mary Thorne no

longer went to the house because of Lady Arabella and the young

squire.

But Beatrice, of course, came to her. What was she to say to

Beatrice? The truth! Nay, but it is not always so easy to say the

truth, even to one's dearest friends.

"But you'll come up now he has gone?" said Beatrice.

"No, indeed," said Mary; "that would hardly be pleasant to Lady

Arabella, nor to me either. No, Trichy, dearest; my visits to dear

old Greshamsbury are done, done, done: perhaps in some twenty years'

time I may be walking down the lawn with your brother, and discussing

our childish days--that is, always, if the then Mrs Gresham shall

have invited me."

"How can Frank have been so wrong, so unkind, so cruel?" said

Beatrice.

This, however, was a light in which Miss Thorne did not take any

pleasure in discussing the matter. Her ideas of Frank's fault, and

unkindness, and cruelty, were doubtless different from those of his

sister. Such cruelty was not unnaturally excused in her eyes by many

circumstances which Beatrice did not fully understand. Mary was quite

ready to go hand in hand with Lady Arabella and the rest of the

Greshamsbury fold in putting an end, if possible, to Frank's passion:

she would give no one a right to accuse her of assisting to ruin the

young heir; but she could hardly bring herself to admit that he was

so very wrong--no, nor yet even so very cruel.

And then the squire came to see her, and this was a yet harder trial

than the visit of Beatrice. It was so difficult for her to speak to

him that she could not but wish him away; and yet, had he not come,

had he altogether neglected her, she would have felt it to be unkind.

She had ever been his pet, had always received kindness from him.

"I am sorry for all this, Mary; very sorry," said he, standing up,

and holding both her hands in his.

"It can't be helped, sir," said she, smiling.

"I don't know," said he; "I don't know--it ought to be helped

somehow--I am quite sure you have not been to blame."

"No," said she, very quietly, as though the position was one quite

a matter of course. "I don't think I have been very much to blame.

There will be misfortunes sometimes when nobody is to blame."

"I do not quite understand it all," said the squire; "but if Frank--"

"Oh! we will not talk about him," said she, still laughing gently.

"You can understand, Mary, how dear he must be to me; but if--"

"Mr Gresham, I would not for worlds be the cause of any

unpleasantness between you and him."

"But I cannot bear to think that we have banished you, Mary."

"It cannot be helped. Things will all come right in time."

"But you will be so lonely here."

"Oh! I shall get over all that. Here, you know, Mr Gresham, 'I am

monarch of all I survey;' and there is a great deal in that."

The squire did not quite catch her meaning, but a glimmering of it

did reach him. It was competent to Lady Arabella to banish her from

Greshamsbury; it was within the sphere of the squire's duties to

prohibit his son from an imprudent match; it was for the Greshams to

guard their Greshamsbury treasure as best they could within their

own territories: but let them beware that they did not attack her on

hers. In obedience to the first expression of their wishes, she had

submitted herself to this public mark of their disapproval because

she had seen at once, with her clear intellect, that they were only

doing that which her conscience must approve. Without a murmur,

therefore, she consented to be pointed at as the young lady who had

been turned out of Greshamsbury because of the young squire. She had

no help for it. But let them take care that they did not go beyond

that. Outside those Greshamsbury gates she and Frank Gresham, she

and Lady Arabella met on equal terms; let them each fight their own

battle.

The squire kissed her forehead affectionately and took his leave,

feeling, somehow, that he had been excused and pitied, and made much

of; whereas he had called on his young neighbour with the intention

of excusing, and pitying, and making much of her. He was not

quite comfortable as he left the house; but, nevertheless, he was

sufficiently honest-hearted to own to himself that Mary Thorne was a

fine girl. Only that it was so absolutely necessary that Frank should

marry money--and only, also, that poor Mary was such a birthless

foundling in the world's esteem--only, but for these things, what a

wife she would have made for that son of his!

To one person only did she talk freely on the subject, and that one

was Patience Oriel; and even with her the freedom was rather of the

mind than of the heart. She never said a word of her feeling with

reference to Frank, but she said much of her position in the village,

and of the necessity she was under to keep out of the way.

"It is very hard," said Patience, "that the offence should be all

with him, and the punishment all with you."

"Oh! as for that," said Mary, laughing, "I will not confess to any

offence, nor yet to any punishment; certainly not to any punishment."

"It comes to the same thing in the end."

"No, not so, Patience; there is always some little sting of disgrace

in punishment: now I am not going to hold myself in the least

disgraced."

"But, Mary, you must meet the Greshams sometimes."

"Meet them! I have not the slightest objection on earth to meet all,

or any of them. They are not a whit dangerous to me, my dear. 'Tis

I that am the wild beast, and 'tis they that must avoid me," and

then she added, after a pause--slightly blushing--"I have not the

slightest objection even to meet him if chance brings him in my way.

Let them look to that. My undertaking goes no further than this, that

I will not be seen within their gates."

But the girls so far understood each other that Patience undertook,

rather than promised, to give Mary what assistance she could; and,

despite Mary's bravado, she was in such a position that she much

wanted the assistance of such a friend as Miss Oriel.

After an absence of some six weeks, Frank, as we have seen, returned

home. Nothing was said to him, except by Beatrice, as to these new

Greshamsbury arrangements; and he, when he found Mary was not at the

place, went boldly to the doctor's house to seek her. But it has been

seen, also, that she discreetly kept out of his way. This she had

thought fit to do when the time came, although she had been so ready

with her boast that she had no objection on earth to meet him.

After that there had been the Christmas vacation, and Mary had again

found discretion to be the better part of valour. This was doubtless

disagreeable enough. She had no particular wish to spend her

Christmas with Miss Oriel's aunt instead of at her uncle's fireside.

Indeed, her Christmas festivities had hitherto been kept at

Greshamsbury, the doctor and herself having made a part of the family

circle there assembled. This was out of the question now; and perhaps

the absolute change to old Miss Oriel's house was better for her than

the lesser change to her uncle's drawing-room. Besides, how could she

have demeaned herself when she met Frank in their parish church? All

this had been fully understood by Patience, and, therefore, had this

Christmas visit been planned.

And then this affair of Frank and Mary Thorne ceased for a while to

be talked of at Greshamsbury, for that other affair of Mr Moffat and

Augusta monopolised the rural attention. Augusta, as we have said,

bore it well, and sustained the public gaze without much flinching.

Her period of martyrdom, however, did not last long, for soon

the news arrived of Frank's exploit in Pall Mall; and then the

Greshamsburyites forgot to think much more of Augusta, being fully

occupied in thinking of what Frank had done.

The tale, as it was first told, declared that Frank had followed Mr

Moffat up into his club; had dragged him thence into the middle of

Pall Mall, and had then slaughtered him on the spot. This was by

degrees modified till a sobered fiction became generally prevalent,

that Mr Moffat was lying somewhere, still alive, but with all his

bones in a general state of compound fracture. This adventure again

brought Frank into the ascendant, and restored to Mary her former

position as the Greshamsbury heroine.

"One cannot wonder at his being very angry," said Beatrice,

discussing the matter with Mary--very imprudently.

"Wonder--no; the wonder would have been if he had not been angry. One

might have been quite sure that he would have been angry enough."

"I suppose it was not absolutely right for him to beat Mr Moffat,"

said Beatrice, apologetically.

"Not right, Trichy? I think he was very right."

"Not to beat him so very much, Mary!"

"Oh, I suppose a man can't exactly stand measuring how much he does

these things. I like your brother for what he has done, and I say

so frankly--though I suppose I ought to eat my tongue out before I

should say such a thing, eh, Trichy?"

"I don't know that there's any harm in that," said Beatrice,

demurely. "If you both liked each other there would be no harm in

that--if that were all."

"Wouldn't there?" said Mary, in a low tone of bantering satire; "that

is so kind, Trichy, coming from you--from one of the family, you

know."

"You are well aware, Mary, that if I could have my wishes--"

"Yes: I am well aware what a paragon of goodness you are. If you

could have your way I should be admitted into heaven again; shouldn't

I? Only with this proviso, that if a stray angel should ever whisper

to me with bated breath, mistaking me, perchance, for one of his own

class, I should be bound to close my ears to his whispering, and

remind him humbly that I was only a poor mortal. You would trust me

so far, wouldn't you, Trichy?"

"I would trust you in any way, Mary. But I think you are unkind in

saying such things to me."

"Into whatever heaven I am admitted, I will go only on this

understanding: that I am to be as good an angel as any of those

around me."

"But, Mary dear, why do you say this to me?"

"Because--because--because--ah me! Why, indeed, but because I have no

one else to say it to. Certainly not because you have deserved it."

"It seems as though you were finding fault with me."

"And so I am; how can I do other than find fault? How can I help

being sore? Trichy, you hardly realise my position; you hardly see

how I am treated; how I am forced to allow myself to be treated

without a sign of complaint. You don't see it all. If you did, you

would not wonder that I should be sore."

Beatrice did not quite see it all; but she saw enough of it to know

that Mary was to be pitied; so, instead of scolding her friend

for being cross, she threw her arms round her and kissed her

affectionately.

But the doctor all this time suffered much more than his niece did.

He could not complain out loudly; he could not aver that his pet lamb

had been ill treated; he could not even have the pleasure of openly

quarrelling with Lady Arabella; but not the less did he feel it to

be most cruel that Mary should have to live before the world as an

outcast, because it had pleased Frank Gresham to fall in love with

her.

But his bitterness was not chiefly against Frank. That Frank had been

very foolish he could not but acknowledge; but it was a kind of folly

for which the doctor was able to find excuse. For Lady Arabella's

cold propriety he could find no excuse.

With the squire he had spoken no word on the subject up to this

period of which we are now writing. With her ladyship he had never

spoken on it since that day when she had told him that Mary was

to come no more to Greshamsbury. He never now dined or spent his

evenings at Greshamsbury, and seldom was to be seen at the house,

except when called in professionally. The squire, indeed, he

frequently met; but he either did so in the village, or out on

horseback, or at his own house.

When the doctor first heard that Sir Roger had lost his seat, and had

returned to Boxall Hill, he resolved to go over and see him. But the

visit was postponed from day to day, as visits are postponed which

may be made any day, and he did not in fact go till he was summoned

there somewhat peremptorily. A message was brought to him one evening

to say that Sir Roger had been struck by paralysis, and that not a

moment was to be lost.

"It always happens at night," said Mary, who had more sympathy for

the living uncle whom she did know, than for the other dying uncle

whom she did not know.

"What matters?--there--just give me my scarf. In all probability I

may not be home to-night--perhaps not till late to-morrow. God bless

you, Mary!" and away the doctor went on his cold bleak ride to Boxall

Hill.

"Who will be his heir?" As the doctor rode along, he could not quite

rid his mind of this question. The poor man now about to die had

wealth enough to make many heirs. What if his heart should have

softened towards his sister's child! What if Mary should be found in

a few days to be possessed of such wealth that the Greshams should be

again be happy to welcome her at Greshamsbury!

The doctor was not a lover of money--and he did his best to get rid

of such pernicious thoughts. But his longings, perhaps, were not so

much that Mary should be rich, as that she should have the power of

heaping coals of fire upon the heads of those people who had so

injured her.

CHAPTER XXIV

Louis Scatcherd

When Dr Thorne reached Boxall Hill he found Mr Rerechild from

Barchester there before him. Poor Lady Scatcherd, when her husband

was stricken by the fit, hardly knew in her dismay what adequate

steps to take. She had, as a matter of course, sent for Dr Thorne;

but she had thought that in so grave a peril the medical skill of no

one man could suffice. It was, she knew, quite out of the question

for her to invoke the aid of Dr Fillgrave, whom no earthly persuasion

would have brought to Boxall Hill; and as Mr Rerechild was supposed

in the Barchester world to be second--though at a long interval--to

that great man, she had applied for his assistance.

Now Mr Rerechild was a follower and humble friend of Dr Fillgrave;

and was wont to regard anything that came from the Barchester doctor

as sure light from the lamp of Ãsculapius. He could not therefore be

other than an enemy of Dr Thorne. But he was a prudent, discreet man,

with a long family, averse to professional hostilities, as knowing

that he could make more by medical friends than medical foes, and

not at all inclined to take up any man's cudgel to his own detriment.

He had, of course, heard of that dreadful affront which had been

put upon his friend, as had all the "medical world"--all the

medical world at least of Barsetshire; and he had often expressed

his sympathy with Dr Fillgrave and his abhorrence of Dr Thorne's

anti-professional practices. But now that he found himself about to

be brought in contact with Dr Thorne, he reflected that the Galen

of Greshamsbury was at any rate equal in reputation to him of

Barchester; that the one was probably on the rise, whereas the other

was already considered by some as rather antiquated; and he therefore

wisely resolved that the present would be an excellent opportunity

for him to make a friend of Dr Thorne.

Poor Lady Scatcherd had an inkling that Dr Fillgrave and Mr Rerechild

were accustomed to row in the same boat, and she was not altogether

free from fear that there might be an outbreak. She therefore took

an opportunity before Dr Thorne's arrival to deprecate any wrathful

tendency.

"Oh, Lady Scatcherd! I have the greatest respect for Dr Thorne,"

said he; "the greatest possible respect; a most skilful

practitioner--something brusque certainly, and perhaps a little

obstinate. But what then? we all have our faults, Lady Scatcherd."

"Oh--yes; we all have, Mr Rerechild; that's certain."

"There's my friend Fillgrave--Lady Scatcherd. He cannot bear anything

of that sort. Now I think he's wrong; and so I tell him." Mr

Rerechild was in error here; for he had never yet ventured to tell Dr

Fillgrave that he was wrong in anything. "We must bear and forbear,

you know. Dr Thorne is an excellent man--in his way very excellent,

Lady Scatcherd."

This little conversation took place after Mr Rerechild's first visit

to his patient: what steps were immediately taken for the relief of

the sufferer we need not describe. They were doubtless well intended,

and were, perhaps, as well adapted to stave off the coming evil day

as any that Dr Fillgrave, or even the great Sir Omicron Pie might

have used.

And then Dr Thorne arrived.

"Oh, doctor! doctor!" exclaimed Lady Scatcherd, almost hanging round

his neck in the hall. "What are we to do? What are we to do? He's

very bad."

"Has he spoken?"

"No; nothing like a word: he has made one or two muttered sounds;

but, poor soul, you could make nothing of it--oh, doctor! doctor! he

has never been like this before."

It was easy to see where Lady Scatcherd placed any such faith as she

might still have in the healing art. "Mr Rerechild is here and has

seen him," she continued. "I thought it best to send for two, for

fear of accidents. He has done something--I don't know what. But,

doctor, do tell the truth now; I look to you to tell me the truth."

Dr Thorne then went up and saw his patient; and had he literally

complied with Lady Scatcherd's request, he might have told her at

once that there was no hope. As, however, he had not the heart to do

this, he mystified the case as doctors so well know how to do, and

told her that "there was cause to fear, great cause for fear; he was

sorry to say, very great cause for much fear."

Dr Thorne promised to stay the night there, and, if possible, the

following night also; and then Lady Scatcherd became troubled in her

mind as to what she should do with Mr Rerechild. He also declared,

with much medical humanity, that, let the inconvenience be what it

might, he too would stay the night. "The loss," he said, "of such a

man as Sir Roger Scatcherd was of such paramount importance as to

make other matters trivial. He would certainly not allow the whole

weight to fall on the shoulders of his friend Dr Thorne: he also

would stay at any rate that night by the sick man's bedside. By the

following morning some change might be expected."

"I say, Dr Thorne," said her ladyship, calling the doctor into the

housekeeping-room, in which she and Hannah spent any time that they

were not required upstairs; "just come in, doctor: you couldn't tell

him we don't want him any more, could you?"

"Tell whom?" said the doctor.

"Why--Mr Rerechild: mightn't he go away, do you think?"

Dr Thorne explained that Mr Rerechild certainly might go away if he

pleased; but that it would by no means be proper for one doctor to

tell another to leave the house. And so Mr Rerechild was allowed to

share the glories of the night.

In the meantime the patient remained speechless; but it soon became

evident that Nature was using all her efforts to make one final

rally. From time to time he moaned and muttered as though he was

conscious, and it seemed as though he strove to speak. He gradually

became awake, at any rate to suffering, and Dr Thorne began to think

that the last scene would be postponed for yet a while longer.

"Wonderful strong constitution--eh, Dr Thorne? wonderful!" said Mr

Rerechild.

"Yes; he has been a strong man."

"Strong as a horse, Dr Thorne. Lord, what that man would have been if

he had given himself a chance! You know his constitution of course."

"Yes; pretty well. I've attended him for many years."

"Always drinking, I suppose; always at it--eh?"

"He has not been a temperate man, certainly."

"The brain, you see, clean gone--and not a particle of coating left

to the stomach; and yet what a struggle he makes--an interesting

case, isn't it?"

"It's very sad to see such an intellect so destroyed."

"Very sad, very sad indeed. How Fillgrave would have liked to have

seen this case. He is a clever man, is Fillgrave--in his way, you

know."

"I'm sure he is," said Dr Thorne.

"Not that he'd make anything of a case like this now--he's not, you

know, quite--quite--perhaps not quite up to the new time of day, if

one may say so."

"He has had a very extensive provincial practice," said Dr Thorne.

"Oh, very--very; and made a tidy lot of money too, has Fillgrave.

He's worth six thousand pounds, I suppose; now that's a good deal of

money to put by in a little town like Barchester."

"Yes, indeed."

"What I say to Fillgrave is this--keep your eyes open; one should

never be too old to learn--there's always something new worth picking

up. But, no--he won't believe that. He can't believe that any new

ideas can be worth anything. You know a man must go to the wall in

that way--eh, doctor?"

And then again they were called to their patient. "He's doing finely,

finely," said Mr Rerechild to Lady Scatcherd. "There's fair ground to

hope he'll rally; fair ground, is there not, doctor?"

"Yes; he'll rally; but how long that may last, that we can hardly

say."

"Oh, no, certainly not, certainly not--that is not with any

certainty; but still he's doing finely, Lady Scatcherd, considering

everything."

"How long will you give him, doctor?" said Mr Rerechild to his new

friend, when they were again alone. "Ten days? I dare say ten days,

or from that to a fortnight, not more; but I think he'll struggle on

ten days."

"Perhaps so," said the doctor. "I should not like to say exactly to

a day."

"No, certainly not. We cannot say exactly to a day; but I say ten

days; as for anything like a recovery, that you know--"

"Is out of the question," said Dr Thorne, gravely.

"Quite so; quite so; coating of the stomach clean gone, you know;

brain destroyed: did you observe the periporollida? I never saw

them so swelled before: now when the periporollida are swollen like

that--"

"Yes, very much; it's always the case when paralysis has been brought

about by intemperance."

"Always, always; I have remarked that always; the periporollida in

such cases are always extended; most interesting case, isn't it? I do

wish Fillgrave could have seen it. But, I believe you and Fillgrave

don't quite--eh?"

"No, not quite," said Dr Thorne; who, as he thought of his last

interview with Dr Fillgrave, and of that gentleman's exceeding anger

as he stood in the hall below, could not keep himself from smiling,

sad as the occasion was.

Nothing would induce Lady Scatcherd to go to bed; but the two doctors

agreed to lie down, each in a room on one side of the patient. How

was it possible that anything but good should come to him, being so

guarded? "He is going on finely, Lady Scatcherd, quite finely," were

the last words Mr Rerechild said as he left the room.

And then Dr Thorne, taking Lady Scatcherd's hand and leading her out

into another chamber, told her the truth.

"Lady Scatcherd," said he, in his tenderest voice--and his voice

could be very tender when occasion required it--"Lady Scatcherd, do

not hope; you must not hope; it would be cruel to bid you do so."

"Oh, doctor! oh, doctor!"

"My dear friend, there is no hope."

"Oh, Dr Thorne!" said the wife, looking wildly up into her

companion's face, though she hardly yet realised the meaning of what

he said, although her senses were half stunned by the blow.

"Dear Lady Scatcherd, is it not better that I should tell you the

truth?"

"Oh, I suppose so; oh yes, oh yes; ah me! ah me! ah me!" And then she

began rocking herself backwards and forwards on her chair, with her

apron up to her eyes. "What shall I do? what shall I do?"

"Look to Him, Lady Scatcherd, who only can make such grief

endurable."

"Yes, yes, yes; I suppose so. Ah me! ah me! But, Dr Thorne, there

must be some chance--isn't there any chance? That man says he's going

on so well."

"I fear there is no chance--as far as my knowledge goes there is no

chance."

"Then why does that chattering magpie tell such lies to a woman? Ah

me! ah me! ah me! oh, doctor! doctor! what shall I do? what shall I

do?" and poor Lady Scatcherd, fairly overcome by her sorrow, burst

out crying like a great school-girl.

And yet what had her husband done for her that she should thus weep

for him? Would not her life be much more blessed when this cause of

all her troubles should be removed from her? Would she not then be a

free woman instead of a slave? Might she not then expect to begin to

taste the comforts of life? What had that harsh tyrant of hers done

that was good or serviceable for her? Why should she thus weep for

him in paroxysms of truest grief?

We hear a good deal of jolly widows; and the slanderous raillery of

the world tells much of conjugal disturbances as a cure for which

women will look forward to a state of widowhood with not unwilling

eyes. The raillery of the world is very slanderous. In our daily

jests we attribute to each other vices of which neither we, nor our

neighbours, nor our friends, nor even our enemies are ever guilty.

It is our favourite parlance to talk of the family troubles of Mrs

Green on our right, and to tell how Mrs Young on our left is strongly

suspected of having raised her hand to her lord and master. What

right have we to make these charges? What have we seen in our own

personal walks through life to make us believe that women are devils?

There may possibly have been a Xantippe here and there, but Imogenes

are to be found under every bush. Lady Scatcherd, in spite of the

life she had led, was one of them.

"You should send a message up to London for Louis," said the doctor.

"We did that, doctor; we did that to-day--we sent up a telegraph. Oh

me! oh me! poor boy, what will he do? I shall never know what to do

with him, never! never!" And with such sorrowful wailings she sat

rocking herself through the long night, every now and then comforting

herself by the performance of some menial service in the sick man's

room.

Sir Roger passed the night much as he had passed the day, except

that he appeared gradually to be growing nearer to a state of

consciousness. On the following morning they succeeded at last in

making Mr Rerechild understand that they were not desirous of keeping

him longer from his Barchester practice; and at about twelve o'clock

Dr Thorne also went, promising that he would return in the evening,

and again pass the night at Boxall Hill.

In the course of the afternoon Sir Roger once more awoke to his

senses, and when he did so his son was standing at his bedside. Louis

Philippe Scatcherd--or as it may be more convenient to call him,

Louis--was a young man just of the age of Frank Gresham. But there

could hardly be two youths more different in their appearance. Louis,

though his father and mother were both robust persons, was short and

slight, and now of a sickly frame. Frank was a picture of health

and strength; but, though manly in disposition, was by no means

precocious either in appearance or manners. Louis Scatcherd looked

as though he was four years the other's senior. He had been sent to

Eton when he was fifteen, his father being under the impression that

this was the most ready and best-recognised method of making him a

gentleman. Here he did not altogether fail as regarded the coveted

object of his becoming the companion of gentlemen. He had more

pocket-money than any other lad in the school, and was possessed also

of a certain effrontery which carried him ahead among boys of his own

age. He gained, therefore, a degree of Ã©clat, even among those who

knew, and very frequently said to each other, that young Scatcherd

was not fit to be their companion except on such open occasions as

those of cricket-matches and boat-races. Boys, in this respect, are

at least as exclusive as men, and understand as well the difference

between an inner and an outer circle. Scatcherd had many companions

at school who were glad enough to go up to Maidenhead with him in his

boat; but there was not one among them who would have talked to him

of his sister.

Sir Roger was vastly proud of his son's success, and did his best

to stimulate it by lavish expenditure at the Christopher, whenever

he could manage to run down to Eton. But this practice, though

sufficiently unexceptionable to the boys, was not held in equal

delight by the masters. To tell the truth, neither Sir Roger nor his

son were favourites with these stern custodians. At last it was felt

necessary to get rid of them both; and Louis was not long in giving

them an opportunity, by getting tipsy twice in one week. On the

second occasion he was sent away, and he and Sir Roger, though long

talked of, were seen no more at Eton.

But the universities were still open to Louis Philippe, and before he

was eighteen he was entered as a gentleman-commoner at Trinity. As he

was, moreover, the eldest son of a baronet, and had almost unlimited

command of money, here also he was enabled for a while to shine.

To shine! but very fitfully; and one may say almost with a ghastly

glare. The very lads who had eaten his father's dinners at Eton, and

shared his four-oar at Eton, knew much better than to associate with

him at Cambridge now that they had put on the \_toga virilis\_. They

were still as prone as ever to fun, frolic, and devilry--perhaps more

so than ever, seeing that more was in their power; but they acquired

an idea that it behoved them to be somewhat circumspect as to the men

with whom their pranks were perpetrated. So, in those days, Louis

Scatcherd was coldly looked on by his whilom Eton friends.

But young Scatcherd did not fail to find companions at Cambridge

also. There are few places indeed in which a rich man cannot buy

companionship. But the set with whom he lived at Cambridge were the

worst of the place. They were fast, slang men, who were fast and

slang, and nothing else--men who imitated grooms in more than their

dress, and who looked on the customary heroes of race-courses as the

highest lords of the ascendant upon earth. Among those at college

young Scatcherd did shine as long as such lustre was permitted him.

Here, indeed, his father, who had striven only to encourage him at

Eton, did strive somewhat to control him. But that was not now easy.

If he limited his son's allowance, he only drove him to do his

debauchery on credit. There were plenty to lend money to the son of

the great millionaire; and so, after eighteen months' trial of a

university education, Sir Roger had no alternative but to withdraw

his son from his \_alma mater\_.

What was he then to do with him? Unluckily it was considered quite

unnecessary to take any steps towards enabling him to earn his

bread. Now nothing on earth can be more difficult than bringing up

well a young man who has not to earn his own bread, and who has no

recognised station among other men similarly circumstanced. Juvenile

dukes, and sprouting earls, find their duties and their places as

easily as embryo clergymen and sucking barristers. Provision is

made for their peculiar positions: and, though they may possibly go

astray, they have a fair chance given to them of running within the

posts. The same may be said of such youths as Frank Gresham. There

are enough of them in the community to have made it necessary that

their well-being should be a matter of care and forethought. But

there are but few men turned out in the world in the position of

Louis Scatcherd; and, of those few, but very few enter the real

battle of life under good auspices.

Poor Sir Roger, though he had hardly time with all his multitudinous

railways to look into this thoroughly, had a glimmering of it. When

he saw his son's pale face, and paid his wine bills, and heard of his

doings in horse-flesh, he did know that things were not going well;

he did understand that the heir to a baronetcy and a fortune of some

ten thousand a year might be doing better. But what was he to do? He

could not watch over his boy himself; so he took a tutor for him and

sent him abroad.

Louis and the tutor got as far as Berlin, with what mutual

satisfaction to each other need not be specially described. But from

Berlin Sir Roger received a letter in which the tutor declined to go

any further in the task which he had undertaken. He found that he

had no influence over his pupil, and he could not reconcile it to

his conscience to be the spectator of such a life as that which Mr

Scatcherd led. He had no power in inducing Mr Scatcherd to leave

Berlin; but he would remain there himself till he should hear from

Sir Roger. So Sir Roger had to leave the huge Government works which

he was then erecting on the southern coast, and hurry off to Berlin

to see what could be done with young Hopeful.

The young Hopeful was by no means a fool; and in some matters was

more than a match for his father. Sir Roger, in his anger, threatened

to cast him off without a shilling. Louis, with mixed penitence and

effrontery, reminded him that he could not change the descent of the

title; promised amendment; declared that he had done only as do other

young men of fortune; and hinted that the tutor was a strait-laced

ass. The father and the son returned together to Boxall Hill, and

three months afterwards Mr Scatcherd set up for himself in London.

And now his life, if not more virtuous, was more crafty than it had

been. He had no tutor to watch his doings and complain of them, and

he had sufficient sense to keep himself from absolute pecuniary ruin.

He lived, it is true, where sharpers and blacklegs had too often

opportunities of plucking him; but, young as he was, he had been

sufficiently long about the world to take care he was not openly

robbed; and as he was not openly robbed, his father, in a certain

sense, was proud of him.

Tidings, however, came--came at least in those last days--which cut

Sir Roger to the quick; tidings of vice in the son which the father

could not but attribute to his own example. Twice the mother was

called up to the sick-bed of her only child, while he lay raving in

that horrid madness by which the outraged mind avenges itself on the

body! Twice he was found raging in delirium tremens, and twice the

father was told that a continuance of such life must end in an early

death.

It may easily be conceived that Sir Roger was not a happy man. Lying

there with that brandy bottle beneath his pillow, reflecting in his

moments of rest that that son of his had his brandy bottle beneath

his pillow, he could hardly have been happy. But he was not a man to

say much about his misery. Though he could restrain neither himself

nor his heir, he could endure in silence; and in silence he did

endure, till, opening his eyes to the consciousness of death, he at

last spoke a few words to the only friend he knew.

Louis Scatcherd was not a fool, nor was he naturally, perhaps, of a

depraved disposition; but he had to reap the fruits of the worst

education which England was able to give him. There were moments in

his life when he felt that a better, a higher, nay, a much happier

career was open to him than that which he had prepared himself to

lead. Now and then he would reflect what money and rank might have

done for him; he would look with wishful eyes to the proud doings of

others of his age; would dream of quiet joys, of a sweet wife, of a

house to which might be asked friends who were neither jockeys nor

drunkards; he would dream of such things in his short intervals of

constrained sobriety; but the dream would only serve to make him

moody.

This was the best side of his character; the worst, probably, was

that which was brought into play by the fact that he was not a fool.

He would have a better chance of redemption in this world--perhaps

also in another--had he been a fool. As it was, he was no fool: he

was not to be done, not he; he knew, no one better, the value of

a shilling; he knew, also, how to keep his shillings, and how to

spend them. He consorted much with blacklegs and such-like, because

blacklegs were to his taste. But he boasted daily, nay, hourly to

himself, and frequently to those around him, that the leeches who

were stuck round him could draw but little blood from him. He could

spend his money freely; but he would so spend it that he himself

might reap the gratification of the expenditure. He was acute,

crafty, knowing, and up to every damnable dodge practised by men of

the class with whom he lived. At one-and-twenty he was that most

odious of all odious characters--a close-fisted reprobate.

He was a small man, not ill-made by Nature, but reduced to unnatural

tenuity by dissipation--a corporeal attribute of which he was apt

to boast, as it enabled him, as he said, to put himself up at 7 st.

7 lb. without any "d---- nonsense of not eating and drinking." The

power, however, was one of which he did not often avail himself, as

his nerves were seldom in a fit state for riding. His hair was dark

red, and he wore red moustaches, and a great deal of red beard

beneath his chin, cut in a manner to make him look like an American.

His voice also had a Yankee twang, being a cross between that of an

American trader and an English groom; and his eyes were keen and

fixed, and cold and knowing.

Such was the son whom Sir Roger saw standing at his bedside when

first he awoke to consciousness. It must not be supposed that Sir

Roger looked at him with our eyes. To him he was an only child,

the heir of his wealth, the future bearer of his title; the most

heart-stirring remembrancer of those other days, when he had been

so much a poorer, and so much a happier man. Let that boy be bad

or good, he was all Sir Roger had; and the father was still able

to hope, when others thought that all ground for hope was gone.

The mother also loved her son with a mother's natural love; but Louis

had ever been ashamed of his mother, and had, as far as possible,

estranged himself from her. Her heart, perhaps, fixed itself

with almost a warmer love on Frank Gresham, her foster-son. Frank

she saw but seldom, but when she did see him he never refused her

embrace. There was, too, a joyous, genial lustre about Frank's face

which always endeared him to women, and made his former nurse regard

him as the pet creation of the age. Though she but seldom interfered

with any monetary arrangement of her husband's, yet once or twice she

had ventured to hint that a legacy left to the young squire would

make her a happy woman. Sir Roger, however, on these occasions had

not appeared very desirous of making his wife happy.

"Ah, Louis! is that you?" ejaculated Sir Roger, in tones hardly more

than half-formed: afterwards, in a day or two that is, he fully

recovered his voice; but just then he could hardly open his jaws, and

spoke almost through his teeth. He managed, however, to put out his

hand and lay it on the counterpane, so that his son could take it.

"Why, that's well, governor," said the son; "you'll be as right as a

trivet in a day or two--eh, governor?"

The "governor" smiled with a ghastly smile. He already pretty well

knew that he would never again be "right," as his son called it, on

that side of the grave. It did not, moreover, suit him to say much

just at that moment, so he contented himself with holding his son's

hand. He lay still in this position for a moment, and then, turning

round painfully on his side, endeavoured to put his hand to the place

where his dire enemy usually was concealed. Sir Roger, however, was

too weak now to be his own master; he was at length, though too late,

a captive in the hands of nurses and doctors, and the bottle had now

been removed.

Then Lady Scatcherd came in, and seeing that her husband was no

longer unconscious, she could not but believe that Dr Thorne had been

wrong; she could not but think that there must be some ground for

hope. She threw herself on her knees at the bedside, bursting into

tears as she did so, and taking Sir Roger's hand in hers covered it

with kisses.

"Bother!" said Sir Roger.

She did not, however, long occupy herself with the indulgence of her

feelings; but going speedily to work, produced such sustenance as

the doctors had ordered to be given when the patient might awake. A

breakfast-cup was brought to him, and a few drops were put into his

mouth; but he soon made it manifest that he would take nothing more

of a description so perfectly innocent.

"A drop of brandy--just a little drop," said he, half-ordering, and

half-entreating.

"Ah, Roger!" said Lady Scatcherd.

"Just a little drop, Louis," said the sick man, appealing to his son.

"A little will be good for him; bring the bottle, mother," said the

son.

After some altercation the brandy bottle was brought, and Louis, with

what he thought a very sparing hand, proceeded to pour about half a

wine-glassful into the cup. As he did so, Sir Roger, weak as he was,

contrived to shake his son's arm, so as greatly to increase the dose.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the sick man, and then greedily swallowed the

dose.

CHAPTER XXV

Sir Roger Dies

That night the doctor stayed at Boxall Hill, and the next night;

so that it became a customary thing for him to sleep there during

the latter part of Sir Roger's illness. He returned home daily to

Greshamsbury; for he had his patients there, to whom he was as

necessary as to Sir Roger, the foremost of whom was Lady Arabella. He

had, therefore, no slight work on his hands, seeing that his nights

were by no means wholly devoted to rest.

Mr Rerechild had not been much wrong as to the remaining space of

life which he had allotted to the dying man. Once or twice Dr Thorne

had thought that the great original strength of his patient would

have enabled him to fight against death for a somewhat longer period;

but Sir Roger would give himself no chance. Whenever he was strong

enough to have a will of his own, he insisted on having his very

medicine mixed with brandy; and in the hours of the doctor's absence,

he was too often successful in his attempts.

"It does not much matter," Dr Thorne had said to Lady Scatcherd. "Do

what you can to keep down the quantity, but do not irritate him by

refusing to obey. It does not much signify now." So Lady Scatcherd

still administered the alcohol, and he from day to day invented

little schemes for increasing the amount, over which he chuckled with

ghastly laughter.

Two or three times during these days Sir Roger essayed to speak

seriously to his son; but Louis always frustrated him. He either got

out of the room on some excuse, or made his mother interfere on the

score that so much talking would be bad for his father. He already

knew with tolerable accuracy what was the purport of his father's

will, and by no means approved of it; but as he could not now hope

to induce his father to alter it so as to make it more favourable to

himself, he conceived that no conversation on matters of business

could be of use to him.

"Louis," said Sir Roger, one afternoon to his son; "Louis, I have not

done by you as I ought to have done--I know that now."

"Nonsense, governor; never mind about that now; I shall do well

enough, I dare say. Besides, it isn't too late; you can make it

twenty-three years instead of twenty-five, if you like it."

"I do not mean as to money, Louis. There are things besides money

which a father ought to look to."

"Now, father, don't fret yourself--I'm all right; you may be sure of

that."

"Louis, it's that accursed brandy--it's that that I'm afraid of: you

see me here, my boy, how I'm lying here now."

"Don't you be annoying yourself, governor; I'm all right--quite

right; and as for you, why, you'll be up and about yourself in

another month or so."

"I shall never be off this bed, my boy, till I'm carried into my

coffin, on those chairs there. But I'm not thinking of myself, Louis,

but you; think what you may have before you if you can't avoid that

accursed bottle."

"I'm all right, governor; right as a trivet. It's very little I take,

except at an odd time or so."

"Oh, Louis! Louis!"

"Come, father, cheer up; this sort of thing isn't the thing for you

at all. I wonder where mother is: she ought to be here with the

broth; just let me go, and I'll see for her."

The father understood it all. He saw that it was now much beyond his

faded powers to touch the heart or conscience of such a youth as his

son had become. What now could he do for his boy except die? What

else, what other benefit, did his son require of him but to die; to

die so that his means of dissipation might be unbounded? He let go

the unresisting hand which he held, and, as the young man crept out

of the room, he turned his face to the wall. He turned his face to

the wall and held bitter commune with his own heart. To what had he

brought himself? To what had he brought his son? Oh, how happy would

it have been for him could he have remained all his days a working

stone-mason in Barchester! How happy could he have died as such,

years ago! Such tears as those which wet that pillow are the

bitterest which human eyes can shed.

But while they were dropping, the memoir of his life was in quick

course of preparation. It was, indeed, nearly completed, with

considerable detail. He had lingered on four days longer than might

have been expected, and the author had thus had more than usual time

for the work. In these days a man is nobody unless his biography

is kept so far posted up that it may be ready for the national

breakfast-table on the morning after his demise. When it chances that

the dead hero is one who was taken in his prime of life, of whose

departure from among us the most far-seeing biographical scribe can

have no prophetic inkling, this must be difficult. Of great men, full

of years, who are ripe for the sickle, who in the course of Nature

must soon fall, it is of course comparatively easy for an active

compiler to have his complete memoir ready in his desk. But in order

that the idea of omnipresent and omniscient information may be kept

up, the young must be chronicled as quickly as the old. In some cases

this task must, one would say, be difficult. Nevertheless, it is

done.

The memoir of Sir Roger Scatcherd was progressing favourably. In

this it was told how fortunate had been his life; how, in his case,

industry and genius combined had triumphed over the difficulties

which humble birth and deficient education had thrown in his way;

how he had made a name among England's great men; how the Queen had

delighted to honour him, and nobles had been proud to have him for a

guest at their mansions. Then followed a list of all the great works

which he had achieved, of the railroads, canals, docks, harbours,

jails, and hospitals which he had constructed. His name was held up

as an example to the labouring classes of his countrymen, and he was

pointed at as one who had lived and died happy--ever happy, said the

biographer, because ever industrious. And so a great moral question

was inculcated. A short paragraph was devoted to his appearance in

Parliament; and unfortunate Mr Romer was again held up for disgrace,

for the thirtieth time, as having been the means of depriving

our legislative councils of the great assistance of Sir Roger's

experience.

"Sir Roger," said the biographer in his concluding passage, "was

possessed of an iron frame; but even iron will yield to the repeated

blows of the hammer. In the latter years of his life he was known to

overtask himself; and at length the body gave way, though the mind

remained firm to the \_last\_. The subject of this memoir was only

fifty-nine when he was taken from us."

And thus Sir Roger's life was written, while the tears were

yet falling on his pillow at Boxall Hill. It was a pity that a

proof-sheet could not have been sent to him. No man was vainer of

his reputation, and it would have greatly gratified him to know that

posterity was about to speak of him in such terms--to speak of him

with a voice that would be audible for twenty-four hours.

Sir Roger made no further attempt to give counsel to his son. It was

too evidently useless. The old dying lion felt that the lion's power

had already passed from him, and that he was helpless in the hands

of the young cub who was so soon to inherit the wealth of the forest.

But Dr Thorne was more kind to him. He had something yet to say as to

his worldly hopes and worldly cares; and his old friend did not turn

a deaf ear to him.

It was during the night that Sir Roger was most anxious to talk, and

most capable of talking. He would lie through the day in a state

half-comatose; but towards evening he would rouse himself, and by

midnight he would be full of fitful energy. One night, as he lay

wakeful and full of thought, he thus poured forth his whole heart to

Dr Thorne.

"Thorne," said he, "I told you about my will, you know."

"Yes," said the other; "and I have blamed myself greatly that I have

not again urged you to alter it. Your illness came too suddenly,

Scatcherd; and then I was averse to speak of it."

"Why should I alter it? It is a good will; as good as I can make. Not

but that I have altered it since I spoke to you. I did it that day

after you left me."

"Have you definitely named your heir in default of Louis?"

"No--that is--yes--I had done that before; I have said Mary's eldest

child: I have not altered that."

"But, Scatcherd, you must alter it."

"Must! well then I won't; but I'll tell you what I have done. I have

added a postscript--a codicil they call it--saying that you, and you

only, know who is her eldest child. Winterbones and Jack Martin have

witnessed that."

Dr Thorne was going to explain how very injudicious such an

arrangement appeared to be; but Sir Roger would not listen to him.

It was not about that that he wished to speak to him. To him it was

matter of but minor interest who might inherit his money if his son

should die early; his care was solely for his son's welfare. At

twenty-five the heir might make his own will--might bequeath all this

wealth according to his own fancy. Sir Roger would not bring himself

to believe that his son could follow him to the grave in so short a

time.

"Never mind that, doctor, now; but about Louis; you will be his

guardian, you know."

"Not his guardian. He is more than of age."

"Ah! but doctor, you will be his guardian. The property will not be

his till he be twenty-five. You will not desert him?"

"I will not desert him; but I doubt whether I can do much for

him--what can I do, Scatcherd?"

"Use the power that a strong man has over a weak one. Use the power

that my will will give you. Do for him as you would for a son of your

own if you saw him going in bad courses. Do as a friend should do for

a friend that is dead and gone. I would do so for you, doctor, if our

places were changed."

"What I can do, that I will do," said Thorne, solemnly, taking as he

spoke the contractor's hand in his own with a tight grasp.

"I know you will; I know you will. Oh! doctor, may you never feel as

I do now! May you on your death-bed have no dread as I have, as to

the fate of those you will leave behind you!"

Doctor Thorne felt that he could not say much in answer to this. The

future fate of Louis Scatcherd was, he could not but own to himself,

greatly to be dreaded. What good, what happiness, could be presaged

for such a one as he was? What comfort could he offer to the father?

And then he was called on to compare, as it were, the prospects of

this unfortunate with those of his own darling; to contrast all that

was murky, foul, and disheartening, with all that was perfect--for to

him she was all but perfect; to liken Louis Scatcherd to the angel

who brightened his own hearthstone. How could he answer to such an

appeal?

He said nothing; but merely tightened his grasp of the other's hand,

to signify that he would do, as best he could, all that was asked

of him. Sir Roger looked up sadly into the doctor's face, as though

expecting some word of consolation. There was no comfort, no

consolation to come to him!

"For three or four years he must greatly depend upon you," continued

Sir Roger.

"I will do what I can," said the doctor. "What I can do I will do.

But he is not a child, Scatcherd: at his age he must stand or fall

mainly by his own conduct. The best thing for him will be to marry."

"Exactly; that's just it, Thorne: I was coming to that. If he would

marry, I think he would do well yet, for all that has come and gone.

If he married, of course you would let him have the command of his

own income."

"I will be governed entirely by your wishes: under any circumstances

his income will, as I understand, be quite sufficient for him,

married or single."

"Ah!--but, Thorne, I should like to think he should shine with the

best of them. For what have I made the money if not for that? Now if

he marries--decently, that is--some woman you know that can assist

him in the world, let him have what he wants. It is not to save the

money that I put it into your hands."

"No, Scatcherd; not to save the money, but to save him. I think that

while you are yet with him you should advise him to marry."

"He does not care a straw for what I advise, not one straw. Why

should he? How can I tell him to be sober when I have been a beast

all my life myself? How can I advise him? That's where it is! It is

that that now kills me. Advise! Why, when I speak to him he treats me

like a child."

"He fears that you are too weak, you know: he thinks that you should

not be allowed to talk."

"Nonsense! he knows better; you know better. Too weak! what

signifies? Would I not give all that I have of strength at one blow

if I could open his eyes to see as I see but for one minute?" And

the sick man raised himself up in his bed as though he were actually

going to expend all that remained to him of vigour in the energy of a

moment.

"Gently, Scatcherd; gently. He will listen to you yet; but do not be

so unruly."

"Thorne, you see that bottle there? Give me half a glass of brandy."

The doctor turned round in his chair; but he hesitated in doing as he

was desired.

"Do as I ask you, doctor. It can do no harm now; you know that well

enough. Why torture me now?"

"No, I will not torture you; but you will have water with it?"

"Water! No; the brandy by itself. I tell you I cannot speak without

it. What's the use of canting now? You know it can make no

difference."

Sir Roger was right. It could make no difference; and Dr Thorne gave

him the half glass of brandy.

"Ah, well; you've a stingy hand, doctor; confounded stingy. You don't

measure your medicines out in such light doses."

"You will be wanting more before morning, you know."

"Before morning! indeed I shall; a pint or so before that. I remember

the time, doctor, when I have drunk to my own cheek above two quarts

between dinner and breakfast! aye, and worked all the day after it!"

"You have been a wonderful man, Scatcherd, very wonderful."

"Aye, wonderful! well, never mind. It's over now. But what was I

saying?--about Louis, doctor; you'll not desert him?"

"Certainly not."

"He's not strong; I know that. How should he be strong, living as he

has done? Not that it seemed to hurt me when I was his age."

"You had the advantage of hard work."

"That's it. Sometimes I wish that Louis had not a shilling in the

world; that he had to trudge about with an apron round his waist as I

did. But it's too late now to think of that. If he would only marry,

doctor."

Dr Thorne again expressed an opinion that no step would be so likely

to reform the habits of the young heir as marriage; and repeated his

advice to the father to implore his son to take a wife.

"I'll tell you what, Thorne," said he. And then, after a pause, he

went on. "I have not half told you as yet what is on my mind; and I'm

nearly afraid to tell it; though, indeed, I don't know why I should

be."

"I never knew you afraid of anything yet," said the doctor, smiling

gently.

"Well, then, I'll not end by turning coward. Now, doctor, tell the

truth to me; what do you expect me to do for that girl of yours that

we were talking of--Mary's child?"

There was a pause for a moment, for Thorne was slow to answer him.

"You would not let me see her, you know, though she is my niece as

truly as she is yours."

"Nothing," at last said the doctor, slowly. "I expect nothing. I

would not let you see her, and therefore, I expect nothing."

"She will have it all if poor Louis should die," said Sir Roger.

"If you intend it so you should put her name into the will," said the

other. "Not that I ask you or wish you to do so. Mary, thank God, can

do without wealth."

"Thorne, on one condition I will put her name into it. I will alter

it all on one condition. Let the two cousins be man and wife--let

Louis marry poor Mary's child."

The proposition for a moment took away the doctor's breath, and he

was unable to answer. Not for all the wealth of India would he have

given up his lamb to that young wolf, even though he had had the

power to do so. But that lamb--lamb though she was--had, as he well

knew, a will of her own on such a matter. What alliance could be more

impossible, thought he to himself, than one between Mary Thorne and

Louis Scatcherd?

"I will alter it all if you will give me your hand upon it that you

will do your best to bring about this marriage. Everything shall be

his on the day he marries her; and should he die unmarried, it shall

all then be hers by name. Say the word, Thorne, and she shall come

here at once. I shall yet have time to see her."

But Dr Thorne did not say the word; just at the moment he said

nothing, but he slowly shook his head.

"Why not, Thorne?"

"My friend, it is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Her hand is not mine to dispose of, nor is her heart."

"Then let her come over herself."

"What! Scatcherd, that the son might make love to her while the

father is so dangerously ill! Bid her come to look for a rich

husband! That would not be seemly, would it?"

"No; not for that: let her come merely that I may see her; that we

may all know her. I will leave the matter then in your hands if you

will promise me to do your best."

"But, my friend, in this matter I cannot do my best. I can do

nothing. And, indeed, I may say at once, that it is altogether out of

the question. I know--"

"What do you know?" said the baronet, turning on him almost angrily.

"What can you know to make you say that it is impossible? Is she a

pearl of such price that a man may not win her?"

"She is a pearl of great price."

"Believe me, doctor, money goes far in winning such pearls."

"Perhaps so; I know little about it. But this I do know, that money

will not win her. Let us talk of something else; believe me it is

useless for us to think of this."

"Yes; if you set your face against it obstinately. You must think

very poorly of Louis if you suppose that no girl can fancy him."

"I have not said so, Scatcherd."

"To have the spending of ten thousand a year, and be a baronet's

lady! Why, doctor, what is it you expect for this girl?"

"Not much, indeed; not much. A quiet heart and a quiet home; not much

more."

"Thorne, if you will be ruled by me in this, she shall be the most

topping woman in this county."

"My friend, my friend, why thus grieve me? Why should you thus harass

yourself? I tell you it is impossible. They have never seen each

other; they have nothing, and can have nothing in common; their

tastes, and wishes, and pursuits are different. Besides, Scatcherd,

marriages never answer that are so made; believe me, it is

impossible."

The contractor threw himself back on his bed, and lay for some ten

minutes perfectly quiet; so much so that the doctor began to think

that he was sleeping. So thinking, and wearied by the watching,

Dr Thorne was beginning to creep quietly from the room, when his

companion again roused himself, almost with vehemence.

"You won't do this thing for me, then?" said he.

"Do it! It is not for you or me to do such things as that. Such

things must be left to those concerned themselves."

"You will not even help me?"

"Not in this thing, Sir Roger."

"Then, by ----, she shall not under any circumstances ever have a

shilling of mine. Give me some of that stuff there," and he again

pointed to the brandy bottle which stood ever within his sight.

The doctor poured out and handed to him another small modicum of

spirit.

"Nonsense, man; fill the glass. I'll stand no nonsense now. I'll be

master in my own house to the last. Give it here, I tell you. Ten

thousand devils are tearing me within. You--you could have comforted

me; but you would not. Fill the glass I tell you."

"I should be killing you were I to do it."

"Killing me! killing me! you are always talking of killing me. Do you

suppose that I am afraid to die? Do not I know how soon it is coming?

Give me the brandy, I say, or I will be out across the room to fetch

it."

"No, Scatcherd. I cannot give it to you; not while I am here. Do you

remember how you were engaged this morning?"--he had that morning

taken the sacrament from the parish clergyman--"you would not wish to

make me guilty of murder, would you?"

"Nonsense! You are talking nonsense; habit is second nature. I tell

you I shall sink without it. Why, you know I always get it directly

your back is turned. Come, I will not be bullied in my own house;

give me that bottle, I say!"--and Sir Roger essayed, vainly enough,

to raise himself from the bed.

"Stop, Scatcherd; I will give it you--I will help you. It may be

that habit is second nature." Sir Roger in his determined energy

had swallowed, without thinking of it, the small quantity which the

doctor had before poured out for him, and still held the empty glass

within his hand. This the doctor now took and filled nearly to the

brim.

"Come, Thorne, a bumper; a bumper for this once. 'Whatever the drink,

it a bumper must be.' You stingy fellow! I would not treat you so.

Well--well."

"It's as full as you can hold it, Scatcherd."

"Try me; try me! my hand is a rock; at least at holding liquor." And

then he drained the contents of the glass, which were sufficient in

quantity to have taken away the breath from any ordinary man.

"Ah, I'm better now. But, Thorne, I do love a full glass, ha! ha!

ha!"

There was something frightful, almost sickening, in the peculiar

hoarse guttural tone of his voice. The sounds came from him as

though steeped in brandy, and told, all too plainly, the havoc which

the alcohol had made. There was a fire too about his eyes which

contrasted with his sunken cheeks: his hanging jaw, unshorn beard,

and haggard face were terrible to look at. His hands and arms were

hot and clammy, but so thin and wasted! Of his lower limbs the lost

use had not returned to him, so that in all his efforts at vehemence

he was controlled by his own want of vitality. When he supported

himself, half-sitting against the pillows, he was in a continual

tremor; and yet, as he boasted, he could still lift his glass

steadily to his mouth. Such now was the hero of whom that ready

compiler of memoirs had just finished his correct and succinct

account.

After he had had his brandy, he sat glaring a while at vacancy, as

though he was dead to all around him, and was thinking--thinking--

thinking of things in the infinite distance of the past.

"Shall I go now," said the doctor, "and send Lady Scatcherd to you?"

"Wait a while, doctor; just one minute longer. So you will do nothing

for Louis, then?"

"I will do everything for him that I can do."

"Ah, yes! everything but the one thing that will save him. Well, I

will not ask you again. But remember, Thorne, I shall alter my will

to-morrow."

"Do so by all means; you may well alter it for the better. If I

may advise you, you will have down your own business attorney from

London. If you will let me send he will be here before to-morrow

night."

"Thank you for nothing, Thorne: I can manage that matter myself. Now

leave me; but remember, you have ruined that girl's fortune."

The doctor did leave him, and went not altogether happy to his room.

He could not but confess to himself that he had, despite himself as

it were, fed himself with hope that Mary's future might be made more

secure, aye, and brighter too, by some small unheeded fraction broken

off from the huge mass of her uncle's wealth. Such hope, if it had

amounted to hope, was now all gone. But this was not all, nor was

this the worst of it. That he had done right in utterly repudiating

all idea of a marriage between Mary and her cousin--of that he was

certain enough; that no earthly consideration would have induced Mary

to plight her troth to such a man--that, with him, was as certain as

doom. But how far had he done right in keeping her from the sight of

her uncle? How could he justify it to himself if he had thus robbed

her of her inheritance, seeing that he had done so from a selfish

fear lest she, who was now all his own, should be known to the world

as belonging to others rather than to him? He had taken upon him on

her behalf to reject wealth as valueless; and yet he had no sooner

done so than he began to consume his hours with reflecting how great

to her would be the value of wealth. And thus, when Sir Roger told

him, as he left the room, that he had ruined Mary's fortune, he was

hardly able to bear the taunt with equanimity.

On the next morning, after paying his professional visit to his

patient, and satisfying himself that the end was now drawing near

with steps terribly quickened, he went down to Greshamsbury.

"How long is this to last, uncle?" said his niece, with sad voice, as

he again prepared to return to Boxall Hill.

"Not long, Mary; do not begrudge him a few more hours of life."

"No, I do not, uncle. I will say nothing more about it. Is his son

with him?" And then, perversely enough, she persisted in asking

numerous questions about Louis Scatcherd.

"Is he likely to marry, uncle?"

"I hope so, my dear."

"Will he be so very rich?"

"Yes; ultimately he will be very rich."

"He will be a baronet, will he not?"

"Yes, my dear."

"What is he like, uncle?"

"Like--I never know what a young man is like. He is like a man with

red hair."

"Uncle, you are the worst hand in describing I ever knew. If I'd seen

him for five minutes, I'd be bound to make a portrait of him; and

you, if you were describing a dog, you'd only say what colour his

hair was."

"Well, he's a little man."

"Exactly, just as I should say that Mrs Umbleby had a red-haired

little dog. I wish I had known these Scatcherds, uncle. I do so

admire people that can push themselves in the world. I wish I had

known Sir Roger."

"You will never know him now, Mary."

"I suppose not. I am so sorry for him. Is Lady Scatcherd nice?"

"She is an excellent woman."

"I hope I may know her some day. You are so much there now, uncle; I

wonder whether you ever mention me to them. If you do, tell her from

me how much I grieve for her."

That same night Dr Thorne again found himself alone with Sir Roger.

The sick man was much more tranquil, and apparently more at ease

than he had been on the preceding night. He said nothing about his

will, and not a word about Mary Thorne; but the doctor knew that

Winterbones and a notary's clerk from Barchester had been in the

bedroom a great part of the day; and, as he knew also that the great

man of business was accustomed to do his most important work by the

hands of such tools as these, he did not doubt but that the will

had been altered and remodelled. Indeed, he thought it more than

probable, that when it was opened it would be found to be wholly

different in its provisions from that which Sir Roger had already

described.

"Louis is clever enough," he said, "sharp enough, I mean. He won't

squander the property."

"He has good natural abilities," said the doctor.

"Excellent, excellent," said the father. "He may do well, very well,

if he can only be kept from this;" and Sir Roger held up the empty

wine-glass which stood by his bedside. "What a life he may have

before him!--and to throw it away for this!" and as he spoke he took

the glass and tossed it across the room. "Oh, doctor! would that it

were all to begin again!"

"We all wish that, I dare say, Scatcherd."

"No, you don't wish it. You ain't worth a shilling, and yet you

regret nothing. I am worth half a million in one way or the other,

and I regret everything--everything--everything!"

"You should not think in that way, Scatcherd; you need not think so.

Yesterday you told Mr Clarke that you were comfortable in your mind."

Mr Clarke was the clergyman who had visited him.

"Of course I did. What else could I say when he asked me? It wouldn't

have been civil to have told him that his time and words were

all thrown away. But, Thorne, believe me, when a man's heart is

sad--sad--sad to the core, a few words from a parson at the last

moment will never make it all right."

"May He have mercy on you, my friend!--if you will think of Him, and

look to Him, He will have mercy on you."

"Well--I will try, doctor; but would that it were all to do again.

You'll see to the old woman for my sake, won't you?"

"What, Lady Scatcherd?"

"Lady Devil! If anything angers me now it is that 'ladyship'--her to

be my lady! Why, when I came out of jail that time, the poor creature

had hardly a shoe to her foot. But it wasn't her fault, Thorne; it

was none of her doing. She never asked for such nonsense."

"She has been an excellent wife, Scatcherd; and what is more, she

is an excellent woman. She is, and ever will be, one of my dearest

friends."

"Thank'ee, doctor, thank'ee. Yes; she has been a good wife--better

for a poor man than a rich one; but then, that was what she was born

to. You won't let her be knocked about by them, will you, Thorne?"

Dr Thorne again assured him, that as long as he lived Lady Scatcherd

should never want one true friend; in making this promise, however,

he managed to drop all allusion to the obnoxious title.

"You'll be with him as much as possible, won't you?" again asked the

baronet, after lying quite silent for a quarter of an hour.

"With whom?" said the doctor, who was then all but asleep.

"With my poor boy; with Louis."

"If he will let me, I will," said the doctor.

"And, doctor, when you see a glass at his mouth, dash it down; thrust

it down, though you thrust out the teeth with it. When you see that,

Thorne, tell him of his father--tell him what his father might have

been but for that; tell him how his father died like a beast, because

he could not keep himself from drink."

These, reader, were the last words spoken by Sir Roger Scatcherd. As

he uttered them he rose up in bed with the same vehemence which he

had shown on the former evening. But in the very act of doing so

he was again struck by paralysis, and before nine on the following

morning all was over.

"Oh, my man--my own, own man!" exclaimed the widow, remembering in

the paroxysm of her grief nothing but the loves of their early days;

"the best, the brightest, the cleverest of them all!"

Some weeks after this Sir Roger was buried, with much pomp and

ceremony, within the precincts of Barchester Cathedral; and a

monument was put up to him soon after, in which he was portrayed as

smoothing a block of granite with a mallet and chisel; while his

eagle eye, disdaining such humble work, was fixed upon some intricate

mathematical instrument above him. Could Sir Roger have seen it

himself, he would probably have declared, that no workman was ever

worth his salt who looked one way while he rowed another.

Immediately after the funeral the will was opened, and Dr Thorne

discovered that the clauses of it were exactly identical with those

which his friend had described to him some months back. Nothing had

been altered; nor had the document been unfolded since that strange

codicil was added, in which it was declared that Dr Thorne knew--and

only Dr Thorne--who was the eldest child of the testator's only

sister. At the same time, however, a joint executor with Dr Thorne

had been named--one Mr Stock, a man of railway fame--and Dr Thorne

himself was made a legatee to the humble extent of a thousand pounds.

A life income of a thousand pounds a year was left to Lady Scatcherd.

CHAPTER XXVI

War

We need not follow Sir Roger to his grave, nor partake of the baked

meats which were furnished for his funeral banquet. Such men as Sir

Roger Scatcherd are always well buried, and we have already seen that

his glories were duly told to posterity in the graphic diction of his

sepulchral monument. In a few days the doctor had returned to his

quiet home, and Sir Louis found himself reigning at Boxall Hill in

his father's stead--with, however, a much diminished sway, and, as he

thought it, but a poor exchequer. We must soon return to him and say

something of his career as a baronet; but for the present, we may go

back to our more pleasant friends at Greshamsbury.

But our friends at Greshamsbury had not been making themselves

pleasant--not so pleasant to each other as circumstances would have

admitted. In those days which the doctor had felt himself bound to

pass, if not altogether at Boxall Hill, yet altogether away from his

own home, so as to admit of his being as much as possible with his

patient, Mary had been thrown more than ever with Patience Oriel,

and, also, almost more than ever with Beatrice Gresham. As regarded

Mary, she would doubtless have preferred the companionship of

Patience, though she loved Beatrice far the best; but she had no

choice. When she went to the parsonage Beatrice came there also, and

when Patience came to the doctor's house Beatrice either accompanied

or followed her. Mary could hardly have rejected their society, even

had she felt it wise to do so. She would in such case have been all

alone, and her severance from the Greshamsbury house and household,

from the big family in which she had for so many years been almost at

home, would have made such solitude almost unendurable.

And then these two girls both knew--not her secret: she had no

secret--but the little history of her ill-treatment. They knew that

though she had been blameless in this matter, yet she had been the

one to bear the punishment; and, as girls and bosom friends, they

could not but sympathise with her, and endow her with heroic

attributes; make her, in fact, as we are doing, their little heroine

for the nonce. This was, perhaps, not serviceable for Mary; but it

was far from being disagreeable.

The tendency to finding matter for hero-worship in Mary's endurance

was much stronger with Beatrice than with Miss Oriel. Miss Oriel was

the elder, and naturally less afflicted with the sentimentation of

romance. She had thrown herself into Mary's arms because she had

seen that it was essentially necessary for Mary's comfort that she

should do so. She was anxious to make her friend smile, and to smile

with her. Beatrice was quite as true in her sympathy; but she rather

wished that she and Mary might weep in unison, shed mutual tears, and

break their hearts together.

Patience had spoken of Frank's love as a misfortune, of his conduct

as erroneous, and to be excused only by his youth, and had never

appeared to surmise that Mary also might be in love as well as he.

But to Beatrice the affair was a tragic difficulty, admitting of no

solution; a Gordian knot, not to be cut; a misery now and for ever.

She would always talk about Frank when she and Mary were alone; and,

to speak the truth, Mary did not stop her as she perhaps should have

done. As for a marriage between them, that was impossible; Beatrice

was well sure of that: it was Frank's unfortunate destiny that he

must marry money--money, and, as Beatrice sometimes thoughtlessly

added, cutting Mary to the quick,--money and family also. Under such

circumstances a marriage between them was quite impossible; but not

the less did Beatrice declare, that she would have loved Mary as her

sister-in-law had it been possible; and how worthy Frank was of a

girl's love, had such love been permissible.

"It is so cruel," Beatrice would say; "so very, very, cruel. You

would have suited him in every way."

"Nonsense, Trichy; I should have suited him in no possible way at

all; nor he me."

"Oh, but you would--exactly. Papa loves you so well."

"And mamma; that would have been so nice."

"Yes; and mamma, too--that is, had you had a fortune," said the

daughter, naÃ¯vely. "She always liked you personally, always."

"Did she?"

"Always. And we all love you so."

"Especially Lady Alexandrina."

"That would not have signified, for Frank cannot endure the de

Courcys himself."

"My dear, it does not matter one straw whom your brother can endure

or not endure just at present. His character is to be formed, and his

tastes, and his heart also."

"Oh, Mary!--his heart."

"Yes, his heart; not the fact of his having a heart. I think he has a

heart; but he himself does not yet understand it."

"Oh, Mary! you do not know him."

Such conversations were not without danger to poor Mary's comfort.

It came soon to be the case that she looked rather for this sort

of sympathy from Beatrice, than for Miss Oriel's pleasant but less

piquant gaiety.

So the days of the doctor's absence were passed, and so also the

first week after his return. During this week it was almost daily

necessary that the squire should be with him. The doctor was now the

legal holder of Sir Roger's property, and, as such, the holder also

of all the mortgages on Mr Gresham's property; and it was natural

that they should be much together. The doctor would not, however,

go up to Greshamsbury on any other than medical business; and it

therefore became necessary that the squire should be a good deal at

the doctor's house.

Then the Lady Arabella became unhappy in her mind. Frank, it was

true, was away at Cambridge, and had been successfully kept out

of Mary's way since the suspicion of danger had fallen upon Lady

Arabella's mind. Frank was away, and Mary was systematically

banished, with due acknowledgement from all the powers in

Greshamsbury. But this was not enough for Lady Arabella as long as

her daughter still habitually consorted with the female culprit, and

as long as her husband consorted with the male culprit. It seemed to

Lady Arabella at this moment as though, in banishing Mary from the

house, she had in effect banished herself from the most intimate of

the Greshamsbury social circles. She magnified in her own mind the

importance of the conferences between the girls, and was not without

some fear that the doctor might be talking the squire over into very

dangerous compliance.

She resolved, therefore, on another duel with the doctor. In the

first she had been pre-eminently and unexpectedly successful. No

young sucking dove could have been more mild than that terrible enemy

whom she had for years regarded as being too puissant for attack. In

ten minutes she had vanquished him, and succeeded in banishing both

him and his niece from the house without losing the value of his

services. As is always the case with us, she had begun to despise

the enemy she had conquered, and to think that the foe, once beaten,

could never rally.

Her object was to break off all confidential intercourse between

Beatrice and Mary, and to interrupt, as far as she could do it, that

between the doctor and the squire. This, it may be said, could be

more easily done by skilful management within her own household. She

had, however, tried that and failed. She had said much to Beatrice as

to the imprudence of her friendship with Mary, and she had done this

purposely before the squire; injudiciously however,--for the squire

had immediately taken Mary's part, and had declared that he had no

wish to see a quarrel between his family and that of the doctor; that

Mary Thorne was in every way a good girl, and an eligible friend for

his own child; and had ended by declaring, that he would not have

Mary persecuted for Frank's fault. This had not been the end, nor

nearly the end of what had been said on the matter at Greshamsbury;

but the end, when it came, came in this wise, that Lady Arabella

determined to say a few words to the doctor as to the expediency

of forbidding familiar intercourse between Mary and any of the

Greshamsbury people.

With this view Lady Arabella absolutely bearded the lion in his den,

the doctor in his shop. She had heard that both Mary and Beatrice

were to pass a certain afternoon at the parsonage, and took that

opportunity of calling at the doctor's house. A period of many years

had passed since she had last so honoured that abode. Mary, indeed,

had been so much one of her own family that the ceremony of calling

on her had never been thought necessary; and thus, unless Mary had

been absolutely ill, there would have been nothing to bring her

ladyship to the house. All this she knew would add to the importance

of the occasion, and she judged it prudent to make the occasion as

important as it might well be.

She was so far successful that she soon found herself \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_

with the doctor in his own study. She was no whit dismayed by the

pair of human thigh-bones which lay close to his hand, and which,

when he was talking in that den of his own, he was in the constant

habit of handling with much energy; nor was she frightened out of her

propriety even by the little child's skull which grinned at her from

off the chimney-piece.

"Doctor," she said, as soon as the first complimentary greetings were

over, speaking in her kindest and most would-be-confidential tone,

"Doctor, I am still uneasy about that boy of mine, and I have thought

it best to come and see you at once, and tell you freely what I

think."

The doctor bowed, and said that he was very sorry that she should

have any cause for uneasiness about his young friend Frank.

"Indeed, I am very uneasy, doctor; and having, as I do have, such

reliance on your prudence, and such perfect confidence in your

friendship, I have thought it best to come and speak to you openly:"

thereupon the Lady Arabella paused, and the doctor bowed again.

"Nobody knows so well as you do the dreadful state of the squire's

affairs."

"Not so very dreadful; not so very dreadful," said the doctor,

mildly: "that is, as far as I know."

"Yes they are, doctor; very dreadful; very dreadful indeed. You know

how much he owes to this young man: I do not, for the squire never

tells anything to me; but I know that it is a very large sum of

money; enough to swamp the estate and ruin Frank. Now I call that

very dreadful."

"No, no, not ruin him, Lady Arabella; not ruin him, I hope."

"However, I did not come to talk to you about that. As I said before,

I know nothing of the squire's affairs, and, as a matter of course,

I do not ask you to tell me. But I am sure you will agree with me in

this, that, as a mother, I cannot but be interested about my only

son," and Lady Arabella put her cambric handkerchief to her eyes.

"Of course you are; of course you are," said the doctor; "and, Lady

Arabella, my opinion of Frank is such, that I feel sure that he

will do well;" and, in his energy, Dr Thorne brandished one of the

thigh-bones almost in the lady's face.

"I hope he will; I am sure I hope he will. But, doctor, he has such

dangers to contend with; he is so warm and impulsive that I fear

his heart will bring him into trouble. Now, you know, unless Frank

marries money he is lost."

The doctor made no answer to this last appeal, but as he sat and

listened a slight frown came across his brow.

"He must marry money, doctor. Now we have, you see, with your

assistance, contrived to separate him from dear Mary--"

"With my assistance, Lady Arabella! I have given no assistance, nor

have I meddled in the matter; nor will I."

"Well, doctor, perhaps not meddled; but you agreed with me, you know,

that the two young people had been imprudent."

"I agreed to no such thing, Lady Arabella; never, never. I not only

never agreed that Mary had been imprudent, but I will not agree to it

now, and will not allow any one to assert it in my presence without

contradicting it:" and then the doctor worked away at the thigh-bones

in a manner that did rather alarm her ladyship.

"At any rate, you thought that the young people had better be kept

apart."

"No; neither did I think that: my niece, I felt sure, was safe from

danger. I knew that she would do nothing that would bring either her

or me to shame."

"Not to shame," said the lady, apologetically, as it were, using the

word perhaps not exactly in the doctor's sense.

"I felt no alarm for her," continued the doctor, "and desired no

change. Frank is your son, and it is for you to look to him. You

thought proper to do so by desiring Mary to absent herself from

Greshamsbury."

"Oh, no, no, no!" said Lady Arabella.

"But you did, Lady Arabella; and as Greshamsbury is your home,

neither I nor my niece had any ground of complaint. We acquiesced,

not without much suffering, but we did acquiesce; and you, I think,

can have no ground of complaint against us."

Lady Arabella had hardly expected that the doctor would reply to her

mild and conciliatory exordium with so much sternness. He had yielded

so easily to her on the former occasion. She did not comprehend that

when she uttered her sentence of exile against Mary, she had given

an order which she had the power of enforcing; but that obedience to

that order had now placed Mary altogether beyond her jurisdiction.

She was, therefore, a little surprised, and for a few moments

overawed by the doctor's manner; but she soon recovered herself,

remembering, doubtless, that fortune favours none but the brave.

"I make no complaint, Dr Thorne," she said, after assuming a tone

more befitting a de Courcy than that hitherto used, "I make no

complaint either as regards you or Mary."

"You are very kind, Lady Arabella."

"But I think that it is my duty to put a stop, a peremptory stop to

anything like a love affair between my son and your niece."

"I have not the least objection in life. If there is such a love

affair, put a stop to it--that is, if you have the power."

Here the doctor was doubtless imprudent. But he had begun to think

that he had yielded sufficiently to the lady; and he had begun to

resolve, also, that though it would not become him to encourage even

the idea of such a marriage, he would make Lady Arabella understand

that he thought his niece quite good enough for her son, and that

the match, if regarded as imprudent, was to be regarded as equally

imprudent on both sides. He would not suffer that Mary and her heart

and feelings and interest should be altogether postponed to those

of the young heir; and, perhaps, he was unconsciously encouraged in

this determination by the reflection that Mary herself might perhaps

become a young heiress.

"It is my duty," said Lady Arabella, repeating her words with even a

stronger de Courcy intonation; "and your duty also, Dr Thorne."

"My duty!" said he, rising from his chair and leaning on the table

with the two thigh-bones. "Lady Arabella, pray understand at once,

that I repudiate any such duty, and will have nothing whatever to do

with it."

"But you do not mean to say that you will encourage this unfortunate

boy to marry your niece?"

"The unfortunate boy, Lady Arabella--whom, by the by, I regard as

a very fortunate young man--is your son, not mine. I shall take no

steps about his marriage, either one way or the other."

"You think it right, then, that your niece should throw herself in

his way?"

"Throw herself in his way! What would you say if I came up to

Greshamsbury, and spoke to you of your daughters in such language?

What would my dear friend Mr Gresham say, if some neighbour's wife

should come and so speak to him? I will tell you what he would say:

he would quietly beg her to go back to her own home and meddle only

with her own matters."

This was dreadful to Lady Arabella. Even Dr Thorne had never before

dared thus to lower her to the level of common humanity, and liken

her to any other wife in the country-side. Moreover, she was not

quite sure whether he, the parish doctor, was not desiring her, the

earl's daughter, to go home and mind her own business. On this first

point, however, there seemed to be no room for doubt, of which she

gave herself the benefit.

"It would not become me to argue with you, Dr Thorne," she said.

"Not at least on this subject," said he.

"I can only repeat that I mean nothing offensive to our dear Mary;

for whom, I think I may say, I have always shown almost a mother's

care."

"Neither am I, nor is Mary, ungrateful for the kindness she has

received at Greshamsbury."

"But I must do my duty: my own children must be my first

consideration."

"Of course they must, Lady Arabella; that's of course."

"And, therefore, I have called on you to say that I think it is

imprudent that Beatrice and Mary should be so much together."

The doctor had been standing during the latter part of this

conversation, but now he began to walk about, still holding the two

bones like a pair of dumb-bells.

"God bless my soul!" he said; "God bless my soul! Why, Lady Arabella,

do you suspect your own daughter as well as your own son? Do you

think that Beatrice is assisting Mary in preparing this wicked

clandestine marriage? I tell you fairly, Lady Arabella, the present

tone of your mind is such that I cannot understand it."

"I suspect nobody, Dr Thorne; but young people will be young."

"And old people must be old, I suppose; the more's the pity. Lady

Arabella, Mary is the same to me as my own daughter, and owes me the

obedience of a child; but as I do not disapprove of your daughter

Beatrice as an acquaintance for her, but rather, on the other hand,

regard with pleasure their friendship, you cannot expect that I

should take any steps to put an end to it."

"But suppose it should lead to renewed intercourse between Frank and

Mary?"

"I have no objection. Frank is a very nice young fellow,

gentleman-like in his manners, and neighbourly in his disposition."

"Dr Thorne--"

"Lady Arabella--"

"I cannot believe that you really intend to express a wish--"

"You are quite right. I have not intended to express any wish; nor do

I intend to do so. Mary is at liberty, within certain bounds--which

I am sure she will not pass--to choose her own friends. I think she

has not chosen badly as regards Miss Beatrice Gresham; and should she

even add Frank Gresham to the number--"

"Friends! why they were more than friends; they were declared

lovers."

"I doubt that, Lady Arabella, because I have not heard of it from

Mary. But even if it were so, I do not see why I should object."

"Not object!"

"As I said before, Frank is, to my thinking, an excellent young man.

Why should I object?"

"Dr Thorne!" said her ladyship, now also rising from her chair in a

state of too evident perturbation.

"Why should \_I\_ object? It is for you, Lady Arabella, to look after

your lambs; for me to see that, if possible, no harm shall come to

mine. If you think that Mary is an improper acquaintance for your

children, it is for you to guide them; for you and their father. Say

what you think fit to your own daughter; but pray understand, once

for all, that I will allow no one to interfere with my niece."

"Interfere!" said Lady Arabella, now absolutely confused by the

severity of the doctor's manner.

"I will allow no one to interfere with her; no one, Lady Arabella.

She has suffered very greatly from imputations which you have most

unjustly thrown on her. It was, however, your undoubted right to turn

her out of your house if you thought fit;--though, as a woman who

had known her for so many years, you might, I think, have treated

her with more forbearance. That, however, was your right, and you

exercised it. There your privilege stops; yes, and must stop, Lady

Arabella. You shall not persecute her here, on the only spot of

ground she can call her own."

"Persecute her, Dr Thorne! You do not mean to say that I have

persecuted her?"

"Ah! but I do mean to say so. You do persecute her, and would

continue to do so did I not defend her. It is not sufficient that

she is forbidden to enter your domain--and so forbidden with the

knowledge of all the country round--but you must come here also with

the hope of interrupting all the innocent pleasures of her life.

Fearing lest she should be allowed even to speak to your son, to hear

a word of him through his own sister, you would put her in prison,

tie her up, keep her from the light of day--"

"Dr Thorne! how can you--"

But the doctor was not to be interrupted.

"It never occurs to you to tie him up, to put him in prison. No; he

is the heir of Greshamsbury; he is your son, an earl's grandson. It

is only natural, after all, that he should throw a few foolish words

at the doctor's niece. But she! it is an offence not to be forgiven

on her part that she should, however, unwillingly, have been forced

to listen to them! Now understand me, Lady Arabella; if any of your

family come to my house I shall be delighted to welcome them: if Mary

should meet any of them elsewhere I shall be delighted to hear of it.

Should she tell me to-morrow that she was engaged to marry Frank, I

should talk the matter over with her, quite coolly, solely with a

view to her interest, as would be my duty; feeling, at the same time,

that Frank would be lucky in having such a wife. Now you know my

mind, Lady Arabella. It is so I should do my duty;--you can do yours

as you may think fit."

Lady Arabella had by this time perceived that she was not destined on

this occasion to gain any great victory. She, however, was angry as

well as the doctor. It was not the man's vehemence that provoked her

so much as his evident determination to break down the prestige of

her rank, and place her on a footing in no respect superior to his

own. He had never before been so audaciously arrogant; and, as she

moved towards the door, she determined in her wrath that she would

never again have confidential intercourse with him in any relation of

life whatsoever.

"Dr Thorne," said she. "I think you have forgotten yourself. You must

excuse me if I say that after what has passed I--I--I--"

"Certainly," said he, fully understanding what she meant; and bowing

low as he opened first the study-door, then the front-door, then the

garden-gate.

And then Lady Arabella stalked off, not without full observation from

Mrs Yates Umbleby and her friend Miss Gushing, who lived close by.

CHAPTER XXVII

Miss Thorne Goes on a Visit

And now began the unpleasant things at Greshamsbury of which we have

here told. When Lady Arabella walked away from the doctor's house

she resolved that, let it cost what it might, there should be war to

the knife between her and him. She had been insulted by him--so at

least she said to herself, and so she was prepared to say to others

also--and it was not to be borne that a de Courcy should allow her

parish doctor to insult her with impunity. She would tell her husband

with all the dignity that she could assume, that it had now become

absolutely necessary that he should protect his wife by breaking

entirely with his unmannered neighbour; and, as regarded the young

members of her family, she would use the authority of a mother, and

absolutely forbid them to hold any intercourse with Mary Thorne. So

resolving, she walked quickly back to her own house.

The doctor, when left alone, was not quite satisfied with the part he

had taken in the interview. He had spoken from impulse rather than

from judgement, and, as is generally the case with men who do so

speak, he had afterwards to acknowledge to himself that he had been

imprudent. He accused himself probably of more violence than he

had really used, and was therefore unhappy; but, nevertheless, his

indignation was not at rest. He was angry with himself; but not

on that account the less angry with Lady Arabella. She was cruel,

overbearing, and unreasonable; cruel in the most cruel of manners, so

he thought; but not on that account was he justified in forgetting

the forbearance due from a gentleman to a lady. Mary, moreover, had

owed much to the kindness of this woman, and, therefore, Dr Thorne

felt that he should have forgiven much.

Thus the doctor walked about his room, much disturbed; now accusing

himself for having been so angry with Lady Arabella, and then feeding

his own anger by thinking of her misconduct.

The only immediate conclusion at which he resolved was this, that it

was unnecessary that he should say anything to Mary on the subject

of her ladyship's visit. There was, no doubt, sorrow enough in store

for his darling; why should he aggravate it? Lady Arabella would

doubtless not stop now in her course; but why should he accelerate

the evil which she would doubtless be able to effect?

Lady Arabella, when she returned to the house, allowed no grass to

grow under her feet. As she entered the house she desired that Miss

Beatrice should be sent to her directly she returned; and she desired

also, that as soon as the squire should be in his room a message to

that effect might be immediately brought to her.

"Beatrice," she said, as soon as the young lady appeared before her,

and in speaking she assumed her firmest tone of authority, "Beatrice,

I am sorry, my dear, to say anything that is unpleasant to you, but I

must make it a positive request that you will for the future drop all

intercourse with Dr Thorne's family."

Beatrice, who had received Lady Arabella's message immediately on

entering the house, and had run upstairs imagining that some instant

haste was required, now stood before her mother rather out of breath,

holding her bonnet by the strings.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, "what on earth has happened?"

"My dear," said the mother, "I cannot really explain to you what has

happened; but I must ask you to give me your positive assurance that

you will comply with my request."

"You don't mean that I am not to see Mary any more?"

"Yes, I do, my dear; at any rate, for the present. When I tell you

that your brother's interest imperatively demands it, I am sure that

you will not refuse me."

Beatrice did not refuse, but she did not appear too willing to

comply. She stood silent, leaning against the end of a sofa and

twisting her bonnet-strings in her hand.

"Well, Beatrice--"

"But, mamma, I don't understand."

Lady Arabella had said that she could not exactly explain: but she

found it necessary to attempt to do so.

"Dr Thorne has openly declared to me that a marriage between poor

Frank and Mary is all he could desire for his niece. After such

unparalleled audacity as that, even your father will see the

necessity of breaking with him."

"Dr Thorne! Oh, mamma, you must have misunderstood him."

"My dear, I am not apt to misunderstand people; especially when I am

so much in earnest as I was in talking to Dr Thorne."

"But, mamma, I know so well what Mary herself thinks about it."

"And I know what Dr Thorne thinks about it; he, at any rate, has been

candid in what he said; there can be no doubt on earth that he has

spoken his true thoughts; there can be no reason to doubt him: of

course such a match would be all that he could wish."

"Mamma, I feel sure that there is some mistake."

"Very well, my dear. I know that you are infatuated about these

people, and that you are always inclined to contradict what I say to

you; but, remember, I expect that you will obey me when I tell you

not to go to Dr Thorne's house any more."

"But, mamma--"

"I expect you to obey me, Beatrice. Though you are so prone to

contradict, you have never disobeyed me; and I fully trust that you

will not do so now."

Lady Arabella had begun by exacting, or trying to exact a promise,

but as she found that this was not forthcoming, she thought it better

to give up the point without a dispute. It might be that Beatrice

would absolutely refuse to pay this respect to her mother's

authority, and then where would she have been?

At this moment a servant came up to say that the squire was in his

room, and Lady Arabella was opportunely saved the necessity of

discussing the matter further with her daughter. "I am now," she

said, "going to see your father on the same subject; you may be quite

sure, Beatrice, that I should not willingly speak to him on any

matter relating to Dr Thorne did I not find it absolutely necessary

to do so."

This Beatrice knew was true, and she did therefore feel convinced

that something terrible must have happened.

While Lady Arabella opened her budget the squire sat quite silent,

listening to her with apparent respect. She found it necessary that

her description to him should be much more elaborate than that which

she had vouchsafed to her daughter, and, in telling her grievance,

she insisted most especially on the personal insult which had been

offered to herself.

"After what has now happened," said she, not quite able to repress a

tone of triumph as she spoke, "I do expect, Mr Gresham, that you

will--will--"

"Will what, my dear?"

"Will at least protect me from the repetition of such treatment."

"You are not afraid that Dr Thorne will come here to attack you? As

far as I can understand, he never comes near the place, unless when

you send for him."

"No; I do not think that he will come to Greshamsbury any more. I

believe I have put a stop to that."

"Then what is it, my dear, that you want me to do?"

Lady Arabella paused a minute before she replied. The game which she

now had to play was not very easy; she knew, or thought she knew,

that her husband, in his heart of hearts, much preferred his friend

to the wife of his bosom, and that he would, if he could, shuffle out

of noticing the doctor's iniquities. It behoved her, therefore, to

put them forward in such a way that they must be noticed.

"I suppose, Mr Gresham, you do not wish that Frank should marry the

girl?"

"I do not think there is the slightest chance of such a thing; and I

am quite sure that Dr Thorne would not encourage it."

"But I tell you, Mr Gresham, that he says he will encourage it."

"Oh, you have misunderstood him."

"Of course; I always misunderstand everything. I know that. I

misunderstood it when I told you how you would distress yourself if

you took those nasty hounds."

"I have had other troubles more expensive than the hounds," said the

poor squire, sighing.

"Oh, yes; I know what you mean; a wife and family are expensive, of

course. It is a little too late now to complain of that."

"My dear, it is always too late to complain of any troubles when they

are no longer to be avoided. We need not, therefore, talk any more

about the hounds at present."

"I do not wish to speak of them, Mr Gresham."

"Nor I."

"But I hope you will not think me unreasonable if I am anxious to

know what you intend to do about Dr Thorne."

"To do?"

"Yes; I suppose you will do something: you do not wish to see your

son marry such a girl as Mary Thorne."

"As far as the girl herself is concerned," said the squire, turning

rather red, "I am not sure that he could do much better. I know

nothing whatever against Mary. Frank, however, cannot afford to make

such a match. It would be his ruin."

"Of course it would; utter ruin; he never could hold up his head

again. Therefore it is I ask, What do you intend to do?"

The squire was bothered. He had no intention whatever of doing

anything, and no belief in his wife's assertion as to Dr Thorne's

iniquity. But he did not know how to get her out of the room. She

asked him the same question over and over again, and on each occasion

urged on him the heinousness of the insult to which she personally

had been subjected; so that at last he was driven to ask her what it

was she wished him to do.

"Well, then, Mr Gresham, if you ask me, I must say, that I think you

should abstain from any intercourse with Dr Thorne whatever."

"Break off all intercourse with him?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? He has been turned out of this house, and I'm not

to go to see him at his own."

"I certainly think that you ought to discontinue your visits to Dr

Thorne altogether."

"Nonsense, my dear; absolute nonsense."

"Nonsense! Mr Gresham; it is no nonsense. As you speak in that way,

I must let you know plainly what I feel. I am endeavouring to do

my duty by my son. As you justly observe, such a marriage as this

would be utter ruin to him. When I found that the young people were

actually talking of being in love with each other, making vows and

all that sort of thing, I did think it time to interfere. I did not,

however, turn them out of Greshamsbury as you accuse me of doing. In

the kindest possible manner--"

"Well--well--well; I know all that. There, they are gone, and that's

enough. I don't complain; surely that ought to be enough."

"Enough! Mr Gresham. No; it is not enough. I find that, in spite

of what has occurred, the closest intimacy exists between the two

families; that poor Beatrice, who is so very young, and not so

prudent as she should be, is made to act as a go-between; and when

I speak to the doctor, hoping that he will assist me in preventing

this, he not only tells me that he means to encourage Mary in her

plans, but positively insults me to my face, laughs at me for being

an earl's daughter, and tells me--yes, he absolutely told me--to get

out of his house."

Let it be told with some shame as to the squire's conduct, that his

first feeling on hearing this was one of envy--of envy and regret

that he could not make the same uncivil request. Not that he wished

to turn his wife absolutely out of his house; but he would have been

very glad to have had the power of dismissing her summarily from his

own room. This, however, was at present impossible; so he was obliged

to make some mild reply.

"You must have mistaken him, my dear. He could not have intended to

say that."

"Oh! of course, Mr Gresham. It is all a mistake, of course. It will

be a mistake, only a mistake when you find your son married to Mary

Thorne."

"Well, my dear, I cannot undertake to quarrel with Dr Thorne." This

was true; for the squire could hardly have quarrelled with Dr Thorne,

even had he wished it.

"Then I think it right to tell you that I shall. And, Mr Gresham, I

did not expect much co-operation from you; but I did think that you

would have shown some little anger when you heard that I had been so

ill-treated. I shall, however, know how to take care of myself; and

I shall continue to do the best I can to protect Frank from these

wicked intrigues."

So saying, her ladyship arose and left the room, having succeeded in

destroying the comfort of all our Greshamsbury friends. It was very

well for the squire to declare that he would not quarrel with Dr

Thorne, and of course he did not do so. But he, himself, had no wish

whatever that his son should marry Mary Thorne; and as a falling drop

will hollow a stone, so did the continual harping of his wife on the

subject give rise to some amount of suspicion in his own mind. Then

as to Beatrice, though she had made no promise that she would not

again visit Mary, she was by no means prepared to set her mother's

authority altogether at defiance; and she also was sufficiently

uncomfortable.

Dr Thorne said nothing of the matter to his niece, and she,

therefore, would have been absolutely bewildered by Beatrice's

absence, had she not received some tidings of what had taken place at

Greshamsbury through Patience Oriel. Beatrice and Patience discussed

the matter fully, and it was agreed between them that it would be

better that Mary should know what sterner orders respecting her

had gone forth from the tyrant at Greshamsbury, and that she might

understand that Beatrice's absence was compulsory. Patience was thus

placed in this position, that on one day she walked and talked with

Beatrice, and on the next with Mary; and so matters went on for a

while at Greshamsbury--not very pleasantly.

Very unpleasantly and very uncomfortably did the months of May and

June pass away. Beatrice and Mary occasionally met, drinking tea

together at the parsonage, or in some other of the ordinary meetings

of country society; but there were no more confidentially distressing

confidential discourses, no more whispering of Frank's name, no more

sweet allusions to the inexpediency of a passion, which, according

to Beatrice's views, would have been so delightful had it been

expedient.

The squire and the doctor also met constantly; there were

unfortunately many subjects on which they were obliged to meet. Louis

Philippe--or Sir Louis as we must call him--though he had no power

over his own property, was wide awake to all the coming privileges

of ownership, and he would constantly point out to his guardian the

manner in which, according to his ideas, the most should be made of

it. The young baronet's ideas of good taste were not of the most

refined description, and he did not hesitate to tell Dr Thorne that

his, the doctor's, friendship with Mr Gresham must be no bar to his,

the baronet's, interest. Sir Louis also had his own lawyer, who gave

Dr Thorne to understand that, according to his ideas, the sum due

on Mr Gresham's property was too large to be left on its present

footing; the title-deeds, he said, should be surrendered or the

mortgage foreclosed. All this added to the sadness which now seemed

to envelop the village of Greshamsbury.

Early in July, Frank was to come home. The manner in which the

comings and goings of "poor Frank" were allowed to disturb the

arrangements of all the ladies, and some of the gentlemen, of

Greshamsbury was most abominable. And yet it can hardly be said to

have been his fault. He would have been only too well pleased had

things been allowed to go on after their old fashion. Things were

not allowed so to go on. At Christmas Miss Oriel had submitted to be

exiled, in order that she might carry Mary away from the presence of

the young Bashaw, an arrangement by which all the winter festivities

of the poor doctor had been thoroughly sacrificed; and now it began

to be said that some similar plan for the summer must be suggested.

It must not be supposed that any direction to this effect was

conveyed either to Mary or to the doctor. The suggestion came from

them, and was mentioned only to Patience. But Patience, as a matter

of course, told Beatrice, and Beatrice told her mother, somewhat

triumphantly, hoping thereby to convince the she-dragon of Mary's

innocence. Alas! she-dragons are not easily convinced of the

innocence of any one. Lady Arabella quite coincided in the propriety

of Mary's being sent off,--whither she never inquired,--in order that

the coast might be clear for "poor Frank;" but she did not a whit the

more abstain from talking of the wicked intrigues of those Thornes.

As it turned out, Mary's absence caused her to talk all the more.

The Boxall Hill property, including the house and furniture, had been

left to the contractor's son; it being understood that the property

would not be at present in his own hands, but that he might inhabit

the house if he chose to do so. It would thus be necessary for Lady

Scatcherd to find a home for herself, unless she could remain at

Boxall Hill by her son's permission. In this position of affairs the

doctor had been obliged to make a bargain between them. Sir Louis did

wish to have the comfort, or perhaps the honour, of a country house;

but he did not wish to have the expense of keeping it up. He was

also willing to let his mother live at the house; but not without

a consideration. After a prolonged degree of haggling, terms were

agreed upon; and a few weeks after her husband's death, Lady

Scatcherd found herself alone at Boxall Hill--alone as regards

society in the ordinary sense, but not quite alone as concerned her

ladyship, for the faithful Hannah was still with her.

The doctor was of course often at Boxall Hill, and never left it

without an urgent request from Lady Scatcherd that he would bring his

niece over to see her. Now Lady Scatcherd was no fit companion for

Mary Thorne, and though Mary had often asked to be taken to Boxall

Hill, certain considerations had hitherto induced the doctor to

refuse the request; but there was that about Lady Scatcherd,--a kind

of homely honesty of purpose, an absence of all conceit as to her own

position, and a strength of womanly confidence in the doctor as her

friend, which by degrees won upon his heart. When, therefore, both he

and Mary felt that it would be better for her again to absent herself

for a while from Greshamsbury, it was, after much deliberation,

agreed that she should go on a visit to Boxall Hill.

To Boxall Hill, accordingly, she went, and was received almost as a

princess. Mary had all her life been accustomed to women of rank, and

had never habituated herself to feel much trepidation in the presence

of titled grandees; but she had prepared herself to be more than

ordinarily submissive to Lady Scatcherd. Her hostess was a widow, was

not a woman of high birth, was a woman of whom her uncle spoke well;

and, for all these reasons, Mary was determined to respect her, and

pay to her every consideration. But when she settled down in the

house she found it almost impossible to do so. Lady Scatcherd treated

her as a farmer's wife might have treated some convalescent young

lady who had been sent to her charge for a few weeks, in order that

she might benefit by the country air. Her ladyship could hardly bring

herself to sit still and eat her dinner tranquilly in her guest's

presence. And then nothing was good enough for Mary. Lady Scatcherd

besought her, almost with tears, to say what she liked best to eat

and drink; and was in despair when Mary declared she didn't care,

that she liked anything, and that she was in nowise particular in

such matters.

"A roast fowl, Miss Thorne?"

"Very nice, Lady Scatcherd."

"And bread sauce?"

"Bread sauce--yes; oh, yes--I like bread sauce,"--and poor Mary tried

hard to show a little interest.

"And just a few sausages. We make them all in the house, Miss Thorne;

we know what they are. And mashed potatoes--do you like them best

mashed or baked?"

Mary finding herself obliged to vote, voted for mashed potatoes.

"Very well. But, Miss Thorne, if you like boiled fowl better, with

a little bit of ham, you know, I do hope you'll say so. And there's

lamb in the house, quite beautiful; now do 'ee say something; do 'ee,

Miss Thorne."

So invoked, Mary felt herself obliged to say something, and declared

for the roast fowl and sausages; but she found it very difficult to

pay much outward respect to a person who would pay so much outward

respect to her. A day or two after her arrival it was decided that

she should ride about the place on a donkey; she was accustomed to

riding, the doctor having generally taken care that one of his own

horses should, when required, consent to carry a lady; but there was

no steed at Boxall Hill that she could mount; and when Lady Scatcherd

had offered to get a pony for her, she had willingly compromised

matters by expressing the delight she would have in making a campaign

on a donkey. Upon this, Lady Scatcherd had herself set off in quest

of the desired animal, much to Mary's horror; and did not return till

the necessary purchase had been effected. Then she came back with the

donkey close at her heels, almost holding its collar, and stood there

at the hall-door till Mary came to approve.

"I hope she'll do. I don't think she'll kick," said Lady Scatcherd,

patting the head of her purchase quite triumphantly.

"Oh, you are so kind, Lady Scatcherd. I'm sure she'll do quite

nicely; she seems very quiet," said Mary.

"Please, my lady, it's a he," said the boy who held the halter.

"Oh! a he, is it?" said her ladyship; "but the he-donkeys are quite

as quiet as the shes, ain't they?"

"Oh, yes, my lady; a deal quieter, all the world over, and twice as

useful."

"I'm so glad of that, Miss Thorne," said Lady Scatcherd, her eyes

bright with joy.

And so Mary was established with her donkey, who did all that could

be expected from an animal in his position.

"But, dear Lady Scatcherd," said Mary, as they sat together at the

open drawing-room window the same evening, "you must not go on

calling me Miss Thorne; my name is Mary, you know. Won't you call me

Mary?" and she came and knelt at Lady Scatcherd's feet, and took hold

of her, looking up into her face.

Lady Scatcherd's cheeks became rather red, as though she was somewhat

ashamed of her position.

"You are so very kind to me," continued Mary, "and it seems so cold

to hear you call me Miss Thorne."

"Well, Miss Thorne, I'm sure I'd call you anything to please you.

Only I didn't know whether you'd like it from me. Else I do think

Mary is the prettiest name in all the language."

"I should like it very much."

"My dear Roger always loved that name better than any other; ten

times better. I used to wish sometimes that I'd been called Mary."

"Did he! Why?"

"He once had a sister called Mary; such a beautiful creature! I

declare I sometimes think you are like her."

"Oh, dear! then she must have been beautiful indeed!" said Mary,

laughing.

"She was very beautiful. I just remember her--oh, so beautiful! she

was quite a poor girl, you know; and so was I then. Isn't it odd that

I should have to be called 'my lady' now? Do you know Miss Thorne--"

"Mary! Mary!" said her guest.

"Ah, yes; but somehow, I hardly like to make so free; but, as I was

saying, I do so dislike being called 'my lady:' I always think the

people are laughing at me; and so they are."

"Oh, nonsense."

"Yes, they are though: poor dear Roger, he used to call me 'my lady'

just to make fun of me; I didn't mind it so much from him. But, Miss

Thorne--"

"Mary, Mary, Mary."

"Ah, well! I shall do it in time. But, Miss--Mary, ha! ha! ha! never

mind, let me alone. But what I want to say is this: do you think I

could drop it? Hannah says, that if I go the right way about it she

is sure I can."

"Oh! but, Lady Scatcherd, you shouldn't think of such a thing."

"Shouldn't I now?"

"Oh, no; for your husband's sake you should be proud of it. He gained

great honour, you know."

"Ah, well," said she, sighing after a short pause; "if you think it

will do him any good, of course I'll put up with it. And then I know

Louis would be mad if I talked of such a thing. But, Miss Thorne,

dear, a woman like me don't like to have to be made a fool of all the

days of her life if she can help it."

"But, Lady Scatcherd," said Mary, when this question of the title had

been duly settled, and her ladyship made to understand that she must

bear the burden for the rest of her life, "but, Lady Scatcherd, you

were speaking of Sir Roger's sister; what became of her?"

"Oh, she did very well at last, as Sir Roger did himself; but in

early life she was very unfortunate--just at the time of my marriage

with dear Roger--," and then, just as she was about to commence so

much as she knew of the history of Mary Scatcherd, she remembered

that the author of her sister-in-law's misery had been a Thorne, a

brother of the doctor; and, therefore, as she presumed, a relative of

her guest; and suddenly she became mute.

"Well," said Mary; "just as you were married, Lady Scatcherd?"

Poor Lady Scatcherd had very little worldly knowledge, and did not

in the least know how to turn the conversation or escape from the

trouble into which she had fallen. All manner of reflections began to

crowd upon her. In her early days she had known very little of the

Thornes, nor had she thought much of them since, except as regarded

her friend the doctor; but at this moment she began for the first

time to remember that she had never heard of more than two brothers in

the family. Who then could have been Mary's father? She felt at once

that it would be improper for to say anything as to Henry Thorne's

terrible faults and sudden fate;--improper also, to say more about

Mary Scatcherd; but she was quite unable to drop the matter otherwise

than abruptly, and with a start.

"She was very unfortunate, you say, Lady Scatcherd?"

"Yes, Miss Thorne; Mary, I mean--never mind me--I shall do it in

time. Yes, she was; but now I think of it, I had better say nothing

more about it. There are reasons, and I ought not to have spoken of

it. You won't be provoked with me, will you?"

Mary assured her that she would not be provoked, and of course asked

no more questions about Mary Scatcherd; nor did she think much more

about it. It was not so however with her ladyship, who could not

keep herself from reflecting that the old clergyman in the Close at

Barchester certainly had but two sons, one of whom was now the doctor

at Greshamsbury, and the other of whom had perished so wretchedly at

the gate of that farmyard. Who then was the father of Mary Thorne?

The days passed very quietly at Boxall Hill. Every morning Mary went

out on her donkey, who justified by his demeanour all that had been

said in his praise; then she would read or draw, then walk with Lady

Scatcherd, then dine, then walk again; and so the days passed quietly

away. Once or twice a week the doctor would come over and drink his

tea there, riding home in the cool of the evening. Mary also received

one visit from her friend Patience.

So the days passed quietly away till the tranquillity of the house

was suddenly broken by tidings from London. Lady Scatcherd received a

letter from her son, contained in three lines, in which he intimated

that on the following day he meant to honour her with a visit. He had

intended, he said, to have gone to Brighton with some friends; but as

he felt himself a little out of sorts, he would postpone his marine

trip and do his mother the grace of spending a few days with her.

This news was not very pleasant to Mary, by whom it had been

understood, as it had also by her uncle, that Lady Scatcherd would

have had the house to herself; but as there were no means of

preventing the evil, Mary could only inform the doctor, and prepare

herself to meet Sir Louis Scatcherd.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Doctor Hears Something to His Advantage

Sir Louis Scatcherd had told his mother that he was rather out of

sorts, and when he reached Boxall Hill it certainly did not appear

that he had given any exaggerated statement of his own maladies. He

certainly was a good deal out of sorts. He had had more than one

attack of delirium tremens since his father's death, and had almost

been at death's door.

Nothing had been said about this by Dr Thorne at Boxall Hill; but

he was by no means ignorant of his ward's state. Twice he had gone

up to London to visit him; twice he had begged him to go down into

the country and place himself under his mother's care. On the last

occasion, the doctor had threatened him with all manner of pains and

penalties: with pains, as to his speedy departure from this world and

all its joys; and with penalties, in the shape of poverty if that

departure should by any chance be retarded. But these threats had

at the moment been in vain, and the doctor had compromised matters

by inducing Sir Louis to promise that he would go to Brighton. The

baronet, however, who was at length frightened by some renewed

attack, gave up his Brighton scheme, and, without any notice to the

doctor, hurried down to Boxall Hill.

Mary did not see him on the first day of his coming, but the doctor

did. He received such intimation of the visit as enabled him to be at

the house soon after the young man's arrival; and, knowing that his

assistance might be necessary, he rode over to Boxall Hill. It was

a dreadful task to him, this of making the same fruitless endeavour

for the son that he had made for the father, and in the same house.

But he was bound by every consideration to perform the task. He had

promised the father that he would do for the son all that was in his

power; and he had, moreover, the consciousness, that should Sir Louis

succeed in destroying himself, the next heir to all the property was

his own niece, Mary Thorne.

He found Sir Louis in a low, wretched, miserable state. Though he

was a drunkard as his father was, he was not at all such a drunkard

as was his father. The physical capacities of the men were very

different. The daily amount of alcohol which the father had consumed

would have burnt up the son in a week; whereas, though the son

was continually tipsy, what he swallowed would hardly have had an

injurious effect upon the father.

"You are all wrong, quite wrong," said Sir Louis, petulantly; "it

isn't that at all. I have taken nothing this week past--literally

nothing. I think it's the liver."

Dr Thorne wanted no one to tell him what was the matter with his

ward. It was his liver; his liver, and his head, and his stomach, and

his heart. Every organ in his body had been destroyed, or was in the

course of destruction. His father had killed himself with brandy;

the son, more elevated in his tastes, was doing the same thing with

curaÃ§oa, maraschino, and cherry-bounce.

"Sir Louis," said the doctor--he was obliged to be much more

punctilious with him than he had been with the contractor--"the

matter is in your own hands entirely: if you cannot keep your lips

from that accursed poison, you have nothing in this world to look

forward to; nothing, nothing!"

Mary proposed to return with her uncle to Greshamsbury, and he was

at first well inclined that she should do so. But this idea was

overruled, partly in compliance with Lady Scatcherd's entreaties, and

partly because it would have seemed as though they had both thought

the presence of its owner had made the house an unfit habitation for

decent people. The doctor therefore returned, leaving Mary there; and

Lady Scatcherd busied herself between her two guests.

On the next day Sir Louis was able to come down to a late dinner, and

Mary was introduced to him. He had dressed himself in his best array;

and as he had--at any rate for the present moment--been frightened

out of his libations, he was prepared to make himself as agreeable as

possible. His mother waited on him almost as a slave might have done;

but she seemed to do so with the fear of a slave rather than the love

of a mother. She was fidgety in her attentions, and worried him by

endeavouring to make her evening sitting-room agreeable.

But Sir Louis, though he was not very sweetly behaved under these

manipulations from his mother's hands, was quite complaisant to

Miss Thorne; nay, after the expiration of a week he was almost more

than complaisant. He piqued himself on his gallantry, and now found

that, in the otherwise dull seclusion of Boxall Hill, he had a good

opportunity of exercising it. To do him justice it must be admitted

that he would not have been incapable of a decent career had he

stumbled upon some girl who could have loved him before he stumbled

upon his maraschino bottle. Such might have been the case with many

a lost rake. The things that are bad are accepted because the things

that are good do not come easily in his way. How many a miserable

father reviles with bitterness of spirit the low tastes of his son,

who has done nothing to provide his child with higher pleasures!

Sir Louis--partly in the hopes of Mary's smiles, and partly

frightened by the doctor's threats--did, for a while, keep himself

within decent bounds. He did not usually appear before Mary's eyes

till three or four in the afternoon; but when he did come forth, he

came forth sober and resolute to please. His mother was delighted,

and was not slow to sing his praises; and even the doctor, who now

visited Boxall Hill more frequently than ever, began to have some

hopes.

One constant subject, I must not say of conversation, on the part

of Lady Scatcherd, but rather of declamation, had hitherto been the

beauty and manly attributes of Frank Gresham. She had hardly ceased

to talk to Mary of the infinite good qualities of the young squire,

and especially of his prowess in the matter of Mr Moffat. Mary had

listened to all this eloquence, not perhaps with inattention, but

without much reply. She had not been exactly sorry to hear Frank

talked about; indeed, had she been so minded, she could herself have

said something on the same subject; but she did not wish to take Lady

Scatcherd altogether into her confidence, and she had been unable to

say much about Frank Gresham without doing so. Lady Scatcherd had,

therefore, gradually conceived the idea that her darling was not a

favourite with her guest.

Now, therefore, she changed the subject; and, as her own son was

behaving with such unexampled propriety, she dropped Frank and

confined her eulogies to Louis. He had been a little wild, she

admitted; young men so often were so; but she hoped that it was now

over.

"He does still take a little drop of those French drinks in the

morning," said Lady Scatcherd, in her confidence; for she was too

honest to be false, even in her own cause. "He does do that, I know:

but that's nothing, my dear, to swilling all day; and everything

can't be done at once, can it, Miss Thorne?"

On this subject Mary found her tongue loosened. She could not talk

about Frank Gresham, but she could speak with hope to the mother of

her only son. She could say that Sir Louis was still very young; that

there was reason to trust that he might now reform; that his present

conduct was apparently good; and that he appeared capable of better

things. So much she did say; and the mother took her sympathy for

more than it was worth.

On this matter, and on this matter perhaps alone, Sir Louis and Lady

Scatcherd were in accord. There was much to recommend Mary to the

baronet; not only did he see her to be beautiful, and perceive her

to be attractive and ladylike; but she was also the niece of the man

who, for the present, held the purse-strings of his wealth. Mary, it

is true, had no fortune. But Sir Louis knew that she was acknowledged

to be a lady; and he was ambitious that his "lady" should be a lady.

There was also much to recommend Mary to the mother, to any mother;

and thus it came to pass, that Miss Thorne had no obstacle between

her and the dignity of being Lady Scatcherd the second;--no obstacle

whatever, if only she could bring herself to wish it.

It was some time--two or three weeks, perhaps--before Mary's mind was

first opened to this new brilliancy in her prospects. Sir Louis at

first was rather afraid of her, and did not declare his admiration

in any very determined terms. He certainly paid her many compliments

which, from any one else, she would have regarded as abominable.

But she did not expect great things from the baronet's taste: she

concluded that he was only doing what he thought a gentleman should

do; and she was willing to forgive much for Lady Scatcherd's sake.

His first attempts were, perhaps, more ludicrous than passionate. He

was still too much an invalid to take walks, and Mary was therefore

saved from his company in her rambles; but he had a horse of his own

at Boxall Hill, and had been advised to ride by the doctor. Mary

also rode--on a donkey only, it is true--but Sir Louis found himself

bound in gallantry to accompany her. Mary's steed had answered every

expectation, and proved himself very quiet; so quiet, that without

the admonition of a cudgel behind him, he could hardly be persuaded

into the demurest trot. Now, as Sir Louis's horse was of a very

different mettle, he found it rather difficult not to step

faster than his inamorata; and, let it him struggle as he would,

was generally so far ahead as to be debarred the delights of

conversation.

When for the second time he proposed to accompany her, Mary did what

she could to hinder it. She saw that he had been rather ashamed of

the manner in which his companion was mounted, and she herself would

have enjoyed her ride much more without him. He was an invalid,

however; it was necessary to make much of him, and Mary did not

absolutely refuse his offer.

"Lady Scatcherd," said he, as they were standing at the door previous

to mounting--he always called his mother Lady Scatcherd--"why don't

you have a horse for Miss Thorne? This donkey is--is--really is, so

very--very--can't go at all, you know?"

Lady Scatcherd began to declare that she would willingly have got a

pony if Mary would have let her do so.

"Oh, no, Lady Scatcherd; not on any account. I do like the donkey so

much--I do indeed."

"But he won't go," said Sir Louis. "And for a person who rides like

you, Miss Thorne--such a horsewoman you know--why, you know, Lady

Scatcherd, it's positively ridiculous; d---- absurd, you know."

And then, with an angry look at his mother, he mounted his horse, and

was soon leading the way down the avenue.

"Miss Thorne," said he, pulling himself up at the gate, "if I had

known that I was to be so extremely happy as to have found you here,

I would have brought you down the most beautiful creature, an Arab.

She belongs to my friend Jenkins; but I wouldn't have stood at any

price in getting her for you. By Jove! if you were on that mare, I'd

back you, for style and appearance, against anything in Hyde Park."

The offer of this sporting wager, which naturally would have been

very gratifying to Mary, was lost upon her, for Sir Louis had again

unwittingly got on in advance, but he stopped himself in time to hear

Mary again declare her passion was a donkey.

"If you could only see Jenkins's little mare, Miss Thorne! Only say

one word, and she shall be down here before the week's end. Price

shall be no obstacle--none whatever. By Jove, what a pair you would

be!"

This generous offer was repeated four or five times; but on each

occasion Mary only half heard what was said, and on each occasion the

baronet was far too much in advance to hear Mary's reply. At last he

recollected that he wanted to call on one of the tenants, and begged

his companion to allow him to ride on.

"If you at all dislike being left alone, you know--"

"Oh dear no, not at all, Sir Louis. I am quite used to it."

"Because I don't care about it, you know; only I can't make this

horse walk the same pace as that brute."

"You mustn't abuse my pet, Sir Louis."

"It's a d---- shame on my mother's part;" said Sir Louis, who, even

when in his best behaviour, could not quite give up his ordinary mode

of conversation. "When she was fortunate enough to get such a girl as

you to come and stay with her, she ought to have had something proper

for her to ride upon; but I'll look to it as soon as I am a little

stronger, you see if I don't;" and, so saying, Sir Louis trotted off,

leaving Mary in peace with her donkey.

Sir Louis had now been living cleanly and forswearing sack for what

was to him a very long period, and his health felt the good effects

of it. No one rejoiced at this more cordially than did the doctor. To

rejoice at it was with him a point of conscience. He could not help

telling himself now and again that, circumstanced as he was, he was

most specially bound to take joy in any sign of reformation which

the baronet might show. Not to do so would be almost tantamount

to wishing that he might die in order that Mary might inherit his

wealth; and, therefore, the doctor did with all his energy devote

himself to the difficult task of hoping and striving that Sir Louis

might yet live to enjoy what was his own. But the task was altogether

a difficult one, for as Sir Louis became stronger in health, so

also did he become more exorbitant in his demands on the doctor's

patience, and more repugnant to the doctor's tastes.

In his worst fits of disreputable living he was ashamed to apply to

his guardian for money; and in his worst fits of illness he was,

through fear, somewhat patient under his doctor's hands; but just at

present he had nothing of which to be ashamed, and was not at all

patient.

"Doctor,"--said he, one day, at Boxall Hill--"how about those

Greshamsbury title-deeds?"

"Oh, that will all be properly settled between my lawyer and your

own."

"Oh--ah--yes; no doubt the lawyers will settle it: settle it with a

fine bill of costs, of course. But, as Finnie says,"--Finnie was Sir

Louis's legal adviser--"I have got a tremendously large interest at

stake in this matter; eighty thousand pounds is no joke. It ain't

everybody that can shell out eighty thousand pounds when they're

wanted; and I should like to know how the thing's going on. I've a

right to ask, you know; eh, doctor?"

"The title-deeds of a large portion of the Greshamsbury estate will

be placed with the mortgage-deeds before the end of next month."

"Oh, that's all right. I choose to know about these things; for

though my father did make such a con-found-ed will, that's no reason

I shouldn't know how things are going."

"You shall know everything that I know, Sir Louis."

"And now, doctor, what are we to do about money?"

"About money?"

"Yes; money, rhino, ready! 'put money in your purse and cut a dash;'

eh, doctor? Not that I want to cut a dash. No, I'm going on the quiet

line altogether now: I've done with all that sort of thing."

"I'm heartily glad of it; heartily," said the doctor.

"Yes, I'm not going to make way for my far-away cousin yet; not if I

know it, at least. I shall soon be all right now, doctor; shan't I?"

"'All right' is a long word, Sir Louis. But I do hope you will be all

right in time, if you will live with decent prudence. You shouldn't

take that filth in the morning though."

"Filth in the morning! That's my mother, I suppose! That's her

ladyship! She's been talking, has she? Don't you believe her, doctor.

There's not a young man in Barsetshire is going more regular, all

right within the posts, than I am."

The doctor was obliged to acknowledge that there did seem to be some

improvement.

"And now, doctor, how about money? Eh?"

Doctor Thorne, like other guardians similarly circumstanced, began to

explain that Sir Louis had already had a good deal of money, and had

begun also to promise that more should be forthcoming in the event

of good behaviour, when he was somewhat suddenly interrupted by Sir

Louis.

"Well, now; I'll tell you what, doctor; I've got a bit of news for

you; something that I think will astonish you."

The doctor opened his eyes, and tried to look as though ready to be

surprised.

"Something that will really make you look about; and something, too,

that will be very much to the hearer's advantage,--as the newspaper

advertisements say."

"Something to my advantage?" said the doctor.

"Well, I hope you'll think so. Doctor, what would you think now of my

getting married?"

"I should be delighted to hear of it--more delighted than I can

express; that is, of course, if you were to marry well. It was your

father's most eager wish that you should marry early."

"That's partly my reason," said the young hypocrite. "But then, if I

marry I must have an income fit to live on; eh, doctor?"

The doctor had some fear that his interesting protÃ©gÃ©e was desirous

of a wife for the sake of the income, instead of desiring the income

for the sake of the wife. But let the cause be what it would,

marriage would probably be good for him; and he had no hesitation,

therefore, in telling him, that if he married well, he should be put

in possession of sufficient income to maintain the new Lady Scatcherd

in a manner becoming her dignity.

"As to marrying well," said Sir Louis, "you, I take it, will the be

the last man, doctor, to quarrel with my choice."

"Shall I?" said the doctor, smiling.

"Well, you won't disapprove, I guess, as the Yankee says. What would

you think of Miss Mary Thorne?"

It must be said in Sir Louis's favour that he had probably no idea

whatever of the estimation in which such young ladies as Mary Thorne

are held by those who are nearest and dearest to them. He had no sort

of conception that she was regarded by her uncle as an inestimable

treasure, almost too precious to be rendered up to the arms of any

man; and infinitely beyond any price in silver and gold, baronets'

incomes of eight or ten thousand a year, and such coins usually

current in the world's markets. He was a rich man and a baronet,

and Mary was an unmarried girl without a portion. In Sir Louis's

estimation he was offering everything, and asking for nothing. He

certainly had some idea that girls were apt to be coy, and required

a little wooing in the shape of presents, civil speeches--perhaps

kisses also. The civil speeches he had, he thought, done, and

imagined that they had been well received. The other things were to

follow; an Arab pony, for instance,--and the kisses probably with it;

and then all these difficulties would be smoothed.

But he did not for a moment conceive that there would be any

difficulty with the uncle. How should there be? Was he not a baronet

with ten thousand a year coming to him? Had he not everything which

fathers want for portionless daughters, and uncles for dependant

nieces? Might he not well inform the doctor that he had something to

tell him for his advantage?

And yet, to tell the truth, the doctor did not seem to be overjoyed

when the announcement was first made to him. He was by no means

overjoyed. On the contrary, even Sir Louis could perceive his

guardian's surprise was altogether unmixed with delight.

What a question was this that was asked him! What would he think of

a marriage between Mary Thorne--his Mary and Sir Louis Scatcherd?

Between the alpha of the whole alphabet, and him whom he could not

but regard as the omega! Think of it! Why he would think of it as

though a lamb and a wolf were to stand at the altar together. Had Sir

Louis been a Hottentot, or an Esquimaux, the proposal could not have

astonished him more. The two persons were so totally of a different

class, that the idea of the one falling in love with the other had

never occurred to him. "What would you think of Miss Mary Thorne?"

Sir Louis had asked; and the doctor, instead of answering him

with ready and pleased alacrity, stood silent, thunderstruck with

amazement.

"Well, wouldn't she be a good wife?" said Sir Louis, rather in a tone

of disgust at the evident disapproval shown at his choice. "I thought

you'd have been so delighted."

"Mary Thorne!" ejaculated the doctor at last. "Have you spoken to my

niece about this, Sir Louis?"

"Well, I have and yet I haven't; I haven't, and yet in a manner I

have."

"I don't understand you," said the doctor.

"Why, you see, I haven't exactly popped to her yet; but I have been

doing the civil; and if she's up to snuff, as I take her to be, she

knows very well what I'm after by this time."

Up to snuff! Mary Thorne, his Mary Thorne, up to snuff! To snuff too

of such a very disagreeable description!

"I think, Sir Louis, that you are in mistake about this. I think you

will find that Mary will not be disposed to avail herself of the

great advantages--for great they undoubtedly are--which you are able

to offer to your intended wife. If you will take my advice, you will

give up thinking of Mary. She would not suit you."

"Not suit me! Oh, but I think she just would. She's got no money, you

mean?"

"No, I did not mean that. It will not signify to you whether your

wife has money or not. You need not look for money. But you should

think of some one more nearly of your own temperament. I am quite

sure that my niece would refuse you."

These last words the doctor uttered with much emphasis. His intention

was to make the baronet understand that the matter was quite

hopeless, and to induce him if possible to drop it on the spot. But

he did not know Sir Louis; he ranked him too low in the scale of

human beings, and gave him no credit for any strength of character.

Sir Louis in his way did love Mary Thorne; and could not bring

himself to believe that Mary did not, or at any rate, would not soon

return his passion. He was, moreover, sufficiently obstinate, firm we

ought perhaps to say,--for his pursuit in this case was certainly not

an evil one,--and he at once made up his mind to succeed in spite of

the uncle.

"If she consents, however, you will do so too?" asked he.

"It is impossible she should consent," said the doctor.

"Impossible! I don't see anything at all impossible. But if she

does?"

"But she won't."

"Very well,--that's to be seen. But just tell me this, if she does,

will you consent?"

"The stars would fall first. It's all nonsense. Give it up, my dear

friend; believe me you are only preparing unhappiness for yourself;"

and the doctor put his hand kindly on the young man's arm. "She will

not, cannot accept such an offer."

"Will not! cannot!" said the baronet, thinking over all the reasons

which in his estimation could possibly be inducing the doctor to be

so hostile to his views, and shaking the hand off his arm. "Will not!

cannot! But come, doctor, answer my question fairly. If she'll have

me for better or worse, you won't say aught against it; will you?"

"But she won't have you; why should you give her and yourself the

pain of a refusal?"

"Oh, as for that, I must stand my chances like another. And as for

her, why d----, doctor, you wouldn't have me believe that any young

lady thinks it so very dreadful to have a baronet with ten thousand

pounds a year at her feet, specially when that same baronet ain't

very old, nor yet particularly ugly. I ain't so green as that,

doctor."

"I suppose she must go through it, then," said the doctor, musing.

"But, Dr Thorne, I did look for a kinder answer from you, considering

all that you so often say about your great friendship with my father.

I did think you'd at any rate answer me when I asked you a question."

But the doctor did not want to answer that special question. Could

it be possible that Mary should wish to marry this odious man, could

such a state of things be imagined to be the case, he would not

refuse his consent, infinitely as he would be disgusted by her

choice. But he would not give Sir Louis any excuse for telling Mary

that her uncle approved of so odious a match.

"I cannot say that in any case I should approve of such a marriage,

Sir Louis. I cannot bring myself to say so; for I know it would make

you both miserable. But on that matter my niece will choose wholly

for herself."

"And about the money, doctor?"

"If you marry a decent woman you shall not want the means of

supporting her decently," and so saying the doctor walked away,

leaving Sir Louis to his meditations.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Donkey Ride

Sir Louis, when left to himself, was slightly dismayed and somewhat

discouraged; but he was not induced to give up his object. The first

effort of his mind was made in conjecturing what private motive

Dr Thorne could possibly have in wishing to debar his niece from

marrying a rich young baronet. That the objection was personal to

himself, Sir Louis did not for a moment imagine. Could it be that the

doctor did not wish that his niece should be richer, and grander, and

altogether bigger than himself? Or was it possible that his guardian

was anxious to prevent him from marrying from some view of the

reversion of the large fortune? That there was some such reason, Sir

Louis was well sure; but let it be what it might, he would get the

better of the doctor. "He knew," so he said to himself, "what stuff

girls were made of. Baronets did not grow like blackberries." And so,

assuring himself with such philosophy, he determined to make his

offer.

The time he selected for doing this was the hour before dinner; but

on the day on which his conversation with the doctor had taken place,

he was deterred by the presence of a strange visitor. To account for

this strange visit it will be necessary that we should return to

Greshamsbury for a few minutes.

Frank, when he returned home for his summer vacation, found that

Mary had again flown; and the very fact of her absence added fuel to

the fire of his love, more perhaps than even her presence might have

done. For the flight of the quarry ever adds eagerness to the pursuit

of the huntsman. Lady Arabella, moreover, had a bitter enemy; a

foe, utterly opposed to her side in the contest, where she had once

fondly looked for her staunchest ally. Frank was now in the habit

of corresponding with Miss Dunstable, and received from her most

energetic admonitions to be true to the love which he had sworn. True

to it he resolved to be; and therefore, when he found that Mary was

flown, he resolved to fly after her.

He did not, however, do this till he had been in a measure provoked

to it by it by the sharp-tongued cautions and blunted irony of his

mother. It was not enough for her that she had banished Mary out of

the parish, and made Dr Thorne's life miserable; not enough that

she harassed her husband with harangues on the constant subject of

Frank's marrying money, and dismayed Beatrice with invectives against

the iniquity of her friend. The snake was so but scotched; to kill it

outright she must induce Frank utterly to renounce Miss Thorne.

This task she essayed, but not exactly with success. "Well, mother,"

said Frank, at last turning very red, partly with shame, and partly

with indignation, as he made the frank avowal, "since you press me

about it, I tell you fairly that my mind is made up to marry Mary

sooner or later, if--"

"Oh, Frank! good heavens! you wicked boy; you are saying this

purposely to drive me distracted."

"If," continued Frank, not attending to his mother's interjections,

"if she will consent."

"Consent!" said Lady Arabella. "Oh, heavens!" and falling into the

corner of the sofa, she buried her face in her handkerchief.

"Yes, mother, if she will consent. And now that I have told you so

much, it is only just that I should tell you this also; that as far

as I can see at present I have no reason to hope that she will do

so."

"Oh, Frank, the girl is doing all she can to catch you," said Lady

Arabella,--not prudently.

"No, mother; there you wrong her altogether; wrong her most cruelly."

"You ungracious, wicked boy! you call me cruel!"

"I don't call you cruel; but you wrong her cruelly, most cruelly.

When I have spoken to her about this--for I have spoken to her--she

has behaved exactly as you would have wanted her to do; but not at

all as I wished her. She has given me no encouragement. You have

turned her out among you"--Frank was beginning to be very bitter

now--"but she has done nothing to deserve it. If there has been any

fault it has been mine. But it is well that we should all understand

each other. My intention is to marry Mary if I can." And, so

speaking, certainly without due filial respect, he turned towards the

door.

"Frank," said his mother, raising herself up with energy to make one

last appeal. "Frank, do you wish to see me die of a broken heart?"

"You know, mother, I would wish to make you happy, if I could."

"If you wish to see me ever happy again, if you do not wish to see

me sink broken-hearted to my grave, you must give up this mad idea,

Frank,"--and now all Lady Arabella's energy came out. "Frank there is

but one course left open to you. You MUST \_marry money\_." And then

Lady Arabella stood up before her son as Lady Macbeth might have

stood, had Lady Macbeth lived to have a son of Frank's years.

"Miss Dunstable, I suppose," said Frank, scornfully. "No, mother; I

made an ass, and worse than an ass of myself once in that way, and I

won't do it again. I hate money."

"Oh, Frank!"

"I hate money."

"But, Frank, the estate?"

"I hate the estate--at least I shall hate it if I am expected to buy

it at such a price as that. The estate is my father's."

"Oh, no, Frank; it is not."

"It is in the sense I mean. He may do with it as he pleases; he will

never have a word of complaint from me. I am ready to go into a

profession to-morrow. I'll be a lawyer, or a doctor, or an engineer;

I don't care what." Frank, in his enthusiasm, probably overlooked

some of the preliminary difficulties. "Or I'll take a farm under him,

and earn my bread that way; but, mother, don't talk to me any more

about marrying money." And, so saying, Frank left the room.

Frank, it will be remembered, was twenty-one when he was first

introduced to the reader; he is now twenty-two. It may be said that

there was a great difference between his character then and now. A

year at that period will make a great difference; but the change has

been, not in his character, but in his feelings.

Frank went out from his mother and immediately ordered his black

horse to be got ready for him. He would at once go over to Boxall

Hill. He went himself to the stables to give his orders; and as he

returned to get his gloves and whip he met Beatrice in the corridor.

"Beatrice," said he, "step in here," and she followed him into his

room. "I'm not going to bear this any longer; I'm going to Boxall

Hill."

"Oh, Frank! how can you be so imprudent?"

"You, at any rate, have some decent feeling for Mary. I believe you

have some regard for her; and therefore I tell you. Will you send her

any message?"

"Oh, yes; my best, best love; that is if you will see her; but,

Frank, you are very foolish, very; and she will be infinitely

distressed."

"Do not mention this, that is, not at present; not that I mean to

make any secret of it. I shall tell my father everything. I'm off

now!" and then, paying no attention to her remonstrance, he turned

down the stairs and was soon on horseback.

He took the road to Boxall Hill, but he did not ride very fast: he

did not go jauntily as a jolly, thriving wooer; but musingly, and

often with diffidence, meditating every now and then whether it

would not be better for him to turn back: to turn back--but not from

fear of his mother; not from prudential motives; not because that

often-repeated lesson as to marrying money was beginning to take

effect; not from such causes as these; but because he doubted how he

might be received by Mary.

He did, it is true, think something about his worldly prospects. He

had talked rather grandiloquently to his mother as to his hating

money, and hating the estate. His mother's never-ceasing worldly

cares on such subjects perhaps demanded that a little grandiloquence

should be opposed to them. But Frank did not hate the estate; nor did

he at all hate the position of an English country gentleman. Miss

Dunstable's eloquence, however, rang in his ears. For Miss Dunstable

had an eloquence of her own, even in her letters. "Never let them

talk you out of your own true, honest, hearty feelings," she had

said. "Greshamsbury is a very nice place, I am sure; and I hope I

shall see it some day; but all its green knolls are not half so nice,

should not be half so precious, as the pulses of your own heart. That

is your own estate, your own, your very own--your own and another's;

whatever may go to the money-lenders, don't send that there. Don't

mortgage that, Mr Gresham."

"No," said Frank, pluckily, as he put his horse into a faster trot,

"I won't mortgage that. They may do what they like with the estate;

but my heart's my own," and so speaking to himself, almost aloud, he

turned a corner of the road rapidly and came at once upon the doctor.

"Hallo, doctor! is that you?" said Frank, rather disgusted.

"What! Frank! I hardly expected to meet you here," said Dr Thorne,

not much better pleased.

They were now not above a mile from Boxall Hill, and the doctor,

therefore, could not but surmise whither Frank was going. They had

repeatedly met since Frank's return from Cambridge, both in the

village and in the doctor's house; but not a word had been said

between them about Mary beyond what the merest courtesy had required.

Not that each did not love the other sufficiently to make a full

confidence between them desirable to both; but neither had had the

courage to speak out.

Nor had either of them the courage to do so now. "Yes," said Frank,

blushing, "I am going to Lady Scatcherd's. Shall I find the ladies at

home?"

"Yes; Lady Scatcherd is there; but Sir Louis is there also--an

invalid: perhaps you would not wish to meet him."

"Oh! I don't mind," said Frank, trying to laugh; "he won't bite, I

suppose?"

The doctor longed in his heart to pray to Frank to return with him;

not to go and make further mischief; not to do that which might cause

a more bitter estrangement between himself and the squire. But he had

not the courage to do it. He could not bring himself to accuse Frank

of being in love with his niece. So after a few more senseless words

on either side, words which each knew to be senseless as he uttered

them, they both rode on their own ways.

And then the doctor silently, and almost unconsciously, made such a

comparison between Louis Scatcherd and Frank Gresham as Hamlet made

between the dead and live king. It was Hyperion to a satyr. Was it

not as impossible that Mary should not love the one, as that she

should love the other? Frank's offer of his affections had at first

probably been but a boyish ebullition of feeling; but if it should

now be, that this had grown into a manly and disinterested love, how

could Mary remain unmoved? What could her heart want more, better,

more beautiful, more rich than such a love as his? Was he not

personally all that a girl could like? Were not his disposition,

mind, character, acquirements, all such as women most delight to

love? Was it not impossible that Mary should be indifferent to him?

So meditated the doctor as he rode along, with only too true a

knowledge of human nature. Ah! it was impossible, it was quite

impossible that Mary should be indifferent. She had never been

indifferent since Frank had uttered his first half-joking word of

love. Such things are more important to women than they are to men,

to girls than they are to boys. When Frank had first told her that he

loved her; aye, months before that, when he merely looked his love,

her heart had received the whisper, had acknowledged the glance,

unconscious as she was herself, and resolved as she was to rebuke his

advances. When, in her hearing, he had said soft nothings to Patience

Oriel, a hated, irrepressible tear had gathered in her eye. When he

had pressed in his warm, loving grasp the hand which she had offered

him as a token of mere friendship, her heart had forgiven him the

treachery, nay, almost thanked him for it, before her eyes or

her words had been ready to rebuke him. When the rumour of his

liaison with Miss Dunstable reached her ears, when she heard of

Miss Dunstable's fortune, she had wept, wept outright, in her

chamber--wept, as she said to herself, to think that he should be so

mercenary; but she had wept, as she should have said to herself, at

finding that he was so faithless. Then, when she knew at last that

this rumour was false, when she found that she was banished from

Greshamsbury for his sake, when she was forced to retreat with her

friend Patience, how could she but love him, in that he was not

mercenary? How could she not love him in that he was so faithful?

It was impossible that she should not love him. Was he not the

brightest and the best of men that she had ever seen, or was like

to see?--that she could possibly ever see, she would have said to

herself, could she have brought herself to own the truth? And then,

when she heard how true he was, how he persisted against father,

mother, and sisters, how could it be that that should not be a merit

in her eyes which was so great a fault in theirs? When Beatrice, with

would-be solemn face, but with eyes beaming with feminine affection,

would gravely talk of Frank's tender love as a terrible misfortune,

as a misfortune to them all, to Mary herself as well as others, how

could Mary do other than love him? "Beatrice is his sister," she

would say within her own mind, "otherwise she would never talk like

this; were she not his sister, she could not but know the value of

such love as this." Ah! yes; Mary did love him; love him with all the

strength of her heart; and the strength of her heart was very great.

And now by degrees, in those lonely donkey-rides at Boxall Hill, in

those solitary walks, she was beginning to own to herself the truth.

And now that she did own it, what should be her course? What should

she do, how should she act if this loved one persevered in his

love? And, ah! what should she do, how should she act if he did not

persevere? Could it be that there should be happiness in store for

her? Was it not too clear that, let the matter go how it would, there

was no happiness in store for her? Much as she might love Frank

Gresham, she could never consent to be his wife unless the squire

would smile on her as his daughter-in-law. The squire had been

all that was kind, all that was affectionate. And then, too, Lady

Arabella! As she thought of the Lady Arabella a sterner form of

thought came across her brow. Why should Lady Arabella rob her of her

heart's joy? What was Lady Arabella that she, Mary Thorne, need quail

before her? Had Lady Arabella stood only in her way, Lady Arabella,

flanked by the de Courcy legion, Mary felt that she could have

demanded Frank's hand as her own before them all without a blush of

shame or a moment's hesitation. Thus, when her heart was all but

ready to collapse within her, would she gain some little strength by

thinking of the Lady Arabella.

"Please, my lady, here be young squoire Gresham," said one of the

untutored servants at Boxall Hill, opening Lady Scatcherd's little

parlour door as her ladyship was amusing herself by pulling down and

turning, and re-folding, and putting up again, a heap of household

linen which was kept in a huge press for the express purpose of

supplying her with occupation.

Lady Scatcherd, holding a vast counterpane in her arms, looked back

over her shoulders and perceived that Frank was in the room. Down

went the counterpane on the ground, and Frank soon found himself in

the very position which that useful article had so lately filled.

"Oh! Master Frank! oh, Master Frank!" said her ladyship, almost in an

hysterical fit of joy; and then she hugged and kissed him as she had

never kissed and hugged her own son since that son had first left the

parent nest.

Frank bore it patiently and with a merry laugh. "But, Lady

Scatcherd," said he, "what will they all say? you forget I am a man

now," and he stooped his head as she again pressed her lips upon his

forehead.

"I don't care what none of 'em say," said her ladyship, quite going

back to her old days; "I will kiss my own boy; so I will. Eh, but

Master Frank, this is good of you. A sight of you is good for sore

eyes; and my eyes have been sore enough too since I saw you;" and she

put her apron up to wipe away a tear.

"Yes," said Frank, gently trying to disengage himself, but not

successfully; "yes, you have had a great loss, Lady Scatcherd. I was

so sorry when I heard of your grief."

"You always had a soft, kind heart, Master Frank; so you had. God's

blessing on you! What a fine man you have grown! Deary me! Well, it

seems as though it were only just t'other day like." And she pushed

him a little off from her, so that she might look the better into his

face.

"Well. Is it all right? I suppose you would hardly know me again now

I've got a pair of whiskers?"

"Know you! I should know you well if I saw but the heel of your

foot. Why, what a head of hair you have got, and so dark too! but it

doesn't curl as it used once." And she stroked his hair, and looked

into his eyes, and put her hand to his cheeks. "You'll think me an

old fool, Master Frank: I know that; but you may think what you like.

If I live for the next twenty years you'll always be my own boy; so

you will."

By degrees, slow degrees, Frank managed to change the conversation,

and to induce Lady Scatcherd to speak on some other topic than his

own infantine perfections. He affected an indifference as he spoke of

her guest, which would have deceived no one but Lady Scatcherd; but

her it did deceive; and then he asked where Mary was.

"She's just gone out on her donkey--somewhere about the place. She

rides on a donkey mostly every day. But you'll stop and take a bit of

dinner with us? Eh, now do 'ee, Master Frank."

But Master Frank excused himself. He did not choose to pledge himself

to sit down to dinner with Mary. He did not know in what mood they

might return with regard to each other at dinner-time. He said,

therefore, that he would walk out and, if possible, find Miss Thorne;

and that he would return to the house again before he went.

Lady Scatcherd then began making apologies for Sir Louis. He was an

invalid; the doctor had been with him all the morning, and he was not

yet out of his room.

These apologies Frank willingly accepted, and then made his way as

he could on to the lawn. A gardener, of whom he inquired, offered to

go with him in pursuit of Miss Thorne. This assistance, however, he

declined, and set forth in quest of her, having learnt what were her

most usual haunts. Nor was he directed wrongly; for after walking

about twenty minutes, he saw through the trees the legs of a donkey

moving on the green-sward, at about two hundred yards from him. On

that donkey doubtless sat Mary Thorne.

The donkey was coming towards him; not exactly in a straight line,

but so much so as to make it impossible that Mary should not see him

if he stood still. He did stand still, and soon emerging from the

trees, Mary saw him all but close to her.

Her heart gave a leap within her, but she was so far mistress of

herself as to repress any visible sign of outward emotion. She did

not fall from her donkey, or scream, or burst into tears. She merely

uttered the words, "Mr Gresham!" in a tone of not unnatural surprise.

"Yes," said he, trying to laugh, but less successful than she had

been in suppressing a show of feeling. "Mr Gresham! I have come over

at last to pay my respects to you. You must have thought me very

uncourteous not to do so before."

This she denied. "She had not," she said, "thought him at all

uncivil. She had come to Boxall Hill to be out of the way; and, of

course, had not expected any such formalities." As she uttered this

she almost blushed at the abrupt truth of what she was saying. But

she was taken so much unawares that she did not know how to make the

truth other than abrupt.

"To be out of the way!" said Frank. "And why should you want to be

out of the way?"

"Oh! there were reasons," said she, laughing. "Perhaps I have

quarrelled dreadfully with my uncle."

Frank at the present moment had not about him a scrap of badinage. He

had not a single easy word at his command. He could not answer her

with anything in guise of a joke; so he walked on, not answering at

all.

"I hope all my friends at Greshamsbury are well," said Mary. "Is

Beatrice quite well?"

"Quite well," said he.

"And Patience?"

"What, Miss Oriel; yes, I believe so. I haven't seen her this day or

two." How was it that Mary felt a little flush of joy, as Frank spoke

in this indifferent way about Miss Oriel's health?

"I thought she was always a particular friend of yours," said she.

"What! who? Miss Oriel? So she is! I like her amazingly; so does

Beatrice." And then he walked about six steps in silence, plucking up

courage for the great attempt. He did pluck up his courage and then

rushed at once to the attack.

"Mary!" said he, and as he spoke he put his hand on the donkey's

neck, and looked tenderly into her face. He looked tenderly, and, as

Mary's ear at once told her, his voice sounded more soft than it had

ever sounded before. "Mary, do you remember the last time that we

were together?"

Mary did remember it well. It was on that occasion when he had

treacherously held her hand; on that day when, according to law, he

had become a man; when he had outraged all the propriety of the de

Courcy interest by offering his love to Mary in Augusta's hearing.

Mary did remember it well; but how was she to speak of it? "It was

your birthday, I think," said she.

"Yes, it was my birthday. I wonder whether you remember what I said

to you then?"

"I remember that you were very foolish, Mr Gresham."

"Mary, I have come to repeat my folly;--that is, if it be folly.

I told you then that I loved you, and I dare say that I did so

awkwardly, like a boy. Perhaps I may be just as awkward now; but you

ought at any rate to believe me when you find that a year has not

altered me."

Mary did not think him at all awkward, and she did believe him. But

how was she to answer him? She had not yet taught herself what answer

she ought to make if he persisted in his suit. She had hitherto been

content to run away from him; but she had done so because she would

not submit to be accused of the indelicacy of putting herself in his

way. She had rebuked him when he first spoke of his love; but she had

done so because she looked on what he said as a boy's nonsense. She

had schooled herself in obedience to the Greshamsbury doctrines. Was

there any real reason, any reason founded on truth and honesty, why

she should not be a fitting wife to Frank Gresham,--Francis Newbold

Gresham, of Greshamsbury, though he was, or was to be?

He was well born--as well born as any gentleman in England. She

was basely born--as basely born as any lady could be. Was this

sufficient bar against such a match? Mary felt in her heart that some

twelvemonth since, before she knew what little she did now know of

her own story, she would have said it was so. And would she indulge

her own love by inveigling him she loved into a base marriage? But

then reason spoke again. What, after all, was this blood of which she

had taught herself to think so much? Would she have been more honest,

more fit to grace an honest man's hearthstone, had she been the

legitimate descendant of a score of legitimate duchesses? Was it not

her first duty to think of him--of what would make him happy? Then of

her uncle--what he would approve? Then of herself--what would best

become her modesty; her sense of honour? Could it be well that she

should sacrifice the happiness of two persons to a theoretic love of

pure blood?

So she had argued within herself; not now, sitting on the donkey,

with Frank's hand before her on the tame brute's neck; but on other

former occasions as she had ridden along demurely among those trees.

So she had argued; but she had never brought her arguments to a

decision. All manner of thoughts crowded on her to prevent her doing

so. She would think of the squire, and resolve to reject Frank; and

would then remember Lady Arabella, and resolve to accept him. Her

resolutions, however, were most irresolute; and so, when Frank

appeared in person before her, carrying his heart in his hand, she

did not know what answer to make to him. Thus it was with her as with

so many other maidens similarly circumstanced; at last she left it

all to chance.

"You ought, at any rate, to believe me," said Frank, "when you find

that a year has not altered me."

"A year should have taught you to be wiser," said she. "You should

have learnt by this time, Mr Gresham, that your lot and mine are not

cast in the same mould; that our stations in life are different.

Would your father or mother approve of your even coming here to see

me?"

Mary, as she spoke these sensible words, felt that they were "flat,

stale, and unprofitable." She felt, also, that they were not true in

sense; that they did not come from her heart; that they were not such

as Frank deserved at her hands, and she was ashamed of herself.

"My father I hope will approve of it," said he. "That my mother

should disapprove of it is a misfortune which I cannot help; but

on this point I will take no answer from my father or mother; the

question is one too personal to myself. Mary, if you say that you

will not, or cannot return my love, I will go away;--not from here

only, but from Greshamsbury. My presence shall not banish you from

all that you hold dear. If you can honestly say that I am nothing to

you, can be nothing to you, I will then tell my mother that she may

be at ease, and I will go away somewhere and get over it as I may."

The poor fellow got so far, looking apparently at the donkey's ears,

with hardly a gasp of hope in his voice, and he so far carried Mary

with him that she also had hardly a gasp of hope in her heart. There

he paused for a moment, and then looking up into her face, he spoke

but one word more. "But," said he--and there he stopped. It was

clearly told in that "but." Thus would he do if Mary would declare

that she did not care for him. If, however, she could not bring

herself so to declare, then was he ready to throw his father and

mother to the winds; then would he stand his ground; then would he

look all other difficulties in the face, sure that they might finally

be overcome. Poor Mary! the whole onus of settling the matter was

thus thrown upon her. She had only to say that he was indifferent to

her;--that was all.

If "all the blood of the Howards" had depended upon it, she could

not have brought herself to utter such a falsehood. Indifferent to

her, as he walked there by her donkey's side, talking thus earnestly

of his love for her! Was he not to her like some god come from the

heavens to make her blessed? Did not the sun shine upon him with a

halo, so that he was bright as an angel? Indifferent to her! Could

the open unadulterated truth have been practicable for her, she

would have declared her indifference in terms that would truly have

astonished him. As it was, she found it easier to say nothing. She

bit her lips to keep herself from sobbing. She struggled hard, but

in vain, to prevent her hands and feet from trembling. She seemed to

swing upon her donkey as though like to fall, and would have given

much to be upon her own feet upon the sward.

"\_Si la jeunesse savait . . .\_" There is so much in that wicked old

French proverb! Had Frank known more about a woman's mind--had he,

that is, been forty-two instead of twenty-two--he would at once have

been sure of his game, and have felt that Mary's silence told him

all he wished to know. But then, had he been forty-two instead of

twenty-two, he would not have been so ready to risk the acres of

Greshamsbury for the smiles of Mary Thorne.

"If you can't say one word to comfort me, I will go," said he,

disconsolately. "I made up my mind to tell you this, and so I came

over. I told Lady Scatcherd I should not stay,--not even for dinner."

"I did not know you were so hurried," said she, almost in a whisper.

On a sudden he stood still, and pulling the donkey's rein, caused him

to stand still also. The beast required very little persuasion to be

so guided, and obligingly remained meekly passive.

"Mary, Mary!" said Frank, throwing his arms round her knees as she

sat upon her steed, and pressing his face against her body. "Mary,

you were always honest; be honest now. I love you with all my heart.

Will you be my wife?"

But still Mary said not a word. She no longer bit her lips; she was

beyond that, and was now using all her efforts to prevent her tears

from falling absolutely on her lover's face. She said nothing. She

could no more rebuke him now and send him from her than she could

encourage him. She could only sit there shaking and crying and

wishing she was on the ground. Frank, on the whole, rather liked the

donkey. It enabled him to approach somewhat nearer to an embrace than

he might have found practicable had they both been on their feet. The

donkey himself was quite at his ease, and looked as though he was

approvingly conscious of what was going on behind his ears.

"I have a right to a word, Mary; say 'Go,' and I will leave you at

once."

But Mary did not say "Go." Perhaps she would have done so had she

been able; but just at present she could say nothing. This came from

her having failed to make up her mind in due time as to what course

it would best become her to follow.

"One word, Mary; one little word. There, if you will not speak,

here is my hand. If you will have it, let it lie in yours;--if not,

push it away." So saying, he managed to get the end of his fingers

on to her palm, and there it remained unrepulsed. "La jeunesse"

was beginning to get a lesson; experience when duly sought after

sometimes comes early in life.

In truth Mary had not strength to push the fingers away. "My love,

my own, my own!" said Frank, presuming on this very negative sign of

acquiescence. "My life, my own one, my own Mary!" and then the hand

was caught hold of and was at his lips before an effort could be made

to save it from such treatment.

"Mary, look at me; say one word to me."

There was a deep sigh, and then came the one word--"Oh, Frank!"

"Mr Gresham, I hope I have the honour of seeing you quite well,"

said a voice close to his ear. "I beg to say that you are welcome to

Boxall Hill." Frank turned round and instantly found himself shaking

hands with Sir Louis Scatcherd.

How Mary got over her confusion Frank never saw, for he had enough

to do to get over his own. He involuntarily deserted Mary and began

talking very fast to Sir Louis. Sir Louis did not once look at Miss

Thorne, but walked back towards the house with Mr Gresham, sulky

enough in temper, but still making some effort to do the fine

gentleman. Mary, glad to be left alone, merely occupied herself with

sitting on the donkey; and the donkey, when he found that the two

gentlemen went towards the house, for company's sake and for his

stable's sake, followed after them.

Frank stayed but three minutes in the house; gave another kiss to

Lady Scatcherd, getting three in return, and thereby infinitely

disgusting Sir Louis, shook hands, anything but warmly, with the

young baronet, and just felt the warmth of Mary's hand within his

own. He felt also the warmth of her eyes' last glance, and rode home

a happy man.

CHAPTER XXX

Post Prandial

Frank rode home a happy man, cheering himself, as successful lovers

do cheer themselves, with the brilliancy of his late exploit: nor was

it till he had turned the corner into the Greshamsbury stables that

he began to reflect what he would do next. It was all very well to

have induced Mary to allow his three fingers to lie half a minute

in her soft hand; the having done so might certainly be sufficient

evidence that he had overcome one of the lions in his path; but it

could hardly be said that all his difficulties were now smoothed. How

was he to make further progress?

To Mary, also, the same ideas no doubt occurred--with many others.

But, then, it was not for Mary to make any progress in the matter. To

her at least belonged this passive comfort, that at present no act

hostile to the de Courcy interest would be expected from her. All

that she could do would be to tell her uncle so much as it was

fitting that he should know. The doing this would doubtless be in

some degree difficult; but it was not probable that there would be

much difference, much of anything but loving anxiety for each other,

between her and Dr Thorne. One other thing, indeed, she must do;

Frank must be made to understand what her birth had been. "This," she

said to herself, "will give him an opportunity of retracting what

he has done should he choose to avail himself of it. It is well he

should have such opportunity."

But Frank had more than this to do. He had told Beatrice that he

would make no secret of his love, and he fully resolved to be as good

as his word. To his father he owed an unreserved confidence; and he

was fully minded to give it. It was, he knew, altogether out of the

question that he should at once marry a portionless girl without his

father's consent; probably out of the question that he should do so

even with it. But he would, at any rate, tell his father, and then

decide as to what should be done next. So resolving, he put his black

horse into the stable and went in to dinner. After dinner he and his

father would be alone.

Yes; after dinner he and his father would be alone. He dressed

himself hurriedly, for the dinner-bell was almost on the stroke as he

entered the house. He said this to himself once and again; but when

the meats and the puddings, and then the cheese, were borne away,

as the decanters were placed before his father, and Lady Arabella

sipped her one glass of claret, and his sisters ate their portion of

strawberries, his pressing anxiety for the coming interview began to

wax somewhat dull.

His mother and sisters, however, rendered him no assistance by

prolonging their stay. With unwonted assiduity he pressed a second

glass of claret on his mother. But Lady Arabella was not only

temperate in her habits, but also at the present moment very angry

with her son. She thought that he had been to Boxall Hill, and was

only waiting a proper moment to cross-question him sternly on the

subject. Now she departed, taking her train of daughters with her.

"Give me one big gooseberry," said Nina, as she squeezed herself in

under her brother's arm, prior to making her retreat. Frank would

willingly have given her a dozen of the biggest, had she wanted them;

but having got the one, she squeezed herself out again and scampered

off.

The squire was very cheery this evening; from what cause cannot now

be said. Perhaps he had succeeded in negotiating a further loan, thus

temporarily sprinkling a drop of water over the ever-rising dust of

his difficulties.

"Well, Frank, what have you been after to-day? Peter told me you had

the black horse out," said he, pushing the decanter to his son. "Take

my advice, my boy, and don't give him too much summer road-work. Legs

won't stand it, let them be ever so good."

"Why, sir, I was obliged to go out to-day, and therefore, it had to

be either the old mare or the young horse."

"Why didn't you take Ramble?" Now Ramble was the squire's own saddle

hack, used for farm surveying, and occasionally for going to cover.

"I shouldn't think of doing that, sir."

"My dear boy, he is quite at your service; for goodness' sake do let

me have a little wine, Frank--quite at your service; any riding I

have now is after the haymakers, and that's all on the grass."

"Thank'ee, sir. Well, perhaps I will take a turn out of Ramble should

I want it."

"Do, and pray, pray take care of that black horse's legs. He's

turning out more of a horse than I took him to be, and I should be

sorry to see him injured. Where have you been to-day?"

"Well, father, I have something to tell you."

"Something to tell me!" and then the squire's happy and gay look,

which had been only rendered more happy and more gay by his assumed

anxiety about the black horse, gave place to that heaviness of visage

which acrimony and misfortune had made so habitual to him. "Something

to tell me!" Any grave words like these always presaged some money

difficulty to the squire's ears. He loved Frank with the tenderest

love. He would have done so under almost any circumstances; but,

doubtless, that love had been made more palpable to himself by the

fact that Frank had been a good son as regards money--not exigeant

as was Lady Arabella, or selfishly reckless as was his nephew Lord

Porlock. But now Frank must be in difficulty about money. This was

his first idea. "What is it, Frank; you have seldom had anything

to say that has not been pleasant for me to hear?" And then the

heaviness of visage again gave way for a moment as his eye fell upon

his son.

"I have been to Boxall Hill, sir."

The tenor of his father's thoughts was changed in an instant; and the

dread of immediate temporary annoyance gave place to true anxiety for

his son. He, the squire, had been no party to Mary's exile from his

own domain; and he had seen with pain that she had now a second time

been driven from her home: but he had never hitherto questioned the

expediency of separating his son from Mary Thorne. Alas! it became

too necessary--too necessary through his own default--that Frank

should marry money!

"At Boxall Hill, Frank! Has that been prudent? Or, indeed, has it

been generous to Miss Thorne, who has been driven there, as it were,

by your imprudence?"

"Father, it is well that we should understand each other about

this--"

"Fill your glass, Frank;" Frank mechanically did as he was told, and

passed the bottle.

"I should never forgive myself were I to deceive you, or keep

anything from you."

"I believe it is not in your nature to deceive me, Frank."

"The fact is, sir, that I have made up my mind that Mary Thorne shall

be my wife--sooner or later that is, unless, of course, she should

utterly refuse. Hitherto, she has utterly refused me. I believe I may

now say that she has accepted me."

The squire sipped his claret, but at the moment said nothing. There

was a quiet, manly, but yet modest determination about his son

that he had hardly noticed before. Frank had become legally of

age, legally a man, when he was twenty-one. Nature, it seems, had

postponed the ceremony till he was twenty-two. Nature often does

postpone the ceremony even to a much later age;--sometimes,

altogether forgets to accomplish it.

The squire continued to sip his claret; he had to think over the

matter a while before he could answer a statement so deliberately

made by his son.

"I think I may say so," continued Frank, with perhaps unnecessary

modesty. "She is so honest that, had she not intended it, she

would have said so honestly. Am I right, father, in thinking that,

as regards Mary, personally, you would not reject her as a

daughter-in-law?"

"Personally!" said the squire, glad to have the subject presented to

him in a view that enabled him to speak out. "Oh, no; personally, I

should not object to her, for I love her dearly. She is a good girl.

I do believe she is a good girl in every respect. I have always liked

her; liked to see her about the house. But--"

"I know what you would say, father." This was rather more than the

squire knew himself. "Such a marriage is imprudent."

"It is more than that, Frank; I fear it is impossible."

"Impossible! No, father; it is not impossible."

"It is impossible, Frank, in the usual sense. What are you to live

upon? What would you do with your children? You would not wish to see

your wife distressed and comfortless."

"No, I should not like to see that."

"You would not wish to begin life as an embarrassed man and end it

as a ruined man. If you were now to marry Miss Thorne such would, I

fear, doubtless be your lot."

Frank caught at the word "now." "I don't expect to marry immediately.

I know that would be imprudent. But I am pledged, father, and I

certainly cannot go back. And now that I have told you all this, what

is your advice to me?"

The father again sat silent, still sipping his wine. There was

nothing in his son that he could be ashamed of, nothing that he could

meet with anger, nothing that he could not love; but how should he

answer him? The fact was, that the son had more in him than the

father; this his mind and spirit were of a calibre not to be opposed

successfully by the mind and spirit of the squire.

"Do you know Mary's history?" said Mr Gresham, at last; "the history

of her birth?"

"Not a word of it," said Frank. "I did not know she had a history."

"Nor does she know it; at least, I presume not. But you should know

it now. And, Frank, I will tell it you; not to turn you from her--not

with that object, though I think that, to a certain extent, it should

have that effect. Mary's birth was not such as would become your wife

and be beneficial to your children."

"If so, father, I should have known that sooner. Why was she brought

in here among us?"

"True, Frank. The fault is mine; mine and your mother's.

Circumstances brought it about years ago, when it never occurred to

us that all this would arise. But I will tell you her history. And,

Frank, remember this, though I tell it you as a secret, a secret to

be kept from all the world but one, you are quite at liberty to let

the doctor know that I have told you. Indeed, I shall be careful to

let him know myself should it ever be necessary that he and I should

speak together as to this engagement." The squire then told his son

the whole story of Mary's birth, as it is known to the reader.

Frank sat silent, looking very blank; he also had, as had every

Gresham, a great love for his pure blood. He had said to his mother

that he hated money, that he hated the estate; but he would have been

very slow to say, even in his warmest opposition to her, that he

hated the roll of the family pedigree. He loved it dearly, though he

seldom spoke of it;--as men of good family seldom do speak of it. It

is one of those possessions which to have is sufficient. A man having

it need not boast of what he has, or show it off before the world.

But on that account he values it more. He had regarded Mary as a

cutting duly taken from the Ullathorne tree; not, indeed, as a

grafting branch, full of flower, just separated from the parent

stalk, but as being not a whit the less truly endowed with the pure

sap of that venerable trunk. When, therefore, he heard her true

history he sat awhile dismayed.

"It is a sad story," said the father.

"Yes, sad enough," said Frank, rising from his chair and standing

with it before him, leaning on the back of it. "Poor Mary, poor Mary!

She will have to learn it some day."

"I fear so, Frank;" and then there was again a few moments' silence.

"To me, father, it is told too late. It can now have no effect on me.

Indeed," said he, sighing as he spoke, but still relieving himself by

the very sigh, "it could have had no effect had I learned it ever so

soon."

"I should have told you before," said the father; "certainly I ought

to have done so."

"It would have been no good," said Frank. "Ah, sir, tell me this: who

were Miss Dunstable's parents? What was that fellow Moffat's family?"

This was perhaps cruel of Frank. The squire, however, made no answer

to the question. "I have thought it right to tell you," said he.

"I leave all commentary to yourself. I need not tell you what your

mother will think."

"What did she think of Miss Dunstable's birth?" said he, again more

bitterly than before. "No, sir," he continued, after a further pause.

"All that can make no change; none at any rate now. It can't make my

love less, even if it could have prevented it. Nor, even, could it do

so--which it can't least, not in the least--but could it do so, it

could not break my engagement. I am now engaged to Mary Thorne."

And then he again repeated his question, asking for his father's

advice under the present circumstances. The conversation was a very

long one, as long as to disarrange all Lady Arabella's plans. She

had determined to take her son most stringently to task that very

evening; and with this object had ensconced herself in the small

drawing-room which had formerly been used for a similar purpose by

the august countess herself. Here she now sat, having desired Augusta

and Beatrice, as well as the twins, to beg Frank to go to her as soon

as he should come out of the dining-room. Poor lady! there she waited

till ten o'clock,--tealess. There was not much of the Bluebeard about

the squire; but he had succeeded in making it understood through the

household that he was not to be interrupted by messages from his wife

during the post-prandial hour, which, though no toper, he loved so

well.

As a period of twelve months will now have to be passed over, the

upshot of this long conversation must be told in as few words as

possible. The father found it impracticable to talk his son out of

his intended marriage; indeed, he hardly attempted to do so by any

direct persuasion. He explained to him that it was impossible that he

should marry at once, and suggested that he, Frank, was very young.

"You married, sir, before you were one-and-twenty," said Frank. Yes,

and repented before I was two-and-twenty. So did not say the squire.

He suggested that Mary should have time to ascertain what would be

her uncle's wishes, and ended by inducing Frank to promise, that

after taking his degree in October he would go abroad for some

months, and that he would not indeed return to Greshamsbury till he

was three-and-twenty.

"He may perhaps forget her," said the father to himself, as this

agreement was made between them.

"He thinks that I shall forget her," said Frank to himself at the

same time; "but he does not know me."

When Lady Arabella at last got hold of her son she found that the

time for her preaching was utterly gone by. He told her, almost with

\_sang-froid\_, what his plans were; and when she came to understand

them, and to understand also what had taken place at Boxall Hill, she

could not blame the squire for what he had done. She also said to

herself, more confidently than the squire had done, that Frank would

quite forget Mary before the year was out. "Lord Buckish," said she

to herself, rejoicingly, "is now with the ambassador at Paris"--Lord

Buckish was her nephew--"and with him Frank will meet women that are

really beautiful--women of fashion. When with Lord Buckish he will

soon forget Mary Thorne."

But not on this account did she change her resolve to follow up

to the furthest point her hostility to the Thornes. She was fully

enabled now to do so, for Dr Fillgrave was already reinstalled at

Greshamsbury as her medical adviser.

One other short visit did Frank pay to Boxall Hill, and one interview

had he with Dr Thorne. Mary told him all she knew of her own sad

history, and was answered only by a kiss,--a kiss absolutely not in

any way by her to be avoided; the first, the only one, that had ever

yet reached her lips from his. And then he went away.

The doctor told him all the story. "Yes," said Frank, "I knew it all

before. Dear Mary, dearest Mary! Don't you, doctor, teach yourself to

believe that I shall forget her." And then also he went his way from

him--went his way also from Greshamsbury, and was absent for the full

period of his allotted banishment--twelve months, namely, and a day.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Small End of the Wedge

Frank Gresham was absent from Greshamsbury twelve months and a day: a

day is always added to the period of such absences, as shown in the

history of Lord Bateman and other noble heroes. We need not detail

all the circumstances of his banishment, all the details of the

compact that was made. One detail of course was this, that there

should be no corresponding; a point to which the squire found some

difficulty in bringing his son to assent.

It must not be supposed that Mary Thorne or the doctor were in any

way parties to, or privy to these agreements. By no means. The

agreements were drawn out, and made, and signed, and sealed at

Greshamsbury, and were known of nowhere else. The reader must not

imagine that Lady Arabella was prepared to give up her son, if

only his love could remain constant for one year. Neither did Lady

Arabella consent to any such arrangement, nor did the squire. It was

settled rather in this wise: that Frank should be subjected to no

torturing process, pestered to give no promises, should in no way be

bullied about Mary--that is, not at present--if he would go away for

a year. Then, at the end of the year, the matter should again be

discussed. Agreeing to this, Frank took his departure, and was absent

as per agreement.

What were Mary's fortunes immediately after his departure must be

shortly told, and then we will again join some of our Greshamsbury

friends at a period about a month before Frank's return.

When Sir Louis saw Frank Gresham standing by Mary's donkey, with

his arms round Mary's knees, he began to fear that there must be

something in it. He had intended that very day to throw himself

at Mary's feet, and now it appeared to his inexperienced eyes as

though somebody else had been at the same work before him. This not

unnaturally made him cross; so, after having sullenly wished the

visitor good-bye, he betook himself to his room, and there drank

curaÃ§oa alone, instead of coming down to dinner.

This he did for two or three days, and then, taking heart of grace,

he remembered that, after all, he had very many advantages over young

Gresham. In the first place, he was a baronet, and could make his

wife a "lady." In the next place, Frank's father was alive and like

to live, whereas his own was dead. He possessed Boxall Hill in his

own right, but his rival had neither house nor land of his own. After

all, might it not be possible for him also to put his arm round

Mary's knees;--her knees, or her waist, or, perhaps, even her neck?

Faint heart never won fair lady. At any rate, he would try.

And he did try. With what result, as regards Mary, need hardly be

told. He certainly did not get nearly so far as putting his hand even

upon her knee before he was made to understand that it "was no go,"

as he graphically described it to his mother. He tried once and

again. On the first time Mary was very civil, though very determined.

On the second, she was more determined, though less civil; and then

she told him, that if he pressed her further he would drive her from

his mother's house. There was something then about Mary's eye, a

fixed composure round her mouth, and an authority in her face, which

went far to quell him; and he did not press her again.

He immediately left Boxall Hill, and, returning to London, had more

violent recourse to the curaÃ§oa. It was not long before the doctor

heard of him, and was obliged to follow him, and then again occurred

those frightful scenes in which the poor wretch had to expiate,

either in terrible delirium or more terrible prostration of spirits,

the vile sin which his father had so early taught him.

Then Mary returned to her uncle's home. Frank was gone, and she

therefore could resume her place at Greshamsbury. Yes, she came back

to Greshamsbury; but Greshamsbury was by no means the same place that

it was formerly. Almost all intercourse was now over between the

doctor and the Greshamsbury people. He rarely ever saw the squire,

and then only on business. Not that the squire had purposely

quarrelled with him; but Dr Thorne himself had chosen that it should

be so, since Frank had openly proposed for his niece. Frank was now

gone, and Lady Arabella was in arms against him. It should not be

said that he kept up any intimacy for the sake of aiding the lovers

in their love. No one should rightfully accuse him of inveigling the

heir to marry his niece.

Mary, therefore, found herself utterly separated from Beatrice. She

was not even able to learn what Beatrice would think, or did think,

of the engagement as it now stood. She could not even explain to

her friend that love had been too strong for her, and endeavour to

get some comfort from that friend's absolution from her sin. This

estrangement was now carried so far that she and Beatrice did not

even meet on neutral ground. Lady Arabella made it known to Miss

Oriel that her daughter could not meet Mary Thorne, even as strangers

meet; and it was made known to others also. Mrs Yates Umbleby, and

her dear friend Miss Gushing, to whose charming tea-parties none of

the Greshamsbury ladies went above once in a twelvemonth, talked

through the parish of this distressing difficulty. They would have

been so happy to have asked dear Mary Thorne, only the Greshamsbury

ladies did not approve.

Mary was thus tabooed from all society in the place in which a

twelvemonth since she had been, of all its denizens, perhaps the

most courted. In those days, no bevy of Greshamsbury young ladies

had fairly represented the Greshamsbury young ladyhood if Mary

Thorne was not there. Now she was excluded from all such bevies.

Patience did not quarrel with her, certainly;--came to see her

frequently;--invited her to walk;--invited her frequently to the

parsonage. But Mary was shy of acceding to such invitations, and at

last frankly told her friend Patience, that she would not again break

bread in Greshamsbury in any house in which she was not thought fit

to meet the other guests who habitually resorted there.

In truth, both the doctor and his niece were very sore, but they

were of that temperament that keeps all its soreness to itself. Mary

walked out by herself boldly, looking at least as though she were

indifferent to all the world. She was, indeed, hardly treated. Young

ladies' engagements are generally matters of profoundest secrecy, and

are hardly known of by their near friends till marriage is a thing

settled. But all the world knew of Mary's engagement within a month

of that day on which she had neglected to expel Frank's finger from

her hand; it had been told openly through the country-side that she

had confessed her love for the young squire. Now it is disagreeable

for a young lady to walk about under such circumstances, especially

so when she has no female friend to keep her in countenance,

more especially so when the gentleman is such importance in the

neighbourhood as Frank was in that locality. It was a matter of

moment to every farmer, and every farmer's wife, which bride Frank

should marry of those bespoken for him; Mary, namely, or Money. Every

yokel about the place had been made to understand that, by some

feminine sleight of hand, the doctor's niece had managed to trap

Master Frank, and that Master Frank had been sent out of the way so

that he might, if yet possible, break through the trapping. All this

made life rather unpleasant for her.

One day, walking solitary in the lanes, she met that sturdy farmer to

whose daughter she had in former days been so serviceable. "God bless

'ee, Miss Mary," said he--he always did bid God bless her when he saw

her. "And, Miss Mary, to say my mind out freely, thee be quite gude

enough for un, quite gude enough; so thee be'st tho'f he were ten

squoires." There may, perhaps, have been something pleasant in the

heartiness of this; but it was not pleasant to have this heart affair

of hers thus publicly scanned and talked over: to have it known to

every one that she had set her heart on marrying Frank Gresham, and

that all the Greshams had set their hearts on preventing it. And yet

she could in nowise help it. No girl could have been more staid and

demure, less demonstrative and boastful about her love. She had never

yet spoken freely, out of her full heart, to one human being. "Oh,

Frank!" All her spoken sin had been contained in that.

But Lady Arabella had been very active. It suited her better that it

should be known, far and wide, that a nameless pauper--Lady Arabella

only surmised that her foe was nameless; but she did not scruple to

declare it--was intriguing to catch the heir of Greshamsbury. None of

the Greshams must meet Mary Thorne; that was the edict sent about the

country; and the edict was well understood. Those, therefore, were

bad days for Miss Thorne.

She had never yet spoken on the matter freely, out of her full heart

to one human being. Not to one? Not to him? Not to her uncle? No, not

even to him, fully and freely. She had told him that that had passed

between Frank and her which amounted, at any rate on his part, to a

proposal.

"Well, dearest, and what was your answer?" said her uncle, drawing

her close to him, and speaking in his kindest voice.

"I hardly made any answer, uncle."

"You did not reject him, Mary?"

"No, uncle," and then she paused;--he had never known her tremble as

she now trembled. "But if you say that I ought, I will," she added,

drawing every word from herself with difficulty.

"I say you ought, Mary! Nay; but this question you must answer

yourself."

"Must I?" said she, plaintively. And then she sat for the next

half hour with her head against his shoulder; but nothing more was

said about it. They both acquiesced in the sentence that had been

pronounced against them, and went on together more lovingly than

before.

The doctor was quite as weak as his niece; nay, weaker. She hesitated

fearfully as to what she ought to do: whether she should obey her

heart or the dictates of Greshamsbury. But he had other doubts than

hers, which nearly set him wild when he strove to bring his mind to

a decision. He himself was now in possession--of course as a trustee

only--of the title-deeds of the estate; more of the estate, much

more, belonged to the heirs under Sir Roger Scatcherd's will than to

the squire. It was now more than probable that that heir must be Mary

Thorne. His conviction became stronger and stronger that no human

efforts would keep Sir Louis in the land of the living till he

was twenty-five. Could he, therefore, wisely or honestly, in true

friendship to the squire, to Frank, or to his niece, take any steps

to separate two persons who loved each other, and whose marriage

would in all human probability be so suitable?

And yet he could not bring himself to encourage it then. The idea

of "looking after dead men's shoes" was abhorrent to his mind,

especially when the man whose death he contemplated had been so

trusted to him as had been Sir Louis Scatcherd. He could not speak

of the event, even to the squire, as being possible. So he kept his

peace from day to day, and gave no counsel to Mary in the matter.

And then he had his own individual annoyances, and very aggravating

annoyances they were. The carriage--or rather post-chaise--of Dr

Fillgrave was now frequent in Greshamsbury, passing him constantly

in the street, among the lanes, and on the high roads. It seemed as

though Dr Fillgrave could never get to his patients at the big house

without showing himself to his beaten rival, either on his way

thither or on his return. This alone would, perhaps, not have hurt

the doctor much; but it did hurt him to know that Dr Fillgrave was

attending the squire for a little incipient gout, and that dear Nina

was in measles under those unloving hands.

And then, also, the old-fashioned phaeton, of old-fashioned old

Dr Century was seen to rumble up to the big house, and it became

known that Lady Arabella was not very well. "Not very well," when

pronounced in a low, grave voice about Lady Arabella, always meant

something serious. And, in this case, something serious was meant.

Lady Arabella was not only ill, but frightened. It appeared, even to

her, that Dr Fillgrave himself hardly knew what he was about, that he

was not so sure in his opinion, so confident in himself, as Dr Thorne

used to be. How should he be, seeing that Dr Thorne had medically had

Lady Arabella in his hands for the last ten years?

If sitting with dignity in his hired carriage, and stepping with

authority up the big front steps, would have done anything, Dr

Fillgrave might have done much. Lady Arabella was greatly taken with

his looks when he first came to her, and it was only when she by

degrees perceived that the symptoms, which she knew so well, did not

yield to him that she began to doubt those looks.

After a while Dr Fillgrave himself suggested Dr Century. "Not that

I fear anything, Lady Arabella," said he,--lying hugely, for he did

fear; fear both for himself and for her. "But Dr Century has great

experience, and in such a matter, when the interests are so

important, one cannot be too safe."

So Dr Century came and toddled slowly into her ladyship's room. He

did not say much; he left the talking to his learned brother, who

certainly was able to do that part of the business. But Dr Century,

though he said very little, looked very grave, and by no means

quieted Lady Arabella's mind. She, as she saw the two putting their

heads together, already had misgivings that she had done wrong. She

knew that she could not be safe without Dr Thorne at her bedside, and

she already felt that she had exercised a most injudicious courage in

driving him away.

"Well, doctor?" said she, as soon as Dr Century had toddled

downstairs to see the squire.

"Oh! we shall be all right, Lady Arabella; all right, very soon. But

we must be careful, very careful; I am glad I've had Century here,

very; but there's nothing to alter; little or nothing."

There were but few words spoken between Dr Century and the squire;

but few as they were, they frightened Mr Gresham. When Dr Fillgrave

came down the grand stairs, a servant waited at the bottom to ask him

also to go to the squire. Now there never had been much cordiality

between the squire and Dr Fillgrave, though Mr Gresham had consented

to take a preventative pill from his hands, and the little man

therefore swelled himself out somewhat more than ordinarily as he

followed the servant.

"Dr Fillgrave," said the squire, at once beginning the conversation,

"Lady Arabella, is, I fear, in danger?"

"Well, no; I hope not in danger, Mr Gresham. I certainly believe I

may be justified in expressing a hope that she is not in danger. Her

state is, no doubt, rather serious--rather serious--as Dr Century has

probably told you;" and Dr Fillgrave made a bow to the old man, who

sat quiet in one of the dining-room arm-chairs.

"Well, doctor," said the squire, "I have not any grounds on which to

doubt your judgement."

Dr Fillgrave bowed, but with the stiffest, slightest inclination

which a head could possibly make. He rather thought that Mr Gresham

had no ground for doubting his judgement.

"Nor do I."

The doctor bowed, and a little, a very little less stiffly.

"But, doctor, I think that something ought to be done."

The doctor this time did his bowing merely with his eyes and mouth.

The former he closed for a moment, the latter he pressed; and then

decorously rubbed his hands one over the other.

"I am afraid, Dr Fillgrave, that you and my friend Thorne are not the

best friends in the world."

"No, Mr Gresham, no; I may go so far as to say we are not."

"Well, I am sorry for it--"

"Perhaps, Mr Gresham, we need hardly discuss it; but there have been

circumstances--"

"I am not going to discuss anything, Dr Fillgrave; I say I am sorry

for it, because I believe that prudence will imperatively require

Lady Arabella to have Doctor Thorne back again. Now, if you would not

object to meet him--"

"Mr Gresham, I beg pardon; I beg pardon, indeed; but you must really

excuse me. Doctor Thorne has, in my estimation--"

"But, Doctor Fillgrave--"

"Mr Gresham, you really must excuse me; you really must, indeed.

Anything else that I could do for Lady Arabella, I should be most

happy to do; but after what has passed, I cannot meet Doctor Thorne;

I really cannot. You must not ask me to do so; Mr Gresham. And, Mr

Gresham," continued the doctor, "I did understand from Lady Arabella

that his--that is, Dr Thorne's--conduct to her ladyship had been

such--so very outrageous, I may say, that--that--that--of course, Mr

Gresham, you know best; but I did think that Lady Arabella herself

was quite unwilling to see Doctor Thorne again;" and Dr Fillgrave

looked very big, and very dignified, and very exclusive.

The squire did not ask again. He had no warrant for supposing that

Lady Arabella would receive Dr Thorne if he did come; and he saw

that it was useless to attempt to overcome the rancour of a man so

pig-headed as the little Galen now before him. Other propositions

were then broached, and it was at last decided that assistance should

be sought for from London, in the person of the great Sir Omicron

Pie.

Sir Omicron came, and Drs Fillgrave and Century were there to meet

him. When they all assembled in Lady Arabella's room, the poor

woman's heart almost sank within her,--as well it might, at such

a sight. If she could only reconcile it with her honour, her

consistency, with her high de Courcy principles, to send once more

for Dr Thorne. Oh, Frank! Frank! to what misery your disobedience

brought your mother!

Sir Omicron and the lesser provincial lights had their consultation,

and the lesser lights went their way to Barchester and Silverbridge,

leaving Sir Omicron to enjoy the hospitality of Greshamsbury.

"You should have Thorne back here, Mr Gresham," said Sir Omicron,

almost in a whisper, when they were quite alone. "Doctor Fillgrave

is a very good man, and so is Dr Century; very good, I am sure. But

Thorne has known her ladyship so long." And then, on the following

morning, Sir Omicron also went his way.

And then there was a scene between the squire and her ladyship. Lady

Arabella had given herself credit for great good generalship when she

found that the squire had been induced to take that pill. We have

all heard of the little end of the wedge, and we have most of us an

idea that the little end is the difficulty. That pill had been the

little end of Lady Arabella's wedge. Up to that period she had been

struggling in vain to make a severance between her husband and her

enemy. That pill should do the business. She well knew how to make

the most of it; to have it published in Greshamsbury that the squire

had put his gouty toe into Dr Fillgrave's hands; how to let it

be known--especially at that humble house in the corner of the

street--that Fillgrave's prescriptions now ran current through the

whole establishment. Dr Thorne did hear of it, and did suffer. He had

been a true friend to the squire, and he thought the squire should

have stood to him more staunchly.

"After all," said he himself, "perhaps it's as well--perhaps it will

be best that I should leave this place altogether." And then he

thought of Sir Roger and his will, and of Mary and her lover. And

then of Mary's birth, and of his own theoretical doctrines as to pure

blood. And so his troubles multiplied, and he saw no present daylight

through them.

Such had been the way in which Lady Arabella had got in the little

end of the wedge. And she would have triumphed joyfully had not her

increased doubts and fears as to herself then come in to check her

triumph and destroy her joy. She had not yet confessed to any one

her secret regret for the friend she had driven away. She hardly yet

acknowledged to herself that she did regret him; but she was uneasy,

frightened, and in low spirits.

"My dear," said the squire, sitting down by her bedside, "I want to

tell you what Sir Omicron said as he went away."

"Well?" said her ladyship, sitting up and looking frightened.

"I don't know how you may take it, Bell; but I think it very good

news:" the squire never called his wife Bell, except when he wanted

her to be on particularly good terms with him.

"Well?" said she again. She was not over-anxious to be gracious, and

did not reciprocate his familiarity.

"Sir Omicron says that you should have Thorne back again, and upon my

honour, I cannot but agree with him. Now, Thorne is a clever man, a

very clever man; nobody denies that; and then, you know--"

"Why did not Sir Omicron say that to me?" said her ladyship, sharply,

all her disposition in Dr Thorne's favour becoming wonderfully damped

by her husband's advocacy.

"I suppose he thought it better to say it to me," said the squire,

rather curtly.

"He should have spoken to myself," said Lady Arabella, who, though

she did not absolutely doubt her husband's word, gave him credit

for having induced and led on Sir Omicron to the uttering of this

opinion. "Doctor Thorne has behaved to me in so gross, so indecent a

manner! And then, as I understand, he is absolutely encouraging that

girl--"

"Now, Bell, you are quite wrong--"

"Of course I am; I always am quite wrong."

"Quite wrong in mixing up two things; Doctor Thorne as an

acquaintance, and Dr Thorne as a doctor."

"It is dreadful to have him here, even standing in the room with me.

How can one talk to one's doctor openly and confidentially when one

looks upon him as one's worst enemy?" And Lady Arabella, softening,

almost melted into tears.

"My dear, you cannot wonder that I should be anxious for you."

Lady Arabella gave a little snuffle, which might be taken as a not

very eloquent expression of thanks for the squire's solicitude, or as

an ironical jeer at his want of sincerity.

"And, therefore, I have not lost a moment in telling you what Sir

Omicron said. 'You should have Thorne back here;' those were his very

words. You can think it over, my dear. And remember this, Bell; if he

is to do any good no time should be lost."

And then the squire left the room, and Lady Arabella remained alone,

perplexed by many doubts.

CHAPTER XXXII

Mr Oriel

I must now, shortly--as shortly as it is in my power to do

it--introduce a new character to my reader. Mention has been made

of the rectory of Greshamsbury; but, hitherto, no opportunity has

offered itself for the Rev Caleb Oriel to come upon the boards.

Mr Oriel was a man of family and fortune, who, having gone to Oxford

with the usual views of such men, had become inoculated there with

very High-Church principles, and had gone into orders influenced by a

feeling of enthusiastic love for the priesthood. He was by no means

an ascetic--such men, indeed, seldom are--nor was he a devotee. He

was a man well able, and certainly willing, to do the work of a

parish clergyman; and when he became one, he was efficacious in his

profession. But it may perhaps be said of him, without speaking

slanderously, that his original calling, as a young man, was rather

to the outward and visible signs of religion than to its inward and

spiritual graces.

He delighted in lecterns and credence-tables, in services at dark

hours of winter mornings when no one would attend, in high waistcoats

and narrow white neckties, in chanted services and intoned prayers,

and in all the paraphernalia of Anglican formalities which have given

such offence to those of our brethren who live in daily fear of the

scarlet lady. Many of his friends declared that Mr Oriel would sooner

or later deliver himself over body and soul to that lady; but there

was no need to fear for him: for though sufficiently enthusiastic to

get out of bed at five a.m. on winter mornings--he did so, at least,

all through his first winter at Greshamsbury--he was not made of

that stuff which is necessary for a staunch, burning, self-denying

convert. It was not in him to change his very sleek black coat for a

Capuchin's filthy cassock, nor his pleasant parsonage for some dirty

hole in Rome. And it was better so both for him and others. There are

but few, very few, to whom it is given to be a Huss, a Wickliffe,

or a Luther; and a man gains but little by being a false Huss, or a

false Luther,--and his neighbours gain less.

But certain lengths in self-privation Mr Oriel did go; at any rate,

for some time. He eschewed matrimony, imagining that it became him

as a priest to do so. He fasted rigorously on Fridays; and the

neighbours declared that he scourged himself.

Mr Oriel was, as it has been said, a man of fortune; that is to say,

when he came of age he was master of thirty thousand pounds. When he

took it into his head to go into the Church, his friends bought for

him the next presentation to the living at Greshamsbury; and, a year

after his ordination, the living falling in, Mr Oriel brought himself

and his sister to the rectory.

Mr Oriel soon became popular. He was a dark-haired, good-looking

man, of polished manners, agreeable in society, not given to monkish

austerities--except in the matter of Fridays--nor yet to the

Low-Church severity of demeanour. He was thoroughly a gentleman,

good-humoured, inoffensive, and sociable. But he had one fault: he

was not a marrying man.

On this ground there was a feeling against him so strong as almost at

one time to throw him into serious danger. It was not only that he

should be sworn against matrimony in his individual self--he whom

fate had made so able to sustain the weight of a wife and family;

but what an example he was setting! If other clergymen all around

should declare against wives and families, what was to become of the

country? What was to be done in the rural districts? The religious

observances, as regards women, of a Brigham Young were hardly so bad

as this!

There were around Greshamsbury very many unmarried ladies--I believe

there generally are so round most such villages. From the great house

he did not receive much annoyance. Beatrice was then only just on the

verge of being brought out, and was not perhaps inclined to think

very much of a young clergyman; and Augusta certainly intended to fly

at higher game. But there were the Miss Athelings, the daughters of

a neighbouring clergyman, who were ready to go all lengths with him

in High-Church matters, except as that one tremendously papal step

of celibacy; and the two Miss Hesterwells, of Hesterwell Park, the

younger of whom boldly declared her purpose of civilising the savage;

and Mrs Opie Green, a very pretty widow, with a very pretty jointure,

who lived in a very pretty house about a mile from Greshamsbury, and

who declared her opinion that Mr Oriel was quite right in his view of

a clergyman's position. How could a woman, situated as she was, have

the comfort of a clergyman's attention if he were to be regarded

just as any other man? She could now know in what light to regard

Mr Oriel, and would be able without scruple to avail herself of his

zeal. So she did avail herself of his zeal,--and that without any

scruple.

And then there was Miss Gushing,--a young thing. Miss Gushing had a

great advantage over the other competitors for the civilisation of

Mr Oriel, namely, in this--that she was able to attend his morning

services. If Mr Oriel was to be reached in any way, it was probable

that he might be reached in this way. If anything could civilise

him, this would do it. Therefore, the young thing, through all one

long, tedious winter, tore herself from her warm bed, and was to

be seen--no, not seen, but heard--entering Mr Oriel's church at

six o'clock. With indefatigable assiduity the responses were made,

uttered from under a close bonnet, and out of a dark corner, in an

enthusiastically feminine voice, through the whole winter.

Nor did Miss Gushing altogether fail in her object. When a

clergyman's daily audience consists of but one person, and that

person is a young lady, it is hardly possible that he should not

become personally intimate with her; hardly possible that he should

not be in some measure grateful. Miss Gushing's responses came from

her with such fervour, and she begged for ghostly advice with such

eager longing to have her scruples satisfied, that Mr Oriel had

nothing for it but to give way to a certain amount of civilisation.

By degrees it came to pass that Miss Gushing could never get her

final prayer said, her shawl and boa adjusted, and stow away her

nice new Prayer-Book with the red letters inside, and the cross on

the back, till Mr Oriel had been into his vestry and got rid of

his surplice. And then they met at the church-porch, and naturally

walked together till Mr Oriel's cruel gateway separated them. The

young thing did sometimes think that, as the parson's civilisation

progressed, he might have taken the trouble to walk with her as far

as Mr Yates Umbleby's hall door; but she had hope to sustain her, and

a firm resolve to merit success, even though she might not attain it.

"Is it not ten thousand pities," she once said to him, "that none

here should avail themselves of the inestimable privilege which your

coming has conferred upon us? Oh, Mr Oriel, I do so wonder at it! To

me it is so delightful! The morning service in the dark church is so

beautiful, so touching!"

"I suppose they think it is a bore getting up so early," said Mr

Oriel.

"Ah, a bore!" said Miss Gushing, in an enthusiastic tone of

depreciation. "How insensate they must be! To me it gives a new charm

to life. It quiets one for the day; makes one so much fitter for

one's daily trials and daily troubles. Does it not, Mr Oriel?"

"I look upon morning prayer as an imperative duty, certainly."

"Oh, certainly, a most imperative duty; but so delicious at the same

time. I spoke to Mrs Umbleby about it, but she said she could not

leave the children."

"No: I dare say not," said Mr Oriel.

"And Mr Umbleby said his business kept him up so late at night."

"Very probably. I hardly expect the attendance of men of business."

"But the servants might come, mightn't they, Mr Oriel?"

"I fear that servants seldom can have time for daily prayers in

church."

"Oh, ah, no; perhaps not." And then Miss Gushing began to bethink

herself of whom should be composed the congregation which it must be

presumed that Mr Oriel wished to see around him. But on this matter

he did not enlighten her.

Then Miss Gushing took to fasting on Fridays, and made some futile

attempts to induce her priest to give her the comfort of confessional

absolution. But, unfortunately, the zeal of the master waxed cool

as that of the pupil waxed hot; and, at last, when the young thing

returned to Greshamsbury from an autumn excursion which she had made

with Mrs Umbleby to Weston-super-Mare, she found that the delicious

morning services had died a natural death. Miss Gushing did not on

that account give up the game, but she was bound to fight with no

particular advantage in her favour.

Miss Oriel, though a good Churchwoman, was by no means a convert to

her brother's extremist views, and perhaps gave but scanty credit

to the Gushings, Athelings, and Opie Greens for the sincerity of

their religion. But, nevertheless, she and her brother were staunch

friends; and she still hoped to see the day when he might be induced

to think that an English parson might get through his parish work

with the assistance of a wife better than he could do without such

feminine encumbrance. The girl whom she selected for his bride was

not the young thing, but Beatrice Gresham.

And at last it seemed probable to Mr Oriel's nearest friends that he

was in a fair way to be overcome. Not that he had begun to make love

to Beatrice, or committed himself by the utterance of any opinion as

to the propriety of clerical marriages; but he daily became looser

about his peculiar tenets, raved less immoderately than heretofore as

to the atrocity of the Greshamsbury church pews, and was observed to

take some opportunities of conversing alone with Beatrice. Beatrice

had always denied the imputation--this had usually been made by Mary

in their happy days--with vehement asseverations of anger; and Miss

Gushing had tittered, and expressed herself as supposing that great

people's daughters might be as barefaced as they pleased.

All this had happened previous to the great Greshamsbury feud. Mr

Oriel gradually got himself into a way of sauntering up to the great

house, sauntering into the drawing-room for the purpose, as I am sure

he thought, of talking to Lady Arabella, and then of sauntering home

again, having usually found an opportunity for saying a few words to

Beatrice during the visit. This went on all through the feud up to

the period of Lady Arabella's illness; and then one morning, about

a month before the date fixed for Frank's return, Mr Oriel found

himself engaged to Miss Beatrice Gresham.

From the day that Miss Gushing heard of it--which was not however

for some considerable time after this--she became an Independent

Methodist. She could no longer, she said at first, have any faith in

any religion; and for an hour or so she was almost tempted to swear

that she could no longer have any faith in any man. She had nearly

completed a worked cover for a credence-table when the news reached

her, as to which, in the young enthusiasm of her heart, she had not

been able to remain silent; it had already been promised to Mr Oriel;

that promise she swore should not be kept. He was an apostate, she

said, from his principles; an utter pervert; a false, designing man,

with whom she would never have trusted herself alone on dark mornings

had she known that he had such grovelling, worldly inclinations. So

Miss Gushing became an Independent Methodist; the credence-table

covering was cut up into slippers for the preacher's feet; and the

young thing herself, more happy in this direction than she had been

in the other, became the arbiter of that preacher's domestic

happiness.

But this little history of Miss Gushing's future life is premature.

Mr Oriel became engaged demurely, nay, almost silently, to Beatrice,

and no one out of their own immediate families was at the time

informed of the matter. It was arranged very differently from those

two other matches--embryo, or not embryo, those, namely, of Augusta

with Mr Moffat, and Frank with Mary Thorne. All Barsetshire had heard

of them; but that of Beatrice and Mr Oriel was managed in a much more

private manner.

"I do think you are a happy girl," said Patience to her one morning.

"Indeed I am."

"He is so good. You don't know how good he is as yet; he never thinks

of himself, and thinks so much of those he loves."

Beatrice took her friend's hand in her own and kissed it. She was

full of joy. When a girl is about to be married, when she may

lawfully talk of her love, there is no music in her ears so sweet as

the praises of her lover.

"I made up my mind from the first that he should marry you."

"Nonsense, Patience."

"I did, indeed. I made up my mind that he should marry; and there

were only two to choose from."

"Me and Miss Gushing," said Beatrice, laughing.

"No; not exactly Miss Gushing. I had not many fears for Caleb there."

"I declare she's very pretty," said Beatrice, who could afford to be

good-natured. Now Miss Gushing certainly was pretty; and would have

been very pretty had her nose not turned up so much, and could she

have parted her hair in the centre.

"Well, I am very glad you chose me;--if it was you who chose," said

Beatrice, modestly; having, however, in her own mind a strong opinion

that Mr Oriel had chosen for himself, and had never had any doubt in

the matter. "And who was the other?"

"Can't you guess?"

"I won't guess any more; perhaps Mrs Green."

"Oh, no; certainly not a widow. I don't like widows marrying. But of

course you could guess if you would; of course it was Mary Thorne.

But I soon saw Mary would not do, for two reasons; Caleb would never

have liked her well enough nor would she ever have liked him."

"Not like him! oh I hope she will; I do so love Mary Thorne."

"So do I, dearly; and so does Caleb; but he could never have loved

her as he loves you."

"But, Patience, have you told Mary?"

"No, I have told no one, and shall not without your leave."

"Ah, you must tell her. Tell it her with my best, and kindest,

warmest love. Tell her how happy I am, and how I long to talk to

her. Tell that I will have her for my bridesmaid. Oh! I do hope that

before that all this horrid quarrel will be settled."

Patience undertook the commission, and did tell Mary; did give her

also the message which Beatrice had sent. And Mary was rejoiced to

hear it; for though, as Patience had said of her, she had never

herself felt any inclination to fall in love with Mr Oriel, she

believed him to be one in whose hands her friend's happiness would be

secure. Then, by degrees, the conversation changed from the loves of

Mr Oriel and Beatrice to the troubles of Frank Gresham and herself.

"She says, that let what will happen you shall be one of her

bridesmaids."

"Ah, yes, dear Trichy! that was settled between us in auld lang syne;

but those settlements are all unsettled now, must all be broken. No,

I cannot be her bridesmaid; but I shall yet hope to see her once

before her marriage."

"And why not be her bridesmaid? Lady Arabella will hardly object to

that."

"Lady Arabella!" said Mary, curling her lip with deep scorn. "I do

not care that for Lady Arabella," and she let her silver thimble fall

from her fingers on to the table. "If Beatrice invited me to her

wedding, she might manage as to that; I should ask no question as to

Lady Arabella."

"Then why not come to it?"

She remained silent for a while, and then boldly answered. "Though I

do not care for Lady Arabella, I do care for Mr Gresham:--and I do

care for his son."

"But the squire always loved you."

"Yes, and therefore I will not be there to vex his sight. I will tell

you the truth, Patience. I can never be in that house again till

Frank Gresham is a married man, or till I am about to be a married

woman. I do not think they have treated me well, but I will not treat

them ill."

"I am sure you will not do that," said Miss Oriel.

"I will endeavour not to do so; and, therefore, will go to none of

their fÃªtes! No, Patience." And then she turned her head to the arm

of the sofa, and silently, without audible sobs, hiding her face, she

endeavoured to get rid of her tears unseen. For one moment she had

all but resolved to pour out the whole truth of her love into her

friend's ears; but suddenly she changed her mind. Why should she talk

of her own unhappiness? Why should she speak of her own love when she

was fully determined not to speak of Frank's promises.

"Mary, dear Mary."

"Anything but pity, Patience; anything but that," said she,

convulsively, swallowing down her sobs, and rubbing away her tears.

"I cannot bear that. Tell Beatrice from me, that I wish her every

happiness; and, with such a husband, I am sure she will be happy. I

wish her every joy; give her my kindest love; but tell her I cannot

be at her marriage. Oh, I should so like to see her; not there, you

know, but here, in my own room, where I still have liberty to speak."

"But why should you decide now? She is not to be married yet, you

know."

"Now, or this day twelvemonth, can make no difference. I will not go

into that house again, unless--but never mind; I will not go into it

all; never, never again. If I could forgive her for myself, I could

not forgive her for my uncle. But tell me, Patience, might not

Beatrice now come here? It is so dreadful to see her every Sunday in

church and never to speak to her, never to kiss her. She seems to

look away from me as though she too had chosen to quarrel with me."

Miss Oriel promised to do her best. She could not imagine, she said,

that such a visit could be objected to on such an occasion. She would

not advise Beatrice to come without telling her mother; but she

could not think that Lady Arabella would be so cruel as to make any

objection, knowing, as she could not but know, that her daughter,

when married, would be at liberty to choose her own friends.

"Good-bye, Mary," said Patience. "I wish I knew how to say more to

comfort you."

"Oh, comfort! I don't want comfort. I want to be let alone."

"That's just it: you are so ferocious in your scorn, so unbending, so

determined to take all the punishment that comes in your way."

"What I do take, I'll take without complaint," said Mary; and then

they kissed each other and parted.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A Morning Visit

It must be remembered that Mary, among her miseries, had to suffer

this: that since Frank's departure, now nearly twelve months ago, she

had not heard a word about him; or rather, she had only heard that he

was very much in love with some lady in London. This news reached her

in a manner so circuitous, and from such a doubtful source; it seemed

to her to savour so strongly of Lady Arabella's precautions, that

she attributed it at once to malice, and blew it to the winds. It

might not improbably be the case that Frank was untrue to her; but

she would not take it for granted because she was now told so. It

was more than probable that he should amuse himself with some one;

flirting was his prevailing sin; and if he did flirt, the most would

of course be made of it.

But she found it to be very desolate to be thus left alone without

a word of comfort or a word of love; without being able to speak to

any one of what filled her heart; doubting, nay, more than doubting,

being all but sure that her passion must terminate in misery. Why had

she not obeyed her conscience and her better instinct in that moment

when the necessity for deciding had come upon her? Why had she

allowed him to understand that he was master of her heart? Did she

not know that there was everything against such a marriage as that

which he proposed? Had she not done wrong, very wrong, even to think

of it? Had she not sinned deeply, against Mr Gresham, who had ever

been so kind to her? Could she hope, was it possible, that a boy like

Frank should be true to his first love? And, if he were true, if he

were ready to go to the altar with her to-morrow, ought she to allow

him to degrade himself by such a marriage?

There was, alas! some truth about the London lady. Frank had taken

his degree, as arranged, and had then gone abroad for the winter,

doing the fashionable things, going up the Nile, crossing over to

Mount Sinai, thence over the long desert to Jerusalem, and home by

Damascus, Beyrout, and Constantinople, bringing back a long beard, a

red cap, and a chibook, just as our fathers used to go through Italy

and Switzerland, and our grandfathers to spend a season in Paris. He

had then remained for a couple of months in London, going through

all the society which the de Courcys were able to open to him. And

it was true that a certain belle of the season, of that season and

some others, had been captivated--for the tenth time--by the silken

sheen of his long beard. Frank had probably been more demonstrative,

perhaps even more susceptible, than he should have been; and

hence the rumour, which had all too willingly been forwarded to

Greshamsbury.

But young Gresham had also met another lady in London, namely Miss

Dunstable. Mary would indeed have been grateful to Miss Dunstable,

could she have known all that lady did for her. Frank's love was

never allowed to flag. When he spoke of the difficulties in his way,

she twitted him by being overcome by straws; and told him that no

one was worth having who was afraid of every lion that he met in his

path. When he spoke of money, she bade him earn it; and always ended

by offering to smooth for him any real difficulty which want of means

might put in his way.

"No," Frank used to say to himself, when these offers were made, "I

never intended to take her and her money together; and, therefore, I

certainly will never take the money alone."

A day or two after Miss Oriel's visit, Mary received the following

note from Beatrice.

DEAREST, DEAREST MARY,

I shall be so happy to see you, and will come to-morrow at

twelve. I have asked mamma, and she says that, for once,

she has no objection. You know it is not my fault that

I have never been with you; don't you? Frank comes home

on the 12th. Mr Oriel wants the wedding to be on the 1st

of September; but that seems to be so very, very soon;

doesn't it? However, mamma and papa are all on his side.

I won't write about this, though, for we shall have such a

delicious talk. Oh, Mary! I have been so unhappy without

you.

Ever your own affectionate,

TRICHY

Monday.

Though Mary was delighted at the idea of once more having her friend

in her arms, there was, nevertheless, something in this letter which

oppressed her. She could not put up with the idea that Beatrice

should have permission given to come to her--just for once. She

hardly wished to be seen by permission. Nevertheless, she did not

refuse the proffered visit, and the first sight of Beatrice's face,

the first touch of the first embrace, dissipated for the moment all

her anger.

And then Beatrice fully enjoyed the delicious talk which she had

promised herself. Mary let her have her way, and for two hours

all the delights and all the duties, all the comforts and all the

responsibilities of a parson's wife were discussed with almost equal

ardour on both sides. The duties and responsibilities were not

exactly those which too often fall to the lot of the mistress of

an English vicarage. Beatrice was not doomed to make her husband

comfortable, to educate her children, dress herself like a lady, and

exercise open-handed charity on an income of two hundred pounds a

year. Her duties and responsibilities would have to spread themselves

over seven or eight times that amount of worldly burden. Living also

close to Greshamsbury, and not far from Courcy Castle, she would have

the full advantages and all the privileges of county society. In

fact, it was all \_couleur de rose\_, and so she chatted deliciously

with her friend.

But it was impossible that they should separate without something

having been said as to Mary's own lot. It would, perhaps, have been

better that they should do so; but this was hardly within the compass

of human nature.

"And Mary, you know, I shall be able to see you as often as I

like;--you and Dr Thorne, too, when I have a house of my own."

Mary said nothing, but essayed to smile. It was but a ghastly

attempt.

"You know how happy that will make me," continued Beatrice. "Of

course mamma won't expect me to be led by her then: if he likes it,

there can be no objection; and he will like it, you may be sure of

that."

"You are very kind, Trichy," said Mary; but she spoke in a tone very

different from that she would have used eighteen months ago.

"Why, what is the matter, Mary? Shan't you be glad to come to see

us?"

"I do not know, dearest; that must depend on circumstances. To see

you, you yourself, your own dear, sweet, loving face must always be

pleasant to me."

"And shan't you be glad to see him?"

"Yes, certainly, if he loves you."

"Of course he loves me."

"All that alone would be pleasant enough, Trichy. But what if there

should be circumstances which should still make us enemies; should

make your friends and my friends--friend, I should say, for I have

only one--should make them opposed to each other?"

"Circumstances! What circumstances?"

"You are going to be married, Trichy, to the man you love; are you

not?"

"Indeed, I am!"

"And it is not pleasant? is it not a happy feeling?"

"Pleasant! happy! yes, very pleasant; very happy. But, Mary, I am not

at all in such a hurry as he is," said Beatrice, naturally thinking

of her own little affairs.

"And, suppose I should wish to be married to the man that I love?"

Mary said this slowly and gravely, and as she spoke she looked her

friend full in the face.

Beatrice was somewhat astonished, and for the moment hardly

understood. "I am sure I hope you will, some day."

"No, Trichy; no, you hope the other way. I love your brother; I love

Frank Gresham; I love him quite as well, quite as warmly, as you love

Caleb Oriel."

"Do you?" said Beatrice, staring with all her eyes, and giving one

long sigh, as this new subject for sorrow was so distinctly put

before her.

"It that so odd?" said Mary. "You love Mr Oriel, though you have been

intimate with him hardly more than two years. Is it so odd that I

should love your brother, whom I have known almost all my life?"

"But, Mary, I thought it was always understood between us

that--that--I mean that you were not to care about him; not in the

way of loving him, you know--I thought you always said so--I have

always told mamma so as if it came from yourself."

"Beatrice, do not tell anything to Lady Arabella as though it came

from me; I do not want anything to be told to her, either of me or

from me. Say what you like to me yourself; whatever you say will not

anger me. Indeed, I know what you would say--and yet I love you. Oh,

I love you, Trichy--Trichy, I do love you so much! Don't turn away

from me!"

There was such a mixture in Mary's manner of tenderness and almost

ferocity, that poor Beatrice could hardly follow her. "Turn away from

you, Mary! no never; but this does make me unhappy."

"It is better that you should know it all, and then you will not be

led into fighting my battles again. You cannot fight them so that I

should win; I do love your brother; love him truly, fondly, tenderly.

I would wish to have him for my husband as you wish to have Mr

Oriel."

"But, Mary, you cannot marry him!"

"Why not?" said she, in a loud voice. "Why can I not marry him? If

the priest says a blessing over us, shall we not be married as well

as you and your husband?"

"But you know he cannot marry unless his wife shall have money."

"Money--money; and he is to sell himself for money? Oh, Trichy! do

not you talk about money. It is horrible. But, Trichy, I will grant

it--I cannot marry him; but still, I love him. He has a name, a place

in the world, and fortune, family, high blood, position, everything.

He has all this, and I have nothing. Of course I cannot marry him.

But yet I do love him."

"Are you engaged to him, Mary?"

"He is not engaged to me; but I am to him."

"Oh, Mary, that is impossible!"

"It is not impossible: it is the case--I am pledged to him; but he is

not pledged to me."

"But, Mary, don't look at me in that way. I do not quite understand

you. What is the good of your being engaged if you cannot marry him?"

"Good! there is no good. But can I help it, if I love him? Can I make

myself not love him by just wishing it? Oh, I would do it if I could.

But now you will understand why I shake my head when you talk of my

coming to your house. Your ways and my ways must be different."

Beatrice was startled, and, for a time, silenced. What Mary said of

the difference of their ways was quite true. Beatrice had dearly

loved her friend, and had thought of her with affection through all

this long period in which they had been separated; but she had given

her love and her thoughts on the understanding, as it were, that they

were in unison as to the impropriety of Frank's conduct.

She had always spoken, with a grave face, of Frank and his love as of

a great misfortune, even to Mary herself; and her pity for Mary had

been founded on the conviction of her innocence. Now all those ideas

had to be altered. Mary owned her fault, confessed herself to be

guilty of all that Lady Arabella so frequently laid to her charge,

and confessed herself anxious to commit every crime as to which

Beatrice had been ever so ready to defend her.

Had Beatrice up to this dreamed that Mary was in love with Frank,

she would doubtless have sympathised with her more or less, sooner

or later. As it was, is was beyond all doubt that she would soon

sympathise with her. But, at the moment, the suddenness of the

declaration seemed to harden her heart, and she forgot, as it were,

to speak tenderly to her friend.

She was silent, therefore, and dismayed; and looked as though she

thought that her ways and Mary's ways must be different.

Mary saw all that was passing in the other's mind: no, not all; all

the hostility, the disappointment, the disapproval, the unhappiness,

she did see; but not the under-current of love, which was strong

enough to well up and drown all these, if only time could be allowed

for it to do so.

"I am glad I have told you," said Mary, curbing herself, "for deceit

and hypocrisy are detestable."

"It was a misunderstanding, not deceit," said Beatrice.

"Well, now we understand each other; now you know that I have a heart

within me, which like those of some others has not always been under

my own control. Lady Arabella believes that I am intriguing to be the

mistress of Greshamsbury. You, at any rate, will not think that of

me. If it could be discovered to-morrow that Frank were not the heir,

I might have some chance of happiness."

"But, Mary--"

"Well?"

"You say you love him."

"Yes; I do say so."

"But if he does not love you, will you cease to do so?"

"If I have a fever, I will get rid of it if I can; in such case I

must do so, or die."

"I fear," continued Beatrice, "you hardly know, perhaps do not think,

what is Frank's real character. He is not made to settle down early

in life; even now, I believe he is attached to some lady in London,

whom, of course, he cannot marry."

Beatrice said this in perfect trueness of heart. She had heard of

Frank's new love-affair, and believing what she had heard, thought

it best to tell the truth. But the information was not of a kind to

quiet Mary's spirit.

"Very well," said she, "let it be so. I have nothing to say against

it."

"But are you not preparing wretchedness and unhappiness for

yourself?"

"Very likely."

"Oh, Mary, do not be so cold with me! you know how delighted I should

be to have you for a sister-in-law, if only it were possible."

"Yes, Trichy; but it is impossible, is it not? Impossible that

Francis Gresham of Greshamsbury should disgrace himself by marrying

such a poor creature as I am. Of course, I know it; of course, I am

prepared for unhappiness and misery. He can amuse himself as he likes

with me or others--with anybody. It is his privilege. It is quite

enough to say that he is not made for settling down. I know my own

position;--and yet I love him."

"But, Mary, has he asked you to be his wife? If so--"

"You ask home-questions, Beatrice. Let me ask you one; has he ever

told you that he has done so?"

At this moment Beatrice was not disposed to repeat all that Frank had

said. A year ago, before he went away, he had told his sister a score

of times that he meant to marry Mary Thorne if she would have him;

but Beatrice now looked on all that as idle, boyish vapouring. The

pity was, that Mary should have looked on it differently.

"We will each keep our secret," said Mary. "Only remember this:

should Frank marry to-morrow, I shall have no ground for blaming him.

He is free as far I as am concerned. He can take the London lady if

he likes. You may tell him so from me. But, Trichy, what else I have

told you, I have told you only."

"Oh, yes!" said Beatrice, sadly; "I shall say nothing of it to

anybody. It is very sad, very, very; I was so happy when I came here,

and now I am so wretched." This was the end of that delicious talk to

which she had looked forward with so much eagerness.

"Don't be wretched about me, dearest; I shall get through it. I

sometimes think I was born to be unhappy, and that unhappiness agrees

with me best. Kiss me now, Trichy, and don't be wretched any more.

You owe it to Mr Oriel to be as happy as the day is long."

And then they parted.

Beatrice, as she went out, saw Dr Thorne in his little shop on the

right-hand side of the passage, deeply engaged in some derogatory

branch of an apothecary's mechanical trade; mixing a dose, perhaps,

for a little child. She would have passed him without speaking if she

could have been sure of doing so without notice, for her heart was

full, and her eyes were red with tears; but it was so long since she

had been in his house that she was more than ordinarily anxious not

to appear uncourteous or unkind to him.

"Good morning, doctor," she said, changing her countenance as best

she might, and attempting a smile.

"Ah, my fairy!" said he, leaving his villainous compounds, and coming

out to her; "and you, too, are about to become a steady old lady."

"Indeed, I am not, doctor; I don't mean to be either steady or old

for the next ten years. But who has told you? I suppose Mary has been

a traitor."

"Well, I will confess, Mary was the traitor. But hadn't I a right

to be told, seeing how often I have brought you sugar-plums in my

pocket? But I wish you joy with all my heart,--with all my heart.

Oriel is an excellent, good fellow."

"Is he not, doctor?"

"An excellent, good fellow. I never heard but of one fault that he

had."

"What was that one fault, Doctor Thorne?"

"He thought that clergymen should not marry. But you have cured that,

and now he's perfect."

"Thank you, doctor. I declare that you say the prettiest things of

all my friends."

"And none of your friends wish prettier things for you. I do

congratulate you, Beatrice, and hope you may be happy with the man

you have chosen;" and taking both her hands in his, he pressed them

warmly, and bade God bless her.

"Oh, doctor! I do so hope the time will come when we shall all be

friends again."

"I hope it as well, my dear. But let it come, or let it not come, my

regard for you will be the same:" and then she parted from him also,

and went her way.

Nothing was spoken of that evening between Dr Thorne and his niece

excepting Beatrice's future happiness; nothing, at least, having

reference to what had passed that morning. But on the following

morning circumstances led to Frank Gresham's name being mentioned.

At the usual breakfast-hour the doctor entered the parlour with a

harassed face. He had an open letter in his hand, and it was at once

clear to Mary that he was going to speak on some subject that vexed

him.

"That unfortunate fellow is again in trouble. Here is a letter from

Greyson." Greyson was a London apothecary, who had been appointed as

medical attendant to Sir Louis Scatcherd, and whose real business

consisted in keeping a watch on the baronet, and reporting to Dr

Thorne when anything was very much amiss. "Here is a letter from

Greyson; he has been drunk for the last three days, and is now laid

up in a terribly nervous state."

"You won't go up to town again; will you, uncle?"

"I hardly know what to do. No, I think not. He talks of coming down

here to Greshamsbury."

"Who, Sir Louis?"

"Yes, Sir Louis. Greyson says that he will be down as soon as he can

get out of his room."

"What! to this house?"

"What other house can he come to?"

"Oh, uncle! I hope not. Pray, pray do not let him come here."

"I cannot prevent it, my dear. I cannot shut my door on him."

They sat down to breakfast, and Mary gave him his tea in silence. "I

am going over to Boxall Hill before dinner," said he. "Have you any

message to send to Lady Scatcherd?"

"Message! no, I have no message; not especially: give her my love,

of course," she said listlessly. And then, as though a thought had

suddenly struck her, she spoke with more energy. "But, couldn't I go

to Boxall Hill again? I should be so delighted."

"What! to run away from Sir Louis? No, dearest, we will have no more

running away. He will probably also go to Boxall Hill, and he could

annoy you much more there than he can here."

"But, uncle, Mr Gresham will be home on the 12th," she said,

blushing.

"What! Frank?"

"Yes. Beatrice said he was to be here on the 12th."

"And would you run away from him too, Mary?"

"I do not know: I do not know what to do."

"No; we will have no more running away: I am sorry that you ever did

so. It was my fault, altogether my fault; but it was foolish."

"Uncle, I am not happy here." As she said this, she put down the cup

which she had held, and, leaning her elbows on the table, rested her

forehead on her hands.

"And would you be happier at Boxall Hill? It is not the place makes

the happiness."

"No, I know that; it is not the place. I do not look to be happy in

any place; but I should be quieter, more tranquil elsewhere than

here."

"I also sometimes think that it will be better for us to take up our

staves and walk away out of Greshamsbury;--leave it altogether, and

settle elsewhere; miles, miles, miles away from here. Should you like

that, dearest?"

Miles, miles, miles away from Greshamsbury! There was something in

the sound that fell very cold on Mary's ears, unhappy as she was.

Greshamsbury had been so dear to her; in spite of all that had

passed, was still so dear to her! Was she prepared to take up her

staff, as her uncle said, and walk forth from the place with the

full understanding that she was to return to it no more; with a mind

resolved that there should be an inseparable gulf between her and its

inhabitants? Such she knew was the proposed nature of the walking

away of which her uncle spoke. So she sat there, resting on her arms,

and gave no answer to the question that had been asked her.

"No, we will stay a while yet," said her uncle. "It may come to

that, but this is not the time. For one season longer let us face--I

will not say our enemies; I cannot call anybody my enemy who bears

the name of Gresham." And then he went on for a moment with his

breakfast. "So Frank will be here on the 12th?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Well, dearest, I have no questions to ask you: no directions to

give. I know how good you are, and how prudent; I am anxious only for

your happiness; not at all--"

"Happiness, uncle, is out of the question."

"I hope not. It is never out of the question, never can be out of the

question. But, as I was saying, I am quite satisfied your conduct

will be good, and, therefore, I have no questions to ask. We will

remain here; and, whether good or evil come, we will not be ashamed

to show our faces."

She sat for a while again silent, collecting her courage on the

subject that was nearest her heart. She would have given the world

that he should ask her questions; but she could not bid him to do so;

and she found it impossible to talk openly to him about Frank unless

he did so. "Will he come here?" at last she said, in a low-toned

voice.

"Who? He, Louis? Yes, I think that in all probability he will."

"No; but Frank," she said, in a still lower voice.

"Ah! my darling, that I cannot tell; but will it be well that he

should come here?"

"I do not know," she said. "No, I suppose not. But, uncle, I don't

think he will come."

She was now sitting on a sofa away from the table, and he got up, sat

down beside her, and took her hands in his. "Mary," said he, "you

must be strong now; strong to endure, not to attack. I think you have

that strength; but, if not, perhaps it will be better that we should

go away."

"I will be strong," said she, rising up and going towards the door.

"Never mind me, uncle; don't follow me; I will be strong. It will be

base, cowardly, mean, to run away; very base in me to make you do

so."

"No, dearest, not so; it will be the same to me."

"No," said she, "I will not run away from Lady Arabella. And, as for

him--if he loves this other one, he shall hear no reproach from me.

Uncle, I will be strong;" and running back to him, she threw her

arms round him and kissed him. And, still restraining her tears, she

got safely to her bedroom. In what way she may there have shown her

strength, it would not be well for us to inquire.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A Barouche and Four Arrives at Greshamsbury

During the last twelve months Sir Louis Scatcherd had been very

efficacious in bringing trouble, turmoil, and vexation upon

Greshamsbury. Now that it was too late to take steps to save himself,

Dr Thorne found that the will left by Sir Roger was so made as to

entail upon him duties that he would find it almost impossible to

perform. Sir Louis, though his father had wished to make him still

a child in the eye of the law, was no child. He knew his own rights

and was determined to exact them; and before Sir Roger had been dead

three months, the doctor found himself in continual litigation with

a low Barchester attorney, who was acting on behalf of his, the

doctor's, own ward.

And if the doctor suffered so did the squire, and so did those who

had hitherto had the management of the squire's affairs. Dr Thorne

soon perceived that he was to be driven into litigation, not only

with Mr Finnie, the Barchester attorney, but with the squire himself.

While Finnie harassed him, he was compelled to harass Mr Gresham. He

was no lawyer himself; and though he had been able to manage very

well between the squire and Sir Roger, and had perhaps given himself

some credit for his lawyer-like ability in so doing, he was utterly

unable to manage between Sir Louis and Mr Gresham.

He had, therefore, to employ a lawyer on his own account, and it

seemed probable that the whole amount of Sir Roger's legacy to

himself would by degrees be expended in this manner. And then, the

squire's lawyers had to take up the matter; and they did so greatly

to the detriment of poor Mr Yates Umbleby, who was found to have made

a mess of the affairs entrusted to him. Mr Umbleby's accounts were

incorrect; his mind was anything but clear, and he confessed, when

put to it by the very sharp gentleman that came down from London,

that he was "bothered;" and so, after a while, he was suspended from

his duties, and Mr Gazebee, the sharp gentleman from London, reigned

over the diminished rent-roll of the Greshamsbury estate.

Thus everything was going wrong at Greshamsbury--with the one

exception of Mr Oriel and his love-suit. Miss Gushing attributed

the deposition of Mr Umbleby to the narrowness of the victory which

Beatrice had won in carrying off Mr Oriel. For Miss Gushing was a

relation of the Umblebys, and had been for many years one of their

family. "If she had only chosen to exert herself as Miss Gresham had

done, she could have had Mr Oriel, easily; oh, too easily! but she

had despised such work," so she said. "But though she had despised

it, the Greshams had not been less irritated, and, therefore, Mr

Umbleby had been driven out of his house." We can hardly believe

this, as victory generally makes men generous. Miss Gushing, however,

stated it as a fact so often that it is probable she was induced to

believe it herself.

Thus everything was going wrong at Greshamsbury, and the squire

himself was especially a sufferer. Umbleby had at any rate been his

own man, and he could do what he liked with him. He could see him

when he liked, and where he liked, and how he liked; could scold him

if in an ill-humour, and laugh at him when in a good humour. All this

Mr Umbleby knew, and bore. But Mr Gazebee was a very different sort

of gentleman; he was the junior partner in the firm of Gumption,

Gazebee & Gazebee, of Mount Street, a house that never defiled

itself with any other business than the agency business, and that in

the very highest line. They drew out leases, and managed property

both for the Duke of Omnium and Lord de Courcy; and ever since her

marriage, it had been one of the objects dearest to Lady Arabella's

heart, that the Greshamsbury acres should be superintended by the

polite skill and polished legal ability of that all but elegant firm

in Mount Street.

The squire had long stood firm, and had delighted in having

everything done under his own eye by poor Mr Yates Umbleby. But now,

alas! he could stand it no longer. He had put off the evil day as

long as he could; he had deferred the odious work of investigation

till things had seemed resolved on investigating themselves; and

then, when it was absolutely necessary that Mr Umbleby should go,

there was nothing for him left but to fall into the ready hands of

Messrs Gumption, Gazebee and Gazebee.

It must not be supposed that Messrs Gumption, Gazebee & Gazebee

were in the least like the ordinary run of attorneys. They wrote

no letters for six-and-eightpence each: they collected no debts,

filed no bills, made no charge per folio for "whereases" and "as

aforesaids;" they did no dirty work, and probably were as ignorant

of the interior of a court of law as any young lady living in their

Mayfair vicinity. No; their business was to manage the property of

great people, draw up leases, make legal assignments, get the family

marriage settlements made, and look after wills. Occasionally, also,

they had to raise money; but it was generally understood that this

was done by proxy.

The firm had been going on for a hundred and fifty years, and the

designation had often been altered; but it always consisted of

Gumptions and Gazebees differently arranged, and no less hallowed

names had ever been permitted to appear. It had been Gazebee, Gazebee

& Gumption; then Gazebee & Gumption; then Gazebee, Gumption &

Gumption; then Gumption, Gumption & Gazebee; and now it was Gumption,

Gazebee & Gazebee.

Mr Gazebee, the junior member of this firm, was a very elegant young

man. While looking at him riding in Rotten Row, you would hardly have

taken him for an attorney; and had he heard that you had so taken

him, he would have been very much surprised indeed. He was rather

bald; not being, as people say, quite so young as he was once. His

exact age was thirty-eight. But he had a really remarkable pair of

jet-black whiskers, which fully made up for any deficiency as to his

head; he had also dark eyes, and a beaked nose, what may be called a

distinguished mouth, and was always dressed in fashionable attire.

The fact was, that Mr Mortimer Gazebee, junior partner in the firm

Gumption, Gazebee & Gazebee, by no means considered himself to be

made of that very disagreeable material which mortals call small

beer.

When this great firm was applied to, to get Mr Gresham through his

difficulties, and when the state of his affairs was made known to

them, they at first expressed rather a disinclination for the work.

But at last, moved doubtless by their respect for the de Courcy

interest, they assented; and Mr Gazebee, junior, went down to

Greshamsbury. The poor squire passed many a sad day after that before

he again felt himself to be master even of his own domain.

Nevertheless, when Mr Mortimer Gazebee visited Greshamsbury, which

he did on more than one or two occasions, he was always received \_en

grand seigneur\_. To Lady Arabella he was by no means an unwelcome

guest, for she found herself able, for the first time in her life, to

speak confidentially on her husband's pecuniary affairs with the man

who had the management of her husband's property. Mr Gazebee also was

a pet with Lady de Courcy; and being known to be a fashionable man in

London, and quite a different sort of person from poor Mr Umbleby,

he was always received with smiles. He had a hundred little ways of

making himself agreeable, and Augusta declared to her cousin, the

Lady Amelia, after having been acquainted with him for a few months,

that he would be a perfect gentleman, only, that his family had

never been anything but attorneys. The Lady Amelia smiled in her own

peculiarly aristocratic way, shrugged her shoulders slightly, and

said, "that Mr Mortimer Gazebee was a very good sort of a person,

very." Poor Augusta felt herself snubbed, thinking perhaps of the

tailor's son; but as there was never any appeal against the Lady

Amelia, she said nothing more at that moment in favour of Mr Mortimer

Gazebee.

All these evils--Mr Mortimer Gazebee being the worst of them--had Sir

Louis Scatcherd brought down on the poor squire's head. There may be

those who will say that the squire had brought them on himself, by

running into debt; and so, doubtless, he had; but it was not the less

true that the baronet's interference was unnecessary, vexatious, and

one might almost say, malicious. His interest would have been quite

safe in the doctor's hands, and he had, in fact, no legal right to

meddle; but neither the doctor nor the squire could prevent him. Mr

Finnie knew very well what he was about, if Sir Louis did not; and

so the three went on, each with his own lawyer, and each of them

distrustful, unhappy, and ill at ease. This was hard upon the doctor,

for he was not in debt, and had borrowed no money.

There was not much reason to suppose that the visit of Sir Louis to

Greshamsbury would much improve matters. It must be presumed that he

was not coming with any amicable views, but with the object rather

of looking after his own; a phrase which was now constantly in his

mouth. He might probably find it necessary while looking after his

own at Greshamsbury, to say some very disagreeable things to the

squire; and the doctor, therefore, hardly expected that the visit

would go off pleasantly.

When last we saw Sir Louis, now nearly twelve months since, he

was intent on making a proposal of marriage to Miss Thorne. This

intention he carried out about two days after Frank Gresham had done

the same thing. He had delayed doing so till he had succeeded in

purchasing his friend Jenkins's Arab pony, imagining that such a

present could not but go far in weaning Mary's heart from her other

lover. Poor Mary was put to the trouble of refusing both the baronet

and the pony, and a very bad time she had of it while doing so. Sir

Louis was a man easily angered, and not very easily pacified, and

Mary had to endure a good deal of annoyance; from any other person,

indeed, she would have called it impertinence. Sir Louis, however,

had to bear his rejection as best he could, and, after a perseverance

of three days, returned to London in disgust; and Mary had not seen

him since.

Mr Greyson's first letter was followed by a second; and the second

was followed by the baronet in person. He also required to be

received \_en grand seigneur\_, perhaps more imperatively than Mr

Mortimer Gazebee himself. He came with four posters from the

Barchester Station, and had himself rattled up to the doctor's door

in a way that took the breath away from all Greshamsbury. Why! the

squire himself for a many long year had been contented to come home

with a pair of horses; and four were never seen in the place, except

when the de Courcys came to Greshamsbury, or Lady Arabella with all

her daughters returned from her hard-fought metropolitan campaigns.

Sir Louis, however, came with four, and very arrogant he looked,

leaning back in the barouche belonging to the George and Dragon,

and wrapped up in fur, although it was now midsummer. And up in the

dicky behind was a servant, more arrogant, if possible, than his

master--the baronet's own man, who was the object of Dr Thorne's

special detestation and disgust. He was a little fellow, chosen

originally on account of his light weight on horseback; but if that

may be considered a merit, it was the only one he had. His out-door

show dress was a little tight frock-coat, round which a polished

strap was always buckled tightly, a stiff white choker, leather

breeches, top-boots, and a hat, with a cockade, stuck on one side

of his head. His name was Jonah, which his master and his master's

friends shortened into Joe; none, however, but those who were very

intimate with his master were allowed to do so with impunity.

This Joe was Dr Thorne's special aversion. In his anxiety to take

every possible step to keep Sir Louis from poisoning himself, he had

at first attempted to enlist the baronet's "own man" in the cause.

Joe had promised fairly, but had betrayed the doctor at once, and

had become the worst instrument of his master's dissipation. When,

therefore, his hat and the cockade were seen, as the carriage dashed

up to the door, the doctor's contentment was by no means increased.

Sir Louis was now twenty-three years old, and was a great deal too

knowing to allow himself to be kept under the doctor's thumb. It

had, indeed, become his plan to rebel against his guardian in almost

everything. He had at first been decently submissive, with the view

of obtaining increased supplies of ready money; but he had been sharp

enough to perceive that, let his conduct be what it would, the doctor

would keep him out of debt; but that the doing so took so large a sum

that he could not hope for any further advances. In this respect Sir

Louis was perhaps more keen-witted than Dr Thorne.

Mary, when she saw the carriage, at once ran up to her own bedroom.

The doctor, who had been with her in the drawing-room, went down to

meet his ward, but as soon as he saw the cockade he darted almost

involuntarily into his shop and shut the door. This protection,

however, lasted only for a moment; he felt that decency required him

to meet his guest, and so he went forth and faced the enemy.

"I say," said Joe, speaking to Janet, who stood curtsying at the

gate, with Bridget, the other maid, behind her, "I say, are there

any chaps about the place to take these things--eh? come, look sharp

here."

It so happened that the doctor's groom was not on the spot, and

"other chaps" the doctor had none.

"Take those things, Bridget," he said, coming forward and offering

his hand to the baronet. Sir Louis, when he saw his host, roused

himself slowly from the back of his carriage. "How do, doctor?" said

he. "What terrible bad roads you have here! and, upon my word, it's

as cold as winter:" and, so saying, he slowly proceeded to descend.

Sir Louis was a year older than when we last saw him, and, in his

generation, a year wiser. He had then been somewhat humble before the

doctor; but now he was determined to let his guardian see that he

knew how to act the baronet; that he had acquired the manners of a

great man; and that he was not to be put upon. He had learnt some

lessons from Jenkins, in London, and other friends of the same sort,

and he was about to profit by them.

The doctor showed him to his room, and then proceeded to ask after

his health. "Oh, I'm right enough," said Sir Louis. "You mustn't

believe all that fellow Greyson tells you: he wants me to take salts

and senna, opodeldoc, and all that sort of stuff; looks after his

bill, you know--eh? like all the rest of you. But I won't have

it;--not at any price; and then he writes to you."

"I'm glad to see you able to travel," said Dr Thorne, who could not

force himself to tell his guest that he was glad to see him at

Greshamsbury.

"Oh, travel; yes, I can travel well enough. But I wish you had some

better sort of trap down in these country parts. I'm shaken to bits.

And, doctor, would you tell your people to send that fellow of mine

up here with hot water."

So dismissed, the doctor went his way, and met Joe swaggering in one

of the passages, while Janet and her colleague dragged along between

them a heavy article of baggage.

"Janet," said he, "go downstairs and get Sir Louis some hot water,

and Joe, do you take hold of your master's portmanteau."

Joe sulkily did as he was bid. "Seems to me," said he, turning to

the girl, and speaking before the doctor was out of hearing, "seems

to me, my dear, you be rather short-handed here; lots of work and

nothing to get; that's about the ticket, ain't it?" Bridget was too

demurely modest to make any answer upon so short an acquaintance; so,

putting her end of the burden down at the strange gentleman's door,

she retreated into the kitchen.

Sir Louis, in answer to the doctor's inquiries, had declared himself

to be all right; but his appearance was anything but all right.

Twelve months since, a life of dissipation, or rather, perhaps, a

life of drinking, had not had upon him so strong an effect but that

some of the salt of youth was still left; some of the freshness of

young years might still be seen in his face. But this was now all

gone; his eyes were sunken and watery, his cheeks were hollow and

wan, his mouth was drawn and his lips dry; his back was even bent,

and his legs were unsteady under him, so that he had been forced to

step down from his carriage as an old man would do. Alas, alas! he

had no further chance now of ever being all right again.

Mary had secluded herself in her bedroom as soon as the carriage had

driven up to the door, and there she remained till dinner-time. But

she could not shut herself up altogether. It would be necessary that

she should appear at dinner; and, therefore, a few minutes before the

hour, she crept out into the drawing-room. As she opened the door,

she looked in timidly, expecting Sir Louis to be there; but when

she saw that her uncle was the only occupant of the room, her brow

cleared, and she entered with a quick step.

"He'll come down to dinner; won't he, uncle?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

"What's he doing now?"

"Dressing, I suppose; he's been at it this hour."

"But, uncle--"

"Well?"

"Will he come up after dinner, do you think?"

Mary spoke of him as though he were some wild beast, whom her uncle

insisted on having in his house.

"Goodness knows what he will do! Come up? Yes. He will not stay in

the dining-room all night."

"But, dear uncle, do be serious."

"Serious!"

"Yes; serious. Don't you think that I might go to bed, instead of

waiting?"

The doctor was saved the trouble of answering by the entrance of the

baronet. He was dressed in what he considered the most fashionable

style of the day. He had on a new dress-coat lined with satin,

new dress-trousers, a silk waistcoat covered with chains, a white

cravat, polished pumps, and silk stockings, and he carried a scented

handkerchief in his hand; he had rings on his fingers, and carbuncle

studs in his shirt, and he smelt as sweet as patchouli could make

him. But he could hardly do more than shuffle into the room, and

seemed almost to drag one of his legs behind him.

Mary, in spite of her aversion, was shocked and distressed when she

saw him. He, however, seemed to think himself perfect, and was no

whit abashed by the unfavourable reception which twelve months since

had been paid to his suit. Mary came up and shook hands with him, and

he received her with a compliment which no doubt he thought must be

acceptable. "Upon my word, Miss Thorne, every place seems to agree

with you; one better than another. You were looking charming at

Boxall Hill; but, upon my word, charming isn't half strong enough

now."

Mary sat down quietly, and the doctor assumed a face of unutterable

disgust. This was the creature for whom all his sympathies had been

demanded, all his best energies put in requisition; on whose behalf

he was to quarrel with his oldest friends, lose his peace and

quietness of life, and exercise all the functions of a loving friend!

This was his self-invited guest, whom he was bound to foster, and

whom he could not turn from his door.

Then dinner came, and Mary had to put her hand upon his arm. She

certainly did not lean upon him, and once or twice felt inclined to

give him some support. They reached the dining-room, however, the

doctor following them, and then sat down, Janet waiting in the room,

as was usual.

"I say, doctor," said the baronet, "hadn't my man better come in

and help? He's got nothing to do, you know. We should be more cosy,

shouldn't we?"

"Janet will manage pretty well," said the doctor.

"Oh, you'd better have Joe; there's nothing like a good servant at

table. I say, Janet, just send that fellow in, will you?"

"We shall do very well without him," said the doctor, becoming rather

red about the cheek-bones, and with a slight gleam of determination

about the eye. Janet, who saw how matters stood, made no attempt to

obey the baronet's order.

"Oh, nonsense, doctor; you think he's an uppish sort of fellow, I

know, and you don't like to trouble him; but when I'm near him, he's

all right; just send him in, will you?"

"Sir Louis," said the doctor, "I'm accustomed to none but my own old

woman here in my own house, and if you will allow me, I'll keep my

old ways. I shall be sorry if you are not comfortable." The baronet

said nothing more, and the dinner passed off slowly and wearily

enough.

When Mary had eaten her fruit and escaped, the doctor got into one

arm-chair and the baronet into another, and the latter began the only

work of existence of which he knew anything.

"That's good port," said he; "very fair port."

The doctor loved his port wine, and thawed a little in his manner. He

loved it not as a toper, but as a collector loves his pet pictures.

He liked to talk about it, and think about it; to praise it, and hear

it praised; to look at it turned towards the light, and to count over

the years it had lain in his cellar.

"Yes," said he, "it's pretty fair wine. It was, at least, when I got

it, twenty years ago, and I don't suppose time has hurt it;" and he

held the glass up to the window, and looked at the evening light

through the ruby tint of the liquid. "Ah, dear, there's not much of

it left; more's the pity."

"A good thing won't last for ever. I'll tell you what now; I wish

I'd brought down a dozen or two of claret. I've some prime stuff in

London; got it from Muzzle & Drug, at ninety-six shillings; it was

a great favour, though. I'll tell you what now, I'll send up for a

couple of dozen to-morrow. I mustn't drink you out of house, high and

dry; must I, doctor?"

The doctor froze immediately.

"I don't think I need trouble you," said he; "I never drink claret,

at least not here; and there's enough of the old bin left to last

some little time longer yet."

Sir Louis drank two or three glasses of wine very quickly after each

other, and they immediately began to tell upon his weak stomach. But

before he was tipsy, he became more impudent and more disagreeable.

"Doctor," said he, "when are we to see any of this Greshamsbury

money? That's what I want to know."

"Your money is quite safe, Sir Louis; and the interest is paid to the

day."

"Interest, yes; but how do I know how long it will be paid? I should

like to see the principal. A hundred thousand pounds, or something

like it, is a precious large stake to have in one man's hands, and he

preciously hard up himself. I'll tell you what, doctor--I shall look

the squire up myself."

"Look him up?"

"Yes; look him up; ferret him out; tell him a bit of my mind. I'll

thank you to pass the bottle. D---- me doctor; I mean to know how

things are going on."

"Your money is quite safe," repeated the doctor, "and, to my mind,

could not be better invested."

"That's all very well; d---- well, I dare say, for you and Squire

Gresham--"

"What do you mean, Sir Louis?"

"Mean! why I mean that I'll sell the squire up; that's what I

mean--hallo--beg pardon. I'm blessed if I haven't broken the

water-jug. That comes of having water on the table. Oh, d---- me,

it's all over me." And then, getting up, to avoid the flood he

himself had caused, he nearly fell into the doctor's arms.

"You're tired with your journey, Sir Louis; perhaps you'd better go

to bed."

"Well, I am a bit seedy or so. Those cursed roads of yours shake a

fellow so."

The doctor rang the bell, and, on this occasion, did request that Joe

might be sent for. Joe came in, and, though he was much steadier than

his master, looked as though he also had found some bin of which he

had approved.

"Sir Louis wishes to go to bed," said the doctor; "you had better

give him your arm."

"Oh, yes; in course I will," said Joe, standing immoveable about

half-way between the door and the table.

"I'll just take one more glass of the old port--eh, doctor?" said Sir

Louis, putting out his hand and clutching the decanter.

It is very hard for any man to deny his guest in his own house, and

the doctor, at the moment, did not know how to do it; so Sir Louis

got his wine, after pouring half of it over the table.

"Come in, sir, and give Sir Louis your arm," said the doctor,

angrily.

"So I will in course, if my master tells me; but, if you please, Dr

Thorne,"--and Joe put his hand up to his hair in a manner that had a

great deal more of impudence than reverence in it--"I just want to ax

one question: where be I to sleep?"

Now this was a question which the doctor was not prepared to answer

on the spur of the moment, however well Janet or Mary might have been

able to do so.

"Sleep," said he, "I don't know where you are to sleep, and don't

care; ask Janet."

"That's all very well, master--"

"Hold your tongue, sirrah!" said Sir Louis. "What the devil do you

want of sleep?--come here," and then, with his servant's help, he

made his way up to his bedroom, and was no more heard of that night.

"Did he get tipsy," asked Mary, almost in a whisper, when her uncle

joined her in the drawing-room.

"Don't talk of it," said he. "Poor wretch! poor wretch! Let's

have some tea now, Molly, and pray don't talk any more about him

to-night." Then Mary did make the tea, and did not talk any more

about Sir Louis that night.

What on earth were they to do with him? He had come there

self-invited; but his connexion with the doctor was such, that it

was impossible he should be told to go away, either he himself, or

that servant of his. There was no reason to disbelieve him when he

declared that he had come down to ferret out the squire. Such was,

doubtless, his intention. He would ferret out the squire. Perhaps he

might ferret out Lady Arabella also. Frank would be home in a few

days; and he, too, might be ferreted out.

But the matter took a very singular turn, and one quite unexpected

on the doctor's part. On the morning following the little dinner of

which we have spoken, one of the Greshamsbury grooms rode up to the

doctor's door with two notes. One was addressed to the doctor in the

squire's well-known large handwriting, and the other was for Sir

Louis. Each contained an invitation do dinner for the following day;

and that to the doctor was in this wise:--

DEAR DOCTOR,

Do come and dine here to-morrow, and bring Sir Louis

Scatcherd with you. If you're the man I take you to be,

you won't refuse me. Lady Arabella sends a note for

Sir Louis. There will be nobody here but Oriel, and Mr

Gazebee, who is staying in the house.

Yours ever,

F. N. GRESHAM.

Greshamsbury, July, 185--.

P.S.--I make a positive request that you'll come, and I

think you will hardly refuse me.

The doctor read it twice before he could believe it, and then ordered

Janet to take the other note up to Sir Louis. As these invitations

were rather in opposition to the then existing Greshamsbury tactics,

the cause of Lady Arabella's special civility must be explained.

Mr Mortimer Gazebee was now at the house, and therefore, it must

be presumed, that things were not allowed to go on after their old

fashion. Mr Gazebee was an acute as well as a fashionable man; one

who knew what he was about, and who, moreover, had determined to give

his very best efforts on behalf of the Greshamsbury property. His

energy, in this respect, will explain itself hereafter. It was not

probable that the arrival in the village of such a person as Sir

Louis Scatcherd should escape attention. He had heard of it before

dinner, and, before the evening was over, had discussed it with Lady

Arabella.

Her ladyship was not at first inclined to make much of Sir Louis, and

expressed herself as but little inclined to agree with Mr Gazebee

when that gentleman suggested that he should be treated with civility

at Greshamsbury. But she was at last talked over. She found it

pleasant enough to have more to do with the secret management of the

estate than Mr Gresham himself; and when Mr Gazebee proved to her,

by sundry nods and winks, and subtle allusions to her own infinite

good sense, that it was necessary to catch this obscene bird which

had come to prey upon the estate, by throwing a little salt upon his

tail, she also nodded and winked, and directed Augusta to prepare the

salt according to order.

"But won't it be odd, Mr Gazebee, asking him out of Dr Thorne's

house?"

"Oh, we must have the doctor, too, Lady Arabella; by all means ask

the doctor also."

Lady Arabella's brow grew dark. "Mr Gazebee," she said, "you can

hardly believe how that man has behaved to me."

"He is altogether beneath your anger," said Mr Gazebee, with a bow.

"I don't know: in one way he may be, but not in another. I really do

not think I can sit down to table with Doctor Thorne."

But, nevertheless, Mr Gazebee gained his point. It was now about a

week since Sir Omicron Pie had been at Greshamsbury, and the squire

had, almost daily, spoken to his wife as to that learned man's

advice. Lady Arabella always answered in the same tone: "You can

hardly know, Mr Gresham, how that man has insulted me." But,

nevertheless, the physician's advice had not been disbelieved: it

tallied too well with her own inward convictions. She was anxious

enough to have Doctor Thorne back at her bedside, if she could only

get him there without damage to her pride. Her husband, she thought,

might probably send the doctor there without absolute permission from

herself; in which case she would have been able to scold, and show

that she was offended; and, at the same time, profit by what had been

done. But Mr Gresham never thought of taking so violent a step as

this, and, therefore, Dr Fillgrave still came, and her ladyship's

\_finesse\_ was wasted in vain.

But Mr Gazebee's proposition opened a door by which her point might

be gained. "Well," said she, at last, with infinite self-denial, "if

you think it is for Mr Gresham's advantage, and if he chooses to ask

Dr Thorne, I will not refuse to receive him."

Mr Gazebee's next task was to discuss the matter with the squire. Nor

was this easy, for Mr Gazebee was no favourite with Mr Gresham. But

the task was at last performed successfully. Mr Gresham was so glad

at heart to find himself able, once more, to ask his old friend to

his own house; and, though it would have pleased him better that this

sign of relenting on his wife's part should have reached him by other

means, he did not refuse to take advantage of it; and so he wrote the

above letter to Dr Thorne.

The doctor, as we have said, read it twice; and he at once resolved

stoutly that he would not go.

"Oh, do, do go!" said Mary. She well knew how wretched this feud had

made her uncle. "Pray, pray go!"

"Indeed, I will not," said he. "There are some things a man should

bear, and some he should not."

"You must go," said Mary, who had taken the note from her uncle's

hand, and read it. "You cannot refuse him when he asks you like

that."

"It will greatly grieve me; but I must refuse him."

"I also am angry, uncle; very angry with Lady Arabella; but for him,

for the squire, I would go to him on my knees if he asked me in that

way."

"Yes; and had he asked you, I also would have gone."

"Oh! now I shall be so wretched. It is his invitation, not hers: Mr

Gresham could not ask me. As for her, do not think of her; but do, do

go when he asks you like that. You will make me so miserable if you

do not. And then Sir Louis cannot go without you,"--and Mary pointed

upstairs--"and you may be sure that he will go."

"Yes; and make a beast of himself."

This colloquy was cut short by a message praying the doctor to go up

to Sir Louis's room. The young man was sitting in his dressing-gown,

drinking a cup of coffee at his toilet-table, while Joe was preparing

his razor and hot water. The doctor's nose immediately told him

that there was more in the coffee-cup than had come out of his own

kitchen, and he would not let the offence pass unnoticed.

"Are you taking brandy this morning, Sir Louis?"

"Just a little \_chasse-cafÃ©\_," said he, not exactly understanding

the word he used. "It's all the go now; and a capital thing for the

stomach."

"It's not a capital thing for your stomach;--about the least capital

thing you can take; that is, if you wish to live."

"Never mind about that now, doctor, but look here. This is what we

call the civil thing--eh?" and he showed the Greshamsbury note. "Not

but what they have an object, of course. I understand all that. Lots

of girls there--eh?"

The doctor took the note and read it. "It is civil," said he; "very

civil."

"Well; I shall go, of course. I don't bear malice because he can't

pay me the money he owes me. I'll eat his dinner, and look at the

girls. Have you an invite too, doctor?"

"Yes; I have."

"And you'll go?"

"I think not; but that need not deter you. But, Sir Louis--"

"Well! eh! what is it?"

"Step downstairs a moment," said the doctor, turning to the servant,

"and wait till you are called for. I wish to speak to your master."

Joe, for a moment, looked up at the baronet's face, as though he

wanted but the slightest encouragement to disobey the doctor's

orders; but not seeing it, he slowly retired, and placed himself, of

course, at the keyhole.

And then, the doctor began a long and very useless lecture. The first

object of it was to induce his ward not to get drunk at Greshamsbury;

but having got so far, he went on, and did succeed in frightening

his unhappy guest. Sir Louis did not possess the iron nerves of

his father--nerves which even brandy had not been able to subdue.

The doctor spoke strongly, very strongly; spoke of quick, almost

immediate death in case of further excesses; spoke to him of the

certainty there would be that he could not live to dispose of his own

property if he could not refrain. And thus he did frighten Sir Louis.

The father he had never been able to frighten. But there are men

who, though they fear death hugely, fear present suffering more;

who, indeed, will not bear a moment of pain if there by any mode of

escape. Sir Louis was such: he had no strength of nerve, no courage,

no ability to make a resolution and keep it. He promised the doctor

that he would refrain; and, as he did so, he swallowed down his cup

of coffee and brandy, in which the two articles bore about equal

proportions.

The doctor did, at last, make up his mind to go. Whichever way he

determined, he found that he was not contented with himself. He did

not like to trust Sir Louis by himself, and he did not like to show

that he was angry. Still less did he like the idea of breaking bread

in Lady Arabella's house till some amends had been made to Mary. But

his heart would not allow him to refuse the petition contained in

the squire's postscript, and the matter ended in his accepting the

invitation.

This visit of his ward's was, in every way, pernicious to the doctor.

He could not go about his business, fearing to leave such a man alone

with Mary. On the afternoon of the second day, she escaped to the

parsonage for an hour or so, and then walked away among the lanes,

calling on some of her old friends among the farmers' wives. But even

then, the doctor was afraid to leave Sir Louis. What could such a

man do, left alone in a village like Greshamsbury? So he stayed at

home, and the two together went over their accounts. The baronet was

particular about his accounts, and said a good deal as to having

Finnie over to Greshamsbury. To this, however, Dr Thorne positively

refused his consent.

The evening passed off better than the preceding one; at least the

early part of it. Sir Louis did not get tipsy; he came up to tea, and

Mary, who did not feel so keenly on the subject as her uncle, almost

wished that he had done so. At ten o'clock he went to bed.

But after that new troubles came on. The doctor had gone downstairs

into his study to make up some of the time which he had lost, and

had just seated himself at his desk, when Janet, without announcing

herself, burst into the room; and Bridget, dissolved in hysterical

tears, with her apron to her eyes, appeared behind the senior

domestic.

"Please, sir," said Janet, driven by excitement much beyond her

usual pace of speaking, and becoming unintentionally a little less

respectful than usual, "please sir, that 'ere young man must go out

of this here house; or else no respectable young 'ooman can't stop

here; no, indeed, sir; and we be sorry to trouble you, Dr Thorne; so

we be."

"What young man? Sir Louis?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, no! he abides mostly in bed, and don't do nothing amiss; least

way not to us. 'Tan't him, sir; but his man."

"Man!" sobbed Bridget from behind. "He an't no man, nor nothing

like a man. If Tummas had been here, he wouldn't have dared; so he

wouldn't." Thomas was the groom, and, if all Greshamsbury reports

were true, it was probable, that on some happy, future day, Thomas

and Bridget would become one flesh and one bone.

"Please sir," continued Janet, "there'll be bad work here if that

'ere young man doesn't quit this here house this very night, and I'm

sorry to trouble you, doctor; and so I am. But Tom, he be given to

fight a'most for nothin'. He's hout now; but if that there young man

be's here when Tom comes home, Tom will be punching his head; I know

he will."

"He wouldn't stand by and see a poor girl put upon; no more he

wouldn't," said Bridget, through her tears.

After many futile inquiries, the doctor ascertained that Mr Jonah had

expressed some admiration for Bridget's youthful charms, and had, in

the absence of Janet, thrown himself at the lady's feet in a manner

which had not been altogether pleasing to her. She had defended

herself stoutly and loudly, and in the middle of the row Janet had

come down.

"And where is he now?" said the doctor.

"Why, sir," said Janet, "the poor girl was so put about that she did

give him one touch across the face with the rolling-pin, and he be

all bloody now, in the back kitchen." At hearing this achievement of

hers thus spoken of, Bridget sobbed more hysterically than ever; but

the doctor, looking at her arm as she held her apron to her face,

thought in his heart that Joe must have had so much the worst of it,

that there could be no possible need for the interference of Thomas

the groom.

And such turned out to be the case. The bridge of Joe's nose was

broken; and the doctor had to set it for him in a little bedroom at

the village public-house, Bridget having positively refused to go to

bed in the same house with so dreadful a character.

"Quiet now, or I'll be serving thee the same way; thee see I've found

the trick of it." The doctor could not but hear so much as he made

his way into his own house by the back door, after finishing his

surgical operation. Bridget was recounting to her champion the fracas

that had occurred; and he, as was so natural, was expressing his

admiration at her valour.

CHAPTER XXXV

Sir Louis Goes Out to Dinner

The next day Joe did not make his appearance, and Sir Louis, with

many execrations, was driven to the terrible necessity of dressing

himself. Then came an unexpected difficulty: how were they to get up

to the house? Walking out to dinner, though it was merely through

the village and up the avenue, seemed to Sir Louis to be a thing

impossible. Indeed, he was not well able to walk at all, and

positively declared that he should never be able to make his way over

the gravel in pumps. His mother would not have thought half as much

of walking from Boxall Hill to Greshamsbury and back again. At last,

the one village fly was sent for, and the matter was arranged.

When they reached the house, it was easy to see that there was some

unwonted bustle. In the drawing-room there was no one but Mr Mortimer

Gazebee, who introduced himself to them both. Sir Louis, who knew

that he was only an attorney, did not take much notice of him, but

the doctor entered into conversation.

"Have you heard that Mr Gresham has come home?" said Mr Gazebee.

"Mr Gresham! I did not know that he had been away."

"Mr Gresham, junior, I mean." No, indeed; the doctor had not heard.

Frank had returned unexpectedly just before dinner, and he was now

undergoing his father's smiles, his mother's embraces, and his

sisters' questions.

"Quite unexpectedly," said Mr Gazebee. "I don't know what has brought

him back before his time. I suppose he found London too hot."

"Deuced hot," said the baronet. "I found it so, at least. I don't

know what keeps men in London when it's so hot; except those fellows

who have business to do: they're paid for it."

Mr Mortimer Gazebee looked at him. He was managing an estate which

owed Sir Louis an enormous sum of money, and, therefore, he could not

afford to despise the baronet; but he thought to himself, what a very

abject fellow the man would be if he were not a baronet, and had not

a large fortune!

And then the squire came in. His broad, honest face was covered with

a smile when he saw the doctor.

"Thorne," he said, almost in a whisper, "you're the best fellow

breathing; I have hardly deserved this." The doctor, as he took his

old friend's hand, could not but be glad that he had followed Mary's

counsel.

"So Frank has come home?"

"Oh, yes; quite unexpectedly. He was to have stayed a week longer in

London. You would hardly know him if you met him. Sir Louis, I beg

your pardon." And the squire went up to his other guest, who had

remained somewhat sullenly standing in one corner of the room. He was

the man of highest rank present, or to be present, and he expected to

be treated as such.

"I am happy to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance,

Mr Gresham," said the baronet, intending to be very courteous.

"Though we have not met before, I very often see your name in my

accounts--ha! ha! ha!" and Sir Louis laughed as though he had said

something very good.

The meeting between Lady Arabella and the doctor was rather

distressing to the former; but she managed to get over it. She shook

hands with him graciously, and said that it was a fine day. The

doctor said that it was fine, only perhaps a little rainy. And then

they went into different parts of the room.

When Frank came in, the doctor hardly did know him. His hair was

darker than it had been, and so was his complexion; but his chief

disguise was in a long silken beard, which hung down over his cravat.

The doctor had hitherto not been much in favour of long beards, but

he could not deny that Frank looked very well with the appendage.

"Oh, doctor, I am so delighted to find you here," said he, coming up

to him; "so very, very glad:" and, taking the doctor's arm, he led

him away into a window, where they were alone. "And how is Mary?"

said he, almost in a whisper. "Oh, I wish she were here! But, doctor,

it shall all come in time. But tell me, doctor, there is no news

about her, is there?"

"News--what news?"

"Oh, well; no news is good news: you will give her my love, won't

you?"

The doctor said that he would. What else could he say? It appeared

quite clear to him that some of Mary's fears were groundless.

Frank was again very much altered. It has been said, that though

he was a boy at twenty-one, he was a man at twenty-two. But now,

at twenty-three, he appeared to be almost a man of the world. His

manners were easy, his voice under his control, and words were at his

command: he was no longer either shy or noisy; but, perhaps, was open

to the charge of seeming, at least, to be too conscious of his own

merits. He was, indeed, very handsome; tall, manly, and powerfully

built, his form was such as women's eyes have ever loved to look

upon. "Ah, if he would but marry money!" said Lady Arabella to

herself, taken up by a mother's natural admiration for her son. His

sisters clung round him before dinner, all talking to him at once.

How proud a family of girls are of one, big, tall, burly brother!

"You don't mean to tell me, Frank, that you are going to eat soup

with that beard?" said the squire, when they were seated round the

table. He had not ceased to rally his son as to this patriarchal

adornment; but, nevertheless, any one could have seen, with half an

eye, that he was as proud of it as were the others.

"Don't I, sir? All I require is a relay of napkins for every course:"

and he went to work, covering it with every spoonful, as men with

beards always do.

"Well, if you like it!" said the squire, shrugging his shoulders.

"But I do like it," said Frank.

"Oh, papa, you wouldn't have him cut it off," said one of the twins.

"It is so handsome."

"I should like to work it into a chair-back instead of floss-silk,"

said the other twin.

"Thank'ee, Sophy; I'll remember you for that."

"Doesn't it look nice, and grand, and patriarchal?" said Beatrice,

turning to her neighbour.

"Patriarchal, certainly," said Mr Oriel. "I should grow one myself if

I had not the fear of the archbishop before my eyes."

What was next said to him was in a whisper, audible only to himself.

"Doctor, did you know Wildman of the 9th. He was left as surgeon at

Scutari for two years. Why, my beard to his is only a little down."

"A little way down, you mean," said Mr Gazebee.

"Yes," said Frank, resolutely set against laughing at Mr Gazebee's

pun. "Why, his beard descends to his ankles, and he is obliged to tie

it in a bag at night, because his feet get entangled in it when he is

asleep!"

"Oh, Frank!" said one of the girls.

This was all very well for the squire, and Lady Arabella, and the

girls. They were all delighted to praise Frank, and talk about him.

Neither did it come amiss to Mr Oriel and the doctor, who had both a

personal interest in the young hero. But Sir Louis did not like it

at all. He was the only baronet in the room, and yet nobody took any

notice of him. He was seated in the post of honour, next to Lady

Arabella; but even Lady Arabella seemed to think more of her own

son than of him. Seeing how he was ill-used, he meditated revenge;

but not the less did it behove him to make some effort to attract

attention.

"Was your ladyship long in London, this season?" said he.

Lady Arabella had not been in London at all this year, and it

was a sore subject with her. "No," said she, very graciously;

"circumstances have kept us at home."

Sir Louis only understood one description of "circumstances."

Circumstances, in his idea, meant the want of money, and he

immediately took Lady Arabella's speech as a confession of poverty.

"Ah, indeed! I am very sorry for that; that must be very distressing

to a person like your ladyship. But things are mending, perhaps?"

Lady Arabella did not in the least understand him. "Mending!" she

said, in her peculiar tone of aristocratic indifference; and then

turned to Mr Gazebee, who was on the other side of her.

Sir Louis was not going to stand this. He was the first man in the

room, and he knew his own importance. It was not to be borne that

Lady Arabella should turn to talk to a dirty attorney, and leave him,

a baronet, to eat his dinner without notice. If nothing else would

move her, he would let her know who was the real owner of the

Greshamsbury title-deeds.

"I think I saw your ladyship out to-day, taking a ride." Lady

Arabella had driven through the village in her pony-chair.

"I never ride," said she, turning her head for one moment from Mr

Gazebee.

"In the one-horse carriage, I mean, my lady. I was delighted with the

way you whipped him up round the corner."

Whipped him up round the corner! Lady Arabella could make no answer

to this; so she went on talking to Mr Gazebee. Sir Louis, repulsed,

but not vanquished--resolved not to be vanquished by any Lady

Arabella--turned his attention to his plate for a minute or two, and

then recommenced.

"The honour of a glass of wine with you, Lady Arabella," said he.

"I never take wine at dinner," said Lady Arabella. The man was

becoming intolerable to her, and she was beginning to fear that it

would be necessary for her to fly the room to get rid of him.

The baronet was again silent for a moment; but he was determined not

to be put down.

"This is a nice-looking country about here," said he.

"Yes; very nice," said Mr Gazebee, endeavouring to relieve the lady

of the mansion.

"I hardly know which I like best; this, or my own place at Boxall

Hill. You have the advantage here in trees, and those sort of things.

But, as to the house, why, my box there is very comfortable, very.

You'd hardly know the place now, Lady Arabella, if you haven't seen

it since my governor bought it. How much do you think he spent about

the house and grounds, pineries included, you know, and those sort of

things?"

Lady Arabella shook her head.

"Now guess, my lady," said he. But it was not to be supposed that

Lady Arabella should guess on such a subject.

"I never guess," said she, with a look of ineffable disgust.

"What do you say, Mr Gazebee?"

"Perhaps a hundred thousand pounds."

"What! for a house! You can't know much about money, nor yet about

building, I think, Mr Gazebee."

"Not much," said Mr Gazebee, "as to such magnificent places as Boxall

Hill."

"Well, my lady, if you won't guess, I'll tell you. It cost twenty-two

thousand four hundred and nineteen pounds four shillings and

eightpence. I've all the accounts exact. Now, that's a tidy lot of

money for a house for a man to live in."

Sir Louis spoke this in a loud tone, which at least commanded the

attention of the table. Lady Arabella, vanquished, bowed her head,

and said that it was a large sum; Mr Gazebee went on sedulously

eating his dinner; the squire was struck momentarily dumb in the

middle of a long chat with the doctor; even Mr Oriel ceased to

whisper; and the girls opened their eyes with astonishment. Before

the end of his speech, Sir Louis's voice had become very loud.

"Yes, indeed," said Frank; "a very tidy lot of money. I'd have

generously dropped the four and eightpence if I'd been the

architect."

"It wasn't all one bill; but that's the tot. I can show the bills:"

and Sir Louis, well pleased with his triumph, swallowed a glass of

wine.

Almost immediately after the cloth was removed, Lady Arabella

escaped, and the gentlemen clustered together. Sir Louis found

himself next to Mr Oriel, and began to make himself agreeable.

"A very nice girl, Miss Beatrice; very nice."

Now Mr Oriel was a modest man, and, when thus addressed as to his

future wife, found it difficult to make any reply.

"You parsons always have your own luck," said Sir Louis. "You get all

the beauty, and generally all the money, too. Not much of the latter

in this case, though--eh?"

Mr Oriel was dumbfounded. He had never said a word to any creature as

to Beatrice's dowry; and when Mr Gresham had told him, with sorrow,

that his daughter's portion must be small, he had at once passed away

from the subject as one that was hardly fit for conversation, even

between him and his future father-in-law; and now he was abruptly

questioned on the subject by a man he had never before seen in his

life. Of course, he could make no answer.

"The squire has muddled his matters most uncommonly," continued Sir

Louis, filling his glass for the second time before he passed the

bottle. "What do you suppose now he owes me alone; just at one lump,

you know?"

Mr Oriel had nothing for it but to run. He could make no answer, nor

would he sit there to hear tidings as to Mr Gresham's embarrassments.

So he fairly retreated, without having said one word to his

neighbour, finding such discretion to be the only kind of valour left

to him.

"What, Oriel! off already?" said the squire. "Anything the matter?"

"Oh, no; nothing particular. I'm not just quite--I think I'll go out

for a few minutes."

"See what it is to be in love," said the squire, half-whispering to

Dr Thorne. "You're not in the same way, I hope?"

Sir Louis then shifted his seat again, and found himself next to

Frank. Mr Gazebee was opposite to him, and the doctor opposite to

Frank.

"Parson seems peekish, I think," said the baronet.

"Peekish?" said the squire, inquisitively.

"Rather down on his luck. He's decently well off himself, isn't he?"

There was another pause, and nobody seemed inclined to answer the

question.

"I mean, he's got something more than his bare living."

"Oh, yes," said Frank, laughing. "He's got what will buy him bread

and cheese when the Rads shut up the Church:--unless, indeed, they

shut up the Funds too."

"Ah, there's nothing like land," said Sir Louis: "nothing like the

dirty acres; is there, squire?"

"Land is a very good investment, certainly," said Mr Gresham.

"The best going," said the other, who was now, as people say when

they mean to be good-natured, slightly under the influence of liquor.

"The best going--eh, Gazebee?"

Mr Gazebee gathered himself up, and turned away his head, looking out

of the window.

"You lawyers never like to give an opinion without money, ha! ha! ha!

Do they, Mr Gresham? You and I have had to pay for plenty of them,

and will have to pay for plenty more before they let us alone."

Here Mr Gazebee got up, and followed Mr Oriel out of the room. He was

not, of course, on such intimate terms in the house as was Mr Oriel;

but he hoped to be forgiven by the ladies in consequence of the

severity of the miseries to which he was subjected. He and Mr Oriel

were soon to be seen through the dining-room window, walking about

the grounds with the two eldest Miss Greshams. And Patience Oriel,

who had also been of the party, was also to be seen with the twins.

Frank looked at his father with almost a malicious smile, and began

to think that he too might be better employed out among the walks.

Did he think then of a former summer evening, when he had half broken

Mary's heart by walking there too lovingly with Patience Oriel?

Sir Louis, if he continued his brilliant career of success, would

soon be left the cock of the walk. The squire, to be sure, could

not bolt, nor could the doctor very well; but they might be equally

vanquished, remaining there in their chairs. Dr Thorne, during all

this time, was sitting with tingling ears. Indeed, it may be said

that his whole body tingled. He was in a manner responsible for this

horrid scene; but what could he do to stop it? He could not take Sir

Louis up bodily and carry him away. One idea did occur to him. The

fly had been ordered for ten o'clock. He could rush out and send for

it instantly.

"You're not going to leave me?" said the squire, in a voice of

horror, as he saw the doctor rising from his chair.

"Oh, no, no, no," said the doctor; and then he whispered the purpose

of his mission. "I will be back in two minutes." The doctor would

have given twenty pounds to have closed the scene at once; but he was

not the man to desert his friend in such a strait as that.

"He's a well-meaning fellow, the doctor," said Sir Louis, when his

guardian was out of the room, "very; but he's not up to trap--not at

all."

"Up to trap--well, I should say he was; that is, if I know what trap

means," said Frank.

"Ah, but that's just the ticket. Do you know? Now I say Dr Thorne's

not a man of the world."

"He's about the best man I know, or ever heard of," said the squire.

"And if any man ever had a good friend, you have got one in him; and

so have I:" and the squire silently drank the doctor's health.

"All very true, I dare say; but yet he's not up to trap. Now look

here, squire--"

"If you don't mind, sir," said Frank, "I've got something very

particular--perhaps, however--"

"Stay till Thorne returns, Frank."

Frank did stay till Thorne returned, and then escaped.

"Excuse me, doctor," said he, "but I've something very particular to

say; I'll explain to-morrow." And then the three were left alone.

Sir Louis was now becoming almost drunk, and was knocking his words

together. The squire had already attempted to stop the bottle; but

the baronet had contrived to get hold of a modicum of Madeira, and

there was no preventing him from helping himself; at least, none at

that moment.

"As we were saying about lawyers," continued Sir Louis. "Let's see,

what were we saying? Why, squire, it's just here. Those fellows will

fleece us both if we don't mind what we are after."

"Never mind about lawyers now," said Dr Thorne, angrily.

"Ah, but I do mind; most particularly. That's all very well for you,

doctor; you've nothing to lose. You've no great stake in the matter.

Why, now, what sum of money of mine do you think those d---- doctors

are handling?"

"D---- doctors!" said the squire in a tone of dismay.

"Lawyers, I mean, of course. Why, now, Gresham; we're all totted

now, you see; you're down in my books, I take it, for pretty near a

hundred thousand pounds."

"Hold your tongue, sir," said the doctor, getting up.

"Hold my tongue!" said Sir Louis.

"Sir Louis Scatcherd," said the squire, slowly rising from his chair,

"we will not, if you please, talk about business at the present

moment. Perhaps we had better go to the ladies."

This latter proposition had certainly not come from the squire's

heart: going to the ladies was the very last thing for which Sir

Louis was now fit. But the squire had said it as being the only

recognised formal way he could think of for breaking up the

symposium.

"Oh, very well," hiccupped the baronet, "I'm always ready for the

ladies," and he stretched out his hand to the decanter to get a last

glass of Madeira.

"No," said the doctor, rising stoutly, and speaking with a determined

voice. "No; you will have no more wine:" and he took the decanter

from him.

"What's all this about?" said Sir Louis, with a drunken laugh.

"Of course he cannot go into the drawing-room, Mr Gresham. If you

will leave him here with me, I will stay with him till the fly

comes. Pray tell Lady Arabella from me, how sorry I am that this has

occurred."

The squire would not leave his friend, and they sat together till the

fly came. It was not long, for the doctor had dispatched his

messenger with much haste.

"I am so heartily ashamed of myself," said the doctor, almost with

tears.

The squire took him by the hand affectionately. "I've seen a tipsy

man before to-night," said he.

"Yes," said the doctor, "and so have I, but--" He did not express the

rest of his thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Will He Come Again?

Long before the doctor returned home after the little dinner-party

above described, Mary had learnt that Frank was already at

Greshamsbury. She had heard nothing of him or from him, not a word,

nothing in the shape of a message, for twelve months; and at her age

twelve months is a long period. Would he come and see her in spite of

his mother? Would he send her any tidings of his return, or notice

her in any way? If he did not, what would she do? and if he did, what

then would she do? It was so hard to resolve; so hard to be deserted;

and so hard to dare to wish that she might not be deserted! She

continued to say to herself, that it would be better that they should

be strangers; and she could hardly keep herself from tears in the

fear that they might be so. What chance could there be that he should

care for her, after an absence spent in travelling over the world?

No; she would forget that affair of his hand; and then, immediately

after having so determined, she would confess to herself that it was

a thing not to be forgotten, and impossible of oblivion.

On her uncle's return, she would hear some word about him; and so

she sat alone, with a book before her, of which she could not read

a line. She expected them about eleven, and was, therefore, rather

surprised when the fly stopped at the door before nine.

She immediately heard her uncle's voice, loud and angry, calling

for Thomas. Both Thomas and Bridget were unfortunately out, being,

at this moment, forgetful of all sublunary cares, and seated in

happiness under a beech-tree in the park. Janet flew to the little

gate, and there found Sir Louis insisting that he would be taken at

once to his own mansion at Boxall Hill, and positively swearing that

he would no longer submit to the insult of the doctor's surveillance.

In the absence of Thomas, the doctor was forced to apply for

assistance to the driver of the fly. Between them the baronet was

dragged out of the vehicle, the windows suffered much, and the

doctor's hat also. In this way, he was taken upstairs, and was at

last put to bed, Janet assisting; nor did the doctor leave the room

till his guest was asleep. Then he went into the drawing-room to

Mary. It may easily be conceived that he was hardly in a humour to

talk much about Frank Gresham.

"What am I to do with him?" said he, almost in tears: "what am I to

do with him?"

"Can you not send him to Boxall Hill?" asked Mary.

"Yes; to kill himself there! But it is no matter; he will kill

himself somewhere. Oh! what that family have done for me!" And then,

suddenly remembering a portion of their doings, he took Mary in his

arms, and kissed and blessed her; and declared that, in spite of all

this, he was a happy man.

There was no word about Frank that night. The next morning the doctor

found Sir Louis very weak, and begging for stimulants. He was worse

than weak; he was in such a state of wretched misery and mental

prostration; so low in heart, in such collapse of energy and spirit,

that Dr Thorne thought it prudent to remove his razors from his

reach.

"For God's sake do let me have a little \_chasse-cafÃ©\_; I'm always

used to it; ask Joe if I'm not! You don't want to kill me, do you?"

And the baronet cried piteously, like a child, and, when the doctor

left him for the breakfast-table, abjectly implored Janet to get him

some curaÃ§oa which he knew was in one of his portmanteaus. Janet,

however, was true to her master.

The doctor did give him some wine; and then, having left strict

orders as to his treatment--Bridget and Thomas being now both in the

house--went forth to some of his too much neglected patients.

Then Mary was again alone, and her mind flew away to her lover. How

should she be able to compose herself when she should first see him?

See him she must. People cannot live in the same village without

meeting. If she passed him at the church-door, as she often passed

Lady Arabella, what should she do? Lady Arabella always smiled

a peculiar, little, bitter smile, and this, with half a nod of

recognition, carried off the meeting. Should she try the bitter

smile, the half-nod with Frank? Alas! she knew it was not in her to

be so much mistress of her own heart's blood.

As she thus thought, she stood at the drawing-room window, looking

out into her garden; and, as she leant against the sill, her head was

surrounded by the sweet creepers. "At any rate, he won't come here,"

she said: and so, with a deep sigh, she turned from the window into

the room.

There he was, Frank Gresham himself standing there in her immediate

presence, beautiful as Apollo. Her next thought was how she might

escape from out of his arms. How it happened that she had fallen into

them, she never knew.

"Mary! my own, own love! my own one! sweetest! dearest! best! Mary!

dear Mary! have you not a word to say to me?"

No; she had not a word, though her life had depended on it. The

exertion necessary for not crying was quite enough for her. This,

then, was the bitter smile and the half-nod that was to pass between

them; this was the manner in which estrangement was to grow into

indifference; this was the mode of meeting by which she was to prove

that she was mistress of her conduct, if not her heart! There he held

her close bound to his breast, and she could only protect her face,

and that all ineffectually, with her hands. "He loves another,"

Beatrice had said. "At any rate, he will not love me," her own heart

had said also. Here was now the answer.

"You know you cannot marry him," Beatrice had said, also. Ah! if that

really were so, was not this embrace deplorable for them both? And

yet how could she not be happy? She endeavoured to repel him; but

with what a weak endeavour! Her pride had been wounded to the core,

not by Lady Arabella's scorn, but by the conviction which had grown

on her, that though she had given her own heart absolutely away,

had parted with it wholly and for ever, she had received nothing in

return. The world, her world, would know that she had loved, and

loved in vain. But here now was the loved one at her feet; the first

moment that his enforced banishment was over, had brought him there.

How could she not be happy?

They all said that she could not marry him. Well, perhaps it might

be so; nay, when she thought of it, must not that edict too probably

be true? But if so, it would not be his fault. He was true to her,

and that satisfied her pride. He had taken from her, by surprise,

a confession of her love. She had often regretted her weakness in

allowing him to do so; but she could not regret it now. She could

endure to suffer; nay, it would not be suffering while he suffered

with her.

"Not one word, Mary? Then after all my dreams, after all my patience,

you do not love me at last?"

Oh, Frank! notwithstanding what has been said in thy praise, what a

fool thou art! Was any word necessary for thee? Had not her heart

beat against thine? Had she not borne thy caresses? Had there been

one touch of anger when she warded off thy threatened kisses?

Bridget, in the kitchen, when Jonah became amorous, smashed his nose

with the rolling-pin. But when Thomas sinned, perhaps as deeply, she

only talked of doing so. Miss Thorne, in the drawing-room, had she

needed self-protection, could doubtless have found the means, though

the process would probably have been less violent.

At last Mary succeeded in her efforts at enfranchisement, and she and

Frank stood at some little distance from each other. She could not

but marvel at him. That long, soft beard, which just now had been so

close to her face, was all new; his whole look was altered; his mien,

and gait, and very voice were not the same. Was this, indeed, the

very Frank who had chattered of his boyish love, two years since, in

the gardens at Greshamsbury?

"Not one word of welcome, Mary?"

"Indeed, Mr Gresham, you are welcome home."

"Mr Gresham! Tell me, Mary--tell me, at once--has anything happened?

I could not ask up there."

"Frank," she said, and then stopped; not being able at the moment to

get any further.

"Speak to me honestly, Mary; honestly and bravely. I offered you my

hand once before; there it is again. Will you take it?"

She looked wistfully up in his eyes; she would fain have taken it.

But though a girl may be honest in such a case, it is so hard for her

to be brave.

He still held out his hand. "Mary," said he, "if you can value it,

it shall be yours through good fortune or ill fortune. There may be

difficulties; but if you can love me, we will get over them. I am a

free man; free to do as I please with myself, except so far as I am

bound to you. There is my hand. Will you have it?" And then he, too,

looked into her eyes, and waited composedly, as though determined to

have an answer.

She slowly raised her hand, and, as she did so, her eyes fell to the

ground. It then drooped again, and was again raised; and, at last,

her light tapering fingers rested on his broad open palm.

They were soon clutched, and the whole hand brought absolutely within

his grasp. "There, now you are my own!" he said, "and none of them

shall part us; my own Mary, my own wife."

"Oh, Frank, is not this imprudent? Is it not wrong?"

"Imprudent! I am sick of prudence. I hate prudence. And as for

wrong--no. I say it is not wrong; certainly not wrong if we love each

other. And you do love me, Mary--eh? You do! don't you?"

He would not excuse her, or allow her to escape from saying it in so

many words; and when the words did come at last, they came freely.

"Yes, Frank, I do love you; if that were all you would have no cause

for fear."

"And I will have no cause for fear."

"Ah; but your father, Frank, and my uncle. I can never bring myself

to do anything that shall bring either of them to sorrow."

Frank, of course, ran through all his arguments. He would go into a

profession, or take a farm and live in it. He would wait; that is,

for a few months. "A few months, Frank!" said Mary. "Well, perhaps

six." "Oh, Frank!" But Frank would not be stopped. He would do

anything that his father might ask him. Anything but the one thing.

He would not give up the wife he had chosen. It would not be

reasonable, or proper, or righteous that he should be asked to do so;

and here he mounted a somewhat high horse.

Mary had no arguments which she could bring from her heart to offer

in opposition to all this. She could only leave her hand in his, and

feel that she was happier than she had been at any time since the day

of that donkey-ride at Boxall Hill.

"But, Mary," continued he, becoming very grave and serious. "We must

be true to each other, and firm in this. Nothing that any of them can

say shall drive me from my purpose; will you say as much?"

Her hand was still in his, and so she stood, thinking for a moment

before she answered him. But she could not do less for him than he

was willing to do for her. "Yes," said she--said in a very low voice,

and with a manner perfectly quiet--"I will be firm. Nothing that they

can say shall shake me. But, Frank, it cannot be soon."

Nothing further occurred in this interview which needs recording.

Frank had been three times told by Mary that he had better go before

he did go; and, at last, she was obliged to take the matter into her

own hands, and lead him to the door.

"You are in a great hurry to get rid of me," said he.

"You have been here two hours, and you must go now; what will they

all think?"

"Who cares what they think? Let them think the truth: that after a

year's absence, I have much to say to you." However, at last, he did

go, and Mary was left alone.

Frank, although he had been so slow to move, had a thousand other

things to do, and went about them at once. He was very much in love,

no doubt; but that did not interfere with his interest in other

pursuits. In the first place, he had to see Harry Baker, and Harry

Baker's stud. Harry had been specially charged to look after the

black horse during Frank's absence, and the holiday doings of

that valuable animal had to be inquired into. Then the kennel of

the hounds had to be visited, and--as a matter of second-rate

importance--the master. This could not be done on the same day; but a

plan for doing so must be concocted with Harry--and then there were

two young pointer pups.

Frank, when he left his betrothed, went about these things quite as

vehemently as though he were not in love at all; quite as vehemently

as though he had said nothing as to going into some profession which

must necessarily separate him from horses and dogs. But Mary sat

there at her window, thinking of her love, and thinking of nothing

else. It was all in all to her now. She had pledged herself not to be

shaken from her troth by anything, by any person; and it would behove

her to be true to this pledge. True to it, though all the Greshams

but one should oppose her with all their power; true to it, even

though her own uncle should oppose her.

And how could she have done any other than so pledge herself, invoked

to it as she had been? How could she do less for him than he was so

anxious to do for her? They would talk to her of maiden delicacy, and

tell her that she had put a stain on that snow-white coat of proof,

in confessing her love for one whose friends were unwilling to

receive her. Let them so talk. Honour, honesty, and truth, out-spoken

truth, self-denying truth, and fealty from man to man, are worth more

than maiden delicacy; more, at any rate, than the talk of it. It

was not for herself that this pledge had been made. She knew her

position, and the difficulties of it; she knew also the value of it.

He had much to offer, much to give; she had nothing but herself. He

had name, and old repute, family, honour, and what eventually would

at least be wealth to her. She was nameless, fameless, portionless.

He had come there with all his ardour, with the impulse of his

character, and asked for her love. It was already his own. He had

then demanded her troth, and she acknowledged that he had a right to

demand it. She would be his if ever it should be in his power to take

her.

But there let the bargain end. She would always remember, that though

it was in her power to keep her pledge, it might too probably not be

in his power to keep his. That doctrine, laid down so imperatively

by the great authorities of Greshamsbury, that edict, which demanded

that Frank should marry money, had come home also to her with a

certain force. It would be sad that the fame of Greshamsbury should

perish, and that the glory should depart from the old house. It might

be, that Frank also should perceive that he must marry money. It

would be a pity that he had not seen it sooner; but she, at any rate,

would not complain.

And so she stood, leaning on the open window, with her book unnoticed

lying beside her. The sun had been in the mid-sky when Frank had left

her, but its rays were beginning to stream into the room from the

west before she moved from her position. Her first thought in the

morning had been this: Would he come to see her? Her last now was

more soothing to her, less full of absolute fear: Would it be right

that he should come again?

The first sounds she heard were the footsteps of her uncle, as he

came up to the drawing-room, three steps at a time. His step was

always heavy; but when he was disturbed in spirit, it was slow; when

merely fatigued in body by ordinary work, it was quick.

"What a broiling day!" he said, and he threw himself into a chair.

"For mercy's sake give me something to drink." Now the doctor was a

great man for summer-drinks. In his house, lemonade, currant-juice,

orange-mixtures, and raspberry-vinegar were used by the quart. He

frequently disapproved of these things for his patients, as being apt

to disarrange the digestion; but he consumed enough himself to throw

a large family into such difficulties.

"Ha--a!" he ejaculated, after a draught; "I'm better now. Well,

what's the news?"

"You've been out, uncle; you ought to have the news. How's Mrs

Green?"

"Really as bad as ennui and solitude can make her."

"And Mrs Oaklerath?"

"She's getting better, because she has ten children to look after,

and twins to suckle. What has he been doing?" And the doctor pointed

towards the room occupied by Sir Louis.

Mary's conscience struck her that she had not even asked. She had

hardly remembered, during the whole day, that the baronet was in the

house. "I do not think he has been doing much," she said. "Janet has

been with him all day."

"Has he been drinking?"

"Upon my word, I don't know, uncle. I think not, for Janet has been

with him. But, uncle--"

"Well, dear--but just give me a little more of that tipple."

Mary prepared the tumbler, and, as she handed it to him, she said,

"Frank Gresham has been here to-day."

The doctor swallowed his draught, and put down the glass before he

made any reply, and even then he said but little.

"Oh! Frank Gresham."

"Yes, uncle."

"You thought him looking pretty well?"

"Yes, uncle; he was very well, I believe."

Dr Thorne had nothing more to say, so he got up and went to his

patient in the next room.

"If he disapproves of it, why does he not say so?" said Mary to

herself. "Why does he not advise me?"

But it was not so easy to give advice while Sir Louis Scatcherd was

lying there in that state.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Sir Louis Leaves Greshamsbury

Janet had been sedulous in her attentions to Sir Louis, and had not

troubled her mistress; but she had not had an easy time of it. Her

orders had been, that either she or Thomas should remain in the room

the whole day, and those orders had been obeyed.

Immediately after breakfast, the baronet had inquired after his own

servant. "His confounded nose must be right by this time, I suppose?"

"It was very bad, Sir Louis," said the old woman, who imagined that

it might be difficult to induce Jonah to come into the house again.

"A man in such a place as his has no business to be laid up," said

the master, with a whine. "I'll see and get a man who won't break his

nose."

Thomas was sent to the inn three or four times, but in vain. The man

was sitting up, well enough, in the tap-room; but the middle of his

face was covered with streaks of plaster, and he could not bring

himself to expose his wounds before his conqueror.

Sir Louis began by ordering the woman to bring him \_chasse-cafÃ©\_. She

offered him coffee, as much as he would; but no \_chasse\_. "A glass of

port wine," she said, "at twelve o'clock, and another at three had

been ordered for him."

"I don't care a ---- for the orders," said Sir Louis; "send me my

own man." The man was again sent for; but would not come. "There's

a bottle of that stuff that I take, in that portmanteau, in the

left-hand corner--just hand it to me."

But Janet was not to be done. She would give him no stuff, except

what the doctor had ordered, till the doctor came back. The doctor

would then, no doubt, give him anything that was proper.

Sir Louis swore a good deal, and stormed as much as he could. He

drank, however, his two glasses of wine, and he got no more. Once or

twice he essayed to get out of bed and dress; but, at every effort,

he found that he could not do it without Joe: and there he was, still

under the clothes when the doctor returned.

"I'll tell you what it is," said he, as soon as his guardian entered

the room, "I'm not going to be made a prisoner of here."

"A prisoner! no, surely not."

"It seems very much like it at present. Your servant here--that

old woman--takes it upon her to say she'll do nothing without your

orders."

"Well; she's right there."

"Right! I don't know what you call right; but I won't stand it. You

are not going to make a child of me, Dr Thorne; so you need not think

it."

And then there was a long quarrel between them, and but an

indifferent reconciliation. The baronet said that he would go to

Boxall Hill, and was vehement in his intention to do so because the

doctor opposed it. He had not, however, as yet ferreted out the

squire, or given a bit of his mind to Mr Gazebee, and it behoved him

to do this before he took himself off to his own country mansion. He

ended, therefore, by deciding to go on the next day but one.

"Let it be so, if you are well enough," said the doctor.

"Well enough!" said the other, with a sneer. "There's nothing to make

me ill that I know of. It certainly won't be drinking too much here."

On the next day, Sir Louis was in a different mood, and in one more

distressing for the doctor to bear. His compelled abstinence from

intemperate drinking had, no doubt, been good for him; but his mind

had so much sunk under the pain of the privation, that his state was

piteous to behold. He had cried for his servant, as a child cries

for its nurse, till at last the doctor, moved to pity, had himself

gone out and brought the man in from the public-house. But when he

did come, Joe was of but little service to his master, as he was

altogether prevented from bringing him either wine or spirits; and

when he searched for the liqueur-case, he found that even that had

been carried away.

"I believe you want me to die," he said, as the doctor, sitting

by his bedside, was trying, for the hundredth time, to make him

understand that he had but one chance of living.

The doctor was not the least irritated. It would have been as wise to

be irritated by the want of reason in a dog.

"I am doing what I can to save your life," he said calmly; "but, as

you said just now, I have no power over you. As long as you are able

to move and remain in my house, you certainly shall not have the

means of destroying yourself. You will be very wise to stay here

for a week or ten days: a week or ten days of healthy living might,

perhaps, bring you round."

Sir Louis again declared that the doctor wished him to die, and spoke

of sending for his attorney, Finnie, to come to Greshamsbury to look

after him.

"Send for him if you choose," said the doctor. "His coming will cost

you three or four pounds, but can do no other harm."

"And I will send for Fillgrave," threatened the baronet. "I'm not

going to die here like a dog."

It was certainly hard upon Dr Thorne that he should be obliged to

entertain such a guest in the house;--to entertain him, and foster

him, and care for him, almost as though he were a son. But he had no

alternative; he had accepted the charge from Sir Roger, and he must

go through with it. His conscience, moreover, allowed him no rest in

this matter: it harassed him day and night, driving him on sometimes

to great wretchedness. He could not love this incubus that was on his

shoulders; he could not do other than be very far from loving him. Of

what use or value was he to any one? What could the world make of him

that would be good, or he of the world? Was not an early death his

certain fate? The earlier it might be, would it not be the better?

Were he to linger on yet for two years longer--and such a space of

life was possible for him--how great would be the mischief that he

might do; nay, certainly would do! Farewell then to all hopes for

Greshamsbury, as far as Mary was concerned. Farewell then to that

dear scheme which lay deep in the doctor's heart, that hope that he

might, in his niece's name, give back to the son the lost property of

the father. And might not one year--six months be as fatal. Frank,

they all said, must marry money; and even he--he the doctor himself,

much as he despised the idea for money's sake--even he could not but

confess that Frank, as the heir to an old, but grievously embarrassed

property, had no right to marry, at his early age, a girl without

a shilling. Mary, his niece, his own child, would probably be the

heiress of this immense wealth; but he could not tell this to Frank;

no, nor to Frank's father while Sir Louis was yet alive. What, if by

so doing he should achieve this marriage for his niece, and that then

Sir Louis should live to dispose of his own? How then would he face

the anger of Lady Arabella?

"I will never hanker after a dead man's shoes, neither for myself nor

for another," he had said to himself a hundred times; and as often

did he accuse himself of doing so. One path, however, was plainly

open before him. He would keep his peace as to the will; and would

use such efforts as he might use for a son of his own loins to

preserve the life that was so valueless. His wishes, his hopes,

his thoughts, he could not control; but his conduct was at his own

disposal.

"I say, doctor, you don't really think that I'm going to die?" Sir

Louis said, when Dr Thorne again visited him.

"I don't think at all; I am sure you will kill yourself if you

continue to live as you have lately done."

"But suppose I go all right for a while, and live--live just as you

tell me, you know?"

"All of us are in God's hands, Sir Louis. By so doing you will, at

any rate, give yourself the best chance."

"Best chance? Why, d----n, doctor! there are fellows have done ten

times worse than I; and they are not going to kick. Come, now, I know

you are trying to frighten me; ain't you, now?"

"I am trying to do the best I can for you."

"It's very hard on a fellow like me; I have nobody to say a kind word

to me; no, not one." And Sir Louis, in his wretchedness, began to

weep. "Come, doctor; if you'll put me once more on my legs, I'll let

you draw on the estate for five hundred pounds; by G----, I will."

The doctor went away to his dinner, and the baronet also had his in

bed. He could not eat much, but he was allowed two glasses of wine,

and also a little brandy in his coffee. This somewhat invigorated

him, and when Dr Thorne again went to him, in the evening, he did not

find him so utterly prostrated in spirit. He had, indeed, made up his

mind to a great resolve; and thus unfolded his final scheme for his

own reformation:--

"Doctor," he began again, "I believe you are an honest fellow; I do

indeed."

Dr Thorne could not but thank him for his good opinion.

"You ain't annoyed at what I said this morning, are you?"

The doctor had forgotten the particular annoyance to which Sir Louis

alluded; and informed him that his mind might be at rest on any such

matter.

"I do believe you'd be glad to see me well; wouldn't you, now?"

The doctor assured him that such was in very truth the case.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what: I've been thinking about it a great

deal to-day; indeed, I have, and I want to do what's right. Mightn't

I have a little drop more of that stuff, just in a cup of coffee?"

The doctor poured him out a cup of coffee, and put about a

teaspoonful of brandy in it. Sir Louis took it with a disconsolate

face, not having been accustomed to such measures in the use of his

favourite beverage.

"I do wish to do what's right--I do, indeed; only, you see, I'm so

lonely. As to those fellows up in London, I don't think that one of

them cares a straw about me."

Dr Thorne was of the same way of thinking, and he said so. He could

not but feel some sympathy with the unfortunate man as he thus spoke

of his own lot. It was true that he had been thrown on the world

without any one to take care of him.

"My dear friend, I will do the best I can in every way; I will,

indeed. I do believe that your companions in town have been too ready

to lead you astray. Drop them, and you may yet do well."

"May I though, doctor? Well, I will drop them. There's Jenkins; he's

the best of them; but even he is always wanting to make money of me.

Not but what I'm up to the best of them in that way."

"You had better leave London, Sir Louis, and change your old mode of

life. Go to Boxall Hill for a while; for two or three years or so;

live with your mother there and take to farming."

"What! farming?"

"Yes; that's what all country gentlemen do: take the land there into

your own hand, and occupy your mind upon it."

"Well, doctor, I will--upon one condition."

Dr Thorne sat still and listened. He had no idea what the condition

might be, but he was not prepared to promise acquiescence till he

heard it.

"You know what I told you once before," said the baronet.

"I don't remember at this moment."

"About my getting married, you know."

The doctor's brow grew black, and promised no help to the poor

wretch. Bad in every way, wretched, selfish, sensual, unfeeling,

purse-proud, ignorant as Sir Louis Scatcherd was, still, there was

left to him the power of feeling something like sincere love. It may

be presumed that he did love Mary Thorne, and that he was at the time

earnest in declaring, that if she could be given to him, he would

endeavour to live according to her uncle's counsel. It was only a

trifle he asked; but, alas! that trifle could not be vouchsafed.

"I should much approve of your getting married, but I do not know how

I can help you."

"Of course, I mean to Miss Mary: I do love her; I really do, Dr

Thorne."

"It is quite impossible, Sir Louis; quite. You do my niece much

honour; but I am able to answer for her, positively, that such a

proposition is quite out of the question."

"Look here now, Dr Thorne; anything in the way of settlements--"

"I will not hear a word on the subject: you are very welcome to the

use of my house as long as it may suit you to remain here; but I must

insist that my niece shall not be troubled on this matter."

"Do you mean to say she's in love with that young Gresham?"

This was too much for the doctor's patience. "Sir Louis," said he,

"I can forgive you much for your father's sake. I can also forgive

something on the score of your own ill health. But you ought to know,

you ought by this time to have learnt, that there are some things

which a man cannot forgive. I will not talk to you about my niece;

and remember this, also, I will not have her troubled by you:" and,

so saying, the doctor left him.

On the next day the baronet was sufficiently recovered to be able to

resume his braggadocio airs. He swore at Janet; insisted on being

served by his own man; demanded in a loud voice, but in vain,

that his liqueur-case should be restored to him; and desired that

post-horses might be ready for him on the morrow. On that day he

got up and ate his dinner in his bedroom. On the next morning he

countermanded the horses, informing the doctor that he did so because

he had a little bit of business to transact with Squire Gresham

before he left the place! With some difficulty, the doctor made him

understand that the squire would not see him on business; and it was

at last decided, that Mr Gazebee should be invited to call on him at

the doctor's house; and this Mr Gazebee agreed to do, in order to

prevent the annoyance of having the baronet up at Greshamsbury.

On this day, the evening before Mr Gazebee's visit, Sir Louis

condescended to come down to dinner. He dined, however, \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_

with the doctor. Mary was not there, nor was anything said as to her

absence. Sir Louis Scatcherd never set eyes upon her again.

He bore himself very arrogantly on that evening, having resumed the

airs and would-be dignity which he thought belonged to him as a man

of rank and property. In his periods of low spirits, he was abject

and humble enough; abject, and fearful of the lamentable destiny

which at these moments he believed to be in store for him. But it

was one of the peculiar symptoms of his state, that as he partially

recovered his bodily health, the tone of his mind recovered itself

also, and his fears for the time were relieved.

There was very little said between him and the doctor that evening.

The doctor sat guarding the wine, and thinking when he should have

his house to himself again. Sir Louis sat moody, every now and then

uttering some impertinence as to the Greshams and the Greshamsbury

property, and, at an early hour, allowed Joe to put him to bed.

The horses were ordered on the next day for three, and, at two, Mr

Gazebee came to the house. He had never been there before, nor had he

ever met Dr Thorne except at the squire's dinner. On this occasion he

asked only for the baronet.

"Ah! ah! I'm glad you're come, Mr Gazebee; very glad," said Sir

Louis; acting the part of the rich, great man with all the power he

had. "I want to ask you a few questions so as to make it all clear

sailing between us."

"As you have asked to see me, I have come, Sir Louis," said the

other, putting on much dignity as he spoke. "But would it not be

better that any business there may be should be done among the

lawyers?"

"The lawyers are very well, I dare say; but when a man has so large a

stake at interest as I have in this Greshamsbury property, why, you

see, Mr Gazebee, he feels a little inclined to look after it himself.

Now, do you know, Mr Gazebee, how much it is that Mr Gresham owes

me?"

Mr Gazebee, of course, did know very well; but he was not going to

discuss the subject with Sir Louis, if he could help it.

"Whatever claim your father's estate may have on that of Mr Gresham

is, as far as I understand, vested in Dr Thorne's hands as trustee.

I am inclined to believe that you have not yourself at present any

claim on Greshamsbury. The interest, as it becomes due, is paid to

Dr Thorne; and if I may be allowed to make a suggestion, I would say

that it will not be expedient to make any change in that arrangement

till the property shall come into your own hands."

"I differ from you entirely, Mr Gazebee; \_in toto\_, as we used to say

at Eton. What you mean to say is--I can't go to law with Mr Gresham;

I'm not so sure of that; but perhaps not. But I can compel Dr Thorne

to look after my interests. I can force him to foreclose. And to tell

you the truth, Gazebee, unless some arrangement is proposed to me

which I shall think advantageous, I shall do so at once. There is

near a hundred thousand pounds owing to me; yes to me. Thorne is only

a name in the matter. The money is my money; and, by ----, I mean to

look after it."

"Have you any doubt, Sir Louis, as to the money being secure?"

"Yes, I have. It isn't so easy to have a hundred thousand pounds

secured. The squire is a poor man, and I don't choose to allow a poor

man to owe me such a sum as that. Besides, I mean to invest it in

land. I tell you fairly, therefore, I shall foreclose."

Mr Gazebee, using all the perspicuity which his professional

education had left to him, tried to make Sir Louis understand that he

had no power to do anything of the kind.

"No power! Mr Gresham shall see whether I have no power. When a man

has a hundred thousand pounds owing to him he ought to have some

power; and, as I take it, he has. But we will see. Perhaps you know

Finnie, do you?"

Mr Gazebee, with a good deal of scorn in his face, said that he had

not that pleasure. Mr Finnie was not in his line.

"Well, you will know him then, and you'll find he's sharp enough;

that is, unless I have some offer made to me that I may choose to

accept." Mr Gazebee declared that he was not instructed to make any

offer, and so he took his leave.

On that afternoon, Sir Louis went off to Boxall Hill, transferring

the miserable task of superintending his self-destruction from the

shoulders of the doctor to those of his mother. Of Lady Scatcherd,

the baronet took no account in his proposed sojourn in the country,

nor did he take much of the doctor in leaving Greshamsbury. He again

wrapped himself in his furs, and, with tottering steps, climbed up

into the barouche which was to carry him away.

"Is my man up behind?" he said to Janet, while the doctor was

standing at the little front garden-gate, making his adieux.

"No, sir, he's not up yet," said Janet, respectfully.

"Then send him out, will you? I can't lose my time waiting here all

day."

"I shall come over to Boxall Hill and see you," said the doctor,

whose heart softened towards the man, in spite of his brutality, as

the hour of his departure came.

"I shall be happy to see you if you like to come, of course; that is,

in the way of visiting, and that sort of thing. As for doctoring, if

I want any I shall send for Fillgrave." Such were his last words as

the carriage, with a rush, went off from the door.

The doctor, as he re-entered the house, could not avoid smiling, for

he thought of Dr Fillgrave's last patient at Boxall Hill. "It's a

question to me," said he to himself, "whether Dr Fillgrave will ever

be induced to make another visit to that house, even with the object

of rescuing a baronet out of my hands."

"He's gone; isn't he, uncle?" said Mary, coming out of her room.

"Yes, my dear; he's gone, poor fellow."

"He may be a poor fellow, uncle; but he's a very disagreeable inmate

in a house. I have not had any dinner these two days."

"And I haven't had what can be called a cup of tea since he's been in

the house. But I'll make up for that to-night."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

De Courcy Precepts and de Courcy Practice

There is a mode of novel-writing which used to be much in vogue, but

which has now gone out of fashion. It is, nevertheless, one which is

very expressive when in good hands, and which enables the author to

tell his story, or some portion of his story, with more natural trust

than any other, I mean that of familiar letters. I trust I shall be

excused if I attempt it as regards this one chapter; though, it may

be, that I shall break down and fall into the commonplace narrative,

even before the one chapter be completed. The correspondents are the

Lady Amelia de Courcy and Miss Gresham. I, of course, give precedence

to the higher rank, but the first epistle originated with the

latter-named young lady. Let me hope that they will explain

themselves.

Miss Gresham to Lady Amelia de Courcy

Greshamsbury House, June, 185--.

MY DEAREST AMELIA,

I wish to consult you on a subject which, as you will

perceive, is of a most momentous nature. You know how much

reliance I place in your judgement and knowledge of what

is proper, and, therefore, I write to you before speaking

to any other living person on the subject: not even to

mamma; for, although her judgement is good too, she has so

many cares and troubles, that it is natural that it should

be a little warped when the interests of her children are

concerned. Now that it is all over, I feel that it may

possibly have been so in the case of Mr Moffat.

You are aware that Mr Mortimer Gazebee is now staying

here, and that he has been here for nearly two months. He

is engaged in managing poor papa's affairs, and mamma, who

likes him very much, says that he is a most excellent man

of business. Of course, you know that he is the junior

partner in the very old firm of Gumption, Gazebee, &

Gazebee, who, I understand, do not undertake any business

at all, except what comes to them from peers, or commoners

of the very highest class.

I soon perceived, dearest Amelia, that Mr Gazebee paid me

more than ordinary attention, and I immediately became

very guarded in my manner. I certainly liked Mr Gazebee

from the first. His manners are quite excellent, his

conduct to mamma is charming, and, as regards myself, I

must say that there has been nothing in his behaviour of

which even \_you\_ could complain. He has never attempted

the slightest familiarity, and I will do him the justice

to say, that, though he has been very attentive, he has

also been very respectful.

I must confess that, for the last three weeks, I have

thought that he meant something. I might, perhaps, have

done more to repel him; or I might have consulted you

earlier as to the propriety of keeping altogether out of

his way. But you know, Amelia, how often these things lead

to nothing, and though I thought all along that Mr Gazebee

was in earnest, I hardly liked to say anything about it

even to you till I was quite certain. If you had advised

me, you know, to accept his offer, and if, after that, he

had never made it, I should have felt so foolish.

But now he has made it. He came to me yesterday just

before dinner, in the little drawing-room, and told me, in

the most delicate manner, in words that even you could not

have but approved, that his highest ambition was to be

thought worthy of my regard, and that he felt for me the

warmest love, and the most profound admiration, and the

deepest respect. You may say, Amelia, that he is only an

attorney, and I believe that he is an attorney; but I am

sure you would have esteemed him had you heard the very

delicate way in which he expressed his sentiments.

Something had given me a presentiment of what he was going

to do when I saw him come into the room, so that I was

on my guard. I tried very hard to show no emotion; but I

suppose I was a little flurried, as I once detected myself

calling him Mr Mortimer: his name, you know, is Mortimer

Gazebee. I ought not to have done so, certainly; but it

was not so bad as if I had called him Mortimer without

the Mr, was it? I don't think there could possibly be a

prettier Christian name than Mortimer. Well, Amelia, I

allowed him to express himself without interruption. He

once attempted to take my hand; but even this was done

without any assumption of familiarity; and when he saw

that I would not permit it, he drew back, and fixed his

eyes on the ground as though he were ashamed even of that.

Of course, I had to give him an answer; and though I had

expected that something of this sort would take place,

I had not made up my mind on the subject. I would not,

certainly, under any circumstances, accept him without

consulting you. If I really disliked him, of course there

would be no doubt; but I can't say, dearest Amelia, that

I do absolutely dislike him; and I really think that we

would make each other very happy, if the marriage were

suitable as regarded both our positions.

I collected myself as well as I could, and I really do

think that you would have said that I did not behave

badly, though the position was rather trying. I told him

that, of course, I was flattered by his sentiments, though

much surprised at hearing them; that since I knew him, I

had esteemed and valued him as an acquaintance, but that,

looking on him as a man of business, I had never expected

anything more. I then endeavoured to explain to him, that

I was not perhaps privileged, as some other girls might

be, to indulge my own feelings altogether: perhaps that

was saying too much, and might make him think that I was

in love with him; but, from the way I said it, I don't

think he would, for I was very much guarded in my manner,

and very collected; and then I told him, that in any

proposal of marriage that might be made to me, it would

be my duty to consult my family as much, if not more than

myself.

He said, of course; and asked whether he might speak to

papa. I tried to make him understand, that in talking of

my family, I did not exactly mean papa, or even mamma.

Of course I was thinking of what was due to the name of

Gresham. I know very well what papa would say. He would

give his consent in half a minute; he is so broken-hearted

by these debts. And, to tell you the truth, Amelia, I

think mamma would too. He did not seem quite to comprehend

what I meant; but he did say that he knew it was a high

ambition to marry into the family of the Greshams. I

am sure you would confess that he has the most proper

feelings; and as for expressing them no man could do it

better.

He owned that it was ambition to ally himself with a

family above his own rank in life, and that he looked to

doing so as a means of advancing himself. Now this was at

any rate honest. That was one of his motives, he said;

though, of course, not his first: and then he declared

how truly attached he was to me. In answer to this, I

remarked, that he had known me only a very short time.

This, perhaps, was giving him too much encouragement; but,

at that moment, I hardly knew what to say, for I did not

wish to hurt his feelings. He then spoke of his income.

He has fifteen hundred a year from the business, and that

will be greatly increased when his father leaves it; and

his father is much older than Mr Gumption, though he is

only the second partner. Mortimer Gazebee will be the

senior partner himself before very long; and perhaps that

does alter his position a little.

He has a very nice place down somewhere in Surrey; I have

heard mamma say it is quite a gentleman's place. It is let

now; but he will live there when he is married. And he

has property of his own besides which he can settle. So,

you see, he is quite as well off as Mr Oriel; better,

indeed; and if a man is in a profession, I believe it is

considered that it does not much matter what. Of course, a

clergyman can be a bishop; but then, I think I have heard

that one attorney did once become Lord Chancellor. I

should have my carriage, you know; I remember his saying

that, especially, though I cannot recollect how he brought

it in.

I told him, at last, that I was so much taken by surprise

that I could not give him an answer then. He was going

up to London, he said, on the next day, and might he

be permitted to address me on the same subject when he

returned? I could not refuse him, you know; and so now I

have taken the opportunity of his absence to write to you

for your advice. You understand the world so very well,

and know so exactly what one ought to do in such a strange

position!

I hope I have made it intelligible, at least, as to what

I have written about. I have said nothing as to my own

feelings, because I wish you to think on the matter

without consulting them. If it would be derogatory to

accept Mr Gazebee, I certainly would not do so because I

happen to like him. If we were to act in that way, what

would the world come to, Amelia? Perhaps my ideas may be

overstrained; if so, you will tell me.

When Mr Oriel proposed for Beatrice, nobody seemed to make

any objection. It all seemed to go as a matter of course.

She says that his family is excellent; but as far as I can

learn, his grandfather was a general in India, and came

home very rich. Mr Gazebee's grandfather was a member of

the firm, and so, I believe, was his great-grandfather.

Don't you think this ought to count for something?

Besides, they have no business except with the most

aristocratic persons, such as uncle de Courcy, and the

Marquis of Kensington Gore, and that sort. I mention the

marquis, because Mr Mortimer Gazebee is there now. And I

know that one of the Gumptions was once in Parliament; and

I don't think that any of the Oriels ever were. The name

of attorney is certainly very bad, is it not, Amelia? but

they certainly do not seem to be all the same, and I do

think that this ought to make a difference. To hear Mr

Mortimer Gazebee talk of some attorney at Barchester, you

would say that there is quite as much difference between

them as between a bishop and a curate. And so I think

there is.

I don't wish at all to speak of my own feelings; but if he

were not an attorney, he is, I think, the sort of man I

should like. He is very nice in every way, and if you were

not told, I don't think you'd know he was an attorney.

But, dear Amelia, I will be guided by you altogether. He

is certainly much nicer than Mr Moffat, and has a great

deal more to say for himself. Of course, Mr Moffat having

been in Parliament, and having been taken up by uncle

de Courcy, was in a different sphere; but I really felt

almost relieved when he behaved in that way. With Mortimer

Gazebee, I think it would be different.

I shall wait so impatiently for your answer, so do pray

write at once. I hear some people say that these sort of

things are not so much thought of now as they were once,

and that all manner of marriages are considered to be

\_comme il faut\_. I do not want, you know, to make myself

foolish by being too particular. Perhaps all these changes

are bad, and I rather think they are; but if the world

changes, one must change too; one can't go against the

world.

So do write and tell me what you think. Do not suppose

that I dislike the man, for I really cannot say that I do.

But I would not for anything make an alliance for which

any one bearing the name of de Courcy would have to blush.

Always, dearest Amelia,

Your most affectionate cousin,

AUGUSTA GRESHAM.

P.S.--I fear Frank is going to be very foolish with Mary

Thorne. You know it is absolutely important that Frank

should marry money.

It strikes me as quite possible that Mortimer Gazebee may

be in Parliament some of these days. He is just the man

for it.

Poor Augusta prayed very hard for her husband; but she prayed to a

bosom that on this subject was as hard as a flint, and she prayed

in vain. Augusta Gresham was twenty-two, Lady Amelia de Courcy was

thirty-four; was it likely that Lady Amelia would permit Augusta

to marry, the issue having thus been left in her hands? Why should

Augusta derogate from her position by marrying beneath herself,

seeing that Lady Amelia had spent so many more years in the world

without having found it necessary to do so? Augusta's letter was

written on two sheets of note-paper, crossed all over; and Lady

Amelia's answer was almost equally formidable.

Lady Amelia de Courcy to Miss Augusta Gresham

Courcy Castle, June, 185--.

MY DEAR AUGUSTA,

I received your letter yesterday morning, but I have put

off answering it till this evening, as I have wished to

give it very mature consideration. The question is one

which concerns, not only your character, but happiness

for life, and nothing less than very mature consideration

would justify me in giving a decided opinion on the

subject.

In the first place, I may tell you, that I have not a word

to say against Mr Mortimer Gazebee. [When Augusta had read

as far as this, her heart sank within her; the rest was

all leather and prunella; she saw at once that the fiat

had gone against her, and that her wish to become Mrs

Mortimer Gazebee was not to be indulged.] I have known

him for a long time, and I believe him to be a very

respectable person, and I have no doubt a good man of

business. The firm of Messrs Gumption & Gazebee stands

probably quite among the first attorneys in London, and I

know that papa has a very high opinion of them.

All of these would be excellent arguments to use in favour

of Mr Gazebee as a suitor, had his proposals been made to

any one in his own rank of life. But you, in considering

the matter, should, I think, look on it in a very

different light. The very fact that you pronounce him to

be so much superior to other attorneys, shows in how very

low esteem you hold the profession in general. It shows

also, dear Augusta, how well aware you are that they are a

class of people among whom you should not seek a partner

for life.

My opinion is, that you should make Mr Gazebee

understand--very courteously, of course--that you cannot

accept his hand. You observe that he himself confesses,

that in marrying you he would seek a wife in a rank above

his own. Is it not, therefore, clear, that in marrying

him, you would descend to a rank below your own?

I shall be very sorry if this grieves you; but still

it will be better that you should bear the grief of

overcoming a temporary fancy, than take a step which may

so probably make you unhappy; and which some of your

friends would certainly regard as disgraceful.

It is not permitted to us, my dear Augusta, to think of

ourselves in such matters. As you truly say, if we were

to act in that way, what would the world come to? It has

been God's pleasure that we should be born with high blood

in our veins. This is a great boon which we both value,

but the boon has its responsibilities as well as its

privileges. It is established by law, that the royal

family shall not intermarry with subjects. In our case

there is no law, but the necessity is not the less felt;

we should not intermarry with those who are probably

of a lower rank. Mr Mortimer Gazebee is, after all,

only an attorney; and, although you speak of his

great-grandfather, he is a man of no blood whatsoever. You

must acknowledge that such an admixture should be looked

on by a de Courcy, or even by a Gresham, as a pollution.

[Here Augusta got very red, and she felt almost inclined

to be angry with her cousin.] Beatrice's marriage with Mr

Oriel is different; though, remember, I am by no means

defending that; it may be good or bad, and I have had no

opportunity of inquiring respecting Mr Oriel's family.

Beatrice, moreover, has never appeared to me to feel

what was due to herself in such matters; but, as I

said, her marriage with Mr Oriel is very different.

Clergymen--particularly the rectors and vicars of country

parishes--do become privileged above other professional

men. I could explain why, but it would be too long in a

letter.

Your feelings on the subject altogether do you great

credit. I have no doubt that Mr Gresham, if asked, would

accede to the match; but that is just the reason why he

should not be asked. It would not be right that I should

say anything against your father to you; but it is

impossible for any of us not to see that all through life

he has thrown away every advantage, and sacrificed his

family. Why is he now in debt, as you say? Why is he not

holding the family seat in Parliament? Even though you are

his daughter, you cannot but feel that you would not do

right to consult him on such a subject.

As to dear aunt, I feel sure, that were she in good

health, and left to exercise her own judgement, she would

not wish to see you married to the agent for the family

estate. For, dear Augusta, that is the real truth. Mr

Gazebee often comes here in the way of business; and

though papa always receives him as a gentleman--that is,

he dines at table and all that--he is not on the same

footing in the house as the ordinary guests and friends of

the family. How would you like to be received at Courcy

Castle in the same way?

You will say, perhaps, that you would still be papa's

niece; so you would. But you know how strict in such

matters papa is, and you must remember, that the wife

always follows the rank of the husband. Papa is accustomed

to the strict etiquette of a court, and I am sure that no

consideration would induce him to receive the estate-agent

in the light of a nephew. Indeed, were you to marry Mr

Gazebee, the house to which he belongs would, I imagine,

have to give up the management of this property.

Even were Mr Gazebee in Parliament--and I do not see how

it is probable that he should get there--it would not make

any difference. You must remember, dearest, that I never

was an advocate for the Moffat match. I acquiesced in it,

because mamma did so. If I could have had my own way,

I would adhere to all our old prescriptive principles.

Neither money nor position can atone to me for low birth.

But the world, alas! is retrograding; and, according to

the new-fangled doctrines of the day, a lady of blood is

not disgraced by allying herself to a man of wealth, and

what may be called quasi-aristocratic position. I wish it

were otherwise; but so it is. And, therefore, the match

with Mr Moffat was not disgraceful, though it could not be

regarded as altogether satisfactory.

But with Mr Gazebee the matter would be altogether

different. He is a man earning his bread; honestly, I

dare say, but in a humble position. You say he is very

respectable: I do not doubt it; and so is Mr Scraggs,

the butcher at Courcy. You see, Augusta, to what such

arguments reduce you.

I dare say he may be nicer than Mr Moffat, in one way.

That is, he may have more small-talk at his command, and

be more clever in all those little pursuits and amusements

which are valued by ordinary young ladies. But my

opinion is, that neither I nor you would be justified in

sacrificing ourselves for such amusements. We have high

duties before us. It may be that the performance of those

duties will prohibit us from taking a part in the ordinary

arena of the feminine world. It is natural that girls

should wish to marry; and, therefore, those who are weak,

take the first that come. Those who have more judgement,

make some sort of selection. But the strongest-minded are,

perhaps, those who are able to forgo themselves and their

own fancies, and to refrain from any alliance that does

not tend to the maintenance of high principles. Of course,

I speak of those who have blood in their veins. You and I

need not dilate as to the conduct of others.

I hope what I have said will convince you. Indeed, I know

that it only requires that you and I should have a little

cousinly talk on this matter to be quite in accord. You

must now remain at Greshamsbury till Mr Gazebee shall

return. Immediately that he does so, seek an interview

with him; do not wait till he asks for it; then tell him,

that when he addressed you, the matter had taken you so

much by surprise, that you were not at the moment able to

answer him with that decision that the subject demanded.

Tell him, that you are flattered--in saying this, however,

you must keep a collected countenance, and be very cold

in your manner--but that family reasons would forbid you

to avail yourself of his offer, even did no other cause

prevent it.

And then, dear Augusta, come to us here. I know you

will be a little down-hearted after going through this

struggle; but I will endeavour to inspirit you. When we

are both together, you will feel more sensibly the value

of that high position which you will preserve by rejecting

Mr Gazebee, and will regret less acutely whatever you may

lose.

Your very affectionate cousin,

AMELIA DE COURCY.

P.S.--I am greatly grieved about Frank; but I have long

feared that he would do some very silly thing. I have

heard lately that Miss Mary Thorne is not even the

legitimate niece of your Dr Thorne, but is the daughter

of some poor creature who was seduced by the doctor, in

Barchester. I do not know how true this may be, but I

think your brother should be put on his guard: it might do

good.

Poor Augusta! She was in truth to be pitied, for her efforts were

made with the intention of doing right according to her lights. For

Mr Moffat she had never cared a straw; and when, therefore, she lost

the piece of gilding for which she had been instructed by her mother

to sell herself, it was impossible to pity her. But Mr Gazebee she

would have loved with that sort of love which it was in her power

to bestow. With him she would have been happy, respectable, and

contented.

She had written her letter with great care. When the offer was made

to her, she could not bring herself to throw Lady Amelia to the winds

and marry the man, as it were, out of her own head. Lady Amelia had

been the tyrant of her life, and so she strove hard to obtain her

tyrant's permission. She used all her little cunning in showing

that, after all, Mr Gazebee was not so very plebeian. All her little

cunning was utterly worthless. Lady Amelia's mind was too strong to

be caught with such chaff. Augusta could not serve God and Mammon.

She must either be true to the god of her cousin's idolatry, and

remain single, or serve the Mammon of her own inclinations, and marry

Mr Gazebee.

When refolding her cousin's letter, after the first perusal, she did

for a moment think of rebellion. Could she not be happy at the nice

place in Surrey, having, as she would have, a carriage, even though

all the de Courcys should drop her? It had been put to her that

she would not like to be received at Courcy Castle with the scant

civility which would be considered due to a Mrs Mortimer Gazebee; but

what if she could put up without being received at Courcy Castle at

all? Such ideas did float through her mind, dimly.

But her courage failed her. It is so hard to throw off a tyrant; so

much easier to yield, when we have been in the habit of yielding.

This third letter, therefore, was written; and it is the end of the

correspondence.

Miss Augusta Gresham to Lady Amelia de Courcy

Greshamsbury House, July, 185--.

MY DEAREST AMELIA,

I did not answer your letter before, because I thought it

better to delay doing so till Mr Gazebee had been here.

He came the day before yesterday, and yesterday I did,

as nearly as possible, what you advised. Perhaps, on

the whole, it will be better. As you say, rank has its

responsibilities as well as its privileges.

I don't quite understand what you mean about clergymen,

but we can talk that over when we meet. Indeed, it seems

to me that if one is to be particular about family--and

I am sure I think we ought--one ought to be so without

exception. If Mr Oriel be a \_parvenu\_, Beatrice's

children won't be well born merely because their father

was a clergyman, even though he is a rector. Since

my former letter, I have heard that Mr Gazebee's

great-great-great-grandfather established the firm; and

there are many people who were nobodies then who are

thought to have good blood in their veins now.

But I do not say this because I differ from you. I agree

with you so fully, that I at once made up my mind to

reject the man; and, consequently, I have done so.

When I told him I could not accept him from family

considerations, he asked me whether I had spoken to papa.

I told him, no; and that it would be no good, as I had

made up my own mind. I don't think he quite understood me;

but it did not perhaps much matter. You told me to be very

cold, and I think that perhaps he thought me less gracious

than before. Indeed, I fear that when he first spoke,

I may seem to have given him too much encouragement.

However, it is all over now; quite over! [As Augusta wrote

this, she barely managed to save the paper beneath her

hand from being moistened with the tear which escaped from

her eye.]

I do not mind confessing now, [she continued] at any rate

to you, that I did like Mr Gazebee a little. I think his

temper and disposition would have suited me. But I am

quite satisfied that I have done right. He tried very hard

to make me change my mind. That is, he said a great many

things as to whether I would not put off my decision. But

I was quite firm. I must say that he behaved very well,

and that I really do think he liked me honestly and truly;

but, of course, I could not sacrifice family

considerations on that account.

Yes, rank has its responsibilities as well as its

privileges. I will remember that. It is necessary to do

so, as otherwise one would be without consolation for what

one has to suffer. For I find that one has to suffer,

Amelia. I know papa would have advised me to marry this

man; and so, I dare say, mamma would, and Frank, and

Beatrice, if they knew that I liked him. It would not be

so bad if we all thought alike about it; but it is hard to

have the responsibilities all on one's own shoulder; is it

not?

But I will go over to you, and you will comfort me. I

always feel stronger on this subject at Courcy than at

Greshamsbury. We will have a long talk about it, and then

I shall be happy again. I purpose going on next Friday, if

that will suit you and dear aunt. I have told mamma that

you all wanted me, and she made no objection. Do write at

once, dearest Amelia, for to hear from you now will be my

only comfort.

Yours, ever most affectionately and obliged,

AUGUSTA GRESHAM.

P.S.--I told mamma what you said about Mary Thorne, and

she said, "Yes; I suppose all the world knows it now; and

if all the world did know it, it makes no difference to

Frank." She seemed very angry; so you see it was true.

Though, by so doing, we shall somewhat anticipate the end of our

story, it may be desirable that the full tale of Mr Gazebee's loves

should be told here. When Mary is breaking her heart on her death-bed

in the last chapter, or otherwise accomplishing her destiny, we shall

hardly find a fit opportunity of saying much about Mr Gazebee and his

aristocratic bride.

For he did succeed at last in obtaining a bride in whose veins ran

the noble ichor of de Courcy blood, in spite of the high doctrine

preached so eloquently by the Lady Amelia. As Augusta had truly said,

he had failed to understand her. He was led to think, by her manner

of receiving his first proposal--and justly so, enough--that she

liked him, and would accept him; and he was, therefore, rather

perplexed by his second interview. He tried again and again, and

begged permission to mention the matter to Mr Gresham; but Augusta

was very firm, and he at last retired in disgust. Augusta went to

Courcy Castle, and received from her cousin that consolation and

re-strengthening which she so much required.

Four years afterwards--long after the fate of Mary Thorne had fallen,

like a thunderbolt, on the inhabitants of Greshamsbury; when Beatrice

was preparing for her second baby, and each of the twins had her

accepted lover--Mr Mortimer Gazebee went down to Courcy Castle; of

course, on matters of business. No doubt he dined at the table, and

all that. We have the word of Lady Amelia, that the earl, with his

usual good-nature, allowed him such privileges. Let us hope that he

never encroached on them.

But on this occasion, Mr Gazebee stayed a long time at the castle,

and singular rumours as to the cause of his prolonged visit became

current in the little town. No female scion of the present family of

Courcy had, as yet, found a mate. We may imagine that eagles find it

difficult to pair when they become scarce in their localities; and

we all know how hard it has sometimes been to get \_comme il faut\_

husbands when there has been any number of Protestant princesses on

hand.

Some such difficulty had, doubtless, brought it about that the

countess was still surrounded by her full bevy of maidens. Rank has

its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and these young

ladies' responsibilities seemed to have consisted in rejecting any

suitor who may have hitherto kneeled to them. But now it was told

through Courcy, that one suitor had kneeled, and not in vain; from

Courcy the rumour flew to Barchester, and thence came down to

Greshamsbury, startling the inhabitants, and making one poor heart

throb with a violence that would have been piteous had it been known.

The suitor, so named, was Mr Mortimer Gazebee.

Yes; Mr Mortimer Gazebee had now awarded to him many other privileges

than those of dining at the table, and all that. He rode with the

young ladies in the park, and they all talked to him very familiarly

before company; all except the Lady Amelia. The countess even called

him Mortimer, and treated him quite as one of the family.

At last came a letter from the countess to her dear sister Arabella.

It should be given at length, but that I fear to introduce another

epistle. It is such an easy mode of writing, and facility is always

dangerous. In this letter it was announced with much preliminary

ambiguity, that Mortimer Gazebee--who had been found to be a treasure

in every way; quite a paragon of men--was about to be taken into the

de Courcy bosom as a child of that house. On that day fortnight, he

was destined to lead to the altar--the Lady Amelia.

The countess then went on to say, that dear Amelia did not

write herself, being so much engaged by her coming duties--the

responsibilities of which she doubtless fully realised, as well as

the privileges; but she had begged her mother to request that the

twins should come and act as bridesmaids on the occasion. Dear

Augusta, she knew, was too much occupied in the coming event in Mr

Oriel's family to be able to attend.

Mr Mortimer Gazebee was taken into the de Courcy family, and did lead

the Lady Amelia to the altar; and the Gresham twins did go there and

act as bridesmaids. And, which is much more to say for human nature,

Augusta did forgive her cousin, and, after a certain interval, went

on a visit to that nice place in Surrey which she had once hoped

would be her own home. It would have been a very nice place, Augusta

thought, had not Lady Amelia Gazebee been so very economical.

We must presume that there was some explanation between them. If so,

Augusta yielded to it, and confessed it to be satisfactory. She had

always yielded to her cousin, and loved her with that sort of love

which is begotten between fear and respect. Anything was better than

quarrelling with her cousin Amelia.

And Mr Mortimer Gazebee did not altogether make a bad bargain. He

never received a shilling of dowry, but that he had not expected.

Nor did he want it. His troubles arose from the overstrained economy

of his noble wife. She would have it, that as she had married a

poor man--Mr Gazebee, however, was not a poor man--it behoved

her to manage her house with great care. Such a match as that

she had made--this she told in confidence to Augusta--had its

responsibilities as well as its privileges.

But, on the whole, Mr Gazebee did not repent his bargain; when he

asked his friends to dine, he could tell them that Lady Amelia would

be very glad to see them; his marriage gave him some Ã©clat at his

club, and some additional weight in the firm to which he belonged;

he gets his share of the Courcy shooting, and is asked about to

Greshamsbury and other Barsetshire houses, not only "to dine at table

and all that," but to take his part in whatever delights country

society there has to offer. He lives with the great hope that

his noble father-in-law may some day be able to bring him into

Parliament.

CHAPTER XXXIX

What the World Says about Blood

"Beatrice," said Frank, rushing suddenly into his sister's room, "I

want you to do me one especial favour." This was three or four days

after Frank had seen Mary Thorne. Since that time he had spoken to

none of his family on the subject; but he was only postponing from

day to day the task of telling his father. He had now completed his

round of visits to the kennel, master huntsman, and stables of the

county hunt, and was at liberty to attend to his own affairs. So he

had decided on speaking to the squire that very day; but he first

made his request to his sister.

"I want you to do me one especial favour." The day for Beatrice's

marriage had now been fixed, and it was not to be very distant.

Mr Oriel had urged that their honeymoon trip would lose half its

delights if they did not take advantage of the fine weather; and

Beatrice had nothing to allege in answer. The day had just been

fixed, and when Frank ran into her room with his special request,

she was not in a humour to refuse him anything.

"If you wish me to be at your wedding, you must do it," said he.

"Wish you to be there! You must be there, of course. Oh, Frank! what

do you mean? I'll do anything you ask; if it is not to go to the

moon, or anything of that sort."

Frank was too much in earnest to joke. "You must have Mary for one of

your bridesmaids," he said. "Now, mind; there may be some difficulty,

but you must insist on it. I know what has been going on; but it is

not to be borne that she should be excluded on such a day as that.

You that have been like sisters all your lives till a year ago!"

"But, Frank--"

"Now, Beatrice, don't have any buts; say that you will do it, and it

will be done: I am sure Oriel will approve, and so will my father."

"But, Frank, you won't hear me."

"Not if you make objections; I have set my heart on your doing it."

"But I had set my heart on the same thing."

"Well?"

"And I went to Mary on purpose; and told her just as you tell me now,

that she must come. I meant to make mamma understand that I could not

be happy unless it were so; but Mary positively refused."

"Refused! What did she say?"

"I could not tell you what she said; indeed, it would not be right if

I could; but she positively declined. She seemed to feel, that after

all that had happened, she never could come to Greshamsbury again."

"Fiddlestick!"

"But, Frank, those are her feelings; and, to tell the truth, I could

not combat them. I know she is not happy; but time will cure that.

And, to tell you the truth, Frank--"

"It was before I came back that you asked her, was it not?"

"Yes; just the day before you came, I think."

"Well, it's all altered now. I have seen her since that."

"Have you Frank?"

"What do you take me for? Of course, I have. The very first day I

went to her. And now, Beatrice, you may believe me or not, as you

like; but if I ever marry, I shall marry Mary Thorne; and if ever she

marries, I think I may say, she will marry me. At any rate, I have

her promise. And now, you cannot be surprised that I should wish

her to be at your wedding; or that I should declare, that if she is

absent, I will be absent. I don't want any secrets, and you may tell

my mother if you like it--and all the de Courcys too, for anything I

care."

Frank had ever been used to command his sisters: and they, especially

Beatrice, had ever been used to obey. On this occasion, she was well

inclined to do so, if she only knew how. She again remembered how

Mary had once sworn to be at her wedding, to be near her, and to

touch her--even though all the blood of the de Courcys should be

crowded before the altar railings.

"I should be so happy that she should be there; but what am I to do,

Frank, if she refuses? I have asked her, and she has refused."

"Go to her again; you need not have any scruples with her. Do

not I tell you she will be your sister? Not come here again to

Greshamsbury! Why, I tell you that she will be living here while you

are living there at the parsonage, for years and years to come."

Beatrice promised that she would go to Mary again, and that she would

endeavour to talk her mother over if Mary would consent to come. But

she could not yet make herself believe that Mary Thorne would ever

be mistress of Greshamsbury. It was so indispensably necessary that

Frank should marry money! Besides, what were those horrid rumours

which were now becoming rife as to Mary's birth; rumours more horrid

than any which had yet been heard?

Augusta had said hardly more than the truth when she spoke of her

father being broken-hearted by his debts. His troubles were becoming

almost too many for him; and Mr Gazebee, though no doubt he was an

excellent man of business, did not seem to lessen them. Mr Gazebee,

indeed, was continually pointing out how much he owed, and in what

a quagmire of difficulties he had entangled himself. Now, to do Mr

Yates Umbleby justice, he had never made himself disagreeable in this

manner.

Mr Gazebee had been doubtless right, when he declared that Sir Louis

Scatcherd had not himself the power to take any steps hostile to the

squire; but Sir Louis had also been right, when he boasted that,

in spite of his father's will, he could cause others to move in

the matter. Others did move, and were moving, and it began to be

understood that a moiety, at least, of the remaining Greshamsbury

property must be sold. Even this, however, would by no means leave

the squire in undisturbed possession of the other moiety. And thus,

Mr Gresham was nearly broken-hearted.

Frank had now been at home a week, and his father had not as yet

spoken to him about the family troubles; nor had a word as yet been

said between them as to Mary Thorne. It had been agreed that Frank

should go away for twelve months, in order that he might forget her.

He had been away the twelvemonth, and had now returned, not having

forgotten her.

It generally happens, that in every household, one subject of

importance occupies it at a time. The subject of importance now

mostly thought of in the Greshamsbury household, was the marriage of

Beatrice. Lady Arabella had to supply the trousseau for her daughter;

the squire had to supply the money for the trousseau; Mr Gazebee had

the task of obtaining the money for the squire. While this was going

on, Mr Gresham was not anxious to talk to his son, either about his

own debts or his son's love. There would be time for these things

when the marriage-feast should be over.

So thought the father, but the matter was precipitated by Frank. He

also had put off the declaration which he had to make, partly from

a wish to spare the squire, but partly also with a view to spare

himself. We have all some of that cowardice which induces us to

postpone an inevitably evil day. At this time the discussions as

to Beatrice's wedding were frequent in the house, and at one of

them Frank had heard his mother repeat the names of the proposed

bridesmaids. Mary's name was not among them, and hence had arisen his

attack on his sister.

Lady Arabella had had her reason for naming the list before her son;

but she overshot her mark. She wished to show him how totally Mary

was forgotten at Greshamsbury; but she only inspired him with a

resolve that she should not be forgotten. He accordingly went to his

sister; and then, the subject being full on his mind, he resolved at

once to discuss it with his father.

"Sir, are you at leisure for five minutes?" he said, entering the

room in which the squire was accustomed to sit majestically, to

receive his tenants, scold his dependants, and in which, in former

happy days, he had always arranged the meets of the Barsetshire hunt.

Mr Gresham was quite at leisure: when was he not so? But had he been

immersed in the deepest business of which he was capable, he would

gladly have put it aside at his son's instance.

"I don't like to have any secret from you, sir," said Frank; "nor,

for the matter of that, from anybody else"--the anybody else was

intended to have reference to his mother--"and, therefore, I would

rather tell you at once what I have made up my mind to do."

Frank's address was very abrupt, and he felt it was so. He was rather

red in the face, and his manner was fluttered. He had quite made up

his mind to break the whole affair to his father; but he had hardly

made up his mind as to the best mode of doing so.

"Good heavens, Frank! what do you mean? you are not going to do

anything rash? What is it you mean, Frank?"

"I don't think it is rash," said Frank.

"Sit down, my boy; sit down. What is it that you say you are going to

do?"

"Nothing immediately, sir," said he, rather abashed; "but as I have

made up my mind about Mary Thorne,--quite made up my mind, I think it

right to tell you."

"Oh, about Mary," said the squire, almost relieved.

And then Frank, in voluble language, which he hardly, however, had

quite under his command, told his father all that had passed between

him and Mary. "You see, sir," said he, "that it is fixed now, and

cannot be altered. Nor must it be altered. You asked me to go away

for twelve months, and I have done so. It has made no difference, you

see. As to our means of living, I am quite willing to do anything

that may be best and most prudent. I was thinking, sir, of taking a

farm somewhere near here, and living on that."

The squire sat quite silent for some moments after this communication

had been made to him. Frank's conduct, as a son, had been such that

he could not find fault with it; and, in this special matter of his

love, how was it possible for him to find fault? He himself was

almost as fond of Mary as of a daughter; and, though he too would

have been desirous that his son should relieve the estate from its

embarrassments by a rich marriage, he did not at all share Lady

Arabella's feelings on the subject. No Countess de Courcy had ever

engraved it on the tablets of his mind that the world would come to

ruin if Frank did not marry money. Ruin there was, and would be, but

it had been brought about by no sin of Frank's.

"Do you remember about her birth, Frank?" he said, at last.

"Yes, sir; everything. She told me all she knew; and Dr Thorne

finished the story."

"And what do you think of it?"

"It is a pity, and a misfortune. It might, perhaps, have been a

reason why you or my mother should not have had Mary in the house

many years ago; but it cannot make any difference now."

Frank had not meant to lean so heavily on his father; but he did do

so. The story had never been told to Lady Arabella; was not even

known to her now, positively, and on good authority. But Mr Gresham

had always known it. If Mary's birth was so great a stain upon her,

why had he brought her into his house among his children?

"It is a misfortune, Frank; a very great misfortune. It will not

do for you and me to ignore birth; too much of the value of one's

position depends upon it."

"But what was Mr Moffat's birth?" said Frank, almost with scorn; "or

what Miss Dunstable's?" he would have added, had it not been that his

father had not been concerned in that sin of wedding him to the oil

of Lebanon.

"True, Frank. But yet, what you would mean to say is not true. We

must take the world as we find it. Were you to marry a rich heiress,

were her birth even as low as that of poor Mary--"

"Don't call her poor Mary, father; she is not poor. My wife will have

a right to take rank in the world, however she was born."

"Well,--poor in that way. But were she an heiress, the world would

forgive her birth on account of her wealth."

"The world is very complaisant, sir."

"You must take it as you find it, Frank. I only say that such is the

fact. If Porlock were to marry the daughter of a shoeblack, without a

farthing, he would make a \_mÃ©salliance\_; but if the daughter of the

shoeblack had half a million of money, nobody would dream of saying

so. I am stating no opinion of my own: I am only giving you the

world's opinion."

"I don't give a straw for the world."

"That is a mistake, my boy; you do care for it, and would be very

foolish if you did not. What you mean is, that, on this particular

point, you value your love more than the world's opinion."

"Well, yes, that is what I mean."

But the squire, though he had been very lucid in his definition, had

not got no nearer to his object; had not even yet ascertained what

his own object was. This marriage would be ruinous to Greshamsbury;

and yet, what was he to say against it, seeing that the ruin had been

his fault, and not his son's?

"You could let me have a farm; could you not, sir? I was thinking

of about six or seven hundred acres. I suppose it could be managed

somehow?"

"A farm?" said the father, abstractedly.

"Yes, sir. I must do something for my living. I should make less of

a mess of that than of anything else. Besides, it would take such a

time to be an attorney, or a doctor, or anything of that sort."

Do something for his living! And was the heir of Greshamsbury come to

this--the heir and only son? Whereas, he, the squire, had succeeded

at an earlier age than Frank's to an unembarrassed income of fourteen

thousand pounds a year! The reflection was very hard to bear.

"Yes: I dare say you could have a farm:" and then he threw himself

back in his chair, closing his eyes. Then, after a while, rose again,

and walked hurriedly about the room. "Frank," he said, at last,

standing opposite to his son, "I wonder what you think of me?"

"Think of you, sir?" ejaculated Frank.

"Yes; what do you think of me, for having thus ruined you. I wonder

whether you hate me?"

Frank, jumping up from his chair, threw his arms round his father's

neck. "Hate you, sir? How can you speak so cruelly? You know well

that I love you. And, father, do not trouble yourself about the

estate for my sake. I do not care for it; I can be just as happy

without it. Let the girls have what is left, and I will make my own

way in the world, somehow. I will go to Australia; yes, sir, that

will be best. I and Mary will both go. Nobody will care about her

birth there. But, father, never say, never think, that I do not love

you!"

The squire was too much moved to speak at once, so he sat down again,

and covered his face with his hands. Frank went on pacing the room,

till, gradually, his first idea recovered possession of his mind, and

the remembrance of his father's grief faded away. "May I tell Mary,"

he said at last, "that you consent to our marriage? It will make her

so happy."

But the squire was not prepared to say this. He was pledged to his

wife to do all that he could to oppose it; and he himself thought,

that if anything could consummate the family ruin, it would be this

marriage.

"I cannot say that, Frank; I cannot say that. What would you both

live on? It would be madness."

"We would go to Australia," answered he, bitterly. "I have just said

so."

"Oh, no, my boy; you cannot do that. You must not throw the old place

up altogether. There is no other one but you, Frank; and we have

lived here now for so many, many years."

"But if we cannot live here any longer, father?"

"But for this scheme of yours, we might do so. I will give up

everything to you, the management of the estate, the park, all the

land we have in hand, if you will give up this fatal scheme. For,

Frank, it is fatal. You are only twenty-three; why should you be in

such a hurry to marry?"

"You married at twenty-one, sir."

Frank was again severe on his father, but unwittingly. "Yes, I did,"

said Mr Gresham; "and see what has come of it! Had I waited ten years

longer, how different would everything have been! No, Frank, I cannot

consent to such a marriage; nor will your mother."

"It is your consent I ask, sir; and I am asking for nothing but your

consent."

"It would be sheer madness; madness for you both. My own Frank, my

dear, dear boy, do not drive me to distraction! Give it up for four

years."

"Four years!"

"Yes; for four years. I ask it as a personal favour; as an obligation

to myself, in order that we may be saved from ruin; you, your mother,

and sisters, your family name, and the old house. I do not talk about

myself; but were such a marriage to take place, I should be driven to

despair."

Frank found it very hard to resist his father, who now had hold of

his hand and arm, and was thus half retaining him, and half embracing

him. "Frank, say that you will forget this for four years--say for

three years."

But Frank would not say so. To postpone his marriage for four years,

or for three, seemed to him to be tantamount to giving up Mary

altogether; and he would not acknowledge that any one had the right

to demand of him to do that.

"My word is pledged, sir," he said.

"Pledged! Pledged to whom?"

"To Miss Thorne."

"But I will see her, Frank;--and her uncle. She was always

reasonable. I am sure she will not wish to bring ruin on her old

friends at Greshamsbury."

"Her old friends at Greshamsbury have done but little lately to

deserve her consideration. She has been treated shamefully. I know

it has not been by you, sir; but I must say so. She has already been

treated shamefully; but I will not treat her falsely."

"Well, Frank, I can say no more to you. I have destroyed the estate

which should have been yours, and I have no right to expect you

should regard what I say."

Frank was greatly distressed. He had not any feeling of animosity

against his father with reference to the property, and would have

done anything to make the squire understand this, short of giving up

his engagement to Mary. His feeling rather was, that, as each had a

case against the other, they should cry quits; that he should forgive

his father for his bad management, on condition that he himself was

to be forgiven with regard to his determined marriage. Not that he

put it exactly in that shape, even to himself; but could he have

unravelled his own thoughts, he would have found that such was the

web on which they were based.

"Father, I do regard what you say; but you would not have me be

false. Had you doubled the property instead of lessening it, I could

not regard what you say any more."

"I should be able to speak in a very different tone; I feel that,

Frank."

"Do not feel it any more, sir; say what you wish, as you would have

said it under any other circumstances; and pray believe this, the

idea never occurs to me, that I have ground of complaint as regards

the property; never. Whatever troubles we may have, do not let that

trouble you."

Soon after this Frank left him. What more was there that could be

said between them? They could not be of one accord; but even yet it

might not be necessary that they should quarrel. He went out, and

roamed by himself through the grounds, rather more in meditation than

was his wont.

If he did marry, how was he to live? He talked of a profession; but

had he meant to do as others do, who make their way in professions,

he should have thought of that a year or two ago!--or, rather, have

done more than think of it. He spoke also of a farm, but even that

could not be had in a moment; nor, if it could, would it produce a

living. Where was his capital? Where his skill? and he might have

asked also, where the industry so necessary for such a trade? He

might set his father at defiance, and if Mary were equally headstrong

with himself, he might marry her. But, what then?

As he walked slowly about, cutting off the daisies with his stick, he

met Mr Oriel, going up to the house, as was now his custom, to dine

there and spend the evening, close to Beatrice.

"How I envy you, Oriel!" he said. "What would I not give to have such

a position in the world as yours!"

"Thou shalt not covet a man's house, nor his wife," said Mr Oriel;

"perhaps it ought to have been added, nor his position."

"It wouldn't have made much difference. When a man is tempted, the

Commandments, I believe, do not go for much."

"Do they not, Frank? That's a dangerous doctrine; and one which, if

you had my position, you would hardly admit. But what makes you so

much out of sorts? Your own position is generally considered about

the best which the world has to give."

"Is it? Then let me tell you that the world has very little to give.

What can I do? Where can I turn? Oriel, if there be an empty, lying

humbug in the world, it is the theory of high birth and pure blood

which some of us endeavour to maintain. Blood, indeed! If my father

had been a baker, I should know by this time where to look for my

livelihood. As it is, I am told of nothing but my blood. Will my

blood ever get me half a crown?"

And then the young democrat walked on again in solitude, leaving Mr

Oriel in doubt as to the exact line of argument which he had meant to

inculcate.

CHAPTER XL

The Two Doctors Change Patients

Dr Fillgrave still continued his visits to Greshamsbury, for Lady

Arabella had not yet mustered the courage necessary for swallowing

her pride and sending once more for Dr Thorne. Nothing pleased Dr

Fillgrave more than those visits.

He habitually attended grander families, and richer people; but then,

he had attended them habitually. Greshamsbury was a prize taken from

the enemy; it was his rock of Gibraltar, of which he thought much

more than of any ordinary Hampshire or Wiltshire which had always

been within his own kingdom.

He was just starting one morning with his post-horses for

Greshamsbury, when an impudent-looking groom, with a crooked nose,

trotted up to his door. For Joe still had a crooked nose, all the

doctor's care having been inefficacious to remedy the evil effects

of Bridget's little tap with the rolling-pin. Joe had no written

credentials, for his master was hardly equal to writing, and

Lady Scatcherd had declined to put herself into further personal

communication with Dr Fillgrave; but he had effrontery enough to

deliver any message.

"Be you Dr Fillgrave?" said Joe, with one finger just raised to his

cocked hat.

"Yes," said Dr Fillgrave, with one foot on the step of the carriage,

but pausing at the sight of so well-turned-out a servant. "Yes; I am

Dr Fillgrave."

"Then you be to go to Boxall Hill immediately; before anywhere else."

"Boxall Hill!" said the doctor, with a very angry frown.

"Yes; Boxall Hill: my master's place--my master is Sir Louis

Scatcherd, baronet. You've heard of him, I suppose?"

Dr Fillgrave had not his mind quite ready for such an occasion. So he

withdrew his foot from the carriage step, and rubbing his hands one

over another, looked at his own hall door for inspiration. A single

glance at his face was sufficient to show that no ordinary thoughts

were being turned over within his breast.

"Well!" said Joe, thinking that his master's name had not altogether

produced the magic effect which he had expected; remembering, also,

how submissive Greyson had always been, who, being a London doctor,

must be supposed to be a bigger man than this provincial fellow.

"Do you know as how my master is dying, very like, while you stand

there?"

"What is your master's disease?" said the doctor, facing Joe, slowly,

and still rubbing his hands. "What ails him? What is the matter with

him?"

"Oh; the matter with him? Well, to say it out at once then, he do

take a drop too much at times, and then he has the horrors--what is

it they call it? delicious beam-ends, or something of that sort."

"Oh, ah, yes; I know; and tell me, my man, who is attending him?"

"Attending him? why, I do, and his mother, that is, her ladyship."

"Yes; but what medical attendant: what doctor?"

"Why, there was Greyson, in London, and--"

"Greyson!" and the doctor looked as though a name so medicinally

humble had never before struck the tympanum of his ear.

"Yes; Greyson. And then, down at what's the name of the place, there

was Thorne."

"Greshamsbury?"

"Yes; Greshamsbury. But he and Thorne didn't hit it off; and so since

that he has had no one but myself."

"I will be at Boxall Hill in the course of the morning," said Dr

Fillgrave; "or, rather, you may say, that I will be there at once: I

will take it in my way." And having thus resolved, he gave his orders

that the post-horses should make such a detour as would enable him

to visit Boxall Hill on his road. "It is impossible," said he to

himself, "that I should be twice treated in such a manner in the same

house."

He was not, however, altogether in a comfortable frame of mind as he

was driven up to the hall door. He could not but remember the smile

of triumph with which his enemy had regarded him in that hall; he

could not but think how he had returned fee-less to Barchester, and

how little he had gained in the medical world by rejecting Lady

Scatcherd's bank-note. However, he also had had his triumphs since

that. He had smiled scornfully at Dr Thorne when he had seen him in

the Greshamsbury street; and had been able to tell, at twenty houses

through the county, how Lady Arabella had at last been obliged to

place herself in his hands. And he triumphed again when he found

himself really standing by Sir Louis Scatcherd's bedside. As for Lady

Scatcherd, she did not even show herself. She kept in her own little

room, sending out Hannah to ask him up the stairs; and she only just

got a peep at him through the door as she heard the medical creak of

his shoes as he again descended.

We need say but little of his visit to Sir Louis. It mattered

nothing now, whether it was Thorne, or Greyson, or Fillgrave. And Dr

Fillgrave knew that it mattered nothing: he had skill at least for

that--and heart enough also to feel that he would fain have been

relieved from this task; would fain have left this patient in the

hands even of Dr Thorne.

The name which Joe had given to his master's illness was certainly

not a false one. He did find Sir Louis "in the horrors." If any

father have a son whose besetting sin is a passion for alcohol, let

him take his child to the room of a drunkard when possessed by "the

horrors." Nothing will cure him if not that.

I will not disgust my reader by attempting to describe the poor

wretch in his misery: the sunken, but yet glaring eyes; the emaciated

cheeks; the fallen mouth; the parched, sore lips; the face, now dry

and hot, and then suddenly clammy with drops of perspiration; the

shaking hand, and all but palsied limbs; and worse than this, the

fearful mental efforts, and the struggles for drink; struggles to

which it is often necessary to give way.

Dr Fillgrave soon knew what was to be the man's fate; but he did what

he might to relieve it. There, in one big, best bedroom, looking out

to the north, lay Sir Louis Scatcherd, dying wretchedly. There, in

the other big, best bedroom, looking out to the south, had died the

other baronet about a twelvemonth since, and each a victim to the

same sin. To this had come the prosperity of the house of Scatcherd!

And then Dr Fillgrave went on to Greshamsbury. It was a long day's

work, both for himself and the horses; but then, the triumph of being

dragged up that avenue compensated for both the expense and the

labour. He always put on his sweetest smile as he came near the hall

door, and rubbed his hands in the most complaisant manner of which he

knew. It was seldom that he saw any of the family but Lady Arabella;

but then he desired to see none other, and when he left her in a good

humour, was quite content to take his glass of sherry and eat his

lunch by himself.

On this occasion, however, the servant at once asked him to go into

the dining-room, and there he found himself in the presence of Frank

Gresham. The fact was, that Lady Arabella, having at last decided,

had sent for Dr Thorne; and it had become necessary that some one

should be entrusted with the duty of informing Dr Fillgrave. That

some one must be the squire, or Frank. Lady Arabella would doubtless

have preferred a messenger more absolutely friendly to her own side

of the house; but such messenger there was none: she could not send

Mr Gazebee to see her doctor, and so, of the two evils, she chose the

least.

"Dr Fillgrave," said Frank, shaking hands with him very cordially as

he came up, "my mother is so much obliged to you for all your care

and anxiety on her behalf! and, so indeed, are we all."

The doctor shook hands with him very warmly. This little expression

of a family feeling on his behalf was the more gratifying, as he had

always thought that the males of the Greshamsbury family were still

wedded to that pseudo-doctor, that half-apothecary who lived in the

village.

"It has been awfully troublesome to you, coming over all this way, I

am sure. Indeed, money could not pay for it; my mother feels that. It

must cut up your time so much."

"Not at all, Mr Gresham; not at all," said the Barchester doctor,

rising up on his toes proudly as he spoke. "A person of your mother's

importance, you know! I should be happy to go any distance to see

her."

"Ah! but, Dr Fillgrave, we cannot allow that."

"Mr Gresham, don't mention it."

"Oh, yes; but I must," said Frank, who thought that he had done

enough for civility, and was now anxious to come to the point. "The

fact is, doctor, that we are very much obliged for what you have

done; but, for the future, my mother thinks she can trust to such

assistance as she can get here in the village."

Frank had been particularly instructed to be very careful how he

mentioned Dr Thorne's name, and, therefore, cleverly avoided it.

Get what assistance she wanted in the village! What words were those

that he heard? "Mr Gresham, eh--hem--perhaps I do not completely--"

Yes, alas! he had completely understood what Frank had meant that he

should understand. Frank desired to be civil, but he had no idea of

beating unnecessarily about the bush on such an occasion as this.

"It's by Sir Omicron's advice, Dr Fillgrave. You see, this man

here"--and he nodded his head towards the doctor's house, being still

anxious not to pronounce the hideous name--"has known my mother's

constitution for so many years."

"Oh, Mr Gresham; of course, if it is wished."

"Yes, Dr Fillgrave, it is wished. Lunch is coming directly:" and

Frank rang the bell.

"Nothing, I thank you, Mr Gresham."

"Do take a glass of sherry."

"Nothing at all, I am very much obliged to you."

"Won't you let the horses get some oats?"

"I will return at once, if you please, Mr Gresham." And the doctor

did return, taking with him, on this occasion, the fee that was

offered to him. His experience had at any rate taught him so much.

But though Frank could do this for Lady Arabella, he could not

receive Dr Thorne on her behalf. The bitterness of that interview had

to be borne by herself. A messenger had been sent for him, and he was

upstairs with her ladyship while his rival was receiving his \_congÃ©\_

downstairs. She had two objects to accomplish, if it might be

possible: she had found that high words with the doctor were of

no avail; but it might be possible that Frank could be saved by

humiliation on her part. If she humbled herself before this man,

would he consent to acknowledge that his niece was not the fit bride

for the heir of Greshamsbury?

The doctor entered the room where she was lying on her sofa, and

walking up to her with a gentle, but yet not constrained step,

took the seat beside her little table, just as he had always been

accustomed to do, and as though there had been no break in their

intercourse.

"Well, doctor, you see that I have come back to you," she said, with

a faint smile.

"Or, rather I have come back to you. And, believe me, Lady Arabella,

I am very happy to do so. There need be no excuses. You were,

doubtless, right to try what other skill could do; and I hope it has

not been tried in vain."

She had meant to have been so condescending; but now all that was put

quite beyond her power. It was not easy to be condescending to the

doctor: she had been trying all her life, and had never succeeded.

"I have had Sir Omicron Pie," she said.

"So I was glad to hear. Sir Omicron is a clever man, and has a good

name. I always recommend Sir Omicron myself."

"And Sir Omicron returns the compliment," said she, smiling

gracefully, "for he recommends you. He told Mr Gresham that I was

very foolish to quarrel with my best friend. So now we are friends

again, are we not? You see how selfish I am." And she put out her

hand to him.

The doctor took her hand cordially, and assured her that he bore her

no ill-will; that he fully understood her conduct--and that he had

never accused her of selfishness. This was all very well and very

gracious; but, nevertheless, Lady Arabella felt that the doctor

kept the upper hand in those sweet forgivenesses. Whereas, she had

intended to keep the upper hand, at least for a while, so that her

humiliation might be more effective when it did come.

And then the doctor used his surgical lore, as he well knew how to

use it. There was an assured confidence about him, an air which

seemed to declare that he really knew what he was doing. These

were very comfortable to his patients, but they were wanting in Dr

Fillgrave. When he had completed his examinations and questions,

and she had completed her little details and made her answer, she

certainly was more at ease than she had been since the doctor had

last left her.

"Don't go yet for a moment," she said. "I have one word to say to

you."

He declared that he was not the least in a hurry. He desired nothing

better, he said, than to sit there and talk to her. "And I owe you a

most sincere apology, Lady Arabella."

"A sincere apology!" said she, becoming a little red. Was he going to

say anything about Mary? Was he going to own that he, and Mary, and

Frank had all been wrong?

"Yes, indeed. I ought not to have brought Sir Louis Scatcherd here: I

ought to have known that he would have disgraced himself."

"Oh! it does not signify," said her ladyship in a tone almost of

disappointment. "I had forgotten it. Mr Gresham and you had more

inconvenience than we had."

"He is an unfortunate, wretched man--most unfortunate; with an

immense fortune which he can never live to possess."

"And who will the money go to, doctor?"

This was a question for which Dr Thorne was hardly prepared. "Go to?"

he repeated. "Oh, some member of the family, I believe. There are

plenty of nephews and nieces."

"Yes; but will it be divided, or all go to one?"

"Probably to one, I think. Sir Roger had a strong idea of leaving

it all in one hand." If it should happen to be a girl, thought Lady

Arabella, what an excellent opportunity would that be for Frank to

marry money!

"And now, doctor, I want to say one word to you; considering the very

long time that we have known each other, it is better that I should

be open with you. This estrangement between us and dear Mary has

given us all so much pain. Cannot we do anything to put an end to

it?"

"Well, what can I say, Lady Arabella? That depends so wholly on

yourself."

"If it depends on me, it shall be done at once."

The doctor bowed. And though he could hardly be said to do so

stiffly, he did it coldly. His bow seemed to say, "Certainly; if you

choose to make a proper \_amende\_ it can be done. But I think it is

very unlikely that you will do so."

"Beatrice is just going to be married, you know that, doctor." The

doctor said that he did know it. "And it will be so pleasant that

Mary should make one of us. Poor Beatrice; you don't know what she

has suffered."

"Yes," said the doctor, "there has been suffering, I am sure;

suffering on both sides."

"You cannot wonder that we should be so anxious about Frank, Dr

Thorne; an only son, and the heir to an estate that has been so very

long in the family:" and Lady Arabella put her handkerchief to her

eyes, as though these facts were in themselves melancholy, and not

to be thought of by a mother without some soft tears. "Now I wish

you could tell me what your views are, in a friendly manner, between

ourselves. You won't find me unreasonable."

"My views, Lady Arabella?"

"Yes, doctor; about your niece, you know: you must have views of some

sort; that's of course. It occurs to me, that perhaps we are all in

the dark together. If so, a little candid speaking between you and me

may set it all right."

Lady Arabella's career had not hitherto been conspicuous for candour,

as far as Dr Thorne had been able to judge of it; but that was no

reason why he should not respond to so very becoming an invitation

on her part. He had no objection to a little candid speaking; at

least, so he declared. As to his views with regard to Mary, they were

merely these: that he would make her as happy and comfortable as he

could while she remained with him; and that he would give her his

blessing--for he had nothing else to give her--when she left him;--if

ever she should do so.

Now, it will be said that the doctor was not very candid in this;

not more so, perhaps, than was Lady Arabella herself. But when one

is specially invited to be candid, one is naturally set upon one's

guard. Those who by disposition are most open, are apt to become

crafty when so admonished. When a man says to you, "Let us be candid

with each other," you feel instinctively that he desires to squeeze

you without giving a drop of water himself.

"Yes; but about Frank," said Lady Arabella.

"About Frank!" said the doctor, with an innocent look, which her

ladyship could hardly interpret.

"What I mean is this: can you give me your word that these young

people do not intend to do anything rash? One word like that from

you will set my mind quite at rest. And then we could be so happy

together again."

"Ah! who is to answer for what rash things a young man will do?" said

the doctor, smiling.

Lady Arabella got up from the sofa, and pushed away the little table.

The man was false, hypocritical, and cunning. Nothing could be made

of him. They were all in a conspiracy together to rob her of her son;

to make him marry without money! What should she do? Where should

she turn for advice or counsel? She had nothing more to say to the

doctor; and he, perceiving that this was the case, took his leave.

This little attempt to achieve candour had not succeeded.

Dr Thorne had answered Lady Arabella as had seemed best to him on the

spur of the moment; but he was by no means satisfied with himself.

As he walked away through the gardens, he bethought himself whether

it would be better for all parties if he could bring himself to be

really candid. Would it not be better for him at once to tell the

squire what were the future prospects of his niece, and let the

father agree to the marriage, or not agree to it, as he might think

fit. But then, if so, if he did do this, would he not in fact say,

"There is my niece, there is this girl of whom you have been talking

for the last twelvemonth, indifferent to what agony of mind you may

have occasioned to her; there she is, a probable heiress! It may be

worth your son's while to wait a little time, and not cast her off

till he shall know whether she be an heiress or no. If it shall turn

out that she is rich, let him take her; if not, why, he can desert

her then as well as now." He could not bring himself to put his niece

into such a position as this. He was anxious enough that she should

be Frank Gresham's wife, for he loved Frank Gresham; he was anxious

enough, also, that she should give to her husband the means of saving

the property of his family. But Frank, though he might find her rich,

was bound to take her while she was poor.

Then, also, he doubted whether he would be justified in speaking

of this will at all. He almost hated the will for the trouble and

vexation it had given him, and the constant stress it had laid on his

conscience. He had spoken of it as yet to no one, and he thought that

he was resolved not to do so while Sir Louis should yet be in the

land of the living.

On reaching home, he found a note from Lady Scatcherd, informing him

that Dr Fillgrave had once more been at Boxall Hill, and that, on

this occasion, he had left the house without anger.

"I don't know what he has said about Louis," she added, "for, to

tell the truth, doctor, I was afraid to see him. But he comes again

to-morrow, and then I shall be braver. But I fear that my poor boy is

in a bad way."

CHAPTER XLI

Doctor Thorne Won't Interfere

At this period there was, as it were, a truce to the ordinary little

skirmishes which had been so customary between Lady Arabella and

the squire. Things had so fallen out, that they neither of them had

much spirit for a contest; and, moreover, on that point which at

the present moment was most thought of by both of them, they were

strangely in unison. For each of them was anxious to prevent the

threatened marriage of their only son.

It must, moreover, be remembered, that Lady Arabella had carried a

great point in ousting Mr Yates Umbleby and putting the management of

the estate into the hands of her own partisan. But then the squire

had not done less in getting rid of Fillgrave and reinstating Dr

Thorne in possession of the family invalids. The losses, therefore,

had been equal; the victories equal; and there was a mutual object.

And it must be confessed, also, that Lady Arabella's taste for

grandeur was on the decline. Misfortune was coming too near to her to

leave her much anxiety for the gaieties of a London season. Things

were not faring well with her. When her eldest daughter was going to

marry a man of fortune, and a member of Parliament, she had thought

nothing of demanding a thousand pounds or so for the extraordinary

expenses incident to such an occasion. But now, Beatrice was to

become the wife of a parish parson, and even that was thought to be

a fortunate event; she had, therefore, no heart for splendour.

"The quieter we can do it the better," she wrote to her

countess-sister. "Her father wanted to give him at least a thousand

pounds; but Mr Gazebee has told me confidentially that it literally

cannot be done at the present moment! Ah, my dear Rosina! how things

have been managed! If one or two of the girls will come over, we

shall all take it as a favour. Beatrice would think it very kind of

them. But I don't think of asking you or Amelia." Amelia was always

the grandest of the de Courcy family, being almost on an equality

with--nay, in some respect superior to--the countess herself. But

this, of course, was before the days of the nice place in Surrey.

Such, and so humble being the present temper of the lady of

Greshamsbury, it will not be thought surprising that she and Mr

Gresham should at last come together in their efforts to reclaim

their son.

At first Lady Arabella urged upon the squire the duty of being very

peremptory and very angry. "Do as other fathers do in such cases.

Make him understand that he will have no allowance to live on." "He

understands that well enough," said Mr Gresham.

"Threaten to cut him off with a shilling," said her ladyship, with

spirit. "I haven't a shilling to cut him off with," answered the

squire, bitterly.

But Lady Arabella herself soon perceived, that this line would not

do. As Mr Gresham himself confessed, his own sins against his son had

been too great to allow of his taking a high hand with him. Besides,

Mr Gresham was not a man who could ever be severe with a son whose

individual conduct had been so good as Frank's. This marriage was, in

his view, a misfortune to be averted if possible,--to be averted by

any possible means; but, as far as Frank was concerned, it was to be

regarded rather as a monomania than a crime.

"I did feel so certain that he would have succeeded with Miss

Dunstable," said the mother, almost crying.

"I thought it impossible but that at his age a twelvemonth's knocking

about the world would cure him," said the father.

"I never heard of a boy being so obstinate about a girl," said the

mother. "I'm sure he didn't get it from the de Courcys:" and then,

again, they talked it over in all its bearings.

"But what are they to live upon?" said Lady Arabella, appealing, as

it were, to some impersonation of reason. "That's what I want him to

tell me. What are they to live upon?"

"I wonder whether de Courcy could get him into some embassy?" said

the father. "He does talk of a profession."

"What! with the girl and all?" asked Lady Arabella with horror,

alarmed at the idea of such an appeal being made to her noble

brother.

"No; but before he marries. He might be broken of it that way."

"Nothing will break him," said the wretched mother;

"nothing--nothing. For my part, I think that he is possessed. Why was

she brought here? Oh, dear! oh, dear! Why was she ever brought into

this house?"

This last question Mr Gresham did not think it necessary to answer.

That evil had been done, and it would be useless to dispute it. "I'll

tell you what I'll do," said he. "I'll speak to the doctor himself."

"It's not the slightest use," said Lady Arabella. "He will not assist

us. Indeed, I firmly believe it's all his own doing."

"Oh, nonsense! that really is nonsense, my love."

"Very well, Mr Gresham. What I say is always nonsense, I know; you

have always told me so. But yet, see how things have turned out. I

knew how it would be when she was first brought into the house." This

assertion was rather a stretch on the part of Lady Arabella.

"Well, it is nonsense to say that Frank is in love with the girl at

the doctor's bidding."

"I think you know, Mr Gresham, that I don't mean that. What I say is

this, that Dr Thorne, finding what an easy fool Frank is--"

"I don't think he's at all easy, my love; and certainly is not a

fool."

"Very well, have it your own way. I'll not say a word more. I'm

struggling to do my best, and I'm browbeaten on every side. God knows

I am not in a state of health to bear it!" And Lady Arabella bowed

her head into her pocket-handkerchief.

"I think, my dear, if you were to see Mary herself it might do some

good," said the squire, when the violence of his wife's grief had

somewhat subsided.

"What! go and call upon this girl?"

"Yes; you can send Beatrice to give her notice, you know. She never

was unreasonable, and I do not think that you would find her so. You

should tell her, you know--"

"Oh, I should know very well what to tell her, Mr Gresham."

"Yes, my love; I'm sure you would; nobody better. But what I mean is,

that if you are to do any good, you should be kind in your manner.

Mary Thorne has a spirit that you cannot break. You may perhaps lead,

but nobody can drive her."

As this scheme originated with her husband, Lady Arabella could not,

of course, confess that there was much in it. But, nevertheless,

she determined to attempt it, thinking that if anything could be

efficacious for good in their present misfortunes, it would be her

own diplomatic powers. It was, therefore, at last settled between

them, that he should endeavour to talk over the doctor, and that she

would do the same with Mary.

"And then I will speak to Frank," said Lady Arabella. "As yet he has

never had the audacity to open his mouth to me about Mary Thorne,

though I believe he declares his love openly to every one else in the

house."

"And I will get Oriel to speak to him," said the squire.

"I think Patience might do more good. I did once think he was getting

fond of Patience, and I was quite unhappy about it then. Ah, dear! I

should be almost pleased at that now."

And thus it was arranged that all the artillery of Greshamsbury was

to be brought to bear at once on Frank's love, so as to crush it, as

it were, by the very weight of metal.

It may be imagined that the squire would have less scruple in

addressing the doctor on this matter than his wife would feel; and

that his part of their present joint undertaking was less difficult

than hers. For he and the doctor had ever been friends at heart. But,

nevertheless, he did feel much scruple, as, with his stick in hand,

he walked down to the little gate which opened out near the doctor's

house.

This feeling was so strong, that he walked on beyond this door to the

entrance, thinking of what he was going to do, and then back again.

It seemed to be his fate to be depending always on the clemency or

consideration of Dr Thorne. At this moment the doctor was imposing

the only obstacle which was offered to the sale of a great part of

his estate. Sir Louis, through his lawyer, was pressing the doctor to

sell, and the lawyer was loudly accusing the doctor of delaying to do

so. "He has the management of your property," said Mr Finnie; "but he

manages it in the interest of his own friend. It is quite clear, and

we will expose it." "By all means," said Sir Louis. "It is a d----d

shame, and it shall be exposed." Of all this the squire was aware.

When he reached the doctor's house, he was shown into the

drawing-room, and found Mary there alone. It had always been his

habit to kiss her forehead when he chanced to meet her about the

house at Greshamsbury. She had been younger and more childish then;

but even now she was but a child to him, so he kissed her as he had

been wont to do. She blushed slightly as she looked up into his face,

and said: "Oh, Mr Gresham, I am so glad to see you here again."

As he looked at her he could not but acknowledge that it was natural

that Frank should love her. He had never before seen that she was

attractive;--had never had an opinion about it. She had grown up

as a child under his eye; and as she had not had the name of being

especially a pretty child, he had never thought on the subject. Now

he saw before him a woman whose every feature was full of spirit and

animation; whose eye sparkled with more than mere brilliancy; whose

face was full of intelligence; whose very smile was eloquent. Was it

to be wondered at that Frank should have learned to love her?

Miss Thorne wanted but one attribute which many consider essential

to feminine beauty. She had no brilliancy of complexion, no pearly

whiteness, no vivid carnation; nor, indeed, did she possess the dark

brilliance of a brunette. But there was a speaking earnestness in her

face; an expression of mental faculty which the squire now for the

first time perceived to be charming.

And then he knew how good she was. He knew well what was her nature;

how generous, how open, how affectionate, and yet how proud! Her

pride was her fault; but even that was not a fault in his eyes. Out

of his own family there was no one whom he had loved, and could love,

as he loved her. He felt, and acknowledged that no man could have a

better wife. And yet he was there with the express object of rescuing

his son from such a marriage!

"You are looking very well, Mary," he said, almost involuntarily.

"Am I?" she answered, smiling. "It's very nice at any rate to be

complimented. Uncle never pays me any compliments of that sort."

In truth, she was looking well. She would say to herself over

and over again, from morning to night, that Frank's love for her

would be, must be, unfortunate; could not lead to happiness. But,

nevertheless, it did make her happy. She had before his return made

up her mind to be forgotten, and it was so sweet to find that he had

been so far from forgetting her. A girl may scold a man in words for

rashness in his love, but her heart never scolds him for such an

offence as that. She had not been slighted, and her heart, therefore,

still rose buoyant within her breast.

The doctor entered the room. As the squire's visit had been expected

by him, he had of course not been out of the house. "And now I

suppose I must go," said Mary; "for I know you are going to talk

about business. But, uncle, Mr Gresham says I'm looking very well.

Why have you not been able to find that out?"

"She's a dear, good girl," said the squire, as the door shut behind

her; "a dear good girl;" and the doctor could not fail to see that

his eyes were filled with tears.

"I think she is," said he, quietly. And then they both sat silent, as

though each was waiting to hear whether the other had anything more

to say on that subject. The doctor, at any rate, had nothing more to

say.

"I have come here specially to speak to you about her," said the

squire.

"About Mary?"

"Yes, doctor; about her and Frank: something must be done, some

arrangement made: if not for our sakes, at least for theirs."

"What arrangement, squire?"

"Ah! that is the question. I take it for granted that either Frank or

Mary has told you that they have engaged themselves to each other."

"Frank told me so twelve months since."

"And has not Mary told you?"

"Not exactly that. But, never mind; she has, I believe, no secret

from me. Though I have said but little to her, I think I know it

all."

"Well, what then?"

The doctor shook his head and put up his hands. He had nothing to

say; no proposition to make; no arrangement to suggest. The thing was

so, and he seemed to say that, as far as he was concerned, there was

an end of it.

The squire sat looking at him, hardly knowing how to proceed. It

seemed to him, that the fact of a young man and a young lady being in

love with each other was not a thing to be left to arrange itself,

particularly, seeing the rank of life in which they were placed. But

the doctor seemed to be of a different opinion.

"But, Dr Thorne, there is no man on God's earth who knows my affairs

as well as you do; and in knowing mine, you know Frank's. Do you

think it possible that they should marry each other?"

"Possible; yes, it is possible. You mean, will it be prudent?"

"Well, take it in that way; would it not be most imprudent?"

"At present, it certainly would be. I have never spoken to either of

them on the subject; but I presume they do not think of such a thing

for the present."

"But, doctor--" The squire was certainly taken aback by the coolness

of the doctor's manner. After all, he, the squire, was Mr Gresham

of Greshamsbury, generally acknowledged to be the first commoner in

Barsetshire; after all, Frank was his heir, and, in process of time,

he would be Mr Gresham of Greshamsbury. Crippled as the estate was,

there would be something left, and the rank at any rate remained. But

as to Mary, she was not even the doctor's daughter. She was not only

penniless, but nameless, fatherless, worse than motherless! It was

incredible that Dr Thorne, with his generally exalted ideas as to

family, should speak in this cold way as to a projected marriage

between the heir of Greshamsbury and his brother's bastard child!

"But, doctor," repeated the squire.

The doctor put one leg over the other, and began to rub his calf.

"Squire," said he. "I think I know all that you would say, all that

you mean. And you don't like to say it, because you would not wish to

pain me by alluding to Mary's birth."

"But, independently of that, what would they live on?" said the

squire, energetically. "Birth is a great thing, a very great thing.

You and I think exactly alike about that, so we need have no dispute.

You are quite as proud of Ullathorne as I am of Greshamsbury."

"I might be if it belonged to me."

"But you are. It is no use arguing. But, putting that aside

altogether, what would they live on? If they were to marry, what

would they do? Where would they go? You know what Lady Arabella

thinks of such things; would it be possible that they should live up

at the house with her? Besides, what a life would that be for both of

them! Could they live here? Would that be well for them?"

The squire looked at the doctor for an answer; but he still went on

rubbing his calf. Mr Gresham, therefore, was constrained to continue

his expostulation.

"When I am dead there will still, I hope, be something;--something

left for the poor fellow. Lady Arabella and the girls would be better

off, perhaps, than now, and I sometimes wish, for Frank's sake, that

the time had come."

The doctor could not now go on rubbing his leg. He was moved to

speak, and declared that, of all events, that was the one which would

be furthest from Frank's heart. "I know no son," said he, "who loves

his father more dearly than he does."

"I do believe it," said the squire; "I do believe it. But yet, I

cannot but feel that I am in his way."

"No, squire, no; you are in no one's way. You will find yourself

happy with your son yet, and proud of him. And proud of his wife,

too. I hope so, and I think so: I do, indeed, or I should not say so,

squire; we will have many a happy day yet together, when we shall

talk of all these things over the dining-room fire at Greshamsbury."

The squire felt it kind in the doctor that he should thus endeavour

to comfort him; but he could not understand, and did not inquire, on

what basis these golden hopes was founded. It was necessary, however,

to return to the subject which he had come to discuss. Would the

doctor assist him in preventing this marriage? That was now the one

thing necessary to be kept in view.

"But, doctor, about the young people; of course they cannot marry,

you are aware of that."

"I don't know that exactly."

"Well, doctor, I must say I thought you would feel it."

"Feel what, squire?"

"That, situated as they are, they ought not to marry."

"That is quite another question. I have said nothing about that

either to you or to anybody else. The truth is, squire, I have never

interfered in this matter one way or the other; and I have no wish to

do so now."

"But should you not interfere? Is not Mary the same to you as your

own child?"

Dr Thorne hardly knew how to answer this. He was aware that his

argument about not interfering was in fact absurd. Mary could not

marry without his interference; and had it been the case that she

was in danger of making an improper marriage, of course he would

interfere. His meaning was, that he would not at the present moment

express any opinion; he would not declare against a match which

might turn out to be in every way desirable; nor, if he spoke in

favour of it, could he give his reasons for doing so. Under these

circumstances, he would have wished to say nothing, could that only

have been possible.

But as it was not possible, and as he must say something, he answered

the squire's last question by asking another. "What is your

objection, squire?"

"Objection! Why, what on earth would they live on?"

"Then I understand, that if that difficulty were over, you would not

refuse your consent merely because of Mary's birth?"

This was a manner in which the squire had by no means expected to

have the affair presented to him. It seemed so impossible that any

sound-minded man should take any but his view of the case, that he

had not prepared himself for argument. There was every objection to

his son marrying Miss Thorne; but the fact of their having no income

between them, did certainly justify him in alleging that first.

"But that difficulty can't be got over, doctor. You know, however,

that it would be cause of grief to us all to see Frank marry much

beneath his station; that is, I mean, in family. You should not press

me to say this, for you know that I love Mary dearly."

"But, my dear friend, it is necessary. Wounds sometimes must be

opened in order that they may be healed. What I mean is this;--and,

squire, I'm sure I need not say to you that I hope for an honest

answer,--were Mary Thorne an heiress; had she, for instance, such

wealth as that Miss Dunstable that we hear of; in that case would you

object to the match?"

When the doctor declared that he expected an honest answer the squire

listened with all his ears; but the question, when finished, seemed

to have no bearing on the present case.

"Come, squire, speak your mind faithfully. There was some talk once

of Frank's marrying Miss Dunstable; did you mean to object to that

match?"

"Miss Dunstable was legitimate; at least, I presume so."

"Oh, Mr Gresham! has it come to that? Miss Dunstable, then, would

have satisfied your ideas of high birth?"

Mr Gresham was rather posed, and regretted, at the moment, his

allusion to Miss Dunstable's presumed legitimacy. But he soon

recovered himself. "No," said he, "it would not. And I am willing

to admit, as I have admitted before, that the undoubted advantages

arising from wealth are taken by the world as atoning for what

otherwise would be a \_mÃ©salliance\_. But--"

"You admit that, do you? You acknowledge that as your conviction on

the subject?"

"Yes. But--" The squire was going on to explain the propriety of this

opinion, but the doctor uncivilly would not hear him.

"Then squire, I will not interfere in this matter one way or the

other."

"How on earth can such an opinion--"

"Pray excuse me, Mr Gresham; but my mind is now quite made up. It was

very nearly so before. I will do nothing to encourage Frank, nor will

I say anything to discourage Mary."

"That is the most singular resolution that a man of sense like you

ever came to."

"I can't help it, squire; it is my resolution."

"But what has Miss Dunstable's fortune to do with it?"

"I cannot say that it has anything; but, in this matter, I will not

interfere."

The squire went on for some time, but it was all to no purpose;

and at last he left the house, considerably in dudgeon. The only

conclusion to which he could come was, that Dr Thorne had thought the

chance on his niece's behalf too good to be thrown away, and had,

therefore, resolved to act in this very singular way.

"I would not have believed it of him, though all Barsetshire had told

me," he said to himself as he entered the great gates; and he went on

repeating the same words till he found himself in his own room. "No,

not if all Barsetshire had told me!"

He did not, however, communicate the ill result of his visit to the

Lady Arabella.

CHAPTER XLII

What Can You Give in Return?

In spite of the family troubles, these were happy days for Beatrice.

It so seldom happens that young ladies on the eve of their marriage

have their future husbands living near them. This happiness was hers,

and Mr Oriel made the most of it. She was constantly being coaxed

down to the parsonage by Patience, in order that she might give her

opinion, in private, as to some domestic arrangement, some piece of

furniture, or some new carpet; but this privacy was always invaded.

What Mr Oriel's parishioners did in these halcyon days, I will not

ask. His morning services, however, had been altogether given up, and

he had provided himself with a very excellent curate.

But one grief did weigh heavily on Beatrice. She continually heard

her mother say things which made her feel that it would be more than

ever impossible that Mary should be at her wedding; and yet she had

promised her brother to ask her. Frank had also repeated his threat,

that if Mary were not present, he would absent himself.

Beatrice did what most girls do in such a case; what all would do who

are worth anything; she asked her lover's advice.

"Oh! but Frank can't be in earnest," said the lover. "Of course he'll

be at our wedding."

"You don't know him, Caleb. He is so changed that no one hardly

would know him. You can't conceive how much in earnest he is, how

determined and resolute. And then, I should like to have Mary so much

if mamma would let her come."

"Ask Lady Arabella," said Caleb.

"Well, I suppose I must do that; but I know what she'll say, and

Frank will never believe that I have done my best." Mr Oriel

comforted her with such little whispered consolations as he was able

to afford, and then she went away on her errand to her mother.

She was indeed surprised at the manner in which her prayer was

received. She could hardly falter forth her petition; but when she

had done so, Lady Arabella answered in this wise:--

"Well my dear, I have no objection, none the least; that is, of

course, if Mary is disposed to behave herself properly."

"Oh, mamma! of course she will," said Beatrice; "she always did and

always does."

"I hope she will, my love. But, Beatrice, when I say that I shall be

glad to see her, of course I mean under certain conditions. I never

disliked Mary Thorne, and if she would only let Frank understand that

she will not listen to his mad proposals, I should be delighted to

see her at Greshamsbury just as she used to be."

Beatrice could say nothing in answer to this; but she felt very sure

that Mary, let her intention be what it might, would not undertake to

make Frank understand anything at anybody's bidding.

"I will tell you what I will do, my dear," continued Lady Arabella;

"I will call on Mary myself."

"What! at Dr Thorne's house?"

"Yes; why not? I have been at Dr Thorne's house before now." And

Lady Arabella could not but think of her last visit thither, and the

strong feeling she had, as she came out, that she would never again

enter those doors. She was, however, prepared to do anything on

behalf of her rebellious son.

"Oh, yes! I know that, mamma."

"I will call upon her, and if I can possibly manage it, I will ask her

myself to make one of your party. If so, you can go to her afterwards

and make your own arrangements. Just write her a note, my dear, and

say that I will call to-morrow at twelve. It might fluster her if I

were to go in without notice."

Beatrice did as she was bid, but with a presentiment that no good

would come of it. The note was certainly unnecessary for the purpose

assigned by Lady Arabella, as Mary was not given to be flustered by

such occurrences; but, perhaps, it was as well that it was written,

as it enabled her to make up her mind steadily as to what information

should be given, and what should not be given to her coming visitor.

On the next morning, at the appointed hour, Lady Arabella walked down

to the doctor's house. She never walked about the village without

making some little disturbance among the inhabitants. With the

squire, himself, they were quite familiar, and he could appear and

reappear without creating any sensation; but her ladyship had not

made herself equally common in men's sight. Therefore, when she

went in at the doctor's little gate, the fact was known through all

Greshamsbury in ten minutes, and before she had left the house, Mrs

Umbleby and Miss Gushing had quite settled between them what was the

exact cause of the very singular event.

The doctor, when he had heard what was going to happen, carefully

kept out of the way: Mary, therefore, had the pleasure of

receiving Lady Arabella alone. Nothing could exceed her ladyship's

affability. Mary thought that it perhaps might have savoured less

of condescension; but then, on this subject, Mary was probably

prejudiced. Lady Arabella smiled and simpered, and asked after the

doctor, and the cat, and Janet, and said everything that could have

been desired by any one less unreasonable than Mary Thorne.

"And now, Mary, I'll tell you why I have called." Mary bowed her

head slightly, as much to say, that she would be glad to receive any

information that Lady Arabella could give her on that subject. "Of

course you know that Beatrice is going to be married very shortly."

Mary acknowledged that she had heard so much.

"Yes: we think it will be in September--early in September--and that

is coming very soon now. The poor girl is anxious that you should be

at her wedding." Mary turned slightly red; but she merely said, and

that somewhat too coldly, that she was much indebted to Beatrice for

her kindness.

"I can assure you, Mary, that she is very fond of you, as much so as

ever; and so, indeed, am I, and all of us are so. You know that Mr

Gresham was always your friend."

"Yes, he always was, and I am grateful to Mr Gresham," answered Mary.

It was well for Lady Arabella that she had her temper under command,

for had she spoken her mind out there would have been very little

chance left for reconciliation between her and Mary.

"Yes, indeed he was; and I think we all did what little we could

to make you welcome at Greshamsbury, Mary, till those unpleasant

occurrences took place."

"What occurrences, Lady Arabella?"

"And Beatrice is so very anxious on this point," said her ladyship,

ignoring for the moment Mary's question. "You two have been so much

together, that she feels she cannot be quite happy if you are not

near her when she is being married."

"Dear Beatrice!" said Mary, warmed for the moment to an expression of

genuine feeling.

"She came to me yesterday, begging that I would waive any objection I

might have to your being there. I have made her no answer yet. What

answer do you think I ought to make her?"

Mary was astounded at this question, and hesitated in her reply.

"What answer ought you to make her?" she said.

"Yes, Mary. What answer do you think I ought to give? I wish to ask

you the question, as you are the person the most concerned."

Mary considered for a while, and then did give her opinion on the

matter in a firm voice. "I think you should tell Beatrice, that as

you cannot at present receive me cordially in your house, it will be

better that you should not be called on to receive me at all."

This was certainly not the sort of answer that Lady Arabella

expected, and she was now somewhat astounded in her turn. "But,

Mary," she said, "I should be delighted to receive you cordially if

I could do so."

"But it seems you cannot, Lady Arabella; and so there must be an end

of it."

"Oh, but I do not know that:" and she smiled her sweetest smile. "I

do not know that. I want to put an end to all this ill-feeling if I

can. It all depends upon one thing, you know."

"Does it, Lady Arabella?"

"Yes, upon one thing. You won't be angry if I ask you another

question--eh, Mary?"

"No; at least I don't think I will."

"Is there any truth in what we hear about your being engaged to

Frank?"

Mary made no immediate answer to this, but sat quite silent, looking

Lady Arabella in the face; not but that she had made up her mind as

to what answer she would give, but the exact words failed her at the

moment.

"Of course you must have heard of such a rumour," continued Lady

Arabella.

"Oh, yes, I have heard of it."

"Yes, and you have noticed it, and I must say very properly. When you

went to Boxall Hill, and before that with Miss Oriel's to her aunt's,

I thought you behaved extremely well." Mary felt herself glow with

indignation, and began to prepare words that should be sharp and

decisive. "But, nevertheless, people talk; and Frank, who is still

quite a boy" (Mary's indignation was not softened by this allusion

to Frank's folly), "seems to have got some nonsense in his head. I

grieve to say it, but I feel myself in justice bound to do so, that

in this matter he has not acted as well as you have done. Now,

therefore, I merely ask you whether there is any truth in the report.

If you tell me that there is none, I shall be quite contented."

"But it is altogether true, Lady Arabella; I am engaged to Frank

Gresham."

"Engaged to be married to him?"

"Yes; engaged to be married to him."

What was to say or do now? Nothing could be more plain, more decided,

or less embarrassed with doubt than Mary's declaration. And as she

made it she looked her visitor full in the face, blushing indeed, for

her cheeks were now suffused as well as her forehead; but boldly,

and, as it were, with defiance.

"And you tell me so to my face, Miss Thorne?"

"And why not? Did you not ask me the question; and would you have me

answer you with a falsehood? I am engaged to him. As you would put

the question to me, what other answer could I make? The truth is,

that I am engaged to him."

The decisive abruptness with which Mary declared her own iniquity

almost took away her ladyship's breath. She had certainly believed

that they were engaged, and had hardly hoped that Mary would deny it;

but she had not expected that the crime would be acknowledged, or, at

any rate, if acknowledged, that the confession would be made without

some show of shame. On this Lady Arabella could have worked; but

there was no such expression, nor was there the slightest hesitation.

"I am engaged to Frank Gresham," and having so said, Mary looked her

visitor full in the face.

"Then it is indeed impossible that you should be received at

Greshamsbury."

"At present, quite so, no doubt: in saying so, Lady Arabella, you

only repeat the answer I made to your first question. I can now go

to Greshamsbury only in one light: that of Mr Gresham's accepted

daughter-in-law."

"And that is perfectly out of the question; altogether out of the

question, now and for ever."

"I will not dispute with you about that; but, as I said before, my

being at Beatrice's wedding is not to be thought of."

Lady Arabella sat for a while silent, that she might meditate, if

possible, calmly as to what line of argument she had now better take.

It would be foolish in her, she thought, to return home, having

merely expressed her anger. She had now an opportunity of talking to

Mary which might not again occur: the difficulty was in deciding in

what special way she should use the opportunity. Should she threaten,

or should she entreat? To do her justice, it should be stated, that

she did actually believe that the marriage was all but impossible;

she did not think that it could take place. But the engagement might

be the ruin of her son's prospects, seeing how he had before him one

imperative, one immediate duty--that of marrying money.

Having considered all this as well as her hurry would allow her,

she determined first to reason, then to entreat, and lastly, if

necessary, to threaten.

"I am astonished! you cannot be surprised at that, Miss Thorne: I am

astonished at hearing so singular a confession made."

"Do you think my confession singular, or is it the fact of my being

engaged to your son?"

"We will pass over that for the present. But do let me ask you, do

you think it possible, I say possible, that you and Frank should be

married?"

"Oh, certainly; quite possible."

"Of course you know that he has not a shilling in the world."

"Nor have I, Lady Arabella."

"Nor will he have were he to do anything so utterly hostile to his

father's wishes. The property, you are aware, is altogether at Mr

Gresham's disposal."

"I am aware of nothing about the property, and can say nothing about

it except this, that it has not been, and will not be inquired after

by me in this matter. If I marry Frank Gresham, it will not be for

the property. I am sorry to make such an apparent boast, but you

force me to do it."

"On what then are you to live? You are too old for love in a cottage,

I suppose?"

"Not at all too old; Frank, you know is 'still quite a boy.'"

Impudent hussy! forward, ill-conditioned saucy minx! such were

the epithets which rose to Lady Arabella's mind; but she politely

suppressed them.

"Miss Thorne, this subject is of course to me very serious; very

ill-adapted for jesting. I look upon such a marriage as absolutely

impossible."

"I do not know what you mean by impossible, Lady Arabella."

"I mean, in the first place, that you two could not get yourselves

married."

"Oh, yes; Mr Oriel would manage that for us. We are his parishioners,

and he would be bound to do it."

"I beg your pardon; I believe that under all the circumstances it

would be illegal."

Mary smiled; but she said nothing. "You may laugh, Miss Thorne, but I

think you will find that I am right. There are still laws to prevent

such fearful distress as would be brought about by such a marriage."

"I hope that nothing I shall do will bring distress on the family."

"Ah, but it would; don't you know that it would? Think of it, Miss

Thorne. Think of Frank's state, and of his father's state. You know

enough of that, I am sure, to be well aware that Frank is not in a

condition to marry without money. Think of the position which Mr

Gresham's only son should hold in the county; think of the old name,

and the pride we have in it; you have lived among us enough to

understand all this; think of these things, and then say whether it

is possible such a marriage should take place without family distress

of the deepest kind. Think of Mr Gresham; if you truly love my son,

you could not wish to bring on him all this misery and ruin."

Mary now was touched, for there was truth in what Lady Arabella said.

But she had no power of going back; her troth was plighted, and

nothing that any human being could say should shake her from it. If

he, indeed, chose to repent, that would be another thing.

"Lady Arabella," she said, "I have nothing to say in favour of this

engagement, except that he wishes it."

"And is that a reason, Mary?"

"To me it is; not only a reason, but a law. I have given him my

promise."

"And you will keep your promise even to his own ruin?"

"I hope not. Our engagement, unless he shall choose to break it off,

must necessarily be a long one; but the time will come--"

"What! when Mr Gresham is dead?"

"Before that, I hope."

"There is no probability of it. And because he is headstrong, you,

who have always had credit for so much sense, will hold him to this

mad engagement?"

"No, Lady Arabella; I will not hold him to anything to which he does

not wish to be held. Nothing that you can say shall move me: nothing

that anybody can say shall induce me to break my promise to him. But

a word from himself will do it. One look will be sufficient. Let him

give me to understand, in any way, that his love for me is injurious

to him--that he has learnt to think so--and then I will renounce my

part in this engagement as quickly as you could wish it."

There was much in this promise, but still not so much as Lady

Arabella wished to get. Mary, she knew, was obstinate, but yet

reasonable; Frank, she thought, was both obstinate and unreasonable.

It might be possible to work on Mary's reason, but quite impossible

to touch Frank's irrationality. So she persevered--foolishly.

"Miss Thorne--that, is, Mary, for I still wish to be thought your

friend--"

"I will tell you the truth, Lady Arabella: for some considerable time

past I have not thought you so."

"Then you have wronged me. But I will go on with what I was saying.

You quite acknowledge that this is a foolish affair?"

"I acknowledge no such thing."

"Something very much like it. You have not a word in its defence."

"Not to you: I do not choose to be put on my defence by you."

"I don't know who has more right; however, you promise that if Frank

wishes it, you will release him from his engagement."

"Release him! It is for him to release me, that is, if he wishes it."

"Very well; at any rate, you give him permission to do so. But will

it not be more honourable for you to begin?"

"No; I think not."

"Ah, but it would. If he, in his position, should be the first to

speak, the first to suggest that this affair between you is a foolish

one, what would people say?"

"They would say the truth."

"And what would you yourself say?"

"Nothing."

"What would he think of himself?"

"Ah, that I do not know. It is according as that may be, that he will

or will not act at your bidding."

"Exactly; and because you know him to be high-minded, because you

think that he, having so much to give, will not break his word to

you--to you who have nothing to give in return--it is, therefore,

that you say that the first step must be taken by him. Is that

noble?"

Then Mary rose from her seat, for it was no longer possible for her

to speak what it was in her to say, sitting there leisurely on her

sofa. Lady Arabella's worship of money had not hitherto been so

brought forward in the conversation as to give her unpardonable

offence; but now she felt that she could no longer restrain her

indignation. "To you who have nothing to give in return!" Had she not

given all that she possessed? Had she not emptied his store into his

lap? that heart of hers, beating with such genuine life, capable of

such perfect love, throbbing with so grand a pride; had she not given

that? And was it not that, between him and her, more than twenty

Greshamsburys, nobler than any pedigree? "To you who have nothing to

give," indeed! This to her who was so ready to give everything!

"Lady Arabella," she said, "I think that you do not understand me,

and that it is not likely that you should. If so, our further talking

will be worse than useless. I have taken no account of what will be

given between your son and me in your sense of the word giving. But

he has professed to--to love me"--as she spoke, she still looked on

the lady's face, but her eyelashes for a moment screened her eyes,

and her colour was a little heightened--"and I have acknowledged that

I also love him, and so we are engaged. To me my promise is sacred. I

will not be threatened into breaking it. If, however, he shall wish

to change his mind, he can do so. I will not upbraid him; will not,

if I can help it, think harshly of him. So much you may tell him if

it suits you; but I will not listen to your calculations as to how

much or how little each of us may have to give to the other."

She was still standing when she finished speaking, and so she

continued to stand. Her eyes were fixed on Lady Arabella, and her

position seemed to say that sufficient words had been spoken, and

that it was time that her ladyship should go; and so Lady Arabella

felt it. Gradually she also rose; slowly, but tacitly, she

acknowledged that she was in the presence of a spirit superior to her

own; and so she took her leave.

"Very well," she said, in a tone that was intended to be

grandiloquent, but which failed grievously; "I will tell him that he

has your permission to think a second time on this matter. I do not

doubt but that he will do so." Mary would not condescend to answer,

but curtsied low as her visitor left the room. And so the interview

was over.

The interview was over, and Mary was alone. She remained standing as

long as she heard the footsteps of Frank's mother on the stairs; not

immediately thinking of what had passed, but still buoying herself up

with her hot indignation, as though her work with Lady Arabella was

not yet finished; but when the footfall was no longer heard, and the

sound of the closing door told her that she was in truth alone, she

sank back in her seat, and, covering her face with her hands, burst

into bitter tears.

All that doctrine about money was horrible to her; that insolent

pretence, that she had caught at Frank because of his worldly

position, made her all but ferocious; but Lady Arabella had not the

less spoken much that was true. She did think of the position which

the heir of Greshamsbury should hold in the county, and of the fact

that a marriage would mar that position so vitally; she did think of

the old name, and the old Gresham pride; she did think of the squire

and his deep distress: it was true that she had lived among them

long enough to understand these things, and to know that it was not

possible that this marriage should take place without deep family

sorrow.

And then she asked herself whether, in consenting to accept Frank's

hand, she had adequately considered this; and she was forced to

acknowledge that she had not considered it. She had ridiculed Lady

Arabella for saying that Frank was still a boy; but was it not true

that his offer had been made with a boy's energy, rather than a man's

forethought? If so, if she had been wrong to accede to that offer

when made, would she not be doubly wrong to hold him to it now that

she saw their error?

It was doubtless true that Frank himself could not be the first to

draw back. What would people say of him? She could now calmly ask

herself the question that had so angered her when asked by Lady

Arabella. If he could not do it, and if, nevertheless, it behoved

them to break off this match, by whom was it to be done if not

by her? Was not Lady Arabella right throughout, right in her

conclusions, though so foully wrong in her manner of drawing them?

And then she did think for one moment of herself. "You who have

nothing to give in return!" Such had been Lady Arabella's main

accusation against her. Was it in fact true that she had nothing to

give? Her maiden love, her feminine pride, her very life, and spirit,

and being--were these things nothing? Were they to be weighed against

pounds sterling per annum? and, when so weighed, were they ever to

kick the beam like feathers? All these things had been nothing to

her when, without reflection, governed wholly by the impulse of the

moment, she had first allowed his daring hand to lie for an instant

in her own. She had thought nothing of these things when that other

suitor came, richer far than Frank, to love whom it was as impossible

to her as it was not to love him.

Her love had been pure from all such thoughts; she was conscious

that it ever would be pure from them. Lady Arabella was unable to

comprehend this, and, therefore, was Lady Arabella so utterly

distasteful to her.

Frank had once held her close to his warm breast; and her very soul

had thrilled with joy to feel that he so loved her,--with a joy which

she had hardly dared to acknowledge. At that moment, her maidenly

efforts had been made to push him off, but her heart had grown to

his. She had acknowledged him to be master of her spirit; her bosom's

lord; the man whom she had been born to worship; the human being to

whom it was for her to link her destiny. Frank's acres had been of no

account; nor had his want of acres. God had brought them two together

that they should love each other; that conviction had satisfied her,

and she had made it a duty to herself that she would love him with

her very soul. And now she was called upon to wrench herself asunder

from him because she had nothing to give in return!

Well, she would wrench herself asunder, as far as such wrenching

might be done compatibly with her solemn promise. It might be right

that Frank should have an opportunity offered him, so that he might

escape from his position without disgrace. She would endeavour to

give him this opportunity. So, with one deep sigh, she arose, took

herself pen, ink, and paper, and sat herself down again so that the

wrenching might begin.

And then, for a moment, she thought of her uncle. Why had he not

spoken to her of all this? Why had he not warned her? He who had ever

been so good to her, why had he now failed her so grievously? She had

told him everything, had had no secret from him; but he had never

answered her a word. "He also must have known," she said to herself,

piteously, "he also must have known that I could give nothing in

return." Such accusation, however, availed her not at all, so she sat

down and slowly wrote her letter.

"Dearest Frank," she began. She had at first written "dear Mr

Gresham;" but her heart revolted against such useless coldness. She

was not going to pretend she did not love him.

DEAREST FRANK,

Your mother has been here talking to me about our

engagement. I do not generally agree with her about such

matters; but she has said some things to-day which I

cannot but acknowledge to be true. She says, that our

marriage would be distressing to your father, injurious to

all your family, and ruinous to yourself. If this be so,

how can I, who love you, wish for such a marriage?

I remember my promise, and have kept it. I would not

yield to your mother when she desired me to disclaim our

engagement. But I do think it will be more prudent if

you will consent to forget all that has passed between

us--not, perhaps, to forget it; that may not be possible

for us--but to let it pass by as though it had never

been. If so, if you think so, dear Frank, do not have any

scruples on my account. What will be best for you, must be

best for me. Think what a reflection it would ever be to

me, to have been the ruin of one that I love so well.

Let me have but one word to say that I am released from my

promise, and I will tell my uncle that the matter between

us is over. It will be painful for us at first; those

occasional meetings which must take place will distress

us, but that will wear off. We shall always think well

of each other, and why should we not be friends? This,

doubtless, cannot be done without inward wounds; but such

wounds are in God's hands, and He can cure them.

I know what your first feelings will be on reading this

letter; but do not answer it in obedience to first

feelings. Think over it, think of your father, and all you

owe him, of your old name, your old family, and of what

the world expects from you. [Mary was forced to put her

hand to her eyes, to save her paper from her falling

tears, as she found herself thus repeating, nearly word

for word, the arguments that had been used by Lady

Arabella.] Think of these things, coolly, if you can, but,

at any rate, without passion: and then let me have one

word in answer. One word will suffice.

I have but to add this: do not allow yourself to think

that my heart will ever reproach you. It cannot reproach

you for doing that which I myself suggest. [Mary's logic

in this was very false; but she was not herself aware of

it.] I will never reproach you either in word or thought;

and as for all others, it seems to me that the world

agrees that we have hitherto been wrong. The world, I

hope, will be satisfied when we have obeyed it.

God bless you, dearest Frank! I shall never call you

so again; but it would be a pretence were I to write

otherwise in this letter. Think of this, and then let me

have one line.

Your affectionate friend,

MARY THORNE.

P.S.--Of course I cannot be at dear Beatrice's marriage;

but when they come back to the parsonage, I shall see her.

I am sure they will both be happy, because they are so

good. I need hardly say that I shall think of them on

their wedding day.

When she had finished her letter, she addressed it plainly, in her

own somewhat bold handwriting, to Francis N. Gresham, Jun., Esq., and

then took it herself to the little village post-office. There should

be nothing underhand about her correspondence: all the Greshamsbury

world should know of it--that world of which she had spoken in her

letter--if that world so pleased. Having put her penny label on it,

she handed it, with an open brow and an unembarrassed face, to the

baker's wife, who was Her Majesty's postmistress at Greshamsbury;

and, having so finished her work, she returned to see the table

prepared for her uncle's dinner. "I will say nothing to him," said

she to herself, "till I get the answer. He will not talk to me about

it, so why should I trouble him?"

CHAPTER XLIII

The Race of Scatcherd Becomes Extinct

It will not be imagined, at any rate by feminine readers, that Mary's

letter was written off at once, without alterations and changes, or

the necessity for a fair copy. Letters from one young lady to another

are doubtless written in this manner, and even with them it might

sometimes be better if more patience had been taken; but with Mary's

first letter to her lover--her first love-letter, if love-letter it

can be called--much more care was used. It was copied and re-copied,

and when she returned from posting it, it was read and re-read.

"It is very cold," she said to herself; "he will think I have no

heart, that I have never loved him!" And then she all but resolved to

run down to the baker's wife, and get back her letter, that she might

alter it. "But it will be better so," she said again. "If I touched

his feelings now, he would never bring himself to leave me. It is

right that I should be cold to him. I should be false to myself if

I tried to move his love--I, who have nothing to give him in return

for it." And so she made no further visit to the post-office, and the

letter went on its way.

We will now follow its fortunes for a short while, and explain how

it was that Mary received no answer for a week; a week, it may well

be imagined, of terrible suspense to her. When she took it to the

post-office, she doubtless thought that the baker's wife had nothing

to do but to send it up to the house at Greshamsbury, and that Frank

would receive it that evening, or, at latest, early on the following

morning. But this was by no means so. The epistle was posted on a

Friday afternoon, and it behoved the baker's wife to send it into

Silverbridge--Silverbridge being the post-town--so that all due

formalities, as ordered by the Queen's Government, might there be

perfected. Now, unfortunately, the post-boy had taken his departure

before Mary reached the shop, and it was not, therefore, dispatched

till Saturday. Sunday was always a \_dies non\_ with the Greshamsbury

Mercury, and, consequently, Frank's letter was not delivered at the

house till Monday morning; at which time Mary had for two long days

been waiting with weary heart for the expected answer.

Now Frank had on that morning gone up to London by the early train,

with his future brother-in-law, Mr Oriel. In order to accomplish

this, they had left Greshamsbury for Barchester exactly as the

postboy was leaving Silverbridge for Greshamsbury.

"I should like to wait for my letters," Mr Oriel had said, when the

journey was being discussed.

"Nonsense," Frank had answered. "Who ever got a letter that was worth

waiting for?" and so Mary was doomed to a week of misery.

When the post-bag arrived at the house on Monday morning, it was

opened as usual by the squire himself at the breakfast-table. "Here

is a letter for Frank," said he, "posted in the village. You had

better send it to him:" and he threw the letter across the table to

Beatrice.

"It's from Mary," said Beatrice, out loud, taking the letter up and

examining the address. And having said so, she repented what she had

done, as she looked first at her father and then at her mother.

A cloud came over the squire's brow as for a minute he went on

turning over the letters and newspapers. "Oh, from Mary Thorne, is

it?" he said. "Well, you had better send it to him."

"Frank said that if any letters came they were to be kept," said his

sister Sophy. "He told me so particularly. I don't think he likes

having letters sent after him."

"You had better send that one," said the squire.

"Mr Oriel is to have all his letters addressed to Long's Hotel, Bond

Street, and this one can very well be sent with them," said Beatrice,

who knew all about it, and intended herself to make a free use of the

address.

"Yes, you had better send it," said the squire; and then nothing

further was said at the table. But Lady Arabella, though she said

nothing, had not failed to mark what had passed. Had she asked for

the letter before the squire, he would probably have taken possession

of it himself; but as soon as she was alone with Beatrice, she did

demand it. "I shall be writing to Frank myself," she said, "and will

send it to him." And so, Beatrice, with a heavy heart, gave it up.

The letter lay before Lady Arabella's eyes all that day, and many a

wistful glance was cast at it. She turned it over and over, and much

she desired to know its contents; but she did not dare to break the

seal of her son's letter. All that day it lay upon her desk, and all

the next, for she could hardly bring herself to part with it; but on

the Wednesday it was sent--sent with these lines from herself:--

"Dearest, dearest Frank, I send you a letter which has come by the

post from Mary Thorne. I do not know what it may contain; but before

you correspond with her, pray, pray think of what I said to you. For

my sake, for your father's, for your own, pray think of it."

That was all, but it was enough to make her word to Beatrice true.

She did send it to Frank enclosed in a letter from herself. We must

reserve to the next chapter what had taken place between Frank and

his mother; but, for the present, we will return to the doctor's

house.

Mary said not a word to him about the letter; but, keeping silent on

the subject, she felt wretchedly estranged from him. "Is anything the

matter, Mary?" he said to her on the Sunday afternoon.

"No, uncle," she answered, turning away her head to hide her tears.

"Ah, but there is something; what is it, dearest?"

"Nothing--that is, nothing that one can talk about."

"What Mary! Be unhappy and not to talk about it to me? That's

something new, is it not?"

"One has presentiments sometimes, and is unhappy without knowing why.

Besides, you know--"

"I know! What do I know? Do I know anything that will make my pet

happier?" and he took her in his arms as they sat together on the

sofa. Her tears were now falling fast, and she no longer made an

effort to hide them. "Speak to me, Mary; this is more than a

presentiment. What is it?"

"Oh, uncle--"

"Come, love, speak to me; tell me why you are grieving."

"Oh, uncle, why have you not spoken to me? Why have you not told

me what to do? Why have you not advised me? Why are you always so

silent?"

"Silent about what?"

"You know, uncle, you know; silent about him; silent about Frank."

Why, indeed? What was he to say to this? It was true that he had

never counselled her; never shown her what course she should take;

had never even spoken to her about her lover. And it was equally true

that he was not now prepared to do so, even in answer to such an

appeal as this. He had a hope, a strong hope, more than a hope, that

Mary's love would yet be happy; but he could not express or explain

his hope; nor could he even acknowledge to himself a wish that would

seem to be based on the death of him whose life he was bound, if

possible, to preserve.

"My love," he said, "it is a matter in which you must judge for

yourself. Did I doubt your conduct, I should interfere; but I do

not."

"Conduct! Is conduct everything? One may conduct oneself excellently,

and yet break one's heart."

This was too much for the doctor; his sternness and firmness

instantly deserted him. "Mary," he said, "I will do anything that you

would have me. If you wish it, I will make arrangements for leaving

this place at once."

"Oh, no," she said, plaintively.

"When you tell me of a broken heart, you almost break my own. Come

to me, darling; do not leave me so. I will say all that I can say. I

have thought, do still think, that circumstances will admit of your

marriage with Frank if you both love each other, and can both be

patient."

"You think so," said she, unconsciously sliding her hand into his,

as though to thank him by its pressure for the comfort he was giving

her.

"I do think so now more than ever. But I only think so; I have been

unable to assure you. There, darling, I must not say more; only that

I cannot bear to see you grieving, I would not have said this:" and

then he left her, and nothing more was spoken on the subject.

If you can be patient! Why, a patience of ten years would be as

nothing to her. Could she but live with the knowledge that she was

first in his estimation, dearest in his heart; could it be also

granted to her to feel that she was regarded as his equal, she could

be patient for ever. What more did she want than to know and feel

this? Patient, indeed!

But what could these circumstances be to which her uncle had alluded?

"I do think that circumstances will admit of your marriage." Such was

his opinion, and she had never known him to be wrong. Circumstances!

What circumstances? Did he perhaps mean that Mr Gresham's affairs

were not so bad as they had been thought to be? If so, that alone

would hardly alter the matter, for what could she give in return? "I

would give him the world for one word of love," she said to herself,

"and never think that he was my debtor. Ah! how beggarly the heart

must be that speculates on such gifts as those!"

But there was her uncle's opinion: he still thought that they might

be married. Oh, why had she sent her letter? and why had she made it

so cold? With such a letter as that before him, Frank could not do

other than consent to her proposal. And then, why did he not at least

answer it?

On the Sunday afternoon there arrived at Greshamsbury a man and a

horse from Boxall Hill, bearing a letter from Lady Scatcherd to Dr

Thorne, earnestly requesting the doctor's immediate attendance. "I

fear everything is over with poor Louis," wrote the unhappy mother.

"It has been very dreadful. Do come to me; I have no other friend,

and I am nearly worn through with it. The man from the city"--she

meant Dr Fillgrave--"comes every day, and I dare say he is all very

well, but he has never done much good. He has not had spirit enough

to keep the bottle from him; and it was that, and that only, that

most behoved to be done. I doubt you won't find him in this world

when you arrive here."

Dr Thorne started immediately. Even though he might have to meet Dr

Fillgrave, he could not hesitate, for he went not as a doctor to the

dying man, but as the trustee under Sir Roger's will. Moreover, as

Lady Scatcherd had said, he was her only friend, and he could not

desert her at such a moment for an army of Fillgraves. He told

Mary he should not return that night; and taking with him a small

saddle-bag, he started at once for Boxall Hill.

As he rode up to the hall door, Dr Fillgrave was getting into his

carriage. They had never met so as to speak to each other since that

memorable day, when they had their famous passage of arms in the hall

of that very house before which they both now stood. But, at the

present moment, neither of them was disposed to renew the fight.

"What news of your patient, Dr Fillgrave?" said our doctor, still

seated on his sweating horse, and putting his hand lightly to his

hat.

Dr Fillgrave could not refrain from one moment of supercilious

disdain: he gave one little chuck to his head, one little twist to

his neck, one little squeeze to his lips, and then the man within him

overcame the doctor. "Sir Louis is no more," he said.

"God's will be done!" said Dr Thorne.

"His death is a release; for his last days have been very frightful.

Your coming, Dr Thorne, will be a comfort to Lady Scatcherd." And

then Dr Fillgrave, thinking that even the present circumstances

required no further condescension, ensconced himself in the carriage.

"His last days have been very dreadful! Ah, me, poor fellow! Dr

Fillgrave, before you go, allow me to say this: I am quite aware that

when he fell into your hands, no medical skill in the world could

save him."

Dr Fillgrave bowed low from the carriage, and after this unwonted

exchange of courtesies, the two doctors parted, not to meet again--at

any rate, in the pages of this novel. Of Dr Fillgrave, let it now be

said, that he grows in dignity as he grows in years, and that he is

universally regarded as one of the celebrities of the city of

Barchester.

Lady Scatcherd was found sitting alone in her little room on the

ground-floor. Even Hannah was not with her, for Hannah was now

occupied upstairs. When the doctor entered the room, which he did

unannounced, he found her seated on a chair, with her back against

one of the presses, her hands clasped together over her knees, gazing

into vacancy. She did not ever hear him or see him as he approached,

and his hand had slightly touched her shoulder before she knew that

she was not alone. Then, she looked up at him with a face so full of

sorrow, so worn with suffering, that his own heart was racked to see

her.

"It is all over, my friend," said he. "It is better so; much better

so."

She seemed at first hardly to understand him, but still regarding him

with that wan face, shook her head slowly and sadly. One might have

thought that she was twenty years older than when Dr Thorne last saw

her.

He drew a chair to her side, and sitting by her, took her hand in

his. "It is better so, Lady Scatcherd; better so," he repeated. "The

poor lad's doom had been spoken, and it is well for him, and for you,

that it should be over."

"They are both gone now," said she, speaking very low; "both gone

now. Oh, doctor! To be left alone here, all alone!"

He said some few words trying to comfort her; but who can comfort

a widow bereaved of her child? Who can console a heart that has

lost all that it possessed? Sir Roger had not been to her a tender

husband; but still he had been the husband of her love. Sir Louis had

not been to her an affectionate son; but still he had been her child,

her only child. Now they were both gone. Who can wonder that the

world should be a blank to her?

Still the doctor spoke soothing words, and still he held her hand.

He knew that his words could not console her; but the sounds of his

kindness at such desolate moments are, to such minds as hers, some

alleviation of grief. She hardly answered him, but sat there staring

out before her, leaving her hand passively to him, and swaying her

head backwards and forwards as though her grief were too heavy to be

borne.

At last, her eye rested on an article which stood upon the table, and

she started up impetuously from her chair. She did this so suddenly,

that the doctor's hand fell beside him before he knew that she had

risen. The table was covered with all those implements which become

so frequent about a house when severe illness is an inhabitant there.

There were little boxes and apothecaries' bottles, cups and saucers

standing separate, and bowls, in which messes have been prepared with

the hope of suiting a sick man's failing appetite. There was a small

saucepan standing on a plate, a curiously shaped glass utensil left

by the doctor, and sundry pieces of flannel, which had been used in

rubbing the sufferer's limbs. But in the middle of the dÃ©bris stood

one black bottle, with head erect, unsuited to the companionship in

which it was found.

"There," she said, rising up, and seizing this in a manner that

would have been ridiculous had it not been so truly tragic. "There,

that has robbed me of everything--of all that I ever possessed; of

husband and child; of the father and son; that has swallowed them

both--murdered them both! Oh, doctor! that such a thing as that

should cause such bitter sorrow! I have hated it always, but now--Oh,

woe is me! weary me!" And then she let the bottle drop from her hand

as though it were too heavy for her.

"This comes of their barro-niting," she continued. "If they had let

him alone, he would have been here now, and so would the other one.

Why did they do it? why did they do it? Ah, doctor! people such as us

should never meddle with them above us. See what has come of it; see

what has come of it!"

The doctor could not remain with her long, as it was necessary that

he should take upon himself the direction of the household, and give

orders for the funeral. First of all, he had to undergo the sad duty

of seeing the corpse of the deceased baronet. This, at any rate,

may be spared to my readers. It was found to be necessary that the

interment should be made very quickly, as the body was already nearly

destroyed by alcohol. Having done all this, and sent back his horse

to Greshamsbury, with directions that clothes for a journey might be

sent to him, and a notice that he should not be home for some days,

he again returned to Lady Scatcherd.

Of course he could not but think much of the immense property

which was now, for a short time, altogether in his own hands. His

resolution was soon made to go at once to London and consult the

best lawyer he could find--or the best dozen lawyers should such be

necessary--as to the validity of Mary's claims. This must be done

before he said a word to her or to any of the Gresham family; but it

must be done instantly, so that all suspense might be at an end as

soon as possible. He must, of course, remain with Lady Scatcherd till

the funeral should be over; but when that office should be complete,

he would start instantly for London.

In resolving to tell no one as to Mary's fortune till after he had

fortified himself with legal warranty, he made one exception. He

thought it rational that he should explain to Lady Scatcherd who was

now the heir under her husband's will; and he was the more inclined

to do so, from feeling that the news would probably be gratifying to

her. With this view, he had once or twice endeavoured to induce her

to talk about the property, but she had been unwilling to do so. She

seemed to dislike all allusions to it, and it was not till she had

incidentally mentioned the fact that she would have to look for a

home, that he was able to fix her to the subject. This was on the

evening before the funeral; on the afternoon of which day he intended

to proceed to London.

"It may probably be arranged that you may continue to live here,"

said the doctor.

"I don't wish it at all," said she, rather sharply. "I don't wish to

have any arrangements made. I would not be indebted to any of them

for anything. Oh, dear! if money could make it all right, I should

have enough of that."

"Indebted to whom, Lady Scatcherd? Who do you think will be the owner

of Boxall Hill?"

"Indeed, then, Dr Thorne, I don't much care: unless it be yourself,

it won't be any friend of mine, or any one I shall care to make a

friend of. It isn't so easy for an old woman like me to make new

friends."

"Well, it certainly won't belong to me."

"I wish it did, with all my heart. But even then, I would not live

here. I have had too many troubles here to wish to see more."

"That shall be just as you like, Lady Scatcherd; but you will

be surprised to hear that the place will--at least I think it

will--belong to a friend of yours: to one to whom you have been very

kind."

"And who is he, doctor? Won't it go to some of those Americans? I am

sure I never did anything kind to them; though, indeed, I did love

poor Mary Scatcherd. But that's years upon years ago, and she is dead

and gone now. Well, I begrudge nothing to Mary's children. As I have

none of my own, it is right they should have the money. It has not

made me happy; I hope it may do so to them."

"The property will, I think, go to Mary Scatcherd's eldest child. It

is she whom you have known as Mary Thorne."

"Doctor!" And then Lady Scatcherd, as she made the exclamation, put

both her hands down to hold her chair, as though she feared the

weight of her surprise would topple her off her seat.

"Yes; Mary Thorne--my Mary--to whom you have been so good, who loves

you so well; she, I believe, will be Sir Roger's heiress. And it was

so that Sir Roger intended on his deathbed, in the event of poor

Louis's life being cut short. If this be so, will you be ashamed to

stay here as the guest of Mary Thorne? She has not been ashamed to be

your guest."

But Lady Scatcherd was now too much interested in the general tenor

of the news which she had heard to care much about the house which

she was to inhabit in future. Mary Thorne, the heiress of Boxall

Hill! Mary Thorne, the still living child of that poor creature who

had so nearly died when they were all afflicted with their early

grief! Well; there was consolation, there was comfort in this. There

were but three people left in the world that she could love: her

foster-child, Frank Gresham--Mary Thorne, and the doctor. If the

money went to Mary, it would of course go to Frank, for she now knew

that they loved each other; and if it went to them, would not the

doctor have his share also; such share as he might want? Could she

have governed the matter, she would have given it all to Frank; and

now it would be as well bestowed.

Yes; there was consolation in this. They both sat up more than half

the night talking over it, and giving and receiving explanations. If

only the council of lawyers would not be adverse! That was now the

point of suspense.

The doctor, before he left her, bade her hold her peace, and say

nothing of Mary's fortune to any one till her rights had been

absolutely acknowledged. "It will be nothing not to have it," said

the doctor; "but it would be very bad to hear it was hers, and then

to lose it."

On the next morning, Dr Thorne deposited the remains of Sir Louis in

the vault prepared for the family in the parish church. He laid the

son where a few months ago he had laid the father,--and so the title

of Scatcherd became extinct. Their race of honour had not been long.

After the funeral, the doctor hurried up to London, and there we will

leave him.

CHAPTER XLIV

Saturday Evening and Sunday Morning

We must now go back a little and describe how Frank had been sent off

on special business to London. The household at Greshamsbury was at

this time in but a doleful state. It seemed to be pervaded, from the

squire down to the scullery-maid, with a feeling that things were

not going well; and men and women, in spite of Beatrice's coming

marriage, were grim-visaged, and dolorous. Mr Mortimer Gazebee,

rejected though he had been, still went and came, talking much to the

squire, much also to her ladyship, as to the ill-doings which were in

the course of projection by Sir Louis; and Frank went about the house

with clouded brow, as though finally resolved to neglect his one

great duty.

Poor Beatrice was robbed of half her joy: over and over again her

brother asked her whether she had yet seen Mary, and she was obliged

as often to answer that she had not. Indeed, she did not dare to

visit her friend, for it was hardly possible that they should

sympathise with each other. Mary was, to say the least, stubborn in

her pride; and Beatrice, though she could forgive her friend for

loving her brother, could not forgive the obstinacy with which Mary

persisted in a course which, as Beatrice thought, she herself knew to

be wrong.

And then Mr Gazebee came down from town, with an intimation that it

behoved the squire himself to go up that he might see certain learned

pundits, and be badgered in his own person at various dingy, dismal

chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Temple, and Gray's Inn Lane. It

was an invitation exactly of that sort which a good many years ago

was given to a certain duck.

"Will you, will you--will you, will you--come and be killed?"

Although Mr Gazebee urged the matter with such eloquence, the squire

remained steady to his objection, and swam obstinately about his

Greshamsbury pond in any direction save that which seemed to lead

towards London.

This occurred on the very evening of that Friday which had witnessed

the Lady Arabella's last visit to Dr Thorne's house. The question of

the squire's necessary journey to the great fountains of justice was,

of course, discussed between Lady Arabella and Mr Gazebee; and it

occurred to the former, full as she was of Frank's iniquity and of

Mary's obstinacy, that if Frank were sent up in lieu of his father,

it would separate them at least for a while. If she could only get

Frank away without seeing his love, she might yet so work upon him,

by means of the message which Mary had sent, as to postpone, if not

break off, this hateful match. It was inconceivable that a youth

of twenty-three, and such a youth as Frank, should be obstinately

constant to a girl possessed of no great beauty--so argued Lady

Arabella to herself--and who had neither wealth, birth, nor fashion

to recommend her.

And thus it was at last settled--the squire being a willing party

to the agreement--that Frank should go up and be badgered in lieu

of his father. At his age it was possible to make it appear a

thing desirable, if not necessary--on account of the importance

conveyed--to sit day after day in the chambers of Messrs Slow &

Bideawhile, and hear musty law talk, and finger dusty law parchments.

The squire had made many visits to Messrs Slow & Bideawhile, and he

knew better. Frank had not hitherto been there on his own bottom, and

thus he fell easily into the trap.

Mr Oriel was also going to London, and this was another reason for

sending Frank. Mr Oriel had business of great importance, which it

was quite necessary that he should execute before his marriage. How

much of this business consisted in going to his tailor, buying a

wedding-ring, and purchasing some other more costly present for

Beatrice, we need not here inquire. But Mr Oriel was quite on Lady

Arabella's side with reference to this mad engagement, and as Frank

and he were now fast friends, some good might be done in that way.

"If we all caution him against it, he can hardly withstand us all!"

said Lady Arabella to herself.

The matter was broached to Frank on the Saturday evening, and settled

between them all the same night. Nothing, of course, was at that

moment said about Mary; but Lady Arabella was too full of the subject

to let him go to London without telling him that Mary was ready to

recede if only he would allow her to do so. About eleven o'clock,

Frank was sitting in his own room, conning over the difficulties

of the situation--thinking of his father's troubles, and his own

position--when he was roused from his reverie by a slight tap at the

door.

"Come in," said he, somewhat loudly. He thought it was one of his

sisters, who were apt to visit him at all hours and for all manner

of reasons; and he, though he was usually gentle to them, was not at

present exactly in a humour to be disturbed.

The door gently opened, and he saw his mother standing hesitating in

the passage.

"Can I come in, Frank?" said she.

"Oh, yes, mother; by all means:" and then, with some surprise marked

in his countenance, he prepared a seat for her. Such a visit as this

from Lady Arabella was very unusual; so much so, that he had probably

not seen her in his own room since the day when he first left school.

He had nothing, however, to be ashamed of; nothing to conceal, unless

it were an open letter from Miss Dunstable which he had in his hand

when she entered, and which he somewhat hurriedly thrust into his

pocket.

"I wanted to say a few words to you, Frank, before you start for

London about this business." Frank signified by a gesture, that he

was quite ready to listen to her.

"I am so glad to see your father putting the matter into your hands.

You are younger than he is; and then--I don't know why, but somehow

your father has never been a good man of business--everything has

gone wrong with him."

"Oh, mother! do not say anything against him."

"No, Frank, I will not; I do not wish it. Things have been

unfortunate, certainly. Ah me! I little thought when I married--but I

don't mean to complain--I have excellent children, and I ought to be

thankful for that."

Frank began to fear that no good could be coming when his mother

spoke in that strain. "I will do the best I can," said he, "up in

town. I can't help thinking myself that Mr Gazebee might have done as

well, but--"

"Oh, dear no; by no means. In such cases the principal must show

himself. Besides, it is right you should know how matters stand. Who

is so much interested in it as you are? Poor Frank! I so often feel

for you when I think how the property has dwindled."

"Pray do not mind me, mother. Why should you talk of it as my matter

while my father is not yet forty-five? His life, so to speak, is as

good as mine. I can do very well without it; all I want is to be

allowed to settle to something."

"You mean a profession."

"Yes; something of that sort."

"They are so slow, dear Frank. You, who speak French so well--I

should think my brother might get you in as attachÃ© to some embassy."

"That wouldn't suit me at all," said Frank.

"Well, we'll talk about that some other time. But I came about

something else, and I do hope you will hear me."

Frank's brow again grew black, for he knew that his mother was about

to say something which it would be disagreeable for him to hear.

"I was with Mary, yesterday."

"Well, mother?"

"Don't be angry with me, Frank; you can't but know that the fate

of an only son must be a subject of anxiety to a mother." Ah! how

singularly altered was Lady Arabella's tone since first she had taken

upon herself to discuss the marriage prospects of her son! Then how

autocratic had she been as she sent him away, bidding him, with full

command, to throw himself into the golden embraces of Miss Dunstable!

But now, how humble, as she came suppliantly to his room, craving

that she might have leave to whisper into his ears a mother's anxious

fears! Frank had laughed at her stern behests, though he had half

obeyed them; but he was touched to the heart by her humility.

He drew his chair nearer to her, and took her by the hand. But she,

disengaging hers, parted the hair from off his forehead, and kissed

his brow. "Oh, Frank," she said, "I have been so proud of you, am

still so proud of you. It will send me to my grave if I see you sink

below your proper position. Not that it will be your fault. I am sure

it will not be your fault. Only circumstanced as you are, you should

be doubly, trebly, careful. If your father had not--"

"Do not speak against my father."

"No, Frank; I will not--no, I will not; not another word. And now,

Frank--"

Before we go on we must say one word further as to Lady Arabella's

character. It will probably be said that she was a consummate

hypocrite; but at the present moment she was not hypocritical. She

did love her son; was anxious--very, very anxious for him; was proud

of him, and almost admired the very obstinacy which so vexed her to

her inmost soul. No grief would be to her so great as that of seeing

him sink below what she conceived to be his position. She was as

genuinely motherly, in wishing that he should marry money, as another

woman might be in wishing to see her son a bishop; or as the Spartan

matron, who preferred that her offspring should return on his shield,

to hearing that he had come back whole in limb but tainted in honour.

When Frank spoke of a profession, she instantly thought of what Lord

de Courcy might do for him. If he would not marry money, he might, at

any rate, be an attachÃ© at an embassy. A profession--hard work, as

a doctor, or as an engineer--would, according to her ideas, degrade

him; cause him to sink below his proper position; but to dangle at

a foreign court, to make small talk at the evening parties of a

lady ambassadress, and occasionally, perhaps, to write demi-official

notes containing demi-official tittle-tattle; this would be in proper

accordance with the high honour of a Gresham of Greshamsbury.

We may not admire the direction taken by Lady Arabella's energy on

behalf of her son, but that energy was not hypocritical.

"And now, Frank--" She looked wistfully into his face as she

addressed him, as though half afraid to go on, and begging that he

would receive with complaisance whatever she found herself forced to

say.

"Well, mother?"

"I was with Mary, yesterday."

"Yes, yes; what then? I know what your feelings are with regard to

her."

"No, Frank; you wrong me. I have no feelings against her--none,

indeed; none but this: that she is not fit to be your wife."

"I think her fit."

"Ah, yes; but how fit? Think of your position, Frank, and what means

you have of keeping her. Think what you are. Your father's only son;

the heir to Greshamsbury. If Greshamsbury be ever again more than a

name, it is you that must redeem it. Of all men living you are the

least able to marry a girl like Mary Thorne."

"Mother, I will not sell myself for what you call my position."

"Who asks you? I do not ask you; nobody asks you. I do not want you

to marry any one. I did think once--but let that pass. You are now

twenty-three. In ten years' time you will still be a young man. I

only ask you to wait. If you marry now, that is, marry such a girl as

Mary Thorne--"

"Such a girl! Where shall I find such another?"

"I mean as regards money, Frank; you know I mean that; how are you to

live? Where are you to go? And then, her birth. Oh, Frank, Frank!"

"Birth! I hate such pretence. What was--but I won't talk about it.

Mother, I tell you my word is pledged, and on no account will I be

induced to break it."

"Ah, that's just it; that's just the point. Now, Frank, listen to me.

Pray listen to me patiently for one minute. I do not ask much of

you."

Frank promised that he would listen patiently; but he looked anything

but patient as he said so.

"I have seen Mary, as it was certainly my duty to do. You cannot be

angry with me for that."

"Who said that I was angry, mother?"

"Well, I have seen her, and I must own, that though she was not

disposed to be courteous to me, personally, she said much that marked

her excellent good sense. But the gist of it was this; that as she

had made you a promise, nothing should turn her from that promise but

your permission."

"And do you think--"

"Wait a moment, Frank, and listen to me. She confessed that this

marriage was one which would necessarily bring distress on all your

family; that it was one which would probably be ruinous to yourself;

that it was a match which could not be approved of: she did, indeed;

she confessed all that. 'I have nothing', she said--those were her

own words--'I have nothing to say in favour of this engagement,

except that he wishes it.' That is what she thinks of it herself.

'His wishes are not a reason; but a law,' she said--"

"And, mother, would you have me desert such a girl as that?"

"It is not deserting, Frank: it would not be deserting: you would be

doing that which she herself approves of. She feels the impropriety

of going on; but she cannot draw back because of her promise to you.

She thinks that she cannot do it, even though she wishes it."

"Wishes it! Oh, mother!"

"I do believe she does, because she has sense to feel the truth of

all that your friends say. Oh, Frank, I will go on my knees to you if

you will listen to me."

"Oh, mother! mother! mother!"

"You should think twice, Frank, before you refuse the only request

your mother ever made you. And why do I ask you? why do I come to you

thus? Is it for my own sake? Oh, my boy! my darling boy! will you

lose everything in life, because you love the child with whom you

have played as a child?"

"Whose fault is it that we were together as children? She is now more

than a child. I look on her already as my wife."

"But she is not your wife, Frank; and she knows that she ought not to

be. It is only because you hold her to it that she consents to be

so."

"Do you mean to say that she does not love me?"

Lady Arabella would probably have said this, also, had she dared;

but she felt, that in doing so, she would be going too far. It was

useless for her to say anything that would be utterly contradicted by

an appeal to Mary herself.

"No, Frank; I do not mean to say that you do not love her. What

I do mean is this: that it is not becoming in you to give up

everything--not only yourself, but all your family--for such a love

as this; and that she, Mary herself, acknowledges this. Every one is

of the same opinion. Ask your father: I need not say that he would

agree with you about everything if he could. I will not say the de

Courcys."

"Oh, the de Courcys!"

"Yes, they are my relations; I know that." Lady Arabella could not

quite drop the tone of bitterness which was natural to her in saying

this. "But ask your sisters; ask Mr Oriel, whom you esteem so much;

ask your friend Harry Baker."

Frank sat silent for a moment or two while his mother, with a look

almost of agony, gazed into his face. "I will ask no one," at last he

said.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!"

"No one but myself can know my own heart."

"And you will sacrifice all to such a love as that, all; her, also,

whom you say that you so love? What happiness can you give her as

your wife? Oh, Frank! is that the only answer you will make your

mother on her knees?

"Oh, mother! mother!"

"No, Frank, I will not let you ruin yourself; I will not let you

destroy yourself. Promise this, at least, that you will think of what

I have said."

"Think of it! I do think of it."

"Ah, but think of it in earnest. You will be absent now in London;

you will have the business of the estate to manage; you will have

heavy cares upon your hands. Think of it as a man, and not as a boy."

"I will see her to-morrow before I go."

"No, Frank, no; grant me that trifle, at any rate. Think upon this

without seeing her. Do not proclaim yourself so weak that you cannot

trust yourself to think over what your mother says to you without

asking her leave. Though you be in love, do not be childish with it.

What I have told you as coming from her is true, word for word; if it

were not, you would soon learn so. Think now of what I have said, and

of what she says, and when you come back from London, then you can

decide."

To so much Frank consented after some further parley; namely, that he

would proceed to London on the following Monday morning without again

seeing Mary. And in the meantime, she was waiting with sore heart for

his answer to that letter that was lying, and was still to lie for so

many hours, in the safe protection of the Silverbridge postmistress.

It may seem strange; but, in truth, his mother's eloquence had more

effect on Frank than that of his father: and yet, with his father he

had always sympathised. But his mother had been energetic; whereas,

his father, if not lukewarm, had, at any rate, been timid. "I will

ask no one," Frank had said in the strong determination of his heart;

and yet the words were hardly out of his mouth before he bethought

himself that he would talk the thing over with Harry Baker. "Not,"

said he to himself, "that I have any doubt; I have no doubt; but I

hate to have all the world against me. My mother wishes me to ask

Harry Baker. Harry is a good fellow, and I will ask him." And with

this resolve he betook himself to bed.

The following day was Sunday. After breakfast Frank went with the

family to church, as was usual; and there, as usual, he saw Mary in

Dr Thorne's pew. She, as she looked at him, could not but wonder why

he had not answered the letter which was still at Silverbridge; and

he endeavoured to read in her face whether it was true, as his mother

had told him, that she was quite ready to give him up. The prayers of

both of them were disturbed, as is so often the case with the prayers

of other anxious people.

There was a separate door opening from the Greshamsbury pew out into

the Greshamsbury grounds, so that the family were not forced into

unseemly community with the village multitude in going to and from

their prayers; for the front door of the church led out into a road

which had no connexion with the private path. It was not unusual with

Frank and his father to go round, after the service, to the chief

entrance, so that they might speak to their neighbours, and get rid

of some of the exclusiveness which was intended for them. On this

morning the squire did so; but Frank walked home with his mother and

sisters, so that Mary saw no more of him.

I have said that he walked home with his mother and his sisters;

but he rather followed in their path. He was not inclined to talk

much, at least, not to them; and he continued asking himself the

question--whether it could be possible that he was wrong in remaining

true to his promise? Could it be that he owed more to his father and

his mother, and what they chose to call his position, than he did to

Mary?

After church, Mr Gazebee tried to get hold of him, for there was much

still to be said, and many hints to be given, as to how Frank should

speak, and, more especially, as to how he should hold his tongue

among the learned pundits in and about Chancery Lane. "You must be

very wide awake with Messrs Slow & Bideawhile," said Mr Gazebee. But

Frank would not hearken to him just at that moment. He was going to

ride over to Harry Baker, so he put Mr Gazebee off till the half-hour

before dinner,--or else the half-hour after tea.

On the previous day he had received a letter from Miss Dunstable,

which he had hitherto read but once. His mother had interrupted him

as he was about to refer to it; and now, as his father's nag was

being saddled--he was still prudent in saving the black horse--he

again took it out.

Miss Dunstable had written in an excellent humour. She was in great

distress about the oil of Lebanon, she said. "I have been trying to

get a purchaser for the last two years; but my lawyer won't let me

sell it, because the would-be purchasers offer a thousand pounds or

so less than the value. I would give ten to be rid of the bore; but I

am as little able to act myself as Sancho was in his government. The

oil of Lebanon! Did you hear anything of it when you were in those

parts? I thought of changing the name to 'London particular;' but my

lawyer says the brewers would bring an action against me.

"I was going down to your neighbourhood--to your friend the duke's,

at least. But I am prevented by my poor doctor, who is so weak that

I must take him to Malvern. It is a great bore; but I have the

satisfaction that I do my duty by him!

"Your cousin George is to be married at last. So I hear, at least.

He loves wisely, if not well; for his widow has the name of being

prudent and fairly well to do in the world. She has got over the

caprices of her youth. Dear Aunt de Courcy will be so delighted. I

might perhaps have met her at Gatherum Castle. I do so regret it.

"Mr Moffat has turned up again. We all thought you had finally

extinguished him. He left a card the other day, and I have told the

servant always to say that I am at home, and that you are with me. He

is going to stand for some borough in the west of Ireland. He's used

to shillelaghs by this time.

"By the by, I have a \_cadeau\_ for a friend of yours. I won't tell you

what it is, nor permit you to communicate the fact. But when you tell

me that in sending it I may fairly congratulate her on having so

devoted a slave as you, it shall be sent.

"If you have nothing better to do at present, do come and see my

invalid at Malvern. Perhaps you might have a mind to treat for the

oil of Lebanon. I'll give you all the assistance I can in cheating my

lawyers."

There was not much about Mary in this; but still, the little that was

said made him again declare that neither father nor mother should

move him from his resolution. "I will write to her and say that she

may send her present when she pleases. Or I will run down to Malvern

for a day. It will do me good to see her." And so resolved, he rode

away to Mill Hill, thinking, as he went, how he would put the matter

to Harry Baker.

Harry was at home; but we need not describe the whole interview. Had

Frank been asked beforehand, he would have declared, that on no

possible subject could he have had the slightest hesitation in asking

Harry any question, or communicating to him any tidings. But when the

time came, he found that he did hesitate much. He did not want to ask

his friend if he should be wise to marry Mary Thorne. Wise or not, he

was determined to do that. But he wished to be quite sure that his

mother was wrong in saying that all the world would dissuade him from

it. Miss Dunstable, at any rate, did not do so.

At last, seated on a stile at the back of the Mill Hill stables,

while Harry stood close before him with both his hands in his

pockets, he did get his story told. It was by no means the first

time that Harry Baker had heard about Mary Thorne, and he was not,

therefore, so surprised as he might have been, had the affair

been new to him. And thus, standing there in the position we have

described, did Mr Baker, junior, give utterance to such wisdom as was

in him on this subject.

"You see, Frank, there are two sides to every question; and, as I

take it, fellows are so apt to go wrong because they are so fond of

one side, they won't look at the other. There's no doubt about it,

Lady Arabella is a very clever woman, and knows what's what; and

there's no doubt about this either, that you have a very ticklish

hand of cards to play."

"I'll play it straightforward; that's my game" said Frank.

"Well and good, my dear fellow. That's the best game always. But what

is straightforward? Between you and me, I fear there's no doubt that

your father's property has got into a deuce of a mess."

"I don't see that that has anything to do with it."

"Yes, but it has. If the estate was all right, and your father could

give you a thousand a year to live on without feeling it, and if your

eldest child would be cock-sure of Greshamsbury, it might be very

well that you should please yourself as to marrying at once. But

that's not the case; and yet Greshamsbury is too good a card to be

flung away."

"I could fling it away to-morrow," said Frank.

"Ah! you think so," said Harry the Wise. "But if you were to hear

to-morrow that Sir Louis Scatcherd were master of the whole place,

and be d---- to him, you would feel very uncomfortable." Had Harry

known how near Sir Louis was to his last struggle, he would not have

spoken of him in this manner. "That's all very fine talk, but it

won't bear wear and tear. You do care for Greshamsbury if you are the

fellow I take you to be: care for it very much; and you care too for

your father being Gresham of Greshamsbury."

"This won't affect my father at all."

"Ah, but it will affect him very much. If you were to marry Miss

Thorne to-morrow, there would at once be an end to any hope of your

saving the property."

"And do you mean to say I'm to be a liar to her for such reasons as

that? Why, Harry, I should be as bad as Moffat. Only it would be ten

times more cowardly, as she has no brother."

"I must differ from you there altogether; but mind, I don't mean to

say anything. Tell me that you have made up your mind to marry her,

and I'll stick to you through thick and thin. But if you ask my

advice, why, I must give it. It is quite a different affair to that

of Moffat's. He had lots of tin, everything he could want, and there

could be no reason why he should not marry,--except that he was a

snob, of whom your sister was well quit. But this is very different.

If I, as your friend, were to put it to Miss Thorne, what do you

think she would say herself?"

"She would say whatever she thought best for me."

"Exactly: because she is a trump. And I say the same. There can be no

doubt about it, Frank, my boy: such a marriage would be very foolish

for you both; very foolish. Nobody can admire Miss Thorne more than

I do; but you oughtn't to be a marrying man for the next ten years,

unless you get a fortune. If you tell her the truth, and if she's the

girl I take her to be, she'll not accuse you of being false. She'll

peak for a while; and so will you, old chap. But others have had to

do that before you. They have got over it, and so will you."

Such was the spoken wisdom of Harry Baker, and who can say that he

was wrong? Frank sat a while on his rustle seat, paring his nails

with his penknife, and then looking up, he thus thanked his friend:--

"I'm sure you mean well, Harry; and I'm much obliged to you. I dare

say you're right too. But, somehow, it doesn't come home to me. And

what is more, after what has passed, I could not tell her that I wish

to part from her. I could not do it. And besides, I have that sort of

feeling, that if I heard she was to marry any one else, I am sure I

should blow his brains out. Either his or my own."

"Well, Frank, you may count on me for anything, except the last

proposition:" and so they shook hands, and Frank rode back to

Greshamsbury.

CHAPTER XLV

Law Business in London

On the Monday morning at six o'clock, Mr Oriel and Frank started

together; but early as it was, Beatrice was up to give them a cup of

coffee, Mr Oriel having slept that night in the house. Whether Frank

would have received his coffee from his sister's fair hands had not

Mr Oriel been there, may be doubted. He, however, loudly asserted

that he should not have done so, when she laid claim to great merit

for rising in his behalf.

Mr Oriel had been specially instigated by Lady Arabella to use the

opportunity of their joint journey, for pointing out to Frank the

iniquity as well as madness of the course he was pursuing; and he had

promised to obey her ladyship's behests. But Mr Oriel was perhaps not

an enterprising man, and was certainly not a presumptuous one. He did

intend to do as he was bid; but when he began, with the object of

leading up to the subject of Frank's engagement, he always softened

down into some much easier enthusiasm in the matter of his own

engagement with Beatrice. He had not that perspicuous, but not

over-sensitive strength of mind which had enabled Harry Baker to

express his opinion out at once; and boldly as he did it, yet to do

so without offence.

Four times before the train arrived in London, he made some little

attempt; but four times he failed. As the subject was matrimony, it

was his easiest course to begin about himself; but he never could get

any further.

"No man was ever more fortunate in a wife than I shall be," he said,

with a soft, euphuistic self-complacency, which would have been silly

had it been adopted to any other person than the bride's brother. His

intention, however, was very good, for he meant to show, that in his

case marriage was prudent and wise, because his case differed so

widely from that of Frank.

"Yes," said Frank. "She is an excellent good girl:" he had said it

three times before, and was not very energetic.

"Yes, and so exactly suited to me; indeed, all that I could have

dreamed of. How very well she looked this morning! Some girls only

look well at night. I should not like that at all."

"You mustn't expect her to look like that always at six o'clock

a.m.," said Frank, laughing. "Young ladies only take that trouble on

very particular occasions. She wouldn't have come down like that if

my father or I had been going alone. No, and she won't do so for you

in a couple of years' time."

"Oh, but she's always nice. I have seen her at home as much almost as

you could do; and then she's so sincerely religious."

"Oh, yes, of course; that is, I am sure she is," said Frank, looking

solemn as became him.

"She's made to be a clergyman's wife."

"Well, so it seems," said Frank.

"A married life is, I'm sure, the happiest in the world--if people

are only in a position to marry," said Mr Oriel, gradually drawing

near to the accomplishment of his design.

"Yes; quite so. Do you know, Oriel, I never was so sleepy in my life.

What with all that fuss of Gazebee's, and one thing and another, I

could not get to bed till one o'clock; and then I couldn't sleep.

I'll take a snooze now, if you won't think it uncivil." And then,

putting his feet upon the opposite seat, he settled himself

comfortably to his rest. And so Mr Oriel's last attempt for lecturing

Frank in the railway-carriage faded away and was annihilated.

By twelve o'clock Frank was with Messrs Slow & Bideawhile. Mr

Bideawhile was engaged at the moment, but he found the managing

Chancery clerk to be a very chatty gentleman. Judging from what he

saw, he would have said that the work to be done at Messrs Slow &

Bideawhile's was not very heavy.

"A singular man that Sir Louis," said the Chancery clerk.

"Yes; very singular," said Frank.

"Excellent security, excellent; no better; and yet he will foreclose;

but you see he has no power himself. But the question is, can the

trustee refuse? Then, again, trustees are so circumscribed nowadays

that they are afraid to do anything. There has been so much said

lately, Mr Gresham, that a man doesn't know where he is, or what he

is doing. Nobody trusts anybody. There have been such terrible things

that we can't wonder at it. Only think of the case of those Hills!

How can any one expect that any one else will ever trust a lawyer

again after that? But that's Mr Bideawhile's bell. How can any one

expect it? He will see you now, I dare say, Mr Gresham."

So it turned out, and Frank was ushered into the presence of Mr

Bideawhile. He had got his lesson by heart, and was going to rush

into the middle of his subject; such a course, however, was not in

accordance with Mr Bideawhile's usual practice. Mr Bideawhile got up

from his large wooden-seated Windsor chair, and, with a soft smile,

in which, however, was mingled some slight dash of the attorney's

acuteness, put out his hand to his young client; not, indeed, as

though he were going to shake hands with him, but as though the hand

were some ripe fruit all but falling, which his visitor might take

and pluck if he thought proper. Frank took hold of the hand, which

returned him no pressure, and then let it go again, not making any

attempt to gather the fruit.

"I have come up to town, Mr Bideawhile, about this mortgage,"

commenced Frank.

"Mortgage--ah, sit down, Mr Gresham; sit down. I hope your father is

quite well?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"I have a great regard for your father. So I had for your

grandfather; a very good man indeed. You, perhaps, don't remember

him, Mr Gresham?"

"He died when I was only a year old."

"Oh, yes; no, you of course, can't remember him; but I do, well: he

used to be very fond of some port wine I had. I think it was '11;'

and if I don't mistake, I have a bottle or two of it yet; but it is

not worth drinking now. Port wine, you know, won't keep beyond a

certain time. That was very good wine. I don't exactly remember what

it stood me a dozen then; but such wine can't be had now. As for the

Madeira, you know there's an end of that. Do you drink Madeira, Mr

Gresham?"

"No," said Frank, "not very often."

"I'm sorry for that, for it's a fine wine; but then there's none

of it left, you know. I have a few dozen, I'm told they're growing

pumpkins where the vineyards were. I wonder what they do with all the

pumpkins they grow in Switzerland! You've been in Switzerland, Mr

Gresham?"

Frank said he had been in Switzerland.

"It's a beautiful country; my girls made me go there last year. They

said it would do me good; but then you know, they wanted to see it

themselves; ha! ha! ha! However, I believe I shall go again this

autumn. That is to Aix, or some of those places; just for three

weeks. I can't spare any more time, Mr Gresham. Do you like that

dining at the \_tables d'hÃ´te\_?"

"Pretty well, sometimes."

"One would get tired of it--eh! But they gave us capital dinners at

Zurich. I don't think much of their soup. But they had fish, and

about seven kinds of meats and poultry, and three or four puddings,

and things of that sort. Upon my word, I thought we did very well,

and so did my girls, too. You see a great many ladies travelling

now."

"Yes," said Frank; "a great many."

"Upon my word, I think they are right; that is, if they can afford

time. I can't afford time. I'm here every day till five, Mr Gresham;

then I go out and dine in Fleet Street, and then back to work till

nine."

"Dear me! that's very hard."

"Well, yes it is hard work. My boys don't like it; but I manage it

somehow. I get down to my little place in the country on Saturday. I

shall be most happy to see you there next Saturday."

Frank, thinking it would be outrageous on his part to take up much of

the time of the gentleman who was constrained to work so unreasonably

hard, began again to talk about his mortgages, and, in so doing, had

to mention the name of Mr Yates Umbleby.

"Ah, poor Umbleby!" said Mr Bideawhile; "what is he doing now? I am

quite sure your father was right, or he wouldn't have done it; but I

used to think that Umbleby was a decent sort of man enough. Not so

grand, you know, as your Gazebees and Gumptions--eh, Mr Gresham? They

do say young Gazebee is thinking of getting into Parliament. Let me

see: Umbleby married--who was it he married? That was the way your

father got hold of him; not your father, but your grandfather. I

used to know all about it. Well, I was sorry for Umbleby. He has got

something, I suppose--eh?"

Frank said that he believed Mr Yates Umbleby had something wherewith

to keep the wolf from the door.

"So you have got Gazebee down there now? Gumption, Gazebee & Gazebee:

very good people, I'm sure; only, perhaps, they have a little too

much on hand to do your father justice."

"But about Sir Louis, Mr Bideawhile."

"Well, about Sir Louis; a very bad sort of fellow, isn't he?

Drinks--eh? I knew his father a little. He was a rough diamond, too.

I was once down in Northamptonshire, about some railway business; let

me see; I almost forget whether I was with him, or against him. But I

know he made sixty thousand pounds by one hour's work; sixty thousand

pounds! And then he got so mad with drinking that we all thought--"

And so Mr Bideawhile went on for two hours, and Frank found no

opportunity of saying one word about the business which had brought

him up to town. What wonder that such a man as this should be obliged

to stay at his office every night till nine o'clock?

During these two hours, a clerk had come in three or four times,

whispering something to the lawyer, who, on the last of such

occasions, turned to Frank, saying, "Well, perhaps that will do for

to-day. If you'll manage to call to-morrow, say about two, I will

have the whole thing looked up; or, perhaps Wednesday or Thursday

would suit you better." Frank, declaring that the morrow would suit

him very well, took his departure, wondering much at the manner in

which business was done at the house of Messrs Slow & Bideawhile.

When he called the next day, the office seemed to be rather

disturbed, and he was shown quickly into Mr Bideawhile's room. "Have

you heard this?" said that gentleman, putting a telegram into his

hands. It contained tidings of the death of Sir Louis Scatcherd.

Frank immediately knew that these tidings must be of importance to

his father; but he had no idea how vitally they concerned his own

more immediate interests.

"Dr Thorne will be up in town on Thursday evening after the funeral,"

said the talkative clerk. "And nothing of course can be done till he

comes," said Mr Bideawhile. And so Frank, pondering on the mutability

of human affairs, again took his departure.

He could do nothing now but wait for Dr Thorne's arrival, and so

he amused himself in the interval by running down to Malvern, and

treating with Miss Dunstable in person for the oil of Lebanon. He

went down on the Wednesday, and thus, failed to receive, on the

Thursday morning, Mary's letter, which reached London on that day.

He returned, however, on the Friday, and then got it; and perhaps

it was well for Mary's happiness that he had seen Miss Dunstable in

the interval. "I don't care what your mother says," said she, with

emphasis. "I don't care for any Harry, whether it be Harry Baker, or

old Harry himself. You made her a promise, and you are bound to keep

it; if not on one day, then on another. What! because you cannot draw

back yourself, get out of it by inducing her to do so! Aunt de Courcy

herself could not improve upon that." Fortified in this manner, he

returned to town on the Friday morning, and then got Mary's letter.

Frank also got a note from Dr Thorne, stating that he had taken up

his temporary domicile at the Gray's Inn Coffee-house, so as to be

near the lawyers.

It has been suggested that the modern English writers of fiction

should among them keep a barrister, in order that they may be set

right on such legal points as will arise in their little narratives,

and thus avoid that exposure of their own ignorance of the laws,

which, now, alas! they too often make. The idea is worthy of

consideration, and I can only say, that if such an arrangement can be

made, and if a counsellor adequately skilful can be found to accept

the office, I shall be happy to subscribe my quota; it would be but a

modest tribute towards the cost.

But as the suggestion has not yet been carried out, and as there is

at present no learned gentleman whose duty would induce him to set

me right, I can only plead for mercy if I be wrong allotting all Sir

Roger's vast possessions in perpetuity to Miss Thorne, alleging also,

in excuse, that the course of my narrative absolutely demands that

she shall be ultimately recognised as Sir Roger's undoubted heiress.

Such, after a not immoderate delay, was the opinion expressed to Dr

Thorne by his law advisers; and such, in fact, turned out to be the

case. I will leave the matter so, hoping that my very absence of

defence may serve to protect me from severe attack. If under such

a will as that described as having been made by Sir Roger, Mary

would not have been the heiress, that will must have been described

wrongly.

But it was not quite at once that those tidings made themselves

absolutely certain to Dr Thorne's mind; nor was he able to express

any such opinion when he first met Frank in London. At that time

Mary's letter was in Frank's pocket; and Frank, though his real

business appertained much more to the fact of Sir Louis's death, and

the effect that would immediately have on his father's affairs, was

much more full of what so much more nearly concerned himself. "I will

show it Dr Thorne himself," said he, "and ask him what he thinks."

Dr Thorne was stretched fast asleep on the comfortless horse-hair

sofa in the dingy sitting-room at the Gray's Inn Coffee-house when

Frank found him. The funeral, and his journey to London, and the

lawyers had together conquered his energies, and he lay and snored,

with nose upright, while heavy London summer flies settled on his

head and face, and robbed his slumbers of half their charms.

"I beg your pardon," said he, jumping up as though he had been

detected in some disgraceful act. "Upon my word, Frank, I beg your

pardon; but--well, my dear fellow, all well at Greshamsbury--eh?" and

as he shook himself, he made a lunge at one uncommonly disagreeable

fly that had been at him for the last ten minutes. It is hardly

necessary to say that he missed his enemy.

"I should have been with you before, doctor, but I was down at

Malvern."

"At Malvern, eh? Ah! so Oriel told me. The death of poor Sir Louis

was very sudden--was it not?"

"Very."

"Poor fellow--poor fellow! His fate has for some time been past

hope. It is a madness, Frank; the worst of madness. Only think of

it--father and son! And such a career as the father had--such a

career as the son might have had!"

"It has been very quickly run," said Frank.

"May it be all forgiven him! I sometimes cannot but believe in a

special Providence. That poor fellow was not able, never would have

been able, to make proper use of the means which fortune had given

him. I hope they may fall into better hands. There is no use in

denying it, his death will be an immense relief to me, and a relief

also to your father. All this law business will now, of course, be

stopped. As for me, I hope I may never be a trustee again."

Frank had put his hand four or five times into his breast-pocket, and

had as often taken out and put back again Mary's letter before he

could find himself able to bring Dr Thorne to the subject. At last

there was a lull in the purely legal discussion, caused by the doctor

intimating that he supposed Frank would now soon return to

Greshamsbury.

"Yes; I shall go to-morrow morning."

"What! so soon as that? I counted on having you one day in London

with me."

"No, I shall go to-morrow. I'm not fit for company for any one. Nor

am I fit for anything. Read that, doctor. It's no use putting it off

any longer. I must get you to talk this over with me. Just read that,

and tell me what you think about it. It was written a week ago, when

I was there, but somehow I have only got it to-day." And putting the

letter into the doctor's hands, he turned away to the window, and

looked out among the Holborn omnibuses. Dr Thorne took the letter and

read it. Mary, after she had written it, had bewailed to herself that

the letter was cold; but it had not seemed cold to her lover, nor did

it appear so to her uncle. When Frank turned round from the window,

the doctor's handkerchief was up to his eyes; who, in order to hide

the tears that were there, was obliged to go through a rather violent

process of blowing his nose.

"Well," he said, as he gave back the letter to Frank.

Well! what did well mean? Was it well? or would it be well were he,

Frank, to comply with the suggestion made to him by Mary?

"It is impossible," he said, "that matters should go on like that.

Think what her sufferings must have been before she wrote that. I am

sure she loves me."

"I think she does," said the doctor.

"And it is out of the question that she should be sacrificed; nor

will I consent to sacrifice my own happiness. I am quite willing to

work for my bread, and I am sure that I am able. I will not submit

to-- Doctor, what answer do you think I ought to give to that

letter? There can be no person so anxious for her happiness as you

are--except myself." And as he asked the question, he again put into

the doctor's hand, almost unconsciously, the letter which he had

still been holding in his own.

The doctor turned it over and over, and then opened it again.

"What answer ought I to make to it?" demanded Frank, with energy.

"You see, Frank, I have never interfered in this matter, otherwise

than to tell you the whole truth about Mary's birth."

"Oh, but you must interfere: you should say what you think."

"Circumstanced as you are now--that is, just at the present

moment--you could hardly marry immediately."

"Why not let me take a farm? My father could, at any rate, manage a

couple of thousand pounds or so for me to stock it. That would not

be asking much. If he could not give it me, I would not scruple

to borrow so much elsewhere." And Frank bethought him of all Miss

Dunstable's offers.

"Oh, yes; that could be managed."

"Then why not marry immediately; say in six months or so? I am not

unreasonable; though, Heaven knows, I have been kept in suspense long

enough. As for her, I am sure she must be suffering frightfully. You

know her best, and, therefore, I ask you what answer I ought to make:

as for myself, I have made up my own mind; I am not a child, nor will

I let them treat me as such."

Frank, as he spoke, was walking rapidly about the room; and he

brought out his different positions, one after the other, with a

little pause, while waiting for the doctor's answer. The doctor was

sitting, with the letter still in his hands, on the head of the sofa,

turning over in his mind the apparent absurdity of Frank's desire to

borrow two thousand pounds for a farm, when, in all human

probability, he might in a few months be in possession of almost any

sum he should choose to name. And yet he would not tell him of Sir

Roger's will. "If it should turn out to be all wrong?" said he to

himself.

"Do you wish me to give her up?" said Frank, at last.

"No. How can I wish it? How can I expect a better match for her?

Besides, Frank, I love no man in the world so well as I do you."

"Then you will help me?"

"What! against your father?"

"Against! no, not against anybody. But will you tell Mary that she

has your consent?"

"I think she knows that."

"But you have never said anything to her."

"Look here, Frank; you ask me for my advice, and I will give it you:

go home; though, indeed, I would rather you went anywhere else."

"No, I must go home; and I must see her."

"Very well, go home: as for seeing Mary, I think you had better put

it off for a fortnight."

"Quite impossible."

"Well, that's my advice. But, at any rate, make up your mind to

nothing for a fortnight. Wait for one fortnight, and I then will tell

you plainly--you and her too--what I think you ought to do. At the

end of a fortnight come to me, and tell the squire that I will take

it as a great kindness if he will come with you. She has suffered,

terribly, terribly; and it is necessary that something should be

settled. But a fortnight more can make no great difference."

"And the letter?"

"Oh! there's the letter."

"But what shall I say? Of course I shall write to-night."

"Tell her to wait a fortnight. And, Frank, mind you bring your father

with you."

Frank could draw nothing further from his friend save constant

repetitions of this charge to him to wait a fortnight,--just one

other fortnight.

"Well, I will come to you at any rate," said Frank; "and, if

possible, I will bring my father. But I shall write to Mary

to-night."

On the Saturday morning, Mary, who was then nearly broken-hearted at

her lover's silence, received a short note:--

MY OWN MARY,

I shall be home to-morrow. I will by no means release you

from your promise. Of course you will perceive that I only

got your letter to-day.

Your own dearest,

FRANK.

P.S.--You will have to call me so hundreds and hundreds of

times yet.

Short as it was, this sufficed Mary. It is one thing for a young lady

to make prudent, heart-breaking suggestions, but quite another to

have them accepted. She did call him dearest Frank, even on that one

day, almost as often as he had desired her.

CHAPTER XLVI

Our Pet Fox Finds a Tail

Frank returned home, and his immediate business was of course with

his father, and with Mr Gazebee, who was still at Greshamsbury.

"But who is the heir?" asked Mr Gazebee, when Frank had explained

that the death of Sir Louis rendered unnecessary any immediate legal

steps.

"Upon my word I don't know," said Frank.

"You saw Dr Thorne," said the squire. "He must have known."

"I never thought of asking him," said Frank, naÃ¯vely.

Mr Gazebee looked rather solemn. "I wonder at that," said he; "for

everything now depends on the hands the property will go into. Let

me see; I think Sir Roger had a married sister. Was not that so, Mr

Gresham?" And then it occurred for the first time, both to the squire

and to his son, that Mary Thorne was the eldest child of this sister.

But it never occurred to either of them that Mary could be the

baronet's heir.

Dr Thorne came down for a couple of days before the fortnight was

over to see his patients, and then returned again to London. But

during this short visit he was utterly dumb on the subject of the

heir. He called at Greshamsbury to see Lady Arabella, and was even

questioned by the squire on the subject. But he obstinately refused

to say more than that nothing certain could be known for yet a few

days.

Immediately after his return, Frank saw Mary, and told her all that

had happened. "I cannot understand my uncle," said she, almost

trembling as she stood close to him in her own drawing-room. "He

usually hates mysteries, and yet now he is so mysterious. He told me,

Frank--that was after I had written that unfortunate letter--"

"Unfortunate, indeed! I wonder what you really thought of me when you

were writing it?"

"If you had heard what your mother said, you would not be surprised.

But, after that, uncle said--"

"Said what?"

"He seemed to think--I don't remember what it was he said. But he

said, he hoped that things might yet turn out well; and then I was

almost sorry that I had written the letter."

"Of course you were sorry, and so you ought to have been. To say that

you would never call me Frank again!"

"I didn't exactly say that."

"I have told him I will wait a fortnight, and so I will. After that,

I shall take the matter into my own hands."

It may be well supposed that Lady Arabella was not well pleased to

learn that Frank and Mary had been again together; and, in the agony

of her spirit, she did say some ill-natured things before Augusta,

who had now returned from Courcy Castle, as to the gross impropriety

of Mary's conduct. But to Frank she said nothing.

Nor was there much said between Frank and Beatrice. If everything

could really be settled at the end of that fortnight which was to

witness the disclosure of the doctor's mystery, there would still

be time to arrange that Mary should be at the wedding. "It shall be

settled then," he said to himself; "and if it be settled, my mother

will hardly venture to exclude my affianced bride from the house."

It was now the beginning of August, and it wanted yet a month to the

Oriel wedding.

But though he said nothing to his mother or to Beatrice, he did say

much to his father. In the first place, he showed him Mary's letter.

"If your heart be not made of stone it will be softened by that," he

said. Mr Gresham's heart was not of stone, and he did acknowledge

that the letter was a very sweet letter. But we know how the drop of

water hollows stone. It was not by the violence of his appeal that

Frank succeeded in obtaining from his father a sort of half-consent

that he would no longer oppose the match; but by the assiduity with

which the appeal was repeated. Frank, as we have said, had more

stubbornness of will than his father; and so, before the fortnight

was over, the squire had been talked over, and promised to attend at

the doctor's bidding.

"I suppose you had better take the Hazlehurst farm," said he to his

son, with a sigh. "It joins the park and the home-fields, and I will

give you up them also. God knows, I don't care about farming any

more--or about anything else either."

"Don't say that, father."

"Well, well! But, Frank, where will you live? The old house is big

enough for us all. But how would Mary get on with your mother?"

At the end of his fortnight, true to his time, the doctor returned to

the village. He was a bad correspondent; and though he had written

some short notes to Mary, he had said no word to her about his

business. It was late in the evening when he got home, and it was

understood by Frank and the squire that they were to be with him on

the following morning. Not a word had been said to Lady Arabella on

the subject.

It was late in the evening when he got home, and Mary waited for him

with a heart almost sick with expectation. As soon as the fly had

stopped at the little gate she heard his voice, and heard at once

that it was quick, joyful, and telling much of inward satisfaction.

He had a good-natured word for Janet, and called Thomas an old

blunder-head in a manner that made Bridget laugh outright.

"He'll have his nose put out of joint some day; won't he?" said the

doctor. Bridget blushed and laughed again, and made a sign to Thomas

that he had better look to his face.

Mary was in his arms before he was yet within the door. "My darling,"

said he, tenderly kissing her. "You are my own darling yet awhile."

"Of course I am. Am I not always to be so?"

"Well, well; let me have some tea, at any rate, for I'm in a fever of

thirst. They may call that tea at the Junction if they will; but if

China were sunk under the sea it would make no difference to them."

Dr Thorne always was in a fever of thirst when he got home from the

railway, and always made complaint as to the tea at the Junction.

Mary went about her usual work with almost more than her usual

alacrity, and so they were soon seated in the drawing-room together.

She soon found that his manner was more than ordinarily kind to her;

and there was moreover something about him which seemed to make him

sparkle with contentment, but he said no word about Frank, nor did he

make any allusion to the business which had taken him up to town.

"Have you got through all your work?" she said to him once.

"Yes, yes; I think all."

"And thoroughly?"

"Yes; thoroughly, I think. But I am very tired, and so are you too,

darling, with waiting for me."

"Oh, no, I am not," said she, as she went on continually filling his

cup; "but I am so happy to have you home again. You have been away so

much lately."

"Ah, yes; well I suppose I shall not go away any more now. It will be

somebody else's turn now."

"Uncle, I think you're going to take up writing mystery romances,

like Mrs Radcliffe's."

"Yes; and I'll begin to-morrow, certainly with-- But, Mary, I will

not say another word to-night. Give me a kiss, dearest, and I'll go."

Mary did kiss him, and he did go. But as she was still lingering in

the room, putting away a book, or a reel of thread, and then sitting

down to think what the morrow would bring forth, the doctor again

came into the room in his dressing-gown, and with the slippers on.

"What, not gone yet?" said he.

"No, not yet; I'm going now."

"You and I, Mary, have always affected a good deal of indifference as

to money, and all that sort of thing."

"I won't acknowledge that it has been an affectation at all," she

answered.

"Perhaps not; but we have often expressed it, have we not?"

"I suppose, uncle, you think that we are like the fox that lost his

tail, or rather some unfortunate fox that might be born without one."

"I wonder how we should either of us bear it if we found ourselves

suddenly rich. It would be a great temptation--a sore temptation. I

fear, Mary, that when poor people talk disdainfully of money, they

often are like your fox, born without a tail. If nature suddenly

should give that beast a tail, would he not be prouder of it than all

the other foxes in the wood?"

"Well, I suppose he would. That's the very meaning of the story. But

how moral you've become all of a sudden at twelve o'clock at night!

Instead of being Mrs Radcliffe, I shall think you're Mr Ãsop."

He took up the article which he had come to seek, and kissing her

again on the forehead, went away to his bed-room without further

speech. "What can he mean by all this about money?" said Mary to

herself. "It cannot be that by Sir Louis's death he will get any of

all this property;" and then she began to bethink herself whether,

after all, she would wish him to be a rich man. "If he were very

rich, he might do something to assist Frank; and then--"

There never was a fox yet without a tail who would not be delighted

to find himself suddenly possessed of that appendage. Never; let the

untailed fox have been ever so sincere in his advice to his friends!

We are all of us, the good and the bad, looking for tails--for one

tail, or for more than one; we do so too often by ways that are

mean enough: but perhaps there is no tail-seeker more mean, more

sneakingly mean than he who looks out to adorn his bare back with a

tail by marriage.

The doctor was up very early the next morning, long before Mary was

ready with her teacups. He was up, and in his own study behind the

shop, arranging dingy papers, pulling about tin boxes which he had

brought down with him from London, and piling on his writing-table

one set of documents in one place, and one in another. "I think I

understand it all," said he; "but yet I know I shall be bothered.

Well, I never will be anybody's trustee again. Let me see!" and then

he sat down, and with bewildered look recapitulated to himself sundry

heavy items. "What those shares are really worth I cannot understand,

and nobody seems able to tell one. They must make it out among

them as best they can. Let me see; that's Boxall Hill, and this is

Greshamsbury. I'll put a newspaper over Greshamsbury, or the squire

will know it!" and then, having made his arrangements, he went to his

breakfast.

I know I am wrong, my much and truly honoured critic, about these

title-deeds and documents. But when we've got that barrister in

hand, then if I go wrong after that, let the blame be on my own

shoulders--or on his.

The doctor ate his breakfast quickly; and did not talk much to his

niece. But what he did say was of a nature to make her feel strangely

happy. She could not analyse her own feelings, or give a reason for

her own confidence; but she certainly did feel, and even trust, that

something was going to happen after breakfast which would make her

more happy than she had been for many months.

"Janet," said he, looking at his watch, "if Mr Gresham and Mr

Frank call, show them into my study. What are you going to do with

yourself, my dear?"

"I don't know, uncle; you are so mysterious, and I am in such a

twitter, that I don't know what to do. Why is Mr Gresham coming

here--that is, the squire?"

"Because I have business with him about the Scatcherd property. You

know that he owed Sir Louis money. But don't go out, Mary. I want you

to be in the way if I should have to call for you. You can stay in

the drawing-room, can't you?"

"Oh, yes, uncle; or here."

"No, dearest; go into the drawing-room." Mary obediently did as she

was bid; and there she sat, for the next three hours, wondering,

wondering, wondering. During the greater part of that time, however,

she well knew that Mr Gresham, senior, and Mr Gresham, junior, were

both with her uncle, below.

At eleven o'clock the doctor's visitors came. He had expected them

somewhat earlier, and was beginning to become fidgety. He had so much

on his hands that he could not sit still for a moment till he had, at

any rate, commenced it. The expected footsteps were at last heard on

the gravel-path, and a moment or two afterwards Janet ushered the

father and son into the room.

The squire did not look very well. He was worn and sorrowful, and

rather pale. The death of his young creditor might be supposed to

have given him some relief from his more pressing cares, but the

necessity of yielding to Frank's wishes had almost more than balanced

this. When a man has daily to reflect that he is poorer than he was

the day before, he soon becomes worn and sorrowful.

But Frank was well; both in health and spirits. He also felt as Mary

did, that the day was to bring forth something which should end his

present troubles; and he could not but be happy to think that he

could now tell Dr Thorne that his father's consent to his marriage

had been given.

The doctor shook hands with them both, and then they sat down. They

were all rather constrained in their manner; and at first it seemed

that nothing but little speeches of compliment were to be made. At

last, the squire remarked that Frank had been talking to him about

Miss Thorne.

"About Mary?" said the doctor.

"Yes; about Mary," said the squire, correcting himself. It was quite

unnecessary that he should use so cold a name as the other, now that

he had agreed to the match.

"Well!" said Dr Thorne.

"I suppose it must be so, doctor. He has set his heart upon it, and

God knows, I have nothing to say against her--against her personally.

No one could say a word against her. She is a sweet, good girl,

excellently brought up; and, as for myself, I have always loved her."

Frank drew near to his father, and pressed his hand against the

squire's arm, by way of giving him, in some sort, a filial embrace

for his kindness.

"Thank you, squire, thank you," said the doctor. "It is very good of

you to say that. She is a good girl, and if Frank chooses to take

her, he will, in my estimation, have made a good choice."

"Chooses!" said Frank, with all the enthusiasm of a lover.

The squire felt himself perhaps a little ruffled at the way in which

the doctor received his gracious intimation; but he did now show it

as he went on. "They cannot, you know, doctor, look to be rich

people--"

"Ah! well, well," interrupted the doctor.

"I have told Frank so, and I think that you should tell Mary. Frank

means to take some land into his hand, and he must farm it as a

farmer. I will endeavour to give him three, or perhaps four hundred a

year. But you know better--"

"Stop, squire; stop a minute. We will talk about that presently. This

death of poor Sir Louis will make a difference."

"Not permanently," said the squire mournfully.

"And now, Frank," said the doctor, not attending to the squire's last

words, "what do you say?"

"What do I say? I say what I said to you in London the other day. I

believe Mary loves me; indeed, I won't be affected--I know she does.

I have loved her--I was going to say always; and, indeed, I almost

might say so. My father knows that this is no light fancy of mine. As

to what he says about our being poor, why--"

The doctor was very arbitrary, and would hear neither of them on this

subject.

"Mr Gresham," said he, interrupting Frank, "of course I am well aware

how very little suited Mary is by birth to marry your only son."

"It is too late to think about it now," said the squire.

"It is not too late for me to justify myself," replied the doctor.

"We have long known each other, Mr Gresham, and you said here the

other day, that this is a subject as to which we have been both of

one mind. Birth and blood are very valuable gifts."

"I certainly think so," said the squire; "but one can't have

everything."

"No; one can't have everything."

"If I am satisfied in that matter--" began Frank.

"Stop a moment, my dear boy," said the doctor. "As your father says,

one can't have everything. My dear friend--" and he gave his hand to

the squire--"do not be angry if I alluded for a moment to the estate.

It has grieved me to see it melting away--the old family acres that

have so long been the heritage of the Greshams."

"We need not talk about that now, Dr Thorne," said Frank, in an

almost angry tone.

"But I must, Frank, for one moment, to justify myself. I could not

have excused myself in letting Mary think that she could become your

wife if I had not hoped that good might come of it."

"Well; good will come of it," said Frank, who did not quite

understand at what the doctor was driving.

"I hope so. I have had much doubt about this, and have been sorely

perplexed; but now I do hope so. Frank--Mr Gresham--" and then Dr

Thorne rose from his chair; but was, for a moment, unable to go on

with his tale.

"We will hope that it is all for the best," said the squire.

"I am sure it is," said Frank.

"Yes; I hope it is. I do think it is; I am sure it is, Frank. Mary

will not come to you empty-handed. I wish for your sake--yes, and for

hers too--that her birth were equal to her fortune, as her worth is

superior to both. Mr Gresham, this marriage will, at any rate, put an

end to your pecuniary embarrassments--unless, indeed, Frank should

prove a hard creditor. My niece is Sir Roger Scatcherd's heir."

The doctor, as soon as he made the announcement, began to employ

himself sedulously about the papers on the table; which, in the

confusion caused by his own emotion, he transferred hither and

thither in such a manner as to upset all his previous arrangements.

"And now," he said, "I might as well explain, as well as I can, of

what that fortune consists. Here, this is--no--"

"But, Dr Thorne," said the squire, now perfectly pale, and almost

gasping for breath, "what is it you mean?"

"There's not a shadow of doubt," said the doctor. "I've had Sir

Abraham Haphazard, and Sir Rickety Giggs, and old Neversaye Die, and

Mr Snilam; and they are all of the same opinion. There is not the

smallest doubt about it. Of course, she must administer, and all

that; and I'm afraid there'll be a very heavy sum to pay for the tax;

for she cannot inherit as a niece, you know. Mr Snilam pointed that

out particularly. But, after all that, there'll be--I've got it down

on a piece of paper, somewhere--three grains of blue pill. I'm really

so bothered, squire, with all these papers, and all those lawyers,

that I don't know whether I'm sitting or standing. There's ready

money enough to pay all the tax and all the debts. I know that, at

any rate."

"You don't mean to say that Mary Thorne is now possessed of all Sir

Roger Scatcherd's wealth?" at last ejaculated the squire.

"But that's exactly what I do mean to say," said the doctor, looking

up from his papers with a tear in his eye, and a smile on his

mouth; "and what is more, squire, you owe her at the present moment

exactly--I've got that down too, somewhere, only I am so bothered

with all these papers. Come, squire, when do you mean to pay her?

She's in a great hurry, as young ladies are when they want to get

married."

The doctor was inclined to joke if possible, so as to carry off, as

it were, some of the great weight of obligation which it might seem

that he was throwing on the father and son; but the squire was by no

means in a state to understand a joke: hardly as yet in a state to

comprehend what was so very serious in this matter.

"Do you mean that Mary is the owner of Boxall Hill?" said he.

"Indeed, I do," said the doctor; and he was just going to add, "and

of Greshamsbury also," but he stopped himself.

"What, the whole property there?"

"That's only a small portion," said the doctor. "I almost wish it

were all, for then I should not be so bothered. Look here; these are

the Boxall Hill title-deeds; that's the simplest part of the whole

affair; and Frank may go and settle himself there to-morrow if he

pleases."

"Stop a moment, Dr Thorne," said Frank. These were the only words

which he had yet uttered since the tidings had been conveyed to him.

"And these, squire, are the Greshamsbury papers:" and the doctor,

with considerable ceremony, withdrew the covering newspapers. "Look

at them; there they all are once again. When I suggested to Mr Snilam

that I supposed they might now all go back to the Greshamsbury

muniment room, I thought he would have fainted. As I cannot return

them to you, you will have to wait till Frank shall give them up."

"But, Dr Thorne," said Frank.

"Well, my boy."

"Does Mary know all about this?"

"Not a word of it. I mean that you shall tell her."

"Perhaps, under such very altered circumstances--"

"Eh?"

"The change is so great and so sudden, so immense in its effects,

that Mary may perhaps wish--"

"Wish! wish what? Wish not to be told of it at all?"

"I shall not think of holding her to her engagement--that is, if--I

mean to say, she should have time at any rate for consideration."

"Oh, I understand," said the doctor. "She shall have time for

consideration. How much shall we give her, squire? three minutes? Go

up to her Frank: she is in the drawing-room."

Frank went to the door, and then hesitated, and returned. "I could

not do it," said he. "I don't think that I understand it all yet. I

am so bewildered that I could not tell her;" and he sat down at the

table, and began to sob with emotion.

"And she knows nothing of it?" said the squire.

"Not a word. I thought that I would keep the pleasure of telling her

for Frank."

"She should not be left in suspense," said the squire.

"Come, Frank, go up to her," again urged the doctor. "You've been

ready enough with your visits when you knew that you ought to stay

away."

"I cannot do it," said Frank, after a pause of some moments; "nor is

it right that I should. It would be taking advantage of her."

"Go to her yourself, doctor; it is you that should do it," said the

squire.

After some further slight delay, the doctor got up, and did go

upstairs. He, even, was half afraid of the task. "It must be done,"

he said to himself, as his heavy steps mounted the stairs. "But how

to tell it?"

When he entered, Mary was standing half-way up the room, as though

she had risen to meet him. Her face was troubled, and her eyes were

almost wild. The emotion, the hopes, the fears of that morning had

almost been too much for her. She had heard the murmuring of the

voices in the room below, and had known that one of them was that

of her lover. Whether that discussion was to be for her good or ill

she did not know; but she felt that further suspense would almost

kill her. "I could wait for years," she said to herself, "if I did

but know. If I lost him, I suppose I should bear it, if I did but

know."--Well; she was going to know.

Her uncle met her in the middle of the room. His face was serious,

though not sad; too serious to confirm her hopes at that moment of

doubt. "What is it, uncle?" she said, taking one of his hands between

both of her own. "What is it? Tell me." And as she looked up into his

face with her wild eyes, she almost frightened him.

"Mary," he said gravely, "you have heard much, I know, of Sir Roger

Scatcherd's great fortune."

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Now that poor Sir Louis is dead--"

"Well, uncle, well?"

"It has been left--"

"To Frank! to Mr Gresham, to the squire!" exclaimed Mary, who felt,

with an agony of doubt, that this sudden accession of immense wealth

might separate her still further from her lover.

"No, Mary, not to the Greshams; but to yourself."

"To me!" she cried, and putting both her hands to her forehead, she

seemed to be holding her temples together. "To me!"

"Yes, Mary; it is all your own now. To do as you like best with it

all--all. May God, in His mercy, enable you to bear the burden, and

lighten for you the temptation!"

She had so far moved as to find the nearest chair, and there she

was now seated, staring at her uncle with fixed eyes. "Uncle," she

said, "what does it mean?" Then he came, and sitting beside her, he

explained, as best he could, the story of her birth, and her kinship

with the Scatcherds. "And where is he, uncle?" she said. "Why does he

not come to me?"

"I wanted him to come, but her refused. They are both there now, the

father and son; shall I fetch them?"

"Fetch them! whom? The squire? No, uncle; but may we go to them?"

"Surely, Mary."

"But, uncle--"

"Yes, dearest."

"Is it true? are you sure? For his sake, you know; not for my own.

The squire, you know--Oh, uncle! I cannot go."

"They shall come to you."

"No--no. I have gone to him such hundreds of times; I will never

allow that he shall be sent to me. But, uncle, is it true?"

The doctor, as he went downstairs, muttered something about Sir

Abraham Haphazard, and Sir Rickety Giggs; but these great names were

much thrown away upon poor Mary. The doctor entered the room first,

and the heiress followed him with downcast eyes and timid steps. She

was at first afraid to advance, but when she did look up, and saw

Frank standing alone by the window, her lover restored her courage,

and rushing up to him, she threw herself into his arms. "Oh, Frank;

my own Frank! my own Frank! we shall never be separated now."

CHAPTER XLVII

How the Bride Was Received, and Who Were Asked to the Wedding

And thus after all did Frank perform his great duty; he did marry

money; or rather, as the wedding has not yet taken place, and is,

indeed, as yet hardly talked of, we should more properly say that

he had engaged himself to marry money. And then, such a quantity of

money! The Scatcherd wealth greatly exceeded the Dunstable wealth; so

that our hero may be looked on as having performed his duties in a

manner deserving the very highest commendation from all classes of

the de Courcy connexion.

And he received it. But that was nothing. That \_he\_ should be fÃªted

by the de Courcys and Greshams, now that he was about to do his duty

by his family in so exemplary a manner: that he should be patted on

the back, now that he no longer meditated that vile crime which had

been so abhorrent to his mother's soul; this was only natural; this

is hardly worthy of remark. But there was another to be fÃªted,

another person to be made a personage, another blessed human mortal

about to do her duty by the family of Gresham in a manner that

deserved, and should receive, Lady Arabella's warmest caresses.

Dear Mary! It was, indeed, not singular that she should be prepared

to act so well, seeing that in early youth she had had the advantage

of an education in the Greshamsbury nursery; but not on that account

was it the less fitting that her virtue should be acknowledged,

eulogised, nay, all but worshipped.

How the party at the doctor's got itself broken up, I am not prepared

to say. Frank, I know, stayed and dined there, and his poor mother,

who would not retire to rest till she had kissed him, and blessed

him, and thanked him for all he was doing for the family, was kept

waiting in her dressing-room till a very unreasonable hour of the

night.

It was the squire who brought the news up to the house. "Arabella,"

he said, in a low, but somewhat solemn voice, "you will be surprised

at the news I bring you. Mary Thorne is the heiress to all the

Scatcherd property!"

"Oh, heavens! Mr Gresham."

"Yes, indeed," continued the squire. "So it is; it is very, very--"

But Lady Arabella had fainted. She was a woman who generally had her

feelings and her emotions much under her own control; but what she

now heard was too much for her. When she came to her senses, the

first words that escaped her lips were, "Dear Mary!"

But the household had to sleep on the news before it could be fully

realised. The squire was not by nature a mercenary man. If I have at

all succeeded in putting his character before the reader, he will be

recognised as one not over attached to money for money's sake. But

things had gone so hard with him, the world had become so rough, so

ungracious, so full of thorns, the want of means had become an evil

so keenly felt in every hour, that it cannot be wondered at that his

dreams that night should be of a golden elysium. The wealth was not

coming to him. True. But his chief sorrow had been for his son. Now

that son would be his only creditor. It was as though mountains of

marble had been taken from off his bosom.

But Lady Arabella's dreams flew away at once into the seventh heaven.

Sordid as they certainly were, they were not absolutely selfish.

Frank would now certainly be the first commoner in Barsetshire; of

course he would represent the county; of course there would be the

house in town; it wouldn't be her house, but she was contented that

the grandeur should be that of her child. He would have heaven

knows what to spend per annum. And that it should come through Mary

Thorne! What a blessing she had allowed Mary to be brought into the

Greshamsbury nursery! Dear Mary!

"She will of course be one now," said Beatrice to her sister. With

her, at the present moment, "one" of course meant one of the bevy

that was to attend her at the altar. "Oh dear! how nice! I shan't

know what to say to her to-morrow. But I know one thing."

"What is that?" asked Augusta.

"She will be as mild and as meek as a little dove. If she and the

doctor had lost every shilling in the world, she would have been as

proud as an eagle." It must be acknowledged that Beatrice had had the

wit to read Mary's character aright.

But Augusta was not quite pleased with the whole affair. Not that

she begrudged her brother his luck, or Mary her happiness. But her

ideas of right and wrong--perhaps we should rather say Lady Amelia's

ideas--would not be fairly carried out.

"After all, Beatrice, this does not alter her birth. I know it is

useless saying anything to Frank."

"Why, you wouldn't break both their hearts now?"

"I don't want to break their hearts, certainly. But there are those

who put their dearest and warmest feelings under restraint rather

than deviate from what they know to be proper." Poor Augusta! she was

the stern professor of the order of this philosophy; the last in the

family who practised with unflinching courage its cruel behests; the

last, always excepting the Lady Amelia.

And how slept Frank that night? With him, at least, let us hope, nay,

let us say boldly, that his happiest thoughts were not of the wealth

which he was to acquire. But yet it would be something to restore

Boxall Hill to Greshamsbury; something to give back to his father

those rumpled vellum documents, since the departure of which the

squire had never had a happy day; nay, something to come forth again

to his friends as a gay, young country squire, instead of as a

farmer, clod-compelling for his bread. We would not have him thought

to be better than he was, nor would we wish him to make him of other

stuff than nature generally uses. His heart did exult at Mary's

wealth; but it leaped higher still when he thought of purer joys.

And what shall we say of Mary's dreams? With her, it was altogether

what she should give, not at all what she should get. Frank had loved

her so truly when she was so poor, such an utter castaway; Frank, who

had ever been the heir of Greshamsbury! Frank, who with his beauty,

and spirit, and his talents might have won the smiles of the richest,

the grandest, the noblest! What lady's heart would not have rejoiced

to be allowed to love her Frank? But he had been true to her through

everything. Ah! how often she thought of that hour, when suddenly

appearing before her, he had strained her to his breast, just as she

had resolved how best to bear the death-like chill of his supposed

estrangements! She was always thinking of that time. She fed her love

by recurring over and over to the altered feeling of that moment. Any

now she could pay him for his goodness. Pay him! No, that would be a

base word, a base thought. Her payment must be made, if God would so

grant it, in many, many years to come. But her store, such as it was,

should be emptied into his lap. It was soothing to her pride that she

would not hurt him by her love, that she would bring no injury to the

old house. "Dear, dear Frank" she murmured, as her waking dreams,

conquered at last by sleep, gave way to those of the fairy world.

But she thought not only of Frank; dreamed not only of him. What had

he not done for her, that uncle of hers, who had been more loving to

her than any father! How was he, too, to be paid? Paid, indeed! Love

can only be paid in its own coin: it knows of no other legal tender.

Well, if her home was to be Greshamsbury, at any rate she would not

be separated from him.

What the doctor dreamed of that, neither he or any one ever knew.

"Why, uncle, I think you've been asleep," said Mary to him that

evening as he moved for a moment uneasily on the sofa. He had been

asleep for the last three-quarters of an hour;--but Frank, his guest,

had felt no offence. "No, I've not been exactly asleep," said he;

"but I'm very tired. I wouldn't do it all again, Frank, to double the

money. You haven't got any more tea, have you, Mary?"

On the following morning, Beatrice was of course with her friend.

There was no awkwardness between them in meeting. Beatrice had loved

her when she was poor, and though they had not lately thought alike

on one very important subject, Mary was too gracious to impute that

to Beatrice as a crime.

"You will be one now, Mary; of course you will."

"If Lady Arabella will let me come."

"Oh, Mary; let you! Do you remember what you said once about coming,

and being near me? I have so often thought of it. And now, Mary, I

must tell you about Caleb;" and the young lady settled herself on the

sofa, so as to have a comfortable long talk. Beatrice had been quite

right. Mary was as meek with her, and as mild as a dove.

And then Patience Oriel came. "My fine, young, darling, magnificent,

overgrown heiress," said Patience, embracing her. "My breath deserted

me, and I was nearly stunned when I heard of it. How small we shall

all be, my dear! I am quite prepared to toady to you immensely; but

pray be a little gracious to me, for the sake of auld lang syne."

Mary gave a long, long kiss. "Yes, for auld lang syne, Patience; when

you took me away under your wing to Richmond." Patience also had

loved her when she was in her trouble, and that love, too, should

never be forgotten.

But the great difficulty was Lady Arabella's first meeting with her.

"I think I'll go down to her after breakfast," said her ladyship to

Beatrice, as the two were talking over the matter while the mother

was finishing her toilet.

"I am sure she will come up if you like it, mamma."

"She is entitled to every courtesy--as Frank's accepted bride, you

know," said Lady Arabella. "I would not for worlds fail in any

respect to her for his sake."

"He will be glad enough for her to come, I am sure," said Beatrice.

"I was talking with Caleb this morning, and he says--"

The matter was of importance, and Lady Arabella gave it her most

mature consideration. The manner of receiving into one's family an

heiress whose wealth is to cure all one's difficulties, disperse

all one's troubles, give a balm to all the wounds of misfortune,

must, under any circumstances, be worthy of much care. But when that

heiress has been already treated as Mary had been treated!

"I must see her, at any rate, before I go to Courcy." said Lady

Arabella.

"Are you going to Courcy, mamma?"

"Oh, certainly; yes, I must see my sister-in-law now. You don't seem

to realise the importance, my dear, of Frank's marriage. He will be

in a great hurry about it, and, indeed, I cannot blame him. I expect

that they will all come here."

"Who, mamma? the de Courcys?"

"Yes, of course. I shall be very much surprised if the earl does not

come now. And I must consult my sister-in-law as to asking the Duke

of Omnium."

Poor Mary!

"And I think it will perhaps be better," continued Lady Arabella,

"that we should have a larger party than we intended at your affair.

The countess, I'm sure, would come now. We couldn't put it off for

ten days; could we, dear?"

"Put it off ten days!"

"Yes; it would be convenient."

"I don't think Mr Oriel would like that at all, mamma. You know he

has made all his arrangements for his Sundays--"

Pshaw! The idea of the parson's Sundays being allowed to have any

bearing on such a matter as Frank's wedding would now become! Why,

they would have--how much? Between twelve and fourteen thousand a

year! Lady Arabella, who had made her calculations a dozen times

during the night, had never found it to be much less than the larger

sum. Mr Oriel's Sundays, indeed!

After much doubt, Lady Arabella acceded to her daughter's suggestion,

that Mary should be received at Greshamsbury instead of being called

on at the doctor's house. "If you think she won't mind the coming

up first," said her ladyship. "I certainly could receive her better

here. I should be more--more--more able, you know, to express what I

feel. We had better go into the big drawing-room to-day, Beatrice.

Will you remember to tell Mrs Richards?"

"Oh, certainly," was Mary's answer when Beatrice, with a voice a

little trembling, proposed to her to walk up to the house. "Certainly

I will, if Lady Arabella will receive me;--only one thing, Trichy."

"What's that, dearest?"

"Frank will think that I come after him."

"Never mind what he thinks. To tell you the truth, Mary, I often call

upon Patience for the sake of finding Caleb. That's all fair now, you

know."

Mary very quietly put on her straw bonnet, and said she was ready

to go up to the house. Beatrice was a little fluttered, and showed

it. Mary was, perhaps, a good deal fluttered, but she did not show

it. She had thought a good deal of her first interview with Lady

Arabella, of her first return to the house; but she had resolved

to carry herself as though the matter were easy to her. She would

not allow it to be seen that she felt that she brought with her to

Greshamsbury, comfort, ease, and renewed opulence.

So she put on her straw bonnet and walked up with Beatrice. Everybody

about the place had already heard the news. The old woman at the

lodge curtsied low to her; the gardener, who was mowing the lawn. The

butler, who opened the front door--he must have been watching Mary's

approach--had manifestly put on a clean white neckcloth for the

occasion.

"God bless you once more, Miss Thorne!" said the old man, in a

half-whisper. Mary was somewhat troubled, for everything seemed,

in a manner, to bow down before her. And why should not everything

bow down before her, seeing that she was in truth the owner of

Greshamsbury?

And then a servant in livery would open the big drawing-room door.

This rather upset both Mary and Beatrice. It became almost impossible

for Mary to enter the room just as she would have done two years ago;

but she got through the difficulty with much self-control.

"Mamma, here's Mary," said Beatrice.

Nor was Lady Arabella quite mistress of herself, although she had

studied minutely how to bear herself.

"Oh, Mary, my dear Mary; what can I say to you?" and then, with a

handkerchief to her eyes, she ran forward and hid her face on Miss

Thorne's shoulders. "What can I say--can you forgive me my anxiety

for my son?"

"How do you do, Lady Arabella?" said Mary.

"My daughter! my child! my Frank's own bride! Oh, Mary! oh, my child!

If I have seemed unkind to you, it has been through love to him."

"All these things are over now," said Mary. "Mr Gresham told me

yesterday that I should be received as Frank's future wife; and so,

you see, I have come." And then she slipped through Lady Arabella's

arms, and sat down, meekly down, on a chair. In five minutes she

had escaped with Beatrice into the school-room, and was kissing the

children, and turning over the new trousseau. They were, however,

soon interrupted, and there was, perhaps, some other kissing besides

that of the children.

"You have no business in here at all, Frank," said Beatrice. "Has he,

Mary?"

"None in the world, I should think."

"See what he has done to my poplin; I hope you won't have your things

treated so cruelly. He'll be careful enough about them."

"Is Oriel a good hand at packing up finery--eh, Beatrice?" asked

Frank.

"He is, at any rate, too well-behaved to spoil it." Thus Mary was

again made at home in the household of Greshamsbury.

Lady Arabella did not carry out her little plan of delaying the Oriel

wedding. Her idea had been to add some grandeur to it, in order to

make it a more fitting precursor of that other greater wedding which

was to follow so soon in its wake. But this, with the assistance of

the countess, she found herself able to do without interfering with

poor Mr Oriel's Sunday arrangements. The countess herself, with the

Ladies Alexandrina and Margaretta, now promised to come, even to this

first affair; and for the other, the whole de Courcy family would

turn out, count and countess, lords and ladies, Honourable Georges

and Honourable Johns. What honour, indeed, could be too great to show

to a bride who had fourteen thousand a year in her own right, or to a

cousin who had done his duty by securing such a bride to himself!

"If the duke be in the country, I am sure he will be happy to come,"

said the countess. "Of course, he will be talking to Frank about

politics. I suppose the squire won't expect Frank to belong to the

old school now."

"Frank, of course, will judge for himself, Rosina;--with his

position, you know!" And so things were settled at Courcy Castle.

And then Beatrice was wedded and carried off to the Lakes. Mary, as

she had promised, did stand near her; but not exactly in the gingham

frock of which she had once spoken. She wore on that occasion-- But

it will be too much, perhaps, to tell the reader what she wore as

Beatrice's bridesmaid, seeing that a couple of pages, at least, must

be devoted to her marriage-dress, and seeing, also, that we have only

a few pages to finish everything; the list of visitors, the marriage

settlements, the dress, and all included.

It was in vain that Mary endeavoured to repress Lady Arabella's

ardour for grand doings. After all, she was to be married from the

doctor's house, and not from Greshamsbury, and it was the doctor

who should have invited the guests; but, in this matter, he did not

choose to oppose her ladyship's spirit, and she had it all her own

way.

"What can I do?" said he to Mary. "I have been contradicting her in

everything for the last two years. The least we can do is to let her

have her own way now in a trifle like this."

But there was one point on which Mary would let nobody have his or

her own way; on which the way to be taken was very manifestly to be

her own. This was touching the marriage settlements. It must not be

supposed, that if Beatrice were married on a Tuesday, Mary could be

married on the Tuesday week following. Ladies with twelve thousand a

year cannot be disposed of in that way: and bridegrooms who do their

duty by marrying money often have to be kept waiting. It was spring,

the early spring, before Frank was made altogether a happy man.

But a word about the settlements. On this subject the doctor thought

he would have been driven mad. Messrs Slow & Bideawhile, as the

lawyers of the Greshamsbury family--it will be understood that Mr

Gazebee's law business was of quite a different nature, and his

work, as regarded Greshamsbury, was now nearly over--Messrs Slow &

Bideawhile declared that it would never do for them to undertake

alone to draw out the settlements. An heiress, such as Mary, must

have lawyers of her own; half a dozen at least, according to the

apparent opinion of Messrs Slow & Bideawhile. And so the doctor had

to go to other lawyers, and they had again to consult Sir Abraham,

and Mr Snilam on a dozen different heads.

If Frank became tenant in tail, in right of his wife, but under his

father, would he be able to grant leases for more than twenty-one

years? and, if so, to whom would the right of trover belong? As to

flotsam and jetsam--there was a little property, Mr Critic, on the

sea-shore--that was a matter that had to be left unsettled at the

last. Such points as these do take a long time to consider. All

this bewildered the doctor sadly, and Frank himself began to make

accusations that he was to be done out of his wife altogether.

But, as we have said, there was one point on which Mary would have

her own way. The lawyers might tie up as they would on her behalf all

the money, and shares, and mortgages which had belonged to the late

Sir Roger, with this exception, all that had ever appertained to

Greshamsbury should belong to Greshamsbury again; not in perspective,

not to her children, or to her children's children, but at once.

Frank should be lord of Boxall Hill in his own right; and as to those

other \_liens\_ on Greshamsbury, let Frank manage that with his father

as he might think fit. She would only trouble herself to see that he

was empowered to do as he did think fit.

"But," argued the ancient, respectable family attorney to the doctor,

"that amounts to two-thirds of the whole estate. Two-thirds, Dr

Thorne! It is preposterous; I should almost say impossible." And the

scanty hairs on the poor man's head almost stood on end as he thought

of the outrageous manner in which the heiress prepared to sacrifice

herself.

"It will all be the same in the end," said the doctor, trying to make

things smooth. "Of course, their joint object will be to put the

Greshamsbury property together again."

"But, my dear sir,"--and then, for twenty minutes, the lawyer

went on proving that it would by no means be the same thing; but,

nevertheless, Mary Thorne did have her own way.

In the course of the winter, Lady de Courcy tried very hard to induce

the heiress to visit Courcy Castle, and this request was so backed by

Lady Arabella, that the doctor said he thought she might as well go

there for three or four days. But here, again, Mary was obstinate.

"I don't see it at all," she said. "If you make a point of it,

or Frank, or Mr Gresham, I will go; but I can't see any possible

reason." The doctor, when so appealed to, would not absolutely say

that he made a point of it, and Mary was tolerably safe as regarded

Frank or the squire. If she went, Frank would be expected to go, and

Frank disliked Courcy Castle almost more than ever. His aunt was now

more than civil to him, and, when they were together, never ceased to

compliment him on the desirable way in which he had done his duty by

his family.

And soon after Christmas a visitor came to Mary, and stayed a

fortnight with her: one whom neither she nor the doctor had expected,

and of whom they had not much more than heard. This was the famous

Miss Dunstable. "Birds of a feather flock together," said Mrs

Rantaway--late Miss Gushing--when she heard of the visit. "The

railway man's niece--if you can call her a niece--and the quack's

daughter will do very well together, no doubt."

"At any rate, they can count their money-bags," said Mrs Umbleby.

And in fact, Mary and Miss Dunstable did get on very well together;

and Miss Dunstable made herself quite happy at Greshamsbury, although

some people--including Mrs Rantaway--contrived to spread a report,

that Dr Thorne, jealous of Mary's money, was going to marry her.

"I shall certainly come and see you turned off," said Miss Dunstable,

taking leave of her new friend. Miss Dunstable, it must be

acknowledged, was a little too fond of slang; but then, a lady with

her fortune, and of her age, may be fond of almost whatever she

pleases.

And so by degrees the winter wore away--very slowly to Frank, as he

declared often enough; and slowly, perhaps, to Mary also, though she

did not say so. The winter wore away, and the chill, bitter, windy,

early spring came round. The comic almanacs give us dreadful pictures

of January and February; but, in truth, the months which should be

made to look gloomy in England are March and April. Let no man boast

himself that he has got through the perils of winter till at least

the seventh of May.

It was early in April, however, that the great doings were to be done

at Greshamsbury. Not exactly on the first. It may be presumed, that

in spite of the practical, common-sense spirit of the age, very few

people do choose to have themselves united on that day. But some

day in the first week of that month was fixed for the ceremony, and

from the end of February all through March, Lady Arabella worked and

strove in a manner that entitled her to profound admiration.

It was at last settled that the breakfast should be held in the large

dining-room at Greshamsbury. There was a difficulty about it which

taxed Lady Arabella to the utmost, for, in making the proposition,

she could not but seem to be throwing some slight on the house in

which the heiress had lived. But when the affair was once opened to

Mary, it was astonishing how easy it became.

"Of course," said Mary, "all the rooms in our house would not hold

half the people you are talking about--if they must come."

Lady Arabella looked so beseechingly, nay, so piteously, that Mary

had not another word to say. It was evident that they must all come:

the de Courcys to the fifth generation; the Duke of Omnium himself,

and others in concatenation accordingly.

"But will your uncle be angry if we have the breakfast up here? He

has been so very handsome to Frank, that I wouldn't make him angry

for all the world."

"If you don't tell him anything about it, Lady Arabella, he'll think

that it is all done properly. He will never know, if he's not told,

that he ought to give the breakfast, and not you."

"Won't he, my dear?" And Lady Arabella looked her admiration for this

very talented suggestion. And so that matter was arranged. The doctor

never knew, till Mary told him some year or so afterwards, that he

had been remiss in any part of his duty.

And who was asked to the wedding? In the first place, we have said

that the Duke of Omnium was there. This was, in fact, the one

circumstance that made this wedding so superior to any other that

had ever taken place in that neighbourhood. The Duke of Omnium never

went anywhere; and yet he went to Mary's wedding! And Mary, when

the ceremony was over, absolutely found herself kissed by a duke.

"Dearest Mary!" exclaimed Lady Arabella, in her ecstasy of joy, when

she saw the honour that was done to her daughter-in-law.

"I hope we shall induce you to come to Gatherum Castle soon," said

the duke to Frank. "I shall be having a few friends there in the

autumn. Let me see; I declare, I have not seen you since you were

good enough to come to my collection. Ha! ha! ha! It wasn't bad fun,

was it?" Frank was not very cordial with his answer. He had not quite

reconciled himself to the difference of his position. When he was

treated as one of the "collection" at Gatherum Castle, he had not

married money.

It would be vain to enumerate all the de Courcys that were there.

There was the earl, looking very gracious, and talking to the

squire about the county. And there was Lord Porlock, looking very

ungracious, and not talking to anybody about anything. And there was

the countess, who for the last week past had done nothing but pat

Frank on the back whenever she could catch him. And there were the

Ladies Alexandrina, Margaretta, and Selina, smiling at everybody.

And the Honourable George, talking in whispers to Frank about his

widow--"Not such a catch as yours, you know; but something extremely

snug;--and have it all my own way, too, old fellow, or I shan't come

to the scratch." And the Honourable John prepared to toady Frank

about his string of hunters; and the Lady Amelia, by herself, not

quite contented with these democratic nuptials--"After all, she is so

absolutely nobody; absolutely, absolutely," she said confidentially

to Augusta, shaking her head. But before Lady Amelia had left

Greshamsbury, Augusta was quite at a loss to understand how there

could be need for so much conversation between her cousin and Mr

Mortimer Gazebee.

And there were many more de Courcys, whom to enumerate would be much

too long.

And the bishop of the diocese, and Mrs Proudie were there. A hint

had even been given, that his lordship would himself condescend to

perform the ceremony, if this should be wished; but that work had

already been anticipated by a very old friend of the Greshams.

Archdeacon Grantly, the rector of Plumstead Episcopi, had long since

undertaken this part of the business; and the knot was eventually

tied by the joint efforts of himself and Mr Oriel. Mrs Grantly came

with him, and so did Mrs Grantly's sister, the new dean's wife. The

dean himself was at the time unfortunately absent at Oxford.

And all the Bakers and the Jacksons were there. The last time they

had all met together under the squire's roof, was on the occasion of

Frank's coming of age. The present gala doings were carried on a very

different spirit. That had been a very poor affair, but this was

worthy of the best days of Greshamsbury.

Occasion also had been taken of this happy moment to make up, or

rather to get rid of the last shreds of the last feud that had so

long separated Dr Thorne from his own relatives. The Thornes of

Ullathorne had made many overtures in a covert way. But our doctor

had contrived to reject them. "They would not receive Mary as their

cousin," said he, "and I will go nowhere that she cannot go." But now

all this was altered. Mrs Gresham would certainly be received in any

house in the county. And thus, Mr Thorne of Ullathorne, an amiable,

popular old bachelor, came to the wedding; and so did his maiden

sister, Miss Monica Thorne, than whose no kinder heart glowed through

all Barsetshire.

"My dear," said she to Mary, kissing her, and offering her some

little tribute, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance; very. It

was not her fault," she added, speaking to herself. "And now that

she will be a Gresham, that need not be any longer be thought of."

Nevertheless, could Miss Thorne have spoken her inward thoughts out

loud, she would have declared, that Frank would have done better to

have borne his poverty than marry wealth without blood. But then,

there are but few so stanch as Miss Thorne; perhaps none in that

county--always excepting Lady Amelia.

And Miss Dunstable, also, was a bridesmaid. "Oh, no" said she, when

asked; "you should have them young and pretty." But she gave way when

she found that Mary did not flatter her by telling her that she was

either the one or the other. "The truth is," said Miss Dunstable, "I

have always been a little in love with your Frank, and so I shall do

it for his sake." There were but four: the other two were the Gresham

twins. Lady Arabella exerted herself greatly in framing hints to

induce Mary to ask some of the de Courcy ladies to do her so much

honour; but on this head Mary would please herself. "Rank," said she

to Beatrice, with a curl on her lip, "has its drawbacks--and must put

up with them."

And now I find that I have not one page--not half a page--for the

wedding-dress. But what matters? Will it not be all found written in

the columns of the \_Morning Post\_?

And thus Frank married money, and became a great man. Let us hope

that he will be a happy man. As the time of the story has been

brought down so near to the present era, it is not practicable for

the novelist to tell much of his future career. When I last heard

from Barsetshire, it seemed to be quite settled that he is to take

the place of one of the old members at the next election; and they

say, also, that there is no chance of any opposition. I have heard,

too, that there have been many very private consultations between him

and various gentlemen of the county, with reference to the hunt; and

the general feeling is said to be that the hounds should go to Boxall

Hill.

At Boxall Hill the young people established themselves on their

return from the Continent. And that reminds me that one word must be

said of Lady Scatcherd.

"You will always stay here with us," said Mary to her, caressing her

ladyship's rough hand, and looking kindly into that kind face.

But Lady Scatcherd would not consent to this. "I will come and see

you sometimes, and then I shall enjoy myself. Yes, I will come and

see you, and my own dear boy." The affair was ended by her taking Mrs

Opie Green's cottage, in order that she might be near the doctor; Mrs

Opie Green having married--somebody.

And of whom else must we say a word? Patience, also, of course, got

a husband--or will do so. Dear Patience! it would be a thousand

pities that so good a wife should be lost to the world. Whether Miss

Dunstable will ever be married, or Augusta Gresham, or Mr Moffat, or

any of the tribe of the de Courcys--except Lady Amelia--I cannot say.

They have all of them still their future before them. That Bridget

was married to Thomas--that I am able to assert; for I know that

Janet was much put out by their joint desertion.

Lady Arabella has not yet lost her admiration for Mary, and Mary,

in return, behaves admirably. Another event is expected, and her

ladyship is almost as anxious about that as she was about the

wedding. "A matter, you know, of such importance in the county!" she

whispered to Lady de Courcy.

Nothing can be more happy than the intercourse between the squire and

his son. What their exact arrangements are, we need not specially

inquire; but the demon of pecuniary embarrassment has lifted his

black wings from the demesne of Greshamsbury.

And now we have but one word left for the doctor. "If you don't

come and dine with me," said the squire to him, when they found

themselves both deserted, "mind I shall come and dine with you." And

on this principle they seem to act. Dr Thorne continues to extend

his practice, to the great disgust of Dr Fillgrave; and when Mary

suggested to him that he should retire, he almost boxed her ears. He

knows the way, however, to Boxall Hill as well as he ever did, and is

willing to acknowledge, that the tea there is almost as good as it

ever was at Greshamsbury.