FRAMLEY PARSONAGE

by

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CHAPTER I

"Omnes Omnia Bona Dicere"

When young Mark Robarts was leaving college, his father might well

declare that all men began to say all good things to him, and to

extol his fortune in that he had a son blessed with so excellent a

disposition. This father was a physician living at Exeter. He was a

gentleman possessed of no private means, but enjoying a lucrative

practice, which had enabled him to maintain and educate a family with

all the advantages which money can give in this country. Mark was

his eldest son and second child; and the first page or two of this

narrative must be consumed in giving a catalogue of the good things

which chance and conduct together had heaped upon this young man's

head.

His first step forward in life had arisen from his having been

sent, while still very young, as a private pupil to the house of a

clergyman, who was an old friend and intimate friend of his father's.

This clergyman had one other, and only one other, pupil--the young

Lord Lufton; and between the two boys, there had sprung up a close

alliance. While they were both so placed, Lady Lufton had visited

her son, and then invited young Robarts to pass his next holidays at

Framley Court. This visit was made; and it ended in Mark going back

to Exeter with a letter full of praise from the widowed peeress. She

had been delighted, she said, in having such a companion for her son,

and expressed a hope that the boys might remain together during the

course of their education. Dr. Robarts was a man who thought much of

the breath of peers and peeresses, and was by no means inclined to

throw away any advantage which might arise to his child from such a

friendship. When, therefore, the young lord was sent to Harrow, Mark

Robarts went there also.

That the lord and his friend often quarrelled, and occasionally

fought,--the fact even that for one period of three months they never

spoke to each other--by no means interfered with the doctor's hopes.

Mark again and again stayed a fortnight at Framley Court, and Lady

Lufton always wrote about him in the highest terms. And then the lads

went together to Oxford, and here Mark's good fortune followed him,

consisting rather in the highly respectable manner in which he lived,

than in any wonderful career of collegiate success. His family was

proud of him, and the doctor was always ready to talk of him to his

patients; not because he was a prize-man, and had gotten medals

and scholarships, but on account of the excellence of his general

conduct. He lived with the best set--he incurred no debts--he was

fond of society, but able to avoid low society--liked his glass of

wine, but was never known to be drunk; and above all things, was one

of the most popular men in the University. Then came the question of

a profession for this young Hyperion, and on this subject Dr. Robarts

was invited himself to go over to Framley Court to discuss the matter

with Lady Lufton. Dr. Robarts returned with a very strong conception

that the Church was the profession best suited to his son.

Lady Lufton had not sent for Dr. Robarts all the way from Exeter for

nothing. The living of Framley was in the gift of the Lufton family,

and the next presentation would be in Lady Lufton's hands, if it

should fall vacant before the young lord was twenty-five years of

ago, and in the young lord's hands if it should fall afterwards. But

the mother and the heir consented to give a joint promise to Dr.

Robarts. Now, as the present incumbent was over seventy, and as the

living was worth Â£900 a year, there could be no doubt as to the

eligibility of the clerical profession. And I must further say, that

the dowager and the doctor were justified in their choice by the

life and principles of the young man--as far as any father can be

justified in choosing such a profession for his son, and as far as

any lay impropriator can be justified in making such a promise. Had

Lady Lufton had a second son, that second son would probably have had

the living, and no one would have thought it wrong;--certainly not if

that second son had been such a one as Mark Robarts.

Lady Lufton herself was a woman who thought much on religious

matters, and would by no means have been disposed to place any one in

a living, merely because such a one had been her son's friend. Her

tendencies were High Church, and she was enabled to perceive that

those of young Mark Robarts ran in the same direction. She was very

desirous that her son should make an associate of his clergyman, and

by this step she would ensure, at any rate, that. She was anxious

that the parish vicar should be one with whom she could herself fully

co-operate, and was perhaps unconsciously wishful that he might in

some measure be subject to her influence. Should she appoint an elder

man, this might probably not be the case to the same extent; and

should her son have the gift, it might probably not be the case at

all. And, therefore, it was resolved that the living should be given

to young Robarts.

He took his degree--not with any brilliancy, but quite in the manner

that his father desired; he then travelled for eight or ten months

with Lord Lufton and a college don, and almost immediately after his

return home was ordained.

The living of Framley is in the diocese of Barchester; and, seeing

what were Mark's hopes with reference to that diocese, it was by no

means difficult to get him a curacy within it. But this curacy he was

not allowed long to fill. He had not been in it above a twelvemonth,

when poor old Dr. Stopford, the then vicar of Framley, was gathered

to his fathers, and the full fruition of his rich hopes fell upon his

shoulders.

But even yet more must be told of his good fortune before we can come

to the actual incidents of our story. Lady Lufton, who, as I have

said, thought much of clerical matters, did not carry her High Church

principles so far as to advocate celibacy for the clergy. On the

contrary, she had an idea that a man could not be a good parish

parson without a wife. So, having given to her favourite a position

in the world, and an income sufficient for a gentleman's wants, she

set herself to work to find him a partner in those blessings. And

here also, as in other matters, he fell in with the views of his

patroness--not, however, that they were declared to him in that

marked manner in which the affair of the living had been broached.

Lady Lufton was much too highly gifted with woman's craft for that.

She never told the young vicar that Miss Monsell accompanied her

ladyship's married daughter to Framley Court expressly that he, Mark,

might fall in love with her; but such was in truth the case.

Lady Lufton had but two children. The eldest, a daughter, had been

married some four or five years to Sir George Meredith, and this

Miss Monsell was a dear friend of hers. And now looms before me the

novelist's great difficulty. Miss Monsell--or, rather, Mrs. Mark

Robarts--must be described. As Miss Monsell, our tale will have

to take no prolonged note of her. And yet we will call her Fanny

Monsell, when we declare that she was one of the pleasantest

companions that could be brought near to a man, as the future partner

of his home, and owner of his heart. And if high principles without

asperity, female gentleness without weakness, a love of laughter

without malice, and a true loving heart, can qualify a woman to be a

parson's wife, then was Fanny Monsell qualified to fill that station.

In person she was somewhat larger than common. Her face would have

been beautiful but that her mouth was large. Her hair, which was

copious, was of a bright brown; her eyes also were brown, and, being

so, were the distinctive feature of her face, for brown eyes are not

common. They were liquid, large, and full either of tenderness or

of mirth. Mark Robarts still had his accustomed luck, when such a

girl as this was brought to Framley for his wooing. And he did woo

her--and won her. For Mark himself was a handsome fellow. At this

time the vicar was about twenty-five years of age, and the future

Mrs. Robarts was two or three years younger. Nor did she come quite

empty-handed to the vicarage. It cannot be said that Fanny Monsell

was an heiress, but she had been left with a provision of some few

thousand pounds. This was so settled, that the interest of his wife's

money paid the heavy insurance on his life which young Robarts

effected, and there was left to him, over and above, sufficient to

furnish his parsonage in the very best style of clerical comfort, and

to start him on the road of life rejoicing.

So much did Lady Lufton do for her protÃ©gÃ©, and it may well be

imagined that the Devonshire physician, sitting meditative over his

parlour fire, looking back, as men will look back on the upshot of

their life, was well contented with that upshot, as regarded his

eldest offshoot, the Rev. Mark Robarts, the vicar of Framley.

But little has as yet been said, personally, as to our hero himself,

and perhaps it may not be necessary to say much. Let us hope that by

degrees he may come forth upon the canvas, showing to the beholder

the nature of the man inwardly and outwardly. Here it may suffice

to say that he was no born heaven's cherub, neither was he a born

fallen devil's spirit. Such as his training made him, such he was.

He had large capabilities for good--and aptitudes also for evil,

quite enough: quite enough to make it needful that he should repel

temptation as temptation only can be repelled. Much had been done to

spoil him, but in the ordinary acceptation of the word he was not

spoiled. He had too much tact, too much common sense, to believe

himself to be the paragon which his mother thought him. Self-conceit

was not, perhaps, his greatest danger. Had he possessed more of it,

he might have been a less agreeable man, but his course before him

might on that account have been the safer. In person he was manly,

tall, and fair-haired, with a square forehead, denoting intelligence

rather than thought, with clear white hands, filbert nails, and a

power of dressing himself in such a manner that no one should ever

observe of him that his clothes were either good or bad, shabby or

smart.

Such was Mark Robarts when, at the age of twenty-five, or a little

more, he married Fanny Monsell. The marriage was celebrated in his

own church, for Miss Monsell had no home of her own, and had been

staying for the last three months at Framley Court. She was given

away by Sir George Meredith, and Lady Lufton herself saw that the

wedding was what it should be, with almost as much care as she had

bestowed on that of her own daughter. The deed of marrying, the

absolute tying of the knot, was performed by the Very Reverend the

Dean of Barchester, an esteemed friend of Lady Lufton's. And Mrs.

Arabin, the dean's wife, was of the party, though the distance from

Barchester to Framley is long, and the roads deep, and no railway

lends its assistance. And Lord Lufton was there of course; and people

protested that he would surely fall in love with one of the four

beautiful bridesmaids, of whom Blanche Robarts, the vicar's second

sister, was by common acknowledgement by far the most beautiful. And

there was there another and a younger sister of Mark's--who did not

officiate at the ceremony, though she was present--and of whom no

prediction was made, seeing that she was then only sixteen, but of

whom mention is made here, as it will come to pass that my readers

will know her hereafter. Her name was Lucy Robarts. And then the

vicar and his wife went off on their wedding tour, the old curate

taking care of the Framley souls the while. And in due time they

returned; and after a further interval, in due course a child was

born to them; and then another; and after that came the period at

which we will begin our story. But before doing so, may I not assert

that all men were right in saying all manner of good things to the

Devonshire physician, and in praising his luck in having such a son?

"You were up at the house to-day, I suppose?" said Mark to his wife,

as he sat stretching himself in an easy chair in the drawing-room,

before the fire, previously to his dressing for dinner. It was

a November evening, and he had been out all day, and on such

occasions the aptitude for delay in dressing is very powerful. A

strong-minded man goes direct from the hall door to his chamber

without encountering the temptation of the drawing-room fire.

"No; but Lady Lufton was down here."

"Full of arguments in favour of Sarah Thompson?"

"Exactly so, Mark."

"And what did you say about Sarah Thompson?"

"Very little as coming from myself: but I did hint that you thought,

or that I thought that you thought, that one of the regular trained

schoolmistresses would be better."

"But her ladyship did not agree?"

"Well, I won't exactly say that;--though I think that perhaps she did

not."

"I am sure she did not. When she has a point to carry, she is very

fond of carrying it."

"But then, Mark, her points are generally so good."

"But, you see, in this affair of the school she is thinking more of

her protÃ©gÃ©e than she does of the children."

"Tell her that, and I am sure she will give way." And then again they

were both silent. And the vicar having thoroughly warmed himself, as

far as this might be done by facing the fire, turned round and began

the operation \_Ã  tergo\_.

"Come, Mark, it is twenty minutes past six. Will you go and dress?"

"I'll tell you what, Fanny: she must have her way about Sarah

Thompson. You can see her to-morrow and tell her so."

"I am sure, Mark, I would not give way, if I thought it wrong. Nor

would she expect it."

"If I persist this time, I shall certainly have to yield the next;

and then the next may probably be more important."

"But if it's wrong, Mark?"

"I didn't say it was wrong. Besides, if it is wrong, wrong in some

infinitesimal degree, one must put up with it. Sarah Thompson is very

respectable; the only question is whether she can teach."

The young wife, though she did not say so, had some idea that her

husband was in error. It is true that one must put up with wrong,

with a great deal of wrong. But no one need put up with wrong that

he can remedy. Why should he, the vicar, consent to receive an

incompetent teacher for the parish children, when he was able to

procure one that was competent? In such a case--so thought Mrs.

Robarts to herself--she would have fought the matter out with Lady

Lufton. On the next morning, however, she did as she was bid, and

signified to the dowager that all objection to Sarah Thompson would

be withdrawn.

"Ah! I was sure he would agree with me," said her ladyship, "when

he learned what sort of person she is. I know I had only to

explain;"--and then she plumed her feathers, and was very gracious;

for to tell the truth, Lady Lufton did not like to be opposed in

things which concerned the parish nearly.

"And, Fanny," said Lady Lufton, in her kindest manner, "you are not

going anywhere on Saturday, are you?"

"No, I think not."

"Then you must come to us. Justinia is to be here, you know"--Lady

Meredith was named Justinia--"and you and Mr. Robarts had better stay

with us till Monday. He can have the little book-room all to himself

on Sunday. The Merediths go on Monday; and Justinia won't be happy

if you are not with her." It would be unjust to say that Lady Lufton

had determined not to invite the Robartses if she were not allowed

to have her own way about Sarah Thompson. But such would have been

the result. As it was, however, she was all kindness; and when Mrs.

Robarts made some little excuse, saying that she was afraid she must

return home in the evening, because of the children, Lady Lufton

declared that there was room enough at Framley Court for baby and

nurse, and so settled the matter in her own way, with a couple of

nods and three taps of her umbrella. This was on a Tuesday morning,

and on the same evening, before dinner, the vicar again seated

himself in the same chair before the drawing-room fire, as soon as he

had seen his horse led into the stable.

"Mark," said his wife, "the Merediths are to be at Framley on

Saturday and Sunday; and I have promised that we will go up and stay

over till Monday."

"You don't mean it! Goodness gracious, how provoking!"

"Why? I thought you wouldn't mind it. And Justinia would think it

unkind if I were not there."

"You can go, my dear, and of course will go. But as for me, it is

impossible."

"But why, love?"

"Why? Just now, at the school-house, I answered a letter that was

brought to me from Chaldicotes. Sowerby insists on my going over

there for a week or so; and I have said that I would."

"Go to Chaldicotes for a week, Mark?"

"I believe I have even consented to ten days."

"And be away two Sundays?"

"No, Fanny, only one. Don't be so censorious."

"Don't call me censorious, Mark; you know I am not so. But I am so

sorry. It is just what Lady Lufton won't like. Besides, you were away

in Scotland two Sundays last month."

"In September, Fanny. And that is being censorious."

"Oh, but, Mark, dear Mark; don't say so. You know I don't mean it.

But Lady Lufton does not like those Chaldicotes people. You know Lord

Lufton was with you the last time you were there; and how annoyed she

was!"

"Lord Lufton won't be with me now, for he is still in Scotland. And

the reason why I am going is this: Harold Smith and his wife will be

there, and I am very anxious to know more of them. I have no doubt

that Harold Smith will be in the government some day, and I cannot

afford to neglect such a man's acquaintance."

"But, Mark, what do you want of any government?"

"Well, Fanny, of course I am bound to say that I want nothing;

neither in one sense do I; but, nevertheless, I shall go and meet the

Harold Smiths."

"Could you not be back before Sunday?"

"I have promised to preach at Chaldicotes. Harold Smith is going to

lecture at Barchester, about the Australasian archipelago, and I am

to preach a charity sermon on the same subject. They want to send out

more missionaries."

"A charity sermon at Chaldicotes!"

"And why not? The house will be quite full, you know; and I dare say

the Arabins will be there."

"I think not; Mrs. Arabin may get on with Mrs. Harold Smith, though

I doubt that; but I'm sure she's not fond of Mrs. Smith's brother. I

don't think she would stay at Chaldicotes."

"And the bishop will probably be there for a day or two."

"That is much more likely, Mark. If the pleasure of meeting Mrs.

Proudie is taking you to Chaldicotes, I have not a word more to say."

"I am not a bit more fond of Mrs. Proudie than you are, Fanny," said

the vicar, with something like vexation in the tone of his voice,

for he thought that his wife was hard upon him. "But it is generally

thought that a parish clergyman does well to meet his bishop now and

then. And as I was invited there, especially to preach while all

these people are staying at the place, I could not well refuse."

And then he got up, and taking his candlestick, escaped to his

dressing-room.

"But what am I to say to Lady Lufton?" his wife said to him, in the

course of the evening.

"Just write her a note, and tell her that you find I had promised to

preach at Chaldicotes next Sunday. You'll go of course?"

"Yes: but I know she'll be annoyed. You were away the last time she

had people there."

"It can't be helped. She must put it down against Sarah Thompson. She

ought not to expect to win always."

"I should not have minded it, if she had lost, as you call it, about

Sarah Thompson. That was a case in which you ought to have had your

own way."

"And this other is a case in which I shall have it. It's a pity that

there should be such a difference; isn't it?"

Then the wife perceived that, vexed as she was, it would be better

that she should say nothing further; and before she went to bed, she

wrote the note to Lady Lufton, as her husband recommended.

CHAPTER II

The Framley Set, and the Chaldicotes Set

It will be necessary that I should say a word or two of some of the

people named in the few preceding pages, and also of the localities

in which they lived. Of Lady Lufton herself enough, perhaps, has been

written to introduce her to my readers. The Framley property belonged

to her son; but as Lufton Park--an ancient ramshackle place in

another county--had heretofore been the family residence of the

Lufton family, Framley Court had been apportioned to her for her

residence for life. Lord Lufton himself was still unmarried; and as

he had no establishment at Lufton Park--which indeed had not been

inhabited since his grandfather died--he lived with his mother when

it suited him to live anywhere in that neighbourhood. The widow

would fain have seen more of him than he allowed her to do. He had a

shooting lodge in Scotland, and apartments in London, and a string of

horses in Leicestershire--much to the disgust of the county gentry

around him, who held that their own hunting was as good as any that

England could afford. His lordship, however, paid his subscription

to the East Barsetshire pack, and then thought himself at liberty to

follow his own pleasure as to his own amusement.

Framley itself was a pleasant country place, having about it nothing

of seignorial dignity or grandeur, but possessing everything

necessary for the comfort of country life. The house was a low

building of two stories, built at different periods, and devoid of

all pretensions to any style of architecture; but the rooms, though

not lofty, were warm and comfortable, and the gardens were trim and

neat beyond all others in the county. Indeed, it was for its gardens

only that Framley Court was celebrated. Village there was none,

properly speaking. The high road went winding about through the

Framley paddocks, shrubberies, and wood-skirted home fields, for a

mile and a half, not two hundred yards of which ran in a straight

line; and there was a cross-road which passed down through the

domain, whereby there came to be a locality called Framley Cross.

Here stood the "Lufton Arms," and here, at Framley Cross, the hounds

occasionally would meet; for the Framley woods were drawn in spite

of the young lord's truant disposition; and then, at the Cross also,

lived the shoemaker, who kept the post-office.

Framley church was distant from this just a quarter of a mile, and

stood immediately opposite to the chief entrance to Framley Court. It

was but a mean, ugly building, having been erected about a hundred

years since, when all churches then built were made to be mean and

ugly; nor was it large enough for the congregation, some of whom were

thus driven to the dissenting chapels, the Sions and Ebenezers, which

had got themselves established on each side of the parish, in putting

down which Lady Lufton thought that her pet parson was hardly as

energetic as he might be. It was, therefore, a matter near to Lady

Lufton's heart to see a new church built, and she was urgent in her

eloquence both with her son and with the vicar, to have this good

work commenced.

Beyond the church, but close to it, were the boys' school and girls'

school, two distinct buildings, which owed their erection to Lady

Lufton's energy; then came a neat little grocer's shop, the neat

grocer being the clerk and sexton, and the neat grocer's wife the

pew-opener in the church. Podgens was their name, and they were great

favourites with her ladyship, both having been servants up at the

house. And here the road took a sudden turn to the left, turning, as

it were, away from Framley Court; and just beyond the turn was the

vicarage, so that there was a little garden path running from the

back of the vicarage grounds into the churchyard, cutting the Podgens

off into an isolated corner of their own;--from whence, to tell

the truth, the vicar would have been glad to banish them and their

cabbages, could he have had the power to do so. For has not the small

vineyard of Naboth been always an eyesore to neighbouring potentates?

The potentate in this case had as little excuse as Ahab, for nothing

in the parsonage way could be more perfect than his parsonage. It had

all the details requisite for the house of a moderate gentleman with

moderate means, and none of those expensive superfluities which

immoderate gentlemen demand, or which themselves demand immoderate

means. And then the gardens and paddocks were exactly suited to it;

and everything was in good order;--not exactly new, so as to be raw

and uncovered, and redolent of workmen; but just at that era of their

existence in which newness gives way to comfortable homeliness.

Other village at Framley there was none. At the back of the Court, up

one of those cross-roads, there was another small shop or two, and

there was a very neat cottage residence, in which lived the widow

of a former curate, another protÃ©gÃ© of Lady Lufton's; and there was

a big, staring, brick house, in which the present curate lived;

but this was a full mile distant from the church, and farther from

Framley Court, standing on that cross-road which runs from Framley

Cross in a direction away from the mansion. This gentleman, the

Rev. Evan Jones, might, from his age, have been the vicar's father;

but he had been for many years curate of Framley; and though he

was personally disliked by Lady Lufton, as being Low Church in his

principles, and unsightly in his appearance, nevertheless, she would

not urge his removal He had two or three pupils in that large brick

house, and, if turned out from these and from his curacy, might find

it difficult to establish himself elsewhere. On this account mercy

was extended to the Rev. E. Jones, and, in spite of his red face and

awkward big feet, he was invited to dine at Framley Court, with his

plain daughter, once in every three months.

Over and above these, there was hardly a house in the parish of

Framley, outside the bounds of Framley Court, except those of farmers

and farm labourers; and yet the parish was of large extent.

Framley is in the eastern division of the county of Barsetshire,

which, as all the world knows, is, politically speaking, as true

blue a county as any in England. There have been backslidings even

here, it is true; but then, in what county have there not been such

backslidings? Where, in these pinchbeck days, can we hope to find

the old agricultural virtue in all its purity? But, among those

backsliders, I regret to say, that men now reckon Lord Lufton. Not

that he is a violent Whig, or perhaps that he is a Whig at all.

But he jeers and sneers at the old county doings; declares, when

solicited on the subject, that, as far as he is concerned, Mr. Bright

may sit for the county, if he pleases; and alleges, that being

unfortunately a peer, he has no right even to interest himself in the

question. All this is deeply regretted, for, in the old days, there

was no portion of the county more decidedly true blue than that

Framley district; and, indeed, up to the present day, the dowager is

able to give an occasional helping hand.

Chaldicotes is the seat of Nathaniel Sowerby, Esq., who, at the

moment supposed to be now present, is one of the members for the

Western Division of Barsetshire. But this Western Division can boast

none of the fine political attributes which grace its twin brother.

It is decidedly Whig, and is almost governed in its politics by one

or two great Whig families. It has been said that Mark Robarts was

about to pay a visit to Chaldicotes, and it has been hinted that his

wife would have been as well pleased had this not been the case. Such

was certainly the fact; for she, dear, prudent, excellent wife as she

was, knew that Mr. Sowerby was not the most eligible friend in the

world for a young clergyman, and knew, also, that there was but one

other house in the whole county the name of which was so distasteful

to Lady Lufton. The reasons for this were, I may say, manifold. In

the first place, Mr. Sowerby was a Whig, and was seated in Parliament

mainly by the interest of that great Whig autocrat the Duke of

Omnium, whose residence was more dangerous even than that of Mr.

Sowerby, and whom Lady Lufton regarded as an impersonation of Lucifer

upon earth. Mr. Sowerby, too, was unmarried--as indeed, also, was

Lord Lufton, much to his mother's grief. Mr. Sowerby, it is true,

was fifty, whereas the young lord was as yet only twenty-six, but,

nevertheless, her ladyship was becoming anxious on the subject. In

her mind every man was bound to marry as soon as he could maintain a

wife; and she held an idea--a quite private tenet, of which she was

herself but imperfectly conscious--that men in general were inclined

to neglect this duty for their own selfish gratifications, that the

wicked ones encouraged the more innocent in this neglect, and that

many would not marry at all, were not an unseen coercion exercised

against them by the other sex. The Duke of Omnium was the very head

of all such sinners, and Lady Lufton greatly feared that her son

might be made subject to the baneful Omnium influence, by means of

Mr. Sowerby and Chaldicotes. And then Mr. Sowerby was known to be a

very poor man, with a very large estate. He had wasted, men said,

much on electioneering, and more in gambling. A considerable portion

of his property had already gone into the hands of the duke, who, as

a rule, bought up everything around him that was to be purchased.

Indeed it was said of him by his enemies, that so covetous was he

of Barsetshire property, that he would lead a young neighbour on to

his ruin, in order that he might get his land. What--oh! what if he

should come to be possessed in this way of any of the fair acres of

Framley Court? What if he should become possessed of them all? It can

hardly be wondered at that Lady Lufton should not like Chaldicotes.

The Chaldicotes set, as Lady Lufton called them, were in every way

opposed to what a set should be according to her ideas. She liked

cheerful, quiet, well-to-do people, who loved their Church, their

country, and their Queen, and who were not too anxious to make a

noise in the world. She desired that all the farmers round her should

be able to pay their rents without trouble, that all the old women

should have warm flannel petticoats, that the working men should

be saved from rheumatism by healthy food and dry houses, that they

should all be obedient to their pastors and masters--temporal as well

as spiritual. That was her idea of loving her country. She desired

also that the copses should be full of pheasants, the stubble-field

of partridges, and the gorse covers of foxes; in that way, also, she

loved her country. She had ardently longed, during that Crimean War,

that the Russians might be beaten--but not by the French, to the

exclusion of the English, as had seemed to her to be too much the

case; and hardly by the English under the dictatorship of Lord

Palmerston. Indeed, she had had but little faith in that war after

Lord Aberdeen had been expelled. If, indeed, Lord Derby could have

come in! But now as to this Chaldicotes set. After all, there was

nothing so very dangerous about them; for it was in London, not

in the country, that Mr. Sowerby indulged, if he did indulge, his

bachelor mal-practices. Speaking of them as a set, the chief offender

was Mr. Harold Smith, or perhaps his wife. He also was a member of

Parliament, and, as many thought, a rising man. His father had been

for many years a debater in the House, and had held high office.

Harold, in early life, had intended himself for the Cabinet; and if

working hard at his trade could ensure success, he ought to obtain

it sooner or later. He had already filled more than one subordinate

station, had been at the Treasury, and for a month or two at the

Admiralty, astonishing official mankind by his diligence. Those

last-named few months had been under Lord Aberdeen, with whom he

had been forced to retire. He was a younger son, and not possessed

of any large fortune. Politics, as a profession, was, therefore,

of importance to him. He had in early life married a sister of Mr.

Sowerby; and as the lady was some six or seven years older than

himself, and had brought with her but a scanty dowry, people thought

that in this matter Mr. Harold Smith had not been perspicacious.

Mr. Harold Smith was not personally a popular man with any party,

though some judged him to be eminently useful. He was laborious,

well-informed, and, on the whole, honest; but he was conceited,

long-winded, and pompous.

Mrs. Harold Smith was the very opposite of her lord. She was a

clever, bright woman, good-looking for her time of life--and she was

now over forty--with a keen sense of the value of all worldly things,

and a keen relish for all the world's pleasures. She was neither

laborious, nor well-informed, nor perhaps altogether honest--what

woman ever understood the necessity or recognized the advantage of

political honesty?--but then she was neither dull nor pompous, and

if she was conceited, she did not show it. She was a disappointed

woman, as regards her husband; seeing that she had married him on the

speculation that he would at once become politically important; and

as yet Mr. Smith had not quite fulfilled the prophecies of his early

life.

And Lady Lufton, when she spoke of the Chaldicotes set, distinctly

included, in her own mind, the Bishop of Barchester, and his wife

and daughter. Seeing that Bishop Proudie was, of course, a man much

addicted to religion and to religious thinking, and that Mr. Sowerby

himself had no peculiar religious sentiments whatever, there would

not at first sight appear to be ground for much intercourse, and

perhaps there was not much of such intercourse; but Mrs. Proudie

and Mrs. Harold Smith were firm friends of four or five years'

standing--ever since the Proudies came into the diocese; and

therefore the bishop was usually taken to Chaldicotes whenever Mrs.

Smith paid her brother a visit. Now Bishop Proudie was by no means

a High Church dignitary, and Lady Lufton had never forgiven him for

coming into that diocese. She had, instinctively, a high respect

for the episcopal office; but of Bishop Proudie himself she hardly

thought better than she did of Mr. Sowerby, or of that fabricator of

evil, the Duke of Omnium. Whenever Mr. Robarts would plead that in

going anywhere he would have the benefit of meeting the bishop, Lady

Lufton would slightly curl her upper lip. She could not say in words

that Bishop Proudie--bishop as he certainly must be called--was no

better than he ought to be; but by that curl of her lip she did

explain to those who knew her that such was the inner feeling of her

heart.

And then it was understood--Mark Robarts, at least, had so heard, and

the information soon reached Framley Court--that Mr. Supplehouse was

to make one of the Chaldicotes party. Now Mr. Supplehouse was a worse

companion for a gentleman-like, young, High Church, conservative

county parson than even Harold Smith. He also was in Parliament, and

had been extolled during the early days of that Russian War by some

portion of the metropolitan daily press, as the only man who could

save the country. Let him be in the ministry, the \_Jupiter\_ had said,

and there would be some hope of reform, some chance that England's

ancient glory would not be allowed in these perilous times to go

headlong to oblivion. And upon this the ministry, not anticipating

much salvation from Mr. Supplehouse, but willing, as they usually

are, to have the \_Jupiter\_ at their back, did send for that

gentleman, and gave him some footing among them. But how can a man

born to save a nation, and to lead a people, be content to fill the

chair of an under-secretary? Supplehouse was not content, and soon

gave it to be understood that his place was much higher than any yet

tendered to him. The seals of high office, or war to the knife,

was the alternative which he offered to a much-belaboured Head of

Affairs--nothing doubting that the Head of Affairs would recognize

the claimant's value, and would have before his eyes a wholesome fear

of the \_Jupiter\_. But the Head of Affairs, much belaboured as he was,

knew that he might pay too high even for Mr. Supplehouse and the

\_Jupiter\_; and the saviour of the nation was told that he might swing

his tomahawk. Since that time he had been swinging his tomahawk, but

not with so much effect as had been anticipated. He also was very

intimate with Mr. Sowerby, and was decidedly one of the Chaldicotes

set. And there were many others included in the stigma whose sins

were political or religious rather than moral. But they were gall and

wormwood to Lady Lufton, who regarded them as children of the Lost

One, and who grieved with a mother's grief when she knew that her son

was among them, and felt all a patron's anger when she heard that her

clerical protÃ©gÃ© was about to seek such society. Mrs. Robarts might

well say that Lady Lufton would be annoyed.

"You won't call at the house before you go, will you?" the wife asked

on the following morning. He was to start after lunch on that day,

driving himself in his own gig, so as to reach Chaldicotes, some

twenty-four miles distant, before dinner.

"No, I think not. What good should I do?"

"Well, I can't explain; but I think I should call: pertly, perhaps,

to show her that, as I had determined to go, I was not afraid of

telling her so."

"Afraid! That's nonsense, Fanny. I'm not afraid of her. But I don't

see why I should bring down upon myself the disagreeable things she

will say. Besides, I have not time. I must walk up and see Jones

about the duties; and then, what with getting ready, I shall have

enough to do to get off in time."

He paid his visit to Mr. Jones, the curate, feeling no qualms

of conscience there, as he rather boasted of all the members of

Parliament he was going to meet, and of the bishop who would be with

them. Mr. Evan Jones was only his curate, and in speaking to him on

the matter he could talk as though it were quite the proper thing for

a vicar to meet his bishop at the house of a county member. And one

would be inclined to say that it was proper: only why could he not

talk of it in the same tone to Lady Lufton? And then, having kissed

his wife and children, he drove off, well pleased with his prospect

for the coming ten days, but already anticipating some discomfort on

his return.

On the three following days, Mrs. Robarts did not meet her ladyship.

She did not exactly take any steps to avoid such a meeting, but she

did not purposely go up to the big house. She went to her school as

usual, and made one or two calls among the farmers' wives, but put

no foot within the Framley Court grounds. She was braver than her

husband, but even she did not wish to anticipate the evil day. On the

Saturday, just before it began to get dusk, when she was thinking of

preparing for the fatal plunge, her friend, Lady Meredith, came to

her.

"So, Fanny, we shall again be so unfortunate as to miss Mr. Robarts,"

said her ladyship.

"Yes. Did you ever know anything so unlucky? But he had promised Mr.

Sowerby before he heard that you were coming. Pray do not think that

he would have gone away had he known it."

"We should have been sorry to keep him from so much more amusing a

party."

"Now, Justinia, you are unfair. You intend to imply that he has gone

to Chaldicotes, because he likes it better than Framley Court; but

that is not the case. I hope Lady Lufton does not think that it is."

Lady Meredith laughed as she put her arm round her friend's waist.

"Don't lose your eloquence in defending him to me," she said. "You'll

want all that for my mother."

"But is your mother angry?" asked Mrs. Robarts, showing by her

countenance how eager she was for true tidings on the subject.

"Well, Fanny, you know her ladyship as well as I do. She thinks so

very highly of the vicar of Framley, that she does begrudge him to

those politicians at Chaldicotes."

"But, Justinia, the bishop is to be there, you know."

"I don't think that that consideration will at all reconcile my

mother to the gentleman's absence. He ought to be very proud, I know,

to find that he is so much thought of. But come, Fanny, I want you to

walk back with me, and you can dress at the house. And now we'll go

and look at the children."

After that, as they walked together to Framley Court, Mrs. Robarts

made her friend promise that she would stand by her if any serious

attack were made on the absent clergyman.

"Are you going up to your room at once?" said the vicar's wife,

as soon as they were inside the porch leading into the hall. Lady

Meredith immediately knew what her friend meant, and decided that the

evil day should not be postponed. "We had better go in and have it

over," she said, "and then we shall be comfortable for the evening."

So the drawing-room door was opened, and there was Lady Lufton alone

upon the sofa.

"Now, mamma," said the daughter, "you mustn't scold Fanny much

about Mr. Robarts. He has gone to preach a charity sermon before

the bishop, and, under those circumstances, perhaps, he could not

refuse." This was a stretch on the part of Lady Meredith--put in

with much good-nature, no doubt; but still a stretch; for no one had

supposed that the bishop would remain at Chaldicotes for the Sunday.

"How do you do, Fanny?" said Lady Lufton, getting up. "I am not

going to scold her; and I don't know how you can talk such nonsense,

Justinia. Of course, we are very sorry not to have Mr. Robarts; more

especially as he was not here the last Sunday that Sir George was

with us. I do like to see Mr. Robarts in his own church, certainly;

and I don't like any other clergyman there as well. If Fanny takes

that for scolding, why--"

"Oh! no, Lady Lufton; and it's so kind of you to say so. But Mr.

Robarts was so sorry that he had accepted this invitation to

Chaldicotes, before he heard that Sir George was coming, and--"

"Oh, I know that Chaldicotes has great attractions which we cannot

offer," said Lady Lufton.

"Indeed, it was not that. But he was asked to preach, you know; and

Mr. Harold Smith--" Poor Fanny was only making it worse. Had she been

worldly wise, she would have accepted the little compliment implied

in Lady Lufton's first rebuke, and then have held her peace.

"Oh, yes; the Harold Smiths! They are irresistible, I know. How could

any man refuse to join a party, graced both by Mrs. Harold Smith and

Mrs. Proudie--even though his duty should require him to stay away?"

"Now, mamma--" said Justinia.

"Well, my dear, what am I to say? You would not wish me to tell a

fib. I don't like Mrs. Harold Smith--at least, what I hear of her;

for it has not been my fortune to meet her since her marriage. It may

be conceited; but to own the truth, I think that Mr. Robarts would

be better off with us at Framley than with the Harold Smiths at

Chaldicotes--even though Mrs. Proudie be thrown into the bargain."

It was nearly dark, and therefore the rising colour in the face of

Mrs. Robarts could not be seen. She, however, was too good a wife to

hear these things said without some anger within her bosom. She could

blame her husband in her own mind; but it was intolerable to her that

others should blame him in her hearing.

"He would undoubtedly be better off," she said; "but then, Lady

Lufton, people can't always go exactly where they will be best off.

Gentlemen sometimes must--"

"Well--well, my dear, that will do. He has not taken you, at any

rate; and so we will forgive him." And Lady Lufton kissed her. "As it

is,"--and she affected a low whisper between the two young wives--"as

it is, we must e'en put up with poor old Evan Jones. He is to be here

to-night, and we must go and dress to receive him."

And so they went off. Lady Lufton was quite good enough at heart to

like Mrs. Robarts all the better for standing up for her absent lord.

CHAPTER III

Chaldicotes

Chaldicotes is a house of much more pretension than Framley Court.

Indeed, if one looks at the ancient marks about it, rather than

at those of the present day, it is a place of very considerable

pretension. There is an old forest, not altogether belonging to the

property, but attached to it, called the Chace of Chaldicotes. A

portion of this forest comes up close behind the mansion, and of

itself gives a character and celebrity to the place. The Chace of

Chaldicotes--the greater part of it, at least--is, as all the world

knows, Crown property, and now, in these utilitarian days, is to be

disforested. In former times it was a great forest, stretching half

across the country, almost as far as Silverbridge; and there are bits

of it, here and there, still to be seen at intervals throughout the

whole distance; but the larger remaining portion, consisting of aged

hollow oaks, centuries old, and wide-spreading withered beeches,

stands in the two parishes of Chaldicotes and Uffley. People still

come from afar to see the oaks of Chaldicotes, and to hear their feet

rustle among the thick autumn leaves. But they will soon come no

longer. The giants of past ages are to give way to wheat and turnips;

a ruthless Chancellor of the Exchequer, disregarding old associations

and rural beauty, requires money returns from the lands; and the

Chace of Chaldicotes is to vanish from the earth's surface.

Some part of it, however, is the private property of Mr. Sowerby,

who hitherto, through all his pecuniary distresses, has managed to

save from the axe and the auction-mart that portion of his paternal

heritage. The house of Chaldicotes is a large stone building,

probably of the time of Charles the Second. It is approached on both

fronts by a heavy double flight of stone steps. In the front of

the house a long, solemn, straight avenue through a double row of

lime-trees, leads away to lodge-gates, which stand in the centre of

the village of Chaldicotes; but to the rear the windows open upon

four different vistas, which run down through the forest: four open

green rides, which all converge together at a large iron gateway,

the barrier which divides the private grounds from the Chace. The

Sowerbys, for many generations, have been rangers of the Chace of

Chaldicotes, thus having almost as wide an authority over the Crown

forest as over their own. But now all this is to cease, for the

forest will be disforested.

It was nearly dark as Mark Robarts drove up through the avenue of

lime-trees to the hall-door; but it was easy to see that the house,

which was dead and silent as the grave through nine months of the

year, was now alive in all its parts. There were lights in many

of the windows, and a noise of voices came from the stables, and

servants were moving about, and dogs barked, and the dark gravel

before the front steps was cut up with many a coach-wheel.

"Oh, be that you, sir, Mr. Robarts?" said a groom, taking the

parson's horse by the head, and touching his own hat. "I hope I see

your reverence well?"

"Quite well, Bob, thank you. All well at Chaldicotes?"

"Pretty bobbish, Mr. Robarts. Deal of life going on here now, sir.

The bishop and his lady came this morning."

"Oh--ah--yes! I understood they were to be here. Any of the young

ladies?"

"One young lady. Miss Olivia, I think they call her, your reverence."

"And how's Mr. Sowerby?"

"Very well, your reverence. He, and Mr. Harold Smith, and Mr.

Fothergill--that's the duke's man of business, you know--is getting

off their horses now in the stable-yard there."

"Home from hunting--eh, Bob?"

"Yes, sir, just home, this minute." And then Mr. Robarts walked into

the house, his portmanteau following on a foot-boy's shoulder.

It will be seen that our young vicar was very intimate at

Chaldicotes; so much so that the groom knew him, and talked to him

about the people in the house. Yes; he was intimate there: much more

than he had given the Framley people to understand. Not that he had

wilfully and overtly deceived any one; not that he had ever spoken a

false word about Chaldicotes. But he had never boasted at home that

he and Sowerby were near allies. Neither had he told them there

how often Mr. Sowerby and Lord Lufton were together in London. Why

trouble women with such matters? Why annoy so excellent a woman as

Lady Lufton? And then Mr. Sowerby was one whose intimacy few young

men would wish to reject. He was fifty, and had lived, perhaps, not

the most salutary life; but he dressed young, and usually looked

well. He was bald, with a good forehead, and sparkling moist eyes. He

was a clever man, and a pleasant companion, and always good-humoured

when it so suited him. He was a gentleman, too, of high breeding and

good birth, whose ancestors had been known in that county--longer,

the farmers around would boast, than those of any other land-owner in

it, unless it be the Thornes of Ullathorne, or perhaps the Greshams

of Greshamsbury--much longer than the de Courcys at Courcy Castle.

As for the Duke of Omnium, he, comparatively speaking, was a new

man. And then he was a member of Parliament, a friend of some men in

power, and of others who might be there; a man who could talk about

the world as one knowing the matter of which he talked. And moreover,

whatever might be his ways of life at other times, when in the

presence of a clergyman he rarely made himself offensive to clerical

tastes. He neither swore, nor brought his vices on the carpet, nor

sneered at the faith of the Church. If he was no Churchman himself,

he at least knew how to live with those who were.

How was it possible that such a one as our vicar should not relish

the intimacy of Mr. Sowerby? It might be very well, he would say to

himself, for a woman like Lady Lufton to turn up her nose at him--for

Lady Lufton, who spent ten months of the year at Framley Court, and

who during those ten months, and for the matter of that, during the

two months also which she spent in London, saw no one out of her own

set. Women did not understand such things, the vicar said to himself;

even his own wife--good, and nice, and sensible, and intelligent as

she was--even she did not understand that a man in the world must

meet all sorts of men; and that in these days it did not do for a

clergyman to be a hermit. 'Twas thus that Mark Robarts argued when he

found himself called upon to defend himself before the bar of his own

conscience for going to Chaldicotes and increasing his intimacy with

Mr. Sowerby. He did know that Mr. Sowerby was a dangerous man; he was

aware that he was over head and ears in debt, and that he had already

entangled young Lord Lufton in some pecuniary embarrassment; his

conscience did tell him that it would be well for him, as one of

Christ's soldiers, to look out for companions of a different stamp.

But nevertheless he went to Chaldicotes, not satisfied with himself

indeed, but repeating to himself a great many arguments why he should

be so satisfied.

He was shown into the drawing-room at once, and there he found Mrs.

Harold Smith, with Mrs. and Miss Proudie, and a lady whom he had

never before seen, and whose name he did not at first hear mentioned.

"Is that Mr. Robarts?" said Mrs. Harold Smith, getting up to greet

him, and screening her pretended ignorance under the veil of the

darkness. "And have you really driven over four-and-twenty miles of

Barsetshire roads on such a day as this to assist us in our little

difficulties? Well, we can promise you gratitude at any rate." And

then the vicar shook hands with Mrs. Proudie, in that deferential

manner which is due from a vicar to his bishop's wife; and Mrs.

Proudie returned the greeting with all that smiling condescension

which a bishop's wife should show to a vicar. Miss Proudie was not

quite so civil. Had Mr. Robarts been still unmarried, she also could

have smiled sweetly; but she had been exercising smiles on clergymen

too long to waste them now on a married parish parson.

"And what are the difficulties, Mrs. Smith, in which I am to assist

you?"

"We have six or seven gentlemen here, Mr. Robarts, and they always go

out hunting before breakfast, and they never come back--I was going

to say--till after dinner. I wish it were so, for then we should not

have to wait for them."

"Excepting Mr. Supplehouse, you know," said the unknown lady, in a

loud voice.

"And he is generally shut up in the library, writing articles."

"He'd be better employed if he were trying to break his neck like the

others," said the unknown lady.

"Only he would never succeed," says Mrs. Harold Smith. "But perhaps,

Mr. Robarts, you are as bad as the rest; perhaps you, too, will be

hunting to-morrow."

"My dear Mrs. Smith!" said Mrs. Proudie, in a tone denoting slight

reproach, and modified horror.

"Oh! I forgot. No, of course, you won't be hunting, Mr. Robarts;

you'll only be wishing that you could."

"Why can't he?" said the lady, with a loud voice.

"My dear Miss Dunstable! a clergyman hunt, while he is staying in the

same house with the bishop? Think of the proprieties!"

"Oh--ah! The bishop wouldn't like it--wouldn't he? Now, do tell me,

sir, what would the bishop do to you if you did hunt?"

"It would depend upon his mood at the time, madam," said Mr. Robarts.

"If that were very stern, he might perhaps have me beheaded before

the palace gates."

Mrs. Proudie drew herself up in her chair, showing that she did

not like the tone of the conversation; and Miss Proudie fixed her

eyes vehemently on her book, showing that Miss Dunstable and her

conversation were both beneath her notice.

"If these gentlemen do not mean to break their necks to-night," said

Mrs. Harold Smith, "I wish they'd let us know it. It's half-past six

already." And then Mr. Robarts gave them to understand that no such

catastrophe could be looked for that day, as Mr. Sowerby and the

other sportsmen were within the stable-yard when he entered the door.

"Then, ladies, we may as well dress," said Mrs. Harold Smith. But

as she moved towards the door, it opened, and a short gentleman,

with a slow, quiet step, entered the room; but was not yet to be

distinguished through the dusk by the eyes of Mr. Robarts. "Oh!

bishop, is that you?" said Mrs. Smith. "Here is one of the luminaries

of your diocese." And then the bishop, feeling through the dark, made

his way up to the vicar and shook him cordially by the hand. "He

was delighted to meet Mr. Robarts at Chaldicotes," he said--"quite

delighted. Was he not going to preach on behalf of the Papuan Mission

next Sunday? Ah! so he, the bishop, had heard. It was a good work,

an excellent work." And then Dr. Proudie expressed himself as much

grieved that he could not remain at Chaldicotes, and hear the sermon.

It was plain that his bishop thought no ill of him on account of his

intimacy with Mr. Sowerby. But then he felt in his own heart that he

did not much regard his bishop's opinion.

"Ah, Robarts, I'm delighted to see you," said Mr. Sowerby, when they

met on the drawing-room rug before dinner. "You know Harold Smith?

Yes, of course you do. Well, who else is there? Oh! Supplehouse. Mr.

Supplehouse, allow me to introduce to you my friend Mr. Robarts. It

is he who will extract the five-pound note out of your pocket next

Sunday for these poor Papuans whom we are going to Christianize.

That is, if Harold Smith does not finish the work out of hand at his

Saturday lecture. And, Robarts, you have seen the bishop, of course:"

this he said in a whisper. "A fine thing to be a bishop, isn't it? I

wish I had half your chance. But, my dear fellow, I've made such a

mistake; I haven't got a bachelor parson for Miss Proudie. You must

help me out, and take her in to dinner." And then the great gong

sounded, and off they went in pairs.

At dinner Mark found himself seated between Miss Proudie and the lady

whom he had heard named as Miss Dunstable. Of the former he was not

very fond, and, in spite of his host's petition, was not inclined to

play bachelor parson for her benefit. With the other lady he would

willingly have chatted during the dinner, only that everybody else at

table seemed to be intent on doing the same thing. She was neither

young, nor beautiful, nor peculiarly ladylike; yet she seemed

to enjoy a popularity which must have excited the envy of Mr.

Supplehouse, and which certainly was not altogether to the taste of

Mrs. Proudie--who, however, fÃªted her as much as did the others.

So that our clergyman found himself unable to obtain more than an

inconsiderable share of the lady's attention.

"Bishop," said she, speaking across the table, "we have missed you so

all day! we have had no one on earth to say a word to us."

"My dear Miss Dunstable, had I known that-- But I really was engaged

on business of some importance."

"I don't believe in business of importance; do you, Mrs. Smith?"

"Do I not?" said Mrs. Smith. "If you were married to Mr. Harold Smith

for one week, you'd believe in it."

"Should I, now? What a pity that I can't have that chance of

improving my faith! But you are a man of business, also, Mr.

Supplehouse; so they tell me." And she turned to her neighbour on her

right hand.

"I cannot compare myself to Harold Smith," said he. "But perhaps I

may equal the bishop."

"What does a man do, now, when he sits himself down to business? How

does he set about it? What are his tools? A quire of blotting paper,

I suppose, to begin with?"

"That depends, I should say, on his trade. A shoemaker begins by

waxing his thread."

"And Mr. Harold Smith--?"

"By counting up his yesterday's figures, generally, I should say;

or else by unrolling a ball of red tape. Well-docketed papers and

statistical facts are his forte."

"And what does a bishop do? Can you tell me that?"

"He sends forth to his clergy either blessings or blowings-up,

according to the state of his digestive organs. But Mrs. Proudie can

explain all that to you with the greatest accuracy."

"Can she now? I understand what you mean, but I don't believe a word

of it. The bishop manages his own affairs himself, quite as much as

you do, or Mr. Harold Smith."

"I, Miss Dunstable?"

"Yes, you."

"But I, unluckily, have not a wife to manage them for me."

"Then you should not laugh at those who have, for you don't know what

you may come to yourself, when you're married."

Mr. Supplehouse began to make a pretty speech, saying that he would

be delighted to incur any danger in that respect to which he might

be subjected by the companionship of Miss Dunstable. But before he

was half through it, she had turned her back upon him, and begun a

conversation with Mark Robarts.

"Have you much work in your parish, Mr. Robarts?" she asked. Now,

Mark was not aware that she knew his name, or the fact of his having

a parish, and was rather surprised by the question. And he had not

quite liked the tone in which she had seemed to speak of the bishop

and his work. His desire for her further acquaintance was therefore

somewhat moderated, and he was not prepared to answer her question

with much zeal.

"All parish clergymen have plenty of work, if they choose to do it."

"Ah, that is it; is it not, Mr. Robarts? If they choose to do it? A

great many do--many that I know, do; and see what a result they have.

But many neglect it--and see what a result \_they\_ have. I think it

ought to be the happiest life that a man can lead, that of a parish

clergyman, with a wife and family and a sufficient income."

"I think it is," said Mark Robarts, asking himself whether the

contentment accruing to him from such blessings had made him

satisfied at all points. He had all these things of which Miss

Dunstable spoke, and yet he had told his wife, the other day, that he

could not afford to neglect the acquaintance of a rising politician

like Harold Smith.

"What I find fault with is this," continued Miss Dunstable, "that we

expect clergymen to do their duty, and don't give them a sufficient

income--give them hardly any income at all. Is it not a scandal,

that an educated gentleman with a family should be made to work half

his life, and perhaps the whole, for a pittance of seventy pounds a

year!" Mark said that it was a scandal, and thought of Mr. Evan Jones

and his daughter; and thought also of his own worth, and his own

house, and his own nine hundred a year.

"And yet you clergymen are so proud--aristocratic would be the

genteel word, I know--that you won't take the money of common,

ordinary poor people. You must be paid from land and endowments, from

tithe and church property. You can't bring yourself to work for what

you earn, as lawyers and doctors do. It is better that curates should

starve than undergo such ignominy as that."

"It is a long subject, Miss Dunstable."

"A very long one; and that means that I am not to say any more about

it."

"I did not mean that exactly."

"Oh, but you did though, Mr. Robarts. And I can take a hint of that

kind when I get it. You clergymen like to keep those long subjects

for your sermons, when no one can answer you. Now if I have a longing

heart's desire for anything at all in this world, it is to be able to

get up into a pulpit, and preach a sermon."

"You can't conceive how soon that appetite would pall upon you, after

its first indulgence."

"That would depend upon whether I could get people to listen to me.

It does not pall upon Mr. Spurgeon, I suppose." Then her attention

was called away by some question from Mr. Sowerby, and Mark Robarts

found himself bound to address his conversation to Miss Proudie.

Miss Proudie, however, was not thankful, and gave him little but

monosyllables for his pains.

"Of course you know Harold Smith is going to give us a lecture about

these islanders," Mr. Sowerby said to him, as they sat round the fire

over their wine after dinner. Mark said that he had been so informed,

and should be delighted to be one of the listeners.

"You are bound to do that, as he is going to listen to you the day

afterwards--or, at any rate, to pretend to do so, which is as much as

you will do for him. It'll be a terrible bore--the lecture, I mean,

not the sermon." And he spoke very low into his friend's ear. "Fancy

having to drive ten miles after dusk, and ten miles back, to hear

Harold Smith talk for two hours about Borneo! One must do it, you

know."

"I dare say it will be very interesting."

"My dear fellow, you haven't undergone so many of these things as I

have. But he's right to do it. It's his line of life; and when a man

begins a thing he ought to go on with it. Where's Lufton all this

time?"

"In Scotland, when I last heard from him; but he's probably at Melton

now."

"It's deuced shabby of him, not hunting here in his own county. He

escapes all the bore of going to lectures, and giving feeds to the

neighbours; that's why he treats us so. He has no idea of his duty,

has he?"

"Lady Lufton does all that, you know."

"I wish I'd a Mrs. Sowerby \_mÃ¨re\_ to do it for me. But then Lufton

has no constituents to look after--lucky dog! By the by, has he

spoken to you about selling that outlying bit of land of his in

Oxfordshire? It belongs to the Lufton property, and yet it doesn't.

In my mind it gives more trouble than it's worth." Lord Lufton had

spoken to Mark about this sale, and had explained to him that such

a sacrifice was absolutely necessary, in consequence of certain

pecuniary transactions between him, Lord Lufton, and Mr. Sowerby.

But it was found impracticable to complete the business without Lady

Lufton's knowledge, and her son had commissioned Mr. Robarts not only

to inform her ladyship, but to talk her over, and to appease her

wrath. This commission he had not yet attempted to execute, and it

was probable that this visit to Chaldicotes would not do much to

facilitate the business.

"They are the most magnificent islands under the sun," said Harold

Smith to the bishop.

"Are they, indeed!" said the bishop, opening his eyes wide, and

assuming a look of intense interest.

"And the most intelligent people."

"Dear me!" said the bishop.

"All they want is guidance, encouragement, instruction--"

"And Christianity," suggested the bishop.

"And Christianity, of course," said Mr. Smith, remembering that he

was speaking to a dignitary of the Church. It was well to humour such

people, Mr. Smith thought. But the Christianity was to be done in the

Sunday sermon, and was not part of his work.

"And how do you intend to begin with them?" asked Mr. Supplehouse,

the business of whose life it had been to suggest difficulties.

"Begin with them--oh--why--it's very easy to begin with them. The

difficulty is to go on with them, after the money is all spent. We'll

begin by explaining to them the benefits of civilization."

"Capital plan!" said Mr. Supplehouse. "But how do you set about it,

Smith?"

"How do we set about it? How did we set about it with Australia and

America? It is very easy to criticize; but in such matters the great

thing is to put one's shoulder to the wheel."

"We sent our felons to Australia," said Supplehouse, "and they began

the work for us. And as to America, we exterminated the people

instead of civilizing them."

"We did not exterminate the inhabitants of India," said Harold Smith,

angrily.

"Nor have we attempted to Christianize them, as the bishop so

properly wishes to do with your islanders."

"Supplehouse, you are not fair," said Mr. Sowerby, "neither to Harold

Smith nor to us;--you are making him rehearse his lecture, which is

bad for him; and making us hear the rehearsal, which is bad for us."

"Supplehouse belongs to a clique which monopolizes the wisdom of

England," said Harold Smith, "or, at any rate, thinks that it

does. But the worst of them is that they are given to talk leading

articles."

"Better that, than talk articles which are not leading," said Mr.

Supplehouse. "Some first-class official men do that."

"Shall I meet you at the duke's next week, Mr. Robarts?" said the

bishop to him, soon after they had gone into the drawing-room. Meet

him at the duke's!--the established enemy of Barsetshire mankind, as

Lady Lufton regarded his grace! No idea of going to the duke's had

ever entered our hero's mind; nor had he been aware that the duke was

about to entertain any one.

"No, my lord; I think not. Indeed, I have no acquaintance with his

grace."

"Oh--ah! I did not know. Because Mr. Sowerby is going; and so are the

Harold Smiths, and, I think, Mr. Supplehouse. An excellent man is

the duke;--that is, as regards all the county interests," added the

bishop, remembering that the moral character of his bachelor grace

was not the very best in the world. And then his lordship began to

ask some questions about the church affairs of Framley, in which a

little interest as to Framley Court was also mixed up, when he was

interrupted by a rather sharp voice, to which he instantly attended.

"Bishop," said the rather sharp voice; and the bishop trotted across

the room to the back of the sofa, on which his wife was sitting.

"Miss Dunstable thinks that she will be able to come to us for a

couple of days, after we leave the duke's."

"I shall be delighted above all things," said the bishop, bowing low

to the dominant lady of the day. For be it known to all men, that

Miss Dunstable was the great heiress of that name.

"Mrs. Proudie is so very kind as to say that she will take me in,

with my poodle, parrot, and pet old woman."

"I tell Miss Dunstable that we shall have quite room for any of her

suite," said Mrs. Proudie. "And that it will give us no trouble."

"'The labour we delight in physics pain,'" said the gallant bishop,

bowing low, and putting his hand upon his heart. In the meantime

Mr. Fothergill had got hold of Mark Robarts. Mr. Fothergill was

a gentleman and a magistrate of the county, but he occupied the

position of managing man on the Duke of Omnium's estates. He was not

exactly his agent; that is to say, he did not receive his rents;

but he "managed" for him, saw people, went about the county, wrote

letters, supported the electioneering interest, did popularity when

it was too much trouble for the duke to do it himself, and was, in

fact, invaluable. People in West Barsetshire would often say that

they did not know what on earth the duke would do, if it were not for

Mr. Fothergill. Indeed, Mr. Fothergill was useful to the duke.

"Mr. Robarts," he said, "I am very happy to have the pleasure of

meeting you--very happy indeed. I have often heard of you from our

friend Sowerby." Mark bowed, and said that he was delighted to

have the honour of making Mr. Fothergill's acquaintance. "I am

commissioned by the Duke of Omnium," continued Mr. Fothergill,

"to say how glad he will be if you will join his grace's party at

Gatherum Castle next week. The bishop will be there, and indeed

nearly the whole set who are here now. The duke would have written

when he heard that you were to be at Chaldicotes; but things were

hardly quite arranged then, so his grace has left it for me to tell

you how happy he will be to make your acquaintance in his own house.

I have spoken to Sowerby," continued Mr. Fothergill, "and he very

much hopes that you will be able to join us."

Mark felt that his face became red when this proposition was made

to him. The party in the county to which he properly belonged--he

and his wife, and all that made him happy and respectable--looked

upon the Duke of Omnium with horror and amazement; and now he had

absolutely received an invitation to the duke's house! A proposition

was made to him that he should be numbered among the duke's friends!

And though in one sense he was sorry that the proposition was made to

him, yet in another he was proud of it. It is not every young man,

let his profession be what it may, who can receive overtures of

friendship from dukes without some elation. Mark, too, had risen in

the world, as far as he had yet risen, by knowing great people; and

he certainly had an ambition to rise higher. I will not degrade him

by calling him a tuft-hunter; but he undoubtedly had a feeling that

the paths most pleasant for a clergyman's feet were those which were

trodden by the great ones of the earth. Nevertheless, at the moment

he declined the duke's invitation. He was very much flattered, he

said, but the duties of his parish would require him to return direct

from Chaldicotes to Framley.

"You need not give me an answer to-night, you know," said Mr.

Fothergill. "Before the week is past, we will talk it over with

Sowerby and the bishop. It will be a thousand pities, Mr. Robarts,

if you will allow me to say so, that you should neglect such an

opportunity of knowing his grace."

When Mark went to bed, his mind was still set against going to the

duke's; but, nevertheless, he did feel that it was a pity that he

should not do so. After all, was it necessary that he should obey

Lady Lufton in all things?

CHAPTER IV

A Matter of Conscience

It is no doubt very wrong to long after a naughty thing. But

nevertheless we all do so. One may say that hankering after naughty

things is the very essence of the evil into which we have been

precipitated by Adam's fall. When we confess that we are all sinners,

we confess that we all long after naughty things. And ambition is a

great vice--as Mark Anthony told us a long time ago--a great vice,

no doubt, if the ambition of the man be with reference to his own

advancement, and not to the advancement of others. But then, how many

of us are there who are not ambitious in this vicious manner? And

there is nothing viler than the desire to know great people--people

of great rank, I should say; nothing worse than the hunting of titles

and worshipping of wealth. We all know this, and say it every day of

our lives. But presuming that a way into the society of Park Lane

was open to us, and a way also into that of Bedford Row, how many of

us are there who would prefer Bedford Row because it is so vile to

worship wealth and title?

I am led into these rather trite remarks by the necessity of putting

forward some sort of excuse for that frame of mind in which the Rev.

Mark Robarts awoke on the morning after his arrival at Chaldicotes.

And I trust that the fact of his being a clergyman will not be

allowed to press against him unfairly. Clergymen are subject to

the same passions as other men; and, as far as I can see, give way

to them, in one line or in another, almost as frequently. Every

clergyman should, by canonical rule, feel a personal disinclination

to a bishopric; but yet we do not believe that such personal

disinclination is generally very strong. Mark's first thoughts when

he woke on that morning flew back to Mr. Fothergill's invitation. The

duke had sent a special message to say how peculiarly glad he, the

duke, would be to make acquaintance with him, the parson! How much of

this message had been of Mr. Fothergill's own manufacture, that Mark

Robarts did not consider. He had obtained a living at an age when

other young clergymen are beginning to think of a curacy, and he

had obtained such a living as middle-aged parsons in their dreams

regard as a possible Paradise for their old years. Of course he

thought that all these good things had been the results of his own

peculiar merits. Of course he felt that he was different from other

parsons,--more fitted by nature for intimacy with great persons, more

urbane, more polished, and more richly endowed with modern clerical

well-to-do aptitudes. He was grateful to Lady Lufton for what she had

done for him; but perhaps not so grateful as he should have been.

At any rate he was not Lady Lufton's servant, nor even her dependant.

So much he had repeated to himself on many occasions, and had gone

so far as to hint the same idea to his wife. In his career as parish

priest he must in most things be the judge of his own actions--and in

many also it was his duty to be the judge of those of his patroness.

The fact of Lady Lufton having placed him in the living, could by no

means make her the proper judge of his actions. This he often said

to himself; and he said as often that Lady Lufton certainly had a

hankering after such a judgement-seat.

Of whom generally did prime ministers and official bigwigs think it

expedient to make bishops and deans? Was it not, as a rule, of those

clergymen who had shown themselves able to perform their clerical

duties efficiently, and able also to take their place with ease in

high society? He was very well off certainly at Framley; but he

could never hope for anything beyond Framley, if he allowed himself

to regard Lady Lufton as a bugbear. Putting Lady Lufton and her

prejudices out of the question, was there any reason why he ought not

to accept the duke's invitation? He could not see that there was any

such reason. If any one could be a better judge on such a subject

than himself, it must be his bishop. And it was clear that the bishop

wished him to go to Gatherum Castle.

The matter was still left open to him. Mr. Fothergill had especially

explained that; and therefore his ultimate decision was as yet within

his own power. Such a visit would cost him some money, for he knew

that a man does not stay at great houses without expense; and then,

in spite of his good income, he was not very flush of money. He had

been down this year with Lord Lufton in Scotland. Perhaps it might

be more prudent for him to return home. But then an idea came to

him that it behoved him as a man and a priest to break through

that Framley thraldom under which he felt that he did to a certain

extent exist. Was it not the fact that he was about to decline this

invitation from fear of Lady Lufton? and if so, was that a motive by

which he ought to be actuated? It was incumbent on him to rid himself

of that feeling. And in this spirit he got up and dressed.

There was hunting again on that day; and as the hounds were to meet

near Chaldicotes, and to draw some coverts lying on the verge of the

chase, the ladies were to go in carriages through the drives of the

forest, and Mr. Robarts was to escort them on horseback. Indeed it

was one of those hunting-days got up rather for the ladies than for

the sport. Great nuisances they are to steady, middle-aged hunting

men; but the young fellows like them because they have thereby an

opportunity of showing off their sporting finery, and of doing a

little flirtation on horseback. The bishop, also, had been minded to

be of the party: so, at least, he had said on the previous evening;

and a place in one of the carriages had been set apart for him: but

since that, he and Mrs. Proudie had discussed the matter in private,

and at breakfast his lordship declared that he had changed his mind.

Mr. Sowerby was one of those men who are known to be very poor--as

poor as debt can make a man--but who, nevertheless, enjoy all the

luxuries which money can give. It was believed that he could not

live in England out of jail but for his protection as a member of

Parliament; and yet it seemed that there was no end to his horses

and carriages, his servants and retinue. He had been at this work

for a great many years, and practice, they say, makes perfect. Such

companions are very dangerous. There is no cholera, no yellow-fever,

no small-pox, more contagious than debt. If one lives habitually

among embarrassed men, one catches it to a certainty. No one had

injured the community in this way more fatally than Mr. Sowerby.

But still he carried on the game himself; and now, on this morning,

carriages and horses thronged at his gate, as though he were as

substantially rich as his friend the Duke of Omnium.

"Robarts, my dear fellow," said Mr. Sowerby, when they were well

under way down one of the glades of the forest,--for the place

where the hounds met was some four or five miles from the house of

Chaldicotes,--"ride on with me a moment. I want to speak to you; and

if I stay behind we shall never get to the hounds." So Mark, who had

come expressly to escort the ladies, rode on alongside of Mr. Sowerby

in his pink coat.

"My dear fellow, Fothergill tells me that you have some hesitation

about going to Gatherum Castle."

"Well, I did decline, certainly. You know I am not a man of pleasure,

as you are. I have some duties to attend to."

"Gammon!" said Mr. Sowerby; and as he said it, he looked with a kind

of derisive smile into the clergyman's face.

"It is easy enough to say that, Sowerby; and perhaps I have no right

to expect that you should understand me."

"Ah, but I do understand you; and I say it is gammon. I would be the

last man in the world to ridicule your scruples about duty, if this

hesitation on your part arose from any such scruple. But answer me

honestly, do you not know that such is not the case?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

"Ah, but I think you do. If you persist in refusing this invitation

will it not be because you are afraid of making Lady Lufton angry? I

do not know what there can be in that woman that she is able to hold

both you and Lufton in leading-strings." Robarts, of course, denied

the charge, and protested that he was not to be taken back to his own

parsonage by any fear of Lady Lufton. But though he made such protest

with warmth, he knew that he did so ineffectually. Sowerby only

smiled, and said that the proof of the pudding was in the eating.

"What is the good of a man keeping a curate if it be not to save him

from that sort of drudgery?" he asked.

"Drudgery! If I were a drudge how could I be here to-day?"

"Well, Robarts, look here. I am speaking now, perhaps, with more of

the energy of an old friend than circumstances fully warrant; but I

am an older man than you, and as I have a regard for you I do not

like to see you throw up a good game when it is in your hands."

"Oh, as far as that goes, Sowerby, I need hardly tell you that I

appreciate your kindness."

"If you are content," continued the man of the world, "to live at

Framley all your life, and to warm yourself in the sunshine of the

dowager there, why, in such case, it may perhaps be useless for you

to extend the circle of your friends; but if you have higher ideas

than these, you will be very wrong to omit the present opportunity of

going to the duke's. I never knew the duke go so much out of his way

to be civil to a clergyman as he has done in this instance."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to him."

"The fact is, that you may, if you please, make yourself popular

in the county; but you cannot do it by obeying all Lady Lufton's

behests. She is a dear old woman, I am sure."

"She is, Sowerby; and you would say so, if you knew her."

"I don't doubt it; but it would not do for you or me to live exactly

according to her ideas. Now, here, in this case, the bishop of the

diocese is to be one of the party, and he has, I believe, already

expressed a wish that you should be another."

"He asked me if I were going."

"Exactly; and Archdeacon Grantly will be there."

"Will he?" asked Mark. Now, that would be a great point gained, for

Archdeacon Grantly was a close friend of Lady Lufton.

"So I understand from Fothergill. Indeed, it will be very wrong of

you not to go, and I tell you so plainly; and what is more, when you

talk about your duty--you having a curate as you have--why, it is

gammon." These last words he spoke looking back over his shoulder

as he stood up in his stirrups, for he had caught the eye of the

huntsman, who was surrounded by his bounds, and was now trotting on

to join him. During a great portion of the day, Mark found himself

riding by the side of Mrs. Proudie, as that lady leaned back in

her carriage. And Mrs. Proudie smiled on him graciously, though

her daughter would not do so. Mrs. Proudie was fond of having an

attendant clergyman; and as it was evident that Mr. Robarts lived

among nice people--titled dowagers, members of Parliament, and people

of that sort--she was quite willing to install him as a sort of

honorary chaplain \_pro tem\_.

"I'll tell you what we have settled, Mrs. Harold Smith and I," said

Mrs. Proudie to him. "This lecture at Barchester will be so late on

Saturday evening, that you had all better come and dine with us."

Mark bowed and thanked her, and declared that he should be very happy

to make one of such a party. Even Lady Lufton could not object to

this, although she was not especially fond of Mrs. Proudie.

"And then they are to sleep at the hotel. It will really be too late

for ladies to think of going back so far at this time of the year. I

told Mrs. Harold Smith, and Miss Dunstable, too, that we could manage

to make room at any rate for them. But they will not leave the other

ladies; so they go to the hotel for that night. But, Mr. Robarts, the

bishop will never allow you to stay at the inn, so of course you will

take a bed at the palace."

It immediately occurred to Mark that as the lecture was to be given

on Saturday evening, the next morning would be Sunday; and, on that

Sunday, he would have to preach at Chaldicotes. "I thought they were

all going to return the same night," said he.

"Well, they did intend it; but you see Mrs. Smith is afraid."

"I should have to get back here on the Sunday morning, Mrs. Proudie."

"Ah, yes, that is bad--very bad indeed. No one dislikes any

interference with the Sabbath more than I do. Indeed, if I am

particular about anything it is about that. But some works are works

of necessity, Mr. Robarts; are they not? Now you must necessarily

be back at Chaldicotes on Sunday morning!" And so the matter was

settled. Mrs. Proudie was very firm in general in the matter of

Sabbath-day observances; but when she had to deal with such persons

as Mrs. Harold Smith, it was expedient that she should give way a

little. "You can start as soon as it's daylight, you know, if you

like it, Mr. Robarts," said Mrs. Proudie.

There was not much to boast of as to the hunting, but it was a very

pleasant day for the ladies. The men rode up and down the grass roads

through the chase, sometimes in the greatest possible hurry as though

they never could go quick enough; and then the coachmen would drive

very fast also, though they did not know why, for a fast pace of

movement is another of those contagious diseases. And then again

the sportsmen would move at an undertaker's pace, when the fox had

traversed and the hounds would be at a loss to know which was the

hunt and which was the heel; and then the carriage also would go

slowly, and the ladies would stand up and talk. And then the time for

lunch came; and altogether the day went by pleasantly enough.

"And so that's hunting, is it?" said Miss Dunstable.

"Yes, that's hunting," said Mr. Sowerby.

"I did not see any gentleman do anything that I could not do myself,

except there was one young man slipped off into the mud; and I

shouldn't like that."

"But there was no breaking of bones, was there, my dear?" said Mrs.

Harold Smith.

"And nobody caught any foxes," said Miss Dunstable. "The fact is,

Mrs. Smith, that I don't think much more of their sport than I do of

their business. I shall take to hunting a pack of hounds myself after

this."

"Do, my dear, and I'll be your whipper-in. I wonder whether Mrs.

Proudie would join us."

"I shall be writing to the duke to-night," said Mr. Fothergill to

Mark, as they were all riding up to the stable-yard together. "You

will let me tell his grace that you will accept his invitation--will

you not?"

"Upon my word, the duke is very kind," said Mark.

"He is very anxious to know you, I can assure you," said Fothergill.

What could a young flattered fool of a parson do, but say that he

would go? Mark did say that he would go; and in the course of the

evening his friend Mr. Sowerby congratulated him, and the bishop

joked with him and said that he knew that he would not give up good

company so soon; and Miss Dunstable said she would make him her

chaplain as soon as Parliament would allow quack doctors to have such

articles--an allusion which Mark did not understand, till he learned

that Miss Dunstable was herself the proprietress of the celebrated

Oil of Lebanon, invented by her late respected father, and patented

by him with such wonderful results in the way of accumulated fortune;

and Mrs. Proudie made him quite one of their party, talking to him

about all manner of Church subjects; and then at last, even Miss

Proudie smiled on him, when she learned that he had been thought

worthy of a bed at a duke's castle. And all the world seemed to be

open to him.

But he could not make himself happy that evening. On the next morning

he must write to his wife; and he could already see the look of

painful sorrow which would fall upon his Fanny's brow when she

learned that her husband was going to be a guest at the Duke of

Omnium's. And he must tell her to send him money, and money was

scarce. And then, as to Lady Lufton, should he send her some message,

or should he not? In either case he must declare war against her. And

then did he not owe everything to Lady Lufton? And thus in spite of

all his triumphs he could not get himself to bed in a happy frame of

mind.

On the next day, which was Friday, he postponed the disagreeable

task of writing. Saturday would do as well; and on Saturday morning,

before they all started for Barchester, he did write. And his letter

ran as follows:--

Chaldicotes,--November, 185--.

DEAREST LOVE,

You will be astonished when I tell you how gay we all are

here, and what further dissipations are in store for us.

The Arabins, as you supposed, are not of our party; but

the Proudies are,--as you supposed also. Your suppositions

are always right. And what will you think when I tell you

that I am to sleep at the palace on Saturday? You know

that there is to be a lecture in Barchester on that day.

Well; we must all go, of course, as Harold Smith, one of

our set here, is to give it. And now it turns out that we

cannot get back the same night because there is no moon;

and Mrs. Bishop would not allow that my cloth should be

contaminated by an hotel;--very kind and considerate, is

it not?

But I have a more astounding piece of news for you than

this. There is to be a great party at Gatherum Castle

next week, and they have talked me over into accepting an

invitation which the duke sent expressly to me. I refused

at first; but everybody here said that my doing so would

be so strange; and then they all wanted to know my reason.

When I came to render it, I did not know what reason I had

to give. The bishop is going, and he thought it very odd

that I should not go also, seeing that I was asked. I

know what my own darling will think, and I know that she

will not be pleased, and I must put off my defence till I

return to her from this ogre-land,--if ever I do get back

alive. But joking apart, Fanny, I think that I should

have been wrong to stand out, when so much was said about

it. I should have been seeming to take upon myself to

sit in judgement upon the duke. I doubt if there be a

single clergyman in the diocese, under fifty years of

age, who would have refused the invitation under such

circumstances,--unless it be Crawley, who is so mad on the

subject that he thinks it almost wrong to take a walk out

of his own parish. I must stay at Gatherum Castle over

Sunday week--indeed, we only go there on Friday. I have

written to Jones about the duties. I can make it up to

him, as I know he wishes to go into Wales at Christmas.

My wanderings will all be over then, and he may go for a

couple of months if he pleases. I suppose you will take my

classes in the school on Sunday, as well as your own; but

pray make them have a good fire. If this is too much for

you, make Mrs. Podgens take the boys. Indeed I think that

will be better.

Of course you will tell her ladyship of my whereabouts.

Tell her from me, that as regards the bishop, as well as

regarding another great personage, the colour has been

laid on perhaps a little too thickly. Not that Lady Lufton

would ever like him. Make her understand that my going to

the duke's has almost become a matter of conscience with

me. I have not known how to make it appear that it would

be right for me to refuse, without absolutely making a

party matter of it. I saw that it would be said, that I,

coming from Lady Lufton's parish, could not go to the Duke

of Omnium's. This I did not choose.

I find that I shall want a little more money before I

leave here, five or ten pounds--say ten pounds. If you

cannot spare it, get it from Davis. He owes me more than

that, a good deal. And now, God bless and preserve you, my

own love. Kiss my darling bairns for papa, and give them

my blessing.

Always and ever your own,

M. R.

And then there was written, on an outside scrap which was folded

round the full-written sheet of paper, "Make it as smooth at Framley

Court as possible." However strong, and reasonable, and unanswerable

the body of Mark's letter may have been, all his hesitation,

weakness, doubt, and fear, were expressed in this short postscript.

CHAPTER V

Amantium IrÃ¦ Amoris Integratio

And now, with my reader's consent, I will follow the postman with

that letter to Framley; not by its own circuitous route indeed, or by

the same mode of conveyance; for that letter went into Barchester by

the Courcy night mail-cart, which, on its road, passes through the

villages of Uffley and Chaldicotes, reaching Barchester in time for

the up mail-train to London. By that train, the letter was sent

towards the metropolis as far as the junction of the Barset branch

line, but there it was turned in its course, and came down again by

the main line as far as Silverbridge; at which place, between six

and seven in the morning, it was shouldered by the Framley footpost

messenger, and in due course delivered at the Framley Parsonage

exactly as Mrs. Robarts had finished reading prayers to the four

servants. Or, I should say rather, that such would in its usual

course have been that letter's destiny. As it was, however, it

reached Silverbridge on Sunday, and lay there till the Monday, as

the Framley people have declined their Sunday post. And then again,

when the letter was delivered at the parsonage, on that wet Monday

morning, Mrs. Robarts was not at home. As we are all aware, she was

staying with her ladyship at Framley Court.

"Oh, but it's mortial wet," said the shivering postman as he handed

in that and the vicar's newspaper. The vicar was a man of the world,

and took the \_Jupiter\_.

"Come in, Robin postman, and warm theeself awhile," said Jemima the

cook, pushing a stool a little to one side, but still well in front

of the big kitchen fire.

"Well, I dudna jist know how it'll be. The wery 'edges 'as eyes

and tells on me in Silverbridge, if I so much as stops to pick a

blackberry."

"There bain't no hedges here, mon, nor yet no blackberries; so sit

thee down and warm theeself. That's better nor blackberries, I'm

thinking," and she handed him a bowl of tea with a slice of buttered

toast. Robin postman took the proffered tea, put his dripping hat on

the ground, and thanked Jemima cook. "But I dudna jist know how it'll

be," said he; "only it do pour so tarnation heavy." Which among us, O

my readers, could have withstood that temptation?

Such was the circuitous course of Mark's letter; but as it left

Chaldicotes on Saturday evening, and reached Mrs. Robarts on the

following morning, or would have done, but for that intervening

Sunday, doing all its peregrinations during the night, it may be held

that its course of transport was not inconveniently arranged. We,

however, will travel by a much shorter route. Robin, in the course of

his daily travels, passed, first the post-office at Framley, then the

Framley Court back entrance, and then the vicar's house, so that on

this wet morning Jemima cook was not able to make use of his services

in transporting this letter back to her mistress; for Robin had got

another village before him, expectant of its letters.

"Why didn't thee leave it, mon, with Mr. Applejohn at the Court?" Mr.

Applejohn was the butler who took the letter-bag. "Thee know'st as

how missus was there." And then Robin, mindful of the tea and toast,

explained to her courteously how the law made it imperative on him to

bring the letter to the very house that was indicated, let the owner

of the letter be where she might; and he laid down the law very

satisfactorily with sundry long-worded quotations. Not to much

effect, however, for the housemaid called him an oaf; and Robin would

decidedly have had the worst of it had not the gardener come in and

taken his part. "They women knows nothin', and understands nothin',"

said the gardener. "Give us hold of the letter. I'll take it up to

the house. It's the master's fist." And then Robin postman went on

one way, and the gardener, he went the other. The gardener never

disliked an excuse for going up to the Court gardens, even on so wet

a day as this.

Mrs. Robarts was sitting over the drawing-room fire with Lady

Meredith, when her husband's letter was brought to her. The Framley

Court letter-bag had been discussed at breakfast; but that was now

nearly an hour since, and Lady Lufton, as was her wont, was away

in her own room writing her own letters, and looking after her own

matters: for Lady Lufton was a person who dealt in figures herself,

and understood business almost as well as Harold Smith. And on that

morning she also had received a letter which had displeased her not a

little. Whence arose this displeasure neither Mrs. Robarts nor Lady

Meredith knew; but her ladyship's brow had grown black at breakfast

time; she had bundled up an ominous-looking epistle into her bag

without speaking of it, and had left the room immediately that

breakfast was over.

"There's something wrong," said Sir George.

"Mamma does fret herself so much about Ludovic's money matters," said

Lady Meredith. Ludovic was Lord Lufton,--Ludovic Lufton, Baron Lufton

of Lufton, in the county of Oxfordshire.

"And yet I don't think Lufton gets much astray," said Sir George,

as he sauntered out of the room. "Well, Justy; we'll put off going

then till to-morrow; but remember, it must be the first train."

Lady Meredith said she would remember, and then they went into the

drawing-room, and there Mrs. Robarts received her letter. Fanny, when

she read it, hardly at first realized to herself the idea that her

husband, the clergyman of Framley, the family clerical friend of Lady

Lufton's establishment, was going to stay with the Duke of Omnium. It

was so thoroughly understood at Framley Court that the duke and all

belonging to him was noxious and damnable. He was a Whig, he was a

bachelor, he was a gambler, he was immoral in every way, he was a man

of no Church principle, a corrupter of youth, a sworn foe of young

wives, a swallower up of small men's patrimonies; a man whom mothers

feared for their sons, and sisters for their brothers; and worse

again, whom fathers had cause to fear for their daughters, and

brothers for their sisters;--a man who, with his belongings, dwelt,

and must dwell, poles asunder from Lady Lufton and her belongings!

And it must be remembered that all these evil things were fully

believed by Mrs. Robarts. Could it really be that her husband was

going to dwell in the halls of Apollyon, to shelter himself beneath

the wings of this very Lucifer? A cloud of sorrow settled upon her

face, and then she read the letter again very slowly, not omitting

the tell-tale postscript.

"Oh, Justinia!" at last she said.

"What, have you got bad news, too?"

"I hardly know how to tell you what has occurred. There; I suppose

you had better read it;" and she handed her husband's epistle to Lady

Meredith,--keeping back, however, the postscript.

"What on earth will her ladyship say now?" said Lady Meredith, as she

folded the paper, and replaced it in the envelope.

"What had I better do, Justinia? how had I better tell her?" And

then the two ladies put their heads together, bethinking themselves

how they might best deprecate the wrath of Lady Lufton. It had been

arranged that Mrs. Robarts should go back to the parsonage after

lunch, and she had persisted in her intention after it had been

settled that the Merediths were to stay over that evening. Lady

Meredith now advised her friend to carry out this determination

without saying anything about her husband's terrible iniquities, and

then to send the letter up to Lady Lufton as soon as she reached the

parsonage. "Mamma will never know that you received it here," said

Lady Meredith. But Mrs. Robarts would not consent to this. Such a

course seemed to her to be cowardly. She knew that her husband was

doing wrong; she felt that he knew it himself; but still it was

necessary that she should defend him. However terrible might be the

storm, it must break upon her own head. So she at once went up and

tapped at Lady Lufton's private door; and as she did so Lady Meredith

followed her.

"Come in," said Lady Lufton, and the voice did not sound soft and

pleasant. When they entered, they found her sitting at her little

writing-table, with her head resting on her arm, and that letter

which she had received that morning was lying open on the table

before her. Indeed there were two letters now there, one from a

London lawyer to herself, and the other from her son to that London

lawyer. It needs only be explained that the subject of those letters

was the immediate sale of that outlying portion of the Lufton

property in Oxfordshire, as to which Mr. Sowerby once spoke. Lord

Lufton had told the lawyer that the thing must be done at once,

adding that his friend Robarts would have explained the whole affair

to his mother. And then the lawyer had written to Lady Lufton, as

indeed was necessary; but unfortunately Lady Lufton had not hitherto

heard a word of the matter. In her eyes the sale of family property

was horrible; the fact that a young man with some fifteen or twenty

thousand a year should require subsidiary money was horrible; that

her own son should have not written to her himself was horrible;

and it was also horrible that her own pet, the clergyman whom she

had brought there to be her son's friend, should be mixed up in the

matter; should be cognizant of it while she was not cognizant; should

be employed in it as a go-between and agent in her son's bad courses.

It was all horrible, and Lady Lufton was sitting there with a black

brow and an uneasy heart. As regarded our poor parson, we may say

that in this matter he was blameless, except that he had hitherto

lacked the courage to execute his friend's commission.

"What is it, Fanny?" said Lady Lufton, as soon as the door was

opened; "I should have been down in half an hour, if you wanted me,

Justinia."

"Fanny has received a letter which makes her wish to speak to you at

once," said Lady Meredith.

"What letter, Fanny?" Poor Fanny's heart was in her mouth; she held

it in her hand, but had not yet quite made up her mind whether she

would show it bodily to Lady Lufton. "From Mr. Robarts," she said.

"Well; I suppose he is going to stay another week at Chaldicotes. For

my part I should be as well pleased;" and Lady Lufton's voice was

not friendly, for she was thinking of that farm in Oxfordshire. The

imprudence of the young is very sore to the prudence of their elders.

No woman could be less covetous, less grasping than Lady Lufton; but

the sale of a portion of the old family property was to her as the

loss of her own heart's blood.

"Here is the letter, Lady Lufton; perhaps you had better read it;"

and Fanny handed it to her, again keeping back the postscript. She

had read and re-read the letter downstairs, but could not make out

whether her husband had intended her to show it. From the line of the

argument she thought that he must have done so. At any rate he said

for himself more than she could say for him, and so, probably, it was

best that her ladyship should see it. Lady Lufton took it, and read

it, and her face grew blacker and blacker. Her mind was set against

the writer before she began it, and every word in it tended to make

her feel more estranged from him. "Oh, he is going to the palace, is

he? well; he must choose his own friends. Harold Smith one of his

party! It's a pity, my dear, he did not see Miss Proudie before he

met you, he might have lived to be the bishop's chaplain. Gatherum

Castle! You don't mean to tell me that he is going there? Then I tell

you fairly, Fanny, that I have done with him."

"Oh, Lady Lufton, don't say that," said Mrs. Robarts, with tears in

her eyes.

"Mamma, mamma, don't speak in that way," said Lady Meredith.

"But, my dear, what am I to say? I must speak in that way. You would

not wish me to speak falsehoods, would you? A man must choose for

himself, but he can't live with two different sets of people; at

least, not if I belong to one and the Duke of Omnium to the other.

The bishop going indeed! If there be anything that I hate it is

hypocrisy."

"There is no hypocrisy in that, Lady Lufton."

"But I say there is, Fanny. Very strange, indeed! 'Put off his

defence!' Why should a man need any defence to his wife if he acts in

a straightforward way? His own language condemns him: 'Wrong to stand

out!' Now, will either of you tell me that Mr. Robarts would really

have thought it wrong to refuse that invitation? I say that that is

hypocrisy. There is no other word for it." By this time the poor

wife, who had been in tears, was wiping them away and preparing for

action. Lady Lufton's extreme severity gave her courage. She knew

that it behoved her to fight for her husband when he was thus

attacked. Had Lady Lufton been moderate in her remarks Mrs. Robarts

would not have had a word to say.

"My husband may have been ill-judged," she said, "but he is no

hypocrite."

"Very well, my dear, I dare say you know better than I; but to me it

looks extremely like hypocrisy; eh, Justinia?

"Oh, mamma, do be moderate."

"Moderate! That's all very well. How is one to moderate one's

feelings when one has been betrayed?"

"You do not mean that Mr. Robarts has betrayed you?" said the wife.

"Oh, no; of course not." And then she went on reading the letter:

"'Seem to have been standing in judgement upon the duke.' Might he

not use the same argument as to going into any house in the kingdom,

however infamous? We must all stand in judgement one upon another in

that sense. 'Crawley!' Yes; if he were a little more like Mr. Crawley

it would be a good thing for me, and for the parish, and for you too,

my dear. God forgive me for bringing him here; that's all."

"Lady Lufton, I must say that you are very hard upon him--very hard.

I did not expect it from such a friend."

"My dear, you ought to know me well enough to be sure that I shall

speak my mind. 'Written to Jones'--yes; it is easy enough to write to

poor Jones. He had better write to Jones, and bid him do the whole

duty. Then he can go and be the duke's domestic chaplain."

"I believe my husband does as much of his own duty as any clergyman

in the whole diocese," said Mrs. Robarts, now again in tears.

"And you are to take his work in the school; you and Mrs. Podgens.

What with his curate and his wife and Mrs. Podgens, I don't see why

he should come back at all."

"Oh, mamma," said Justinia, "pray, pray don't be so harsh to her."

"Let me finish it, my dear;--oh, here I come. 'Tell her ladyship my

whereabouts.' He little thought you'd show me this letter."

"Didn't he?" said Mrs. Robarts, putting out her hand to get it back,

but in vain. "I thought it was for the best; I did indeed."

"I had better finish it now, if you please. What is this? How does

he dare send his ribald jokes to me in such a matter? No, I do not

suppose I ever shall like Dr. Proudie; I have never expected it. A

matter of conscience with him! Well--well, well. Had I not read it

myself, I could not have believed it of him. I would not positively

have believed it. 'Coming from my parish he could not go to the Duke

of Omnium!' And it is what I would wish to have said. People fit for

this parish should not be fit for the Duke of Omnium's house. And I

had trusted that he would have this feeling more strongly than any

one else in it. I have been deceived--that's all."

"He has done nothing to deceive you, Lady Lufton."

"I hope he will not have deceived you, my dear. 'More money;' yes,

it is probable that he will want more money. There is your letter,

Fanny. I am very sorry for it. I can say nothing more." And she

folded up the letter and gave it back to Mrs. Robarts.

"I thought it right to show it to you," said Mrs. Robarts.

"It did not much matter whether you did or no; of course I must have

been told."

"He especially begs me to tell you.

"Why, yes; he could not very well have kept me in the dark in such

a matter. He could not neglect his own work, and go and live with

gamblers and adulterers at the Duke of Omnium's without my knowing

it." And now Fanny Robarts's cup was full, full to the overflowing.

When she heard these words she forgot all about Lady Lufton, all

about Lady Meredith, and remembered only her husband--that he was her

husband, and, in spite of his faults, a good and loving husband;--and

that other fact also she remembered, that she was his wife.

"Lady Lufton," she said, "you forget yourself in speaking in that way

of my husband."

"What!" said her ladyship; "you are to show me such a letter as that,

and I am not to tell you what I think?"

"Not if you think such hard things as that. Even you are not

justified in speaking to me in that way, and I will not hear it."

"Heighty-tighty!" said her ladyship.

"Whether or no he is right in going to the Duke of Omnium's, I will

not pretend to judge. He is the judge of his own actions, and neither

you nor I."

"And when he leaves you with the butcher's bill unpaid and no money

to buy shoes for the children, who will be the judge then?"

"Not you, Lady Lufton. If such bad days should ever come--and neither

you nor I have a right to expect them--I will not come to you in my

troubles; not after this."

"Very well, my dear. You may go to the Duke of Omnium if that suits

you better."

"Fanny, come away," said Lady Meredith. "Why should you try to anger

my mother?"

"I don't want to anger her; but I won't hear him abused in that way

without speaking up for him. If I don't defend him, who will? Lady

Lufton has said terrible things about him; and they are not true."

"Oh, Fanny!" said Justinia.

"Very well, very well!" said Lady Lufton. "This is the sort of return

that one gets."

"I don't know what you mean by return, Lady Lufton: but would you

wish me to stand by quietly and hear such things said of my husband?

He does not live with such people as you have named. He does not

neglect his duties. If every clergyman were as much in his parish,

it would be well for some of them. And in going to such a house as

the Duke of Omnium's it does make a difference that he goes there

in company with the bishop. I can't explain why, but I know that it

does."

"Especially when the bishop is coupled up with the devil, as Mr.

Robarts has done," said Lady Lufton; "he can join the duke with them

and then they'll stand for the three Graces, won't they, Justinia?"

And Lady Lufton laughed a bitter little laugh at her own wit.

"I suppose I may go now, Lady Lufton."

"Oh, yes, certainly, my dear."

"I am sorry if I have made you angry with me; but I will not allow

any one to speak against Mr. Robarts without answering them. You have

been very unjust to him; and even though I do anger you, I must say

so."

"Come, Fanny; this is too bad," said Lady Lufton. "You have been

scolding me for the last half-hour because I would not congratulate

you on this new friend that your husband has made, and now you are

going to begin it all over again. That is more than I can stand. If

you have nothing else particular to say, you might as well leave me."

And Lady Lufton's face as she spoke was unbending, severe, and harsh.

Mrs. Robarts had never before been so spoken to by her old friend;

indeed, she had never been so spoken to by any one, and she hardly

knew how to bear herself.

"Very well, Lady Lufton," she said; "then I will go. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Lady Lufton, and turning herself to her table she

began to arrange her papers. Fanny had never before left Framley

Court to go back to her own parsonage without a warm embrace. Now she

was to do so without even having her hand taken. Had it come to this,

that there was absolutely to be a quarrel between them--a quarrel for

ever?

"Fanny is going, you know, mamma," said Lady Meredith. "She will be

home before you are down again."

"I cannot help it, my dear. Fanny must do as she pleases. I am not to

be the judge of her actions. She has just told me so." Mrs. Robarts

had said nothing of the kind, but she was far too proud to point this

out. So with a gentle step she retreated through the door, and then

Lady Meredith, having tried what a conciliatory whisper with her

mother would do, followed her. Alas, the conciliatory whisper was

altogether ineffectual.

The two ladies said nothing as they descended the stairs, but when

they had regained the drawing-room they looked with blank horror into

each other's faces. What were they to do now? Of such a tragedy as

this they had had no remotest preconception. Was it absolutely the

case that Fanny Robarts was to walk out of Lady Lufton's house as a

declared enemy--she who, before her marriage as well as since, had

been almost treated as an adopted daughter of the family?

"Oh, Fanny, why did you answer my mother in that way?" said Lady

Meredith. "You saw that she was vexed, She had other things to vex

her besides this about Mr. Robarts."

"And would not you answer any one who attacked Sir George?"

"No, not my own mother. I would let her say what she pleased, and

leave Sir George to fight his own battles."

"Ah, but it is different with you. You are her daughter, and Sir

George--she would not dare to speak in that way as to Sir George's

doings."

"Indeed she would, if it pleased her. I am sorry I let you go up to

her."

"It is as well that it should be over, Justinia. As those are her

thoughts about Mr. Robarts, it is quite as well that we should know

them. Even for all that I owe to her, and all the love I bear to you,

I will not come to this house if I am to hear my husband abused--not

into any house."

"My dearest Fanny, we all know what happens when two angry people get

together."

"I was not angry when I went up to her; not in the least."

"It is no good looking back. What are we to do now, Fanny?"

"I suppose I had better go home," said Mrs. Robarts. "I will go and

put my things up, and then I will send James for them."

"Wait till after lunch, and then you will be able to kiss my mother

before you leave us."

"No, Justinia; I cannot wait. I must answer Mr. Robarts by this post,

and I must think what I have to say to him. I could not write that

letter here, and the post goes at four." And Mrs. Robarts got up from

her chair, preparatory to her final departure.

"I shall come to you before dinner," said Lady Meredith; "and if I

can bring you good tidings, I shall expect you to come back here with

me. It is out of the question that I should go away from Framley

leaving you and my mother at enmity with each other." To this Mrs.

Robarts made no answer; and in a very few minutes afterwards she was

in her own nursery, kissing her children, and teaching the elder one

to say something about papa. But, even as she taught him, the tears

stood in her eyes, and the little fellow knew that everything was not

right. And there she sat till about two, doing little odds and ends

of things for the children, and allowing that occupation to stand

as an excuse to her for not commencing her letter. But then there

remained only two hours to her, and it might be that the letter would

be difficult in the writing--would require thought and changes, and

must needs be copied, perhaps, more than once. As to the money, that

she had in the house--as much, at least, as Mark now wanted, though

the sending of it would leave her nearly penniless. She could,

however, in case of personal need, resort to Davis as desired by him.

So she got out her desk in the drawing-room and sat down and wrote

her letter. It was difficult, though she found that it hardly took so

long as she expected. It was difficult, for she felt bound to tell

him the truth; and yet she was anxious not to spoil all his pleasure

among his friends. She told him, however, that Lady Lufton was very

angry, "unreasonably angry, I must say," she put in, in order to

show that she had not sided against him. "And, indeed, we have quite

quarrelled, and this has made me unhappy, as it will you, dearest; I

know that. But we both know how good she is at heart, and Justinia

thinks that she had other things to trouble her; and I hope it will

all be made up before you come home; only, dearest Mark, pray do not

be longer than you said in your last letter." And then there were

three or four paragraphs about the babies, and two about the schools,

which I may as well omit. She had just finished her letter, and was

carefully folding it for its envelope, with the two whole five-pound

notes imprudently placed within it, when she heard a footstep on the

gravel path which led up from a small wicket to the front door. The

path ran near the drawing-room window, and she was just in time

to catch a glimpse of the last fold of a passing cloak. "It is

Justinia," she said to herself; and her heart became disturbed at the

idea of again discussing the morning's adventure. "What am I to do,"

she had said to herself before, "if she wants me to beg her pardon? I

will not own before her that he is in the wrong."

And then the door opened--for the visitor made her entrance without

the aid of any servant--and Lady Lufton herself stood before her.

"Fanny," she said at once, "I have come to beg your pardon."

"Oh, Lady Lufton!"

"I was very much harassed when you came to me just now;--by more

things than one, my dear. But, nevertheless, I should not have spoken

to you of your husband as I did, and so I have come to beg your

pardon." Mrs. Robarts was past answering by the time that this was

said, past answering at least in words; so she jumped up, and with

her eyes full of tears, threw herself into her old friend's arms.

"Oh, Lady Lufton!" she sobbed forth again.

"You will forgive me, won't you?" said her ladyship, as she returned

her young friend's caress. "Well, that's right. I have not been at

all happy since you left my den this morning, and I don't suppose you

have. But, Fanny, dearest, we love each other too well, and know each

other too thoroughly, to have a long quarrel, don't we?"

"Oh, yes, Lady Lufton."

"Of course we do. Friends are not to be picked up on the road-side

every day; nor are they to be thrown away lightly. And now sit down,

my love, and let us have a little talk. There, I must take my bonnet

off. You have pulled the strings so that you have almost choked me."

And Lady Lufton deposited her bonnet on the table, and seated herself

comfortably in the corner of the sofa.

"My dear," she said, "there is no duty which any woman owes to any

other human being at all equal to that which she owes to her husband,

and, therefore, you were quite right to stand up for Mr. Robarts this

morning." Upon this Mrs. Robarts said nothing, but she got her hand

within that of her ladyship and gave it a slight squeeze.

"And I loved you for what you were doing all the time. I did, my

dear; though you were a little fierce, you know. Even Justinia admits

that, and she has been at me ever since you went away. And, indeed,

I did not know that it was in you to look in that way out of those

pretty eyes of yours."

"Oh, Lady Lufton!"

"But I looked fierce enough too myself, I dare say; so we'll say

nothing more about that; will we? But now, about this good man of

yours?"

"Dear Lady Lufton, you must forgive him."

"Well, as you ask me, I will. We'll have nothing more said about the

duke, either now or when he comes back; not a word. Let me see--he's

to be back;--when is it?"

"Wednesday week, I think."

"Ah, Wednesday. Well, tell him to come and dine up at the house on

Wednesday. He'll be in time, I suppose, and there shan't be a word

said about this horrid duke."

"I am so much obliged to you, Lady Lufton."

"But look here, my dear; believe me, he's better off without such

friends."

"Oh, I know he is; much better off."

"Well, I'm glad you admit that, for I thought you seemed to be in

favour of the duke."

"Oh, no, Lady Lufton."

"That's right, then. And now, if you'll take my advice, you'll use

your influence, as a good, dear sweet wife as you are, to prevent his

going there any more. I'm an old woman and he is a young man, and

it's very natural that he should think me behind the times. I'm not

angry at that. But he'll find that it's better for him, better for

him in every way, to stick to his old friends. It will be better for

his peace of mind, better for his character as a clergyman, better

for his pocket, better for his children and for you,--and better for

his eternal welfare. The duke is not such a companion as he should

seek;--nor, if he is sought, should he allow himself to be led away."

And then Lady Lufton ceased, and Fanny Robarts kneeling at her feet

sobbed, with her face hidden on her friend's knees. She had not

a word now to say as to her husband's capability of judging for

himself.

"And now I must be going again; but Justinia has made me

promise,--promise, mind you, most solemnly, that I would have you

back to dinner to-night,--by force if necessary. It was the only

way I could make my peace with her; so you must not leave me in the

lurch." Of course, Fanny said that she would go and dine at Framley

Court.

"And you must not send that letter, by any means," said her ladyship

as she was leaving the room, poking with her umbrella at the epistle,

which lay directed on Mis. Robarts's desk. "I can understand very

well what it contains. You must alter it altogether, my dear." And

then Lady Lufton went.

Mrs. Robarts instantly rushed to her desk and tore open her letter.

She looked at her watch and it was past four. She had hardly begun

another when the postman came. "Oh, Mary," she said, "do make him

wait. If he'll wait a quarter of an hour I'll give him a shilling."

"There's no need of that, ma'am. Let him have a glass of beer."

"Very well, Mary; but don't give him too much, for fear he should

drop the letters about. I'll be ready in ten minutes." And in five

minutes she had scrawled a very different sort of letter. But he

might want the money immediately, so she would not delay it for a

day.

CHAPTER VI

Mr. Harold Smith's Lecture

On the whole the party at Chaldicotes was very pleasant, and the

time passed away quickly enough. Mr. Robarts's chief friend there,

independently of Mr. Sowerby, was Miss Dunstable, who seemed to

take a great fancy to him, whereas she was not very accessible to

the blandishments of Mr. Supplehouse, nor more specially courteous

even to her host than good manners required of her. But then Mr.

Supplehouse and Mr. Sowerby were both bachelors, while Mark Robarts

was a married man. With Mr. Sowerby Robarts had more than one

communication respecting Lord Lufton and his affairs, which he would

willingly have avoided had it been possible. Sowerby was one of those

men who are always mixing up business with pleasure, and who have

usually some scheme in their mind which requires forwarding. Men of

this class have, as a rule, no daily work, no regular routine of

labour; but it may be doubted whether they do not toil much more

incessantly than those who have.

"Lufton is so dilatory," Mr. Sowerby said. "Why did he not arrange

this at once, when he promised it? And then he is so afraid of that

old woman at Framley Court. Well, my dear fellow, say what you will;

she is an old woman, and she'll never be younger. But do write to

Lufton, and tell him that this delay is inconvenient to me; he'll

do anything for you, I know." Mark said that he would write, and,

indeed, did do so; but he did not at first like the tone of the

conversation into which he was dragged. It was very painful to him to

hear Lady Lufton called an old woman, and hardly less so to discuss

the propriety of Lord Lufton's parting with his property. This was

irksome to him, till habit made it easy. But by degrees his feelings

became less acute, and he accustomed himself to his friend Sowerby's

mode of talking.

And then on Saturday afternoon they all went over to Barchester.

Harold Smith during the last forty-eight hours had become crammed

to overflowing with Sarawak, Labuan, New Guinea, and the Salomon

Islands. As is the case with all men labouring under temporary

specialities, he for the time had faith in nothing else, and was

not content that any one near him should have any other faith. They

called him Viscount Papua and Baron Borneo; and his wife, who headed

the joke against him, insisted on having her title. Miss Dunstable

swore that she would wed none but a South Sea islander; and to Mark

was offered the income and duties of Bishop of Spices. Nor did the

Proudie family set themselves against these little sarcastic quips

with any overwhelming severity. It is sweet to unbend oneself at the

proper opportunity, and this was the proper opportunity for Mrs.

Proudie's unbending. No mortal can be seriously wise at all hours;

and in these happy hours did that usually wise mortal, the bishop,

lay aside for awhile his serious wisdom.

"We think of dining at five to-morrow, my Lady Papua," said the

facetious bishop; "will that suit his lordship and the affairs of

State? he! he! he!" And the good prelate laughed at the fun. How

pleasantly young men and women of fifty or thereabouts can joke and

flirt and poke their fun about, laughing and holding their sides,

dealing in little innuendoes and rejoicing in nicknames, when they

have no Mentors of twenty-five or thirty near them to keep them in

order! The vicar of Framley might perhaps have been regarded as such

a Mentor, were it not for that capability of adapting himself to the

company immediately around him on which he so much piqued himself.

He therefore also talked to my Lady Papua, and was jocose about

the Baron,--not altogether to the satisfaction of Mr. Harold Smith

himself. For Mr. Harold Smith was in earnest, and did not quite

relish these jocundities. He had an idea that he could in about three

months talk the British world into civilizing New Guinea, and that

the world of Barsetshire would be made to go with him by one night's

efforts. He did not understand why others should be less serious, and

was inclined to resent somewhat stiffly the amenities of our friend

Mark.

"We must not keep the Baron waiting," said Mark, as they were

preparing to start for Barchester.

"I don't know what you mean by the Baron, sir," said Harold Smith.

"But perhaps the joke will be against you, when you are getting up

into your pulpit to-morrow, and sending the hat round among the

clod-hoppers of Chaldicotes."

"Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones; eh, Baron?"

said Miss Dunstable. "Mr. Robarts's sermon will be too near akin to

your lecture to allow of his laughing."

"If we can do nothing towards instructing the outer world till it's

done by the parsons," said Harold Smith, "the outer world will have

to wait a long time, I fear."

"Nobody can do anything of that kind short of a member of Parliament

and a would-be minister," whispered Mrs. Harold. And so they were all

very pleasant together, in spite of a little fencing with edge-tools;

and at three o'clock the \_cortÃ©ge\_ of carriages started for

Barchester, that of the bishop, of course, leading the way. His

lordship, however, was not in it.

"Mrs. Proudie, I'm sure you'll let me go with you," said Miss

Dunstable, at the last moment, as she came down the big stone steps.

"I want to hear the rest of that story about Mr. Slope." Now this

upset everything. The bishop was to have gone with his wife, Mrs.

Smith, and Mark Robarts; and Mr. Sowerby had so arranged matters that

he could have accompanied Miss Dunstable in his phaeton. But no one

ever dreamed of denying Miss Dunstable anything. Of course Mark gave

way; but it ended in the bishop declaring that he had no special

predilection for his own carriage, which he did in compliance with

a glance from his wife's eye. Then other changes of course followed,

and, at last, Mr. Sowerby and Harold Smith were the joint occupants

of the phaeton. The poor lecturer, as he seated himself, made some

remark such as those he had been making for the last two days--for

out of a full heart the mouth speaketh. But he spoke to an impatient

listener. "D---- the South Sea islanders," said Mr. Sowerby.

"You'll have it all your own way in a few minutes, like a bull in a

china-shop; but for Heaven's sake let us have a little peace till

that time comes." It appeared that Mr. Sowerby's little plan of

having Miss Dunstable for his companion was not quite insignificant;

and, indeed, it may be said that but few of his little plans were

so. At the present moment he flung himself back in the carriage

and prepared for sleep. He could further no plan of his by a

\_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ conversation with his brother-in-law. And then Mrs.

Proudie began her story about Mr. Slope, or rather recommenced it.

She was very fond of talking about this gentleman, who had once been

her pet chaplain, but was now her bitterest foe; and in telling the

story, she had sometimes to whisper to Miss Dunstable, for there

were one or two fie-fie little anecdotes about a married lady, not

altogether fit for young Mr. Robarts's ears. But Mrs. Harold Smith

insisted on having them out loud, and Miss Dunstable would gratify

that lady in spite of Mrs. Proudie's winks.

"What, kissing her hand, and he a clergyman!" said Miss Dunstable.

"I did not think they ever did such things, Mr. Robarts."

"Still waters run deepest," said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"Hush-h-h," looked, rather than spoke, Mrs. Proudie. "The grief

of spirit which that bad man caused me nearly broke my heart, and

all the while, you know, he was courting--" and then Mrs. Proudie

whispered a name.

"What, the dean's wife!" shouted Miss Dunstable, in a voice which

made the coachman of the next carriage give a chuck to his horses as

he overheard her.

"The archdeacon's sister-in-law!" screamed Mrs. Harold Smith.

"What might he not have attempted next?" said Miss Dunstable.

"She wasn't the dean's wife then, you know," said Mrs. Proudie,

explaining.

"Well, you've a gay set in the chapter, I must say," said Miss

Dunstable. "You ought to make one of them in Barchester, Mr.

Robarts."

"Only perhaps Mrs. Robarts might not like it," said Mrs. Harold

Smith.

"And then the schemes which he tried on with the bishop!" said Mrs.

Proudie.

"It's all fair in love and war, you know," said Miss Dunstable.

"But he little knew whom he had to deal with when he began that,"

said Mrs. Proudie.

"The bishop was too many for him," suggested Mrs. Harold Smith, very

maliciously.

"If the bishop was not, somebody else was; and he was obliged to

leave Barchester in utter disgrace. He has since married the wife of

some tallow-chandler."

"The wife!" said Miss Dunstable. "What a man!"

"Widow, I mean; but it's all one to him."

"The gentleman was clearly born when Venus was in the ascendant,"

said Mrs. Smith. "You clergymen usually are, I believe, Mr. Robarts."

So that Mrs. Proudie's carriage was by no means the dullest as they

drove into Barchester that day; and by degrees our friend Mark became

accustomed to his companions, and before they reached the palace he

acknowledged to himself that Miss Dunstable was very good fun. We

cannot linger over the bishop's dinner, though it was very good of

its kind; and as Mr. Sowerby contrived to sit next to Miss Dunstable,

thereby overturning a little scheme made by Mr. Supplehouse, he again

shone forth in unclouded good humour. But Mr. Harold Smith became

impatient immediately on the withdrawal of the cloth. The lecture was

to begin at seven, and according to his watch that hour had already

come. He declared that Sowerby and Supplehouse were endeavouring to

delay matters in order that the Barchesterians might become vexed

and impatient; and so the bishop was not allowed to exercise his

hospitality in true episcopal fashion.

"You forget, Sowerby," said Supplehouse, "that the world here for the

last fortnight has been looking forward to nothing else."

"The world shall be gratified at once," said Mrs. Harold, obeying a

little nod from Mrs. Proudie. "Come, my dear," and she took hold of

Miss Dunstable's arm, "don't let us keep Barchester waiting. We shall

be ready in a quarter of an hour, shall we not, Mrs. Proudie?" and so

they sailed off.

"And we shall have time for one glass of claret," said the bishop.

"There; that's seven by the cathedral," said Harold Smith, jumping

up from his chair as he heard the clock. "If the people have come it

would not be right in me to keep them waiting, and I shall go."

"Just one glass of claret, Mr. Smith, and we'll be off," said the

bishop.

"Those women will keep me an hour," said Harold, filling his glass,

and drinking it standing. "They do it on purpose," He was thinking

of his wife, but it seemed to the bishop as though his guest were

actually speaking of Mrs. Proudie.

It was rather late when they all found themselves in the big room of

the Mechanics' Institute; but I do not know whether this on the whole

did them any harm. Most of Mr. Smith's hearers, excepting the party

from the palace, were Barchester tradesmen with their wives and

families; and they waited, not impatiently, for the big people. And

then the lecture was gratis, a fact which is always borne in mind

by an Englishman when he comes to reckon up and calculate the way

in which he is treated. When he pays his money, then he takes his

choice; he may be impatient or not as he likes. His sense of justice

teaches him so much, and in accordance with that sense he usually

acts. So the people on the benches rose graciously when the palace

party entered the room. Seats for them had been kept in the front.

There were three arm-chairs, which were filled, after some little

hesitation, by the bishop, Mrs. Proudie, and Miss Dunstable--Mrs.

Smith positively declining to take one of them; though, as she

admitted, her rank as Lady Papua of the islands did give her some

claim. And this remark, as it was made quite out loud, reached Mr.

Smith's ears as he stood behind a little table on a small raised

dais, holding his white kid gloves; and it annoyed him and rather put

him out. He did not like that joke about Lady Papua. And then the

others of the party sat upon a front bench covered with red cloth.

"We shall find this very hard and very narrow about the second hour,"

said Mr. Sowerby, and Mr. Smith on his dais again overheard the

words, and dashed his gloves down to the table. He felt that all the

room would hear it.

And there were one or two gentlemen on the second seat who shook

hands with some of our party. There was Mr. Thorne, of Ullathorne,

a good-natured old bachelor, whose residence was near enough

to Barchester to allow of his coming in without much personal

inconvenience; and next to him was Mr. Harding, an old clergyman

of the chapter, with whom Mrs. Proudie shook hands very graciously,

making way for him to seat himself close behind her if he would so

please. But Mr. Harding did not so please. Having paid his respects

to the bishop he returned quietly to the side of his old friend Mr.

Thorne, thereby angering Mrs. Proudie, as might easily be seen by her

face. And Mr. Chadwick also was there, the episcopal man of business

for the diocese; but he also adhered to the two gentlemen above

named. And now that the bishop and the ladies had taken their places,

Mr. Harold Smith relifted his gloves and again laid them down, hummed

three times distinctly, and then began.

"It was," he said, "the most peculiar characteristic of the present

era in the British islands that those who were high placed before the

world in rank, wealth, and education were willing to come forward

and give their time and knowledge without fee or reward, for the

advantage and amelioration of those who did not stand so high in the

social scale." And then he paused for a moment, during which Mrs.

Smith remarked to Miss Dunstable that that was pretty well for a

beginning; and Miss Dunstable replied, "that as for herself she felt

very grateful to rank, wealth, and education." Mr. Sowerby winked

to Mr. Supplehouse, who opened his eyes very wide and shrugged his

shoulders. But the Barchesterians took it all in good part and gave

the lecturer the applause of their hands and feet. And then, well

pleased, he recommenced--"I do not make these remarks with reference

to myself--"

"I hope he's not going to be modest," said Miss Dunstable.

"It will be quite new if he is," replied Mrs. Smith.

"--so much as to many noble and talented lords and members of the

lower House who have lately from time to time devoted themselves to

this good work." And then he went through a long list of peers and

members of Parliament, beginning, of course, with Lord Boanerges, and

ending with Mr. Green Walker, a young gentleman who had lately been

returned by his uncle's interest for the borough of Crewe Junction,

and had immediately made his entrance into public life by giving a

lecture on the grammarians of the Latin language as exemplified at

Eton School. "On the present occasion," Mr. Smith continued, "our

object is to learn something as to those grand and magnificent

islands which lie far away, beyond the Indies, in the Southern Ocean;

the lands of which produce rich spices and glorious fruits, and whose

seas are embedded with pearls and corals,--Papua and the Philippines,

Borneo and the Moluccas. My friends, you are familiar with your maps,

and you know the track which the equator makes for itself through

those distant oceans." And then many heads were turned down, and

there was a rustle of leaves; for not a few of those "who stood not

so high in the social scale" had brought their maps with them, and

refreshed their memories as to the whereabouts of these wondrous

islands.

And then Mr. Smith also, with a map in his hand, and pointing

occasionally to another large map which hung against the wall, went

into the geography of the matter. "We might have found that out from

our atlases, I think, without coming all the way to Barchester,"

said that unsympathizing helpmate, Mrs. Harold, very cruelly--most

illogically too, for there be so many things which we could find out

ourselves by search, but which we never do find out unless they be

specially told us; and why should not the latitude and longitude of

Labuan be one--or rather two of these things? And then, when he had

duly marked the path of the line through Borneo, Celebes, and Gilolo,

through the Macassar Strait and the Molucca passage, Mr. Harold

Smith rose to a higher flight. "But what," said he, "avails all

that God can give to man, unless man will open his hand to receive

the gift? And what is this opening of the hand but the process of

civilization--yes, my friends, the process of civilization? These

South Sea islanders have all that a kind Providence can bestow on

them; but that all is as nothing without education. That education

and that civilization it is for you to bestow upon them--yes, my

friends, for you; for you, citizens of Barchester as you are." And

then he paused again, in order that the feet and hands might go to

work. The feet and hands did go to work, during which Mr. Smith took

a slight drink of water. He was now quite in his element, and had

got into the proper way of punching the table with his fists. A few

words dropping from Mr. Sowerby did now and again find their way to

his ears, but the sound of his own voice had brought with it the

accustomed charm, and he ran on from platitude to truism, and from

truism back to platitude, with an eloquence that was charming to

himself.

"Civilization," he exclaimed, lifting up his eyes and hands to the

ceiling. "O Civilization--"

"There will not be a chance for us now for the next hour and a half,"

said Mr. Supplehouse, groaning. Harold Smith cast one eye down at

him, but it immediately flew back to the ceiling.

"O Civilization! thou that ennoblest mankind and makest him equal to

the gods, what is like unto thee?" Here Mrs. Proudie showed evident

signs of disapprobation, which no doubt would have been shared by

the bishop, had not that worthy prelate been asleep. But Mr. Smith

continued unobservant; or at any rate regardless. "What is like unto

thee? Thou art the irrigating stream which makest fertile the barren

plain. Till thou comest all is dark and dreary; but at thy advent the

noontide sun shines out, the earth gives forth her increase; the deep

bowels of the rocks render up their tribute. Forms which were dull

and hideous become endowed with grace and beauty, and vegetable

existence rises to the scale of celestial life. Then, too, Genius

appears clad in a panoply of translucent armour, grasping in his

hand the whole terrestrial surface, and making every rood of earth

subservient to his purposes;--Genius, the child of Civilization, the

mother of the Arts!" The last little bit, taken from the "Pedigree

of Progress," had a great success, and all Barchester went to work

with its hands and feet;--all Barchester, except that ill-natured

aristocratic front-row together with the three arm-chairs at the

corner of it. The aristocratic front row felt itself to be too

intimate with civilization to care much about it; and the three

arm-chairs, or rather that special one which contained Mrs.

Proudie, considered that there was a certain heathenness, a pagan

sentimentality almost amounting to infidelity, contained in the

lecturer's remarks, with which she, a pillar of the Church, could not

put up, seated as she was now in public conclave.

"It is to civilization that we must look," continued Mr. Harold

Smith, descending from poetry to prose as a lecturer well knows how,

and thereby showing the value of both--"for any material progress in

these islands; and--"

"And to Christianity," shouted Mrs. Proudie, to the great amazement

of the assembled people, and to the thorough wakening of the bishop,

who, jumping up in his chair at the sound of the well-known voice,

exclaimed, "Certainly, certainly."

"Hear, hear, hear," said those on the benches who particularly

belonged to Mrs. Proudie's school of divinity in the city, and among

the voices was distinctly heard that of a new verger in whose behalf

she had greatly interested herself.

"Oh, yes, Christianity of course," said Harold Smith, upon whom the

interruption did not seem to operate favourably.

"Christianity and Sabbath-day observance," exclaimed Mrs. Proudie,

who, now that she had obtained the ear of the public, seemed well

inclined to keep it. "Let us never forget that these islanders can

never prosper unless they keep the Sabbath holy." Poor Mr. Smith,

having been so rudely dragged from his high horse, was never able

to mount it again, and completed the lecture in a manner not at all

comfortable to himself. He had there, on the table before him, a huge

bundle of statistics, with which he had meant to convince the reason

of his hearers, after he had taken full possession of their feelings.

But they fell very dull and flat. And at the moment when he was

interrupted, he was about to explain that that material progress to

which he had alluded could not be attained without money; and that it

behoved them, the people of Barchester before him, to come forward

with their purses like men and brothers. He did also attempt this;

but from the moment of that fatal onslaught from the arm-chair,

it was clear to him, and to every one else, that Mrs. Proudie was

now the hero of the hour. His time had gone by, and the people of

Barchester did not care a straw for his appeal. From these causes

the lecture was over full twenty minutes earlier than any one had

expected, to the great delight of Messrs. Sowerby and Supplehouse,

who, on that evening, moved and carried a vote of thanks to Mrs.

Proudie. For they had gay doings yet before they went to their beds.

"Robarts, here one moment," Mr. Sowerby said, as they were standing

at the door of the Mechanics' Institute. "Don't you go off with Mr.

and Mrs. Bishop. We are going to have a little supper at the Dragon

of Wantly, and, after what we have gone through, upon my word we want

it. You can tell one of the palace servants to let you in." Mark

considered the proposal wistfully. He would fain have joined the

supper party had he dared; but he, like many others of his cloth, had

the fear of Mrs. Proudie before his eyes. And a very merry supper

they had; but poor Mr. Harold Smith was not the merriest of the

party.

CHAPTER VII

Sunday Morning

It was, perhaps, quite as well on the whole for Mark Robarts, that he

did not go to that supper party. It was eleven o'clock before they

sat down and nearly two before the gentlemen were in bed. It must

be remembered that he had to preach, on the coming Sunday morning,

a charity sermon on behalf of a mission to Mr. Harold Smith's

islanders; and, to tell the truth, it was a task for which he had

now very little inclination. When first invited to do this, he had

regarded the task seriously enough, as he always did regard such

work, and he completed his sermon for the occasion before he left

Framley; but, since that, an air of ridicule had been thrown over the

whole affair, in which he had joined without much thinking of his own

sermon, and this made him now heartily wish that he could choose a

discourse upon any other subject. He knew well that the very points

on which he had most insisted, were those which had drawn most mirth

from Miss Dunstable and Mrs. Smith, and had oftenest provoked his own

laughter; and how was he now to preach on those matters in a fitting

mood, knowing, as he would know, that those two ladies would be

looking at him, would endeavour to catch his eye, and would turn him

into ridicule as they had already turned the lecturer? In this he did

injustice to one of the ladies, unconsciously. Miss Dunstable, with

all her aptitude for mirth, and we may almost fairly say for frolic,

was in no way inclined to ridicule religion or anything which she

thought to appertain to it. It may be presumed that among such things

she did not include Mrs. Proudie, as she was willing enough to laugh

at that lady; but Mark, had he known her better, might have been sure

that she would have sat out his sermon with perfect propriety.

As it was, however, he did feel considerable uneasiness; and in the

morning he got up early, with the view of seeing what might be done

in the way of emendation. He cut out those parts which referred most

specially to the islands,--he rejected altogether those names over

which they had all laughed together so heartily,--and he inserted a

string of general remarks, very useful, no doubt, which he flattered

himself would rob his sermon of all similarity to Harold Smith's

lecture. He had, perhaps, hoped, when writing it, to create some

little sensation; but now he would be quite satisfied if it passed

without remark. But his troubles for that Sunday were destined to

be many. It had been arranged that the party at the hotel should

breakfast at eight and start at half-past eight punctually, so as

to enable them to reach Chaldicotes in ample time to arrange their

dresses before they went to church. The church stood in the grounds,

close to that long formal avenue of lime trees, but within the front

gates. Their walk, therefore, after reaching Mr. Sowerby's house,

would not be long.

Mrs. Proudie, who was herself an early body, would not hear of her

guest--and he a clergyman--going out to the inn for his breakfast

on a Sunday morning. As regarded that Sabbath-day journey to

Chaldicotes, to that she had given her assent, no doubt with much

uneasiness of mind; but let them have as little desecration as

possible. It was therefore an understood thing that he was to return

with his friends; but he should not go without the advantage of

family prayers and family breakfast. And so Mrs. Proudie on retiring

to rest gave the necessary orders, to the great annoyance of her

household.

To the great annoyance, at least, of her servants! The bishop himself

did not make his appearance till a much later hour. He in all things

now supported his wife's rule; in all things, now, I say; for

there had been a moment, when in the first flush and pride of his

episcopacy, other ideas had filled his mind. Now, however, he gave no

opposition to that good woman with whom Providence had blessed him;

and in return for such conduct that good woman administered in all

things to his little personal comforts. With what surprise did the

bishop now look back upon that unholy war which he had once been

tempted to wage against the wife of his bosom? Nor did any of the

Miss Proudies show themselves at that early hour. They, perhaps, were

absent on a different ground. With them Mrs. Proudie had not been

so successful as with the bishop. They had wills of their own which

became stronger and stronger every day. Of the three with whom Mrs.

Proudie was blessed one was already in a position to exercise that

will in a legitimate way over a very excellent young clergyman in

the diocese, the Rev. Optimus Grey; but the other two, having as yet

no such opening for their powers of command, were perhaps a little

too much inclined to keep themselves in practice at home. But at

half-past seven punctually Mrs. Proudie was there, and so was the

domestic chaplain; so was Mr. Robarts, and so were the household

servants--all excepting one lazy recreant. "Where is Thomas?" said

she of the Argus eyes, standing up with her book of family prayers in

her hand. "So please you, ma'am, Tummas be bad with the tooth-ache."

"Tooth-ache!" exclaimed Mrs. Proudie; but her eyes said more terrible

things than that. "Let Thomas come to me before church." And then

they proceeded to prayers. These were read by the chaplain, as it was

proper and decent that they should be: but I cannot but think that

Mrs. Proudie a little exceeded her office in taking upon herself

to pronounce the blessing when the prayers were over. She did it,

however, in a clear, sonorous voice, and perhaps with more personal

dignity than was within the chaplain's compass.

Mrs. Proudie was rather stern at breakfast, and the vicar of Framley

felt an unaccountable desire to get out of the house. In the first

place she was not dressed with her usual punctilious attention to the

proprieties of her high situation. It was evident that there was to

be a further toilet before she sailed up the middle of the cathedral

choir. She had on a large loose cap with no other strings than those

which were wanted for tying it beneath her chin, a cap with which the

household and the chaplain were well acquainted, but which seemed

ungracious in the eyes of Mr. Robarts after all the well-dressed

holiday doings of the last week. She wore also a large, loose,

dark-coloured wrapper, which came well up round her neck, and which

was not buoyed out, as were her dresses in general, with an under

mechanism of petticoats. It clung to her closely, and added to the

inflexibility of her general appearance. And then she had encased her

feet in large carpet slippers, which no doubt were comfortable, but

which struck her visitor as being strange and unsightly. "Do you

find a difficulty in getting your people together for early morning

prayers?" she said, as she commenced her operations with the teapot.

"I can't say that I do," said Mark. "But then we are seldom so early

as this."

"Parish clergymen should be early, I think," said she. "It sets a

good example in the village."

"I am thinking of having morning prayers in the church," said Mr.

Robarts.

"That's nonsense," said Mrs. Proudie, "and usually means worse than

nonsense. I know what that comes to. If you have three services on

Sunday and domestic prayers at home, you do very well." And so saying

she handed him his cup.

"But I have not three services on Sunday, Mrs. Proudie."

"Then I think you should have. Where can the poor people be so well

off on Sundays as in church? The bishop intends to express a very

strong opinion on this subject in his next charge; and then I am sure

you will attend to his wishes." To this Mark made no answer, but

devoted himself to his egg.

"I suppose you have not a very large establishment at Framley?" asked

Mrs. Proudie.

"What, at the parsonage?"

"Yes; you live at the parsonage, don't you?"

"Certainly--well; not very large, Mrs. Proudie; just enough to do the

work, make things comfortable, and look after the children."

"It is a very fine living," said she; "very fine. I don't remember

that we have anything so good ourselves,--except it is Plumstead, the

archdeacon's place. He has managed to butter his bread pretty well."

"His father was Bishop of Barchester."

"Oh, yes, I know all about him. Only for that he would barely have

risen to be an archdeacon, I suspect. Let me see; yours is Â£800, is

it not, Mr. Robarts? And you such a young man! I suppose you have

insured your life highly."

"Pretty well, Mrs. Proudie."

"And then, too, your wife had some little fortune, had she not? We

cannot all fall on our feet like that; can we, Mr. White?" and Mrs.

Proudie in her playful way appealed to the chaplain. Mrs. Proudie

was an imperious woman; but then so also was Lady Lufton; and it may

therefore he said that Mr. Robarts ought to have been accustomed to

feminine domination; but as he sat there munching his toast he could

not but make a comparison between the two. Lady Lufton in her little

attempts sometimes angered him; but he certainly thought, comparing

the lay lady and the clerical together, that the rule of the former

was the lighter and the pleasanter. But then Lady Lufton had given

him a living and a wife, and Mrs. Proudie had given him nothing.

Immediately after breakfast Mr. Robarts escaped to the Dragon of

Wantly, partly because he had had enough of the matutinal Mrs.

Proudie, and partly also in order that he might hurry his friends

there. He was already becoming fidgety about the time, as Harold

Smith had been on the preceding evening, and he did not give Mrs.

Smith credit for much punctuality. When he arrived at the inn he

asked if they had done breakfast, and was immediately told that not

one of them was yet down. It was already half-past eight, and they

ought to be now under weigh on the road. He immediately went to Mr.

Sowerby's room, and found that gentleman shaving himself. "Don't be a

bit uneasy," said Mr. Sowerby. "You and Smith shall have my phaeton,

and those horses will take you there in an hour. Not, however, but

what we shall all be in time. We'll send round to the whole party and

ferret them out." And then Mr. Sowerby, having evoked manifold aid

with various peals of the bell, sent messengers, male and female,

flying to all the different rooms.

"I think I'll hire a gig and go over at once," said Mark. "It would

not do for me to be late, you know."

"It won't do for any of us to be late; and it's all nonsense about

hiring a gig. It would be just throwing a sovereign away, and we

should pass you on the road. Go down and see that the tea is made,

and all that; and make them have the bill ready; and, Robarts, you

may pay it too, if you like it. But I believe we may as well leave

that to Baron Borneo--eh?" And then Mark did go down and make the

tea, and he did order the bill; and then he walked about the room,

looking at his watch, and nervously waiting for the footsteps of his

friends. And as he was so employed, he bethought himself whether it

was fit that he should be so doing on a Sunday morning; whether it

was good that he should be waiting there, in painful anxiety, to

gallop over a dozen miles in order that he might not be too late with

his sermon; whether his own snug room at home, with Fanny opposite to

him, and his bairns crawling on the floor, with his own preparations

for his own quiet service, and the warm pressure of Lady Lufton's

hand when that service should be over, was not better than all this.

He could not afford not to know Harold Smith, and Mr. Sowerby, and

the Duke of Omnium, he had said to himself. He had to look to rise

in the world, as other men did. But what pleasure had come to him

as yet from these intimacies? How much had he hitherto done towards

his rising? To speak the truth he was not over well pleased with

himself, as he made Mrs. Harold Smith's tea and ordered Mr. Sowerby's

mutton-chops on that Sunday morning.

At a little after nine they all assembled; but even then he could

not make the ladies understand that there was any cause for hurry;

at least Mrs. Smith, who was the leader of the party, would not

understand it. When Mark again talked of hiring a gig, Miss Dunstable

indeed said that she would join him; and seemed to be so far earnest

in the matter that Mr. Sowerby hurried through his second egg in

order to prevent such a catastrophe. And then Mark absolutely did

order the gig; whereupon Mrs. Smith remarked that in such case she

need not hurry herself; but the waiter brought up word that all

the horses of the hotel were out, excepting one pair, neither of

which could go in single harness. Indeed, half of their stable

establishment was already secured by Mr. Sowerby's own party. "Then

let me have the pair," said Mark, almost frantic with delay.

"Nonsense, Robarts; we are ready now. He won't want them, James.

Come, Supplehouse, have you done?"

"Then I am to hurry myself, am I?" said Mrs. Harold Smith. "What

changeable creatures you men are! May I be allowed half a cup more

tea, Mr. Robarts?" Mark, who was now really angry, turned away to

the window. There was no charity in these people, he said to himself.

They knew the nature of his distress, and yet they only laughed at

him. He did not, perhaps, reflect that he had assisted in the joke

against Harold Smith on the previous evening. "James," said he,

turning to the waiter, "let me have that pair of horses immediately,

if you please."

"Yes, sir; round in fifteen minutes, sir: only Ned, sir, the

post-boy, sir; I fear he's at his breakfast, sir; but we'll have him

here in less than no time, sir!" But before Ned and the pair were

there, Mrs. Smith had absolutely got her bonnet on, and at ten they

started. Mark did share the phaeton with Harold Smith, but the

phaeton did not go any faster than the other carriages. They led the

way, indeed, but that was all; and when the vicar's watch told him

that it was eleven, they were still a mile from Chaldicotes gate,

although the horses were in a lather of steam; and they had only just

entered the village when the church bells ceased to be heard.

"Come, you are in time, after all," said Harold Smith. "Better time

than I was last night." Robarts could not explain to him that the

entry of a clergyman into church, of a clergyman who is going to

assist in the service, should not be made at the last minute, that it

should be staid and decorous, and not done in scrambling haste, with

running feet and scant breath.

"I suppose we'll stop here, sir," said the postilion, as he pulled up

his horses short at the church-door, in the midst of the people who

were congregated together ready for the service. But Mark had not

anticipated being so late, and said at first that it was necessary

that he should go on to the house; then, when the horses had again

begun to move, he remembered that he could send for his gown, and

as he got out of the carriage he gave his orders accordingly. And

now the other two carriages were there, and so there was a noise

and confusion at the door--very unseemly, as Mark felt it; and the

gentlemen spoke in loud voices, and Mrs. Harold Smith declared that

she had no Prayer-Book, and was much too tired to go in at present;

she would go home and rest herself, she said. And two other ladies

of the party did so also, leaving Miss Dunstable to go alone;--for

which, however, she did not care one button. And then one of the

party, who had a nasty habit of swearing, cursed at something as

he walked in close to Mark's elbow; and so they made their way up

the church as the Absolution was being read, and Mark Robarts felt

thoroughly ashamed of himself. If his rising in the world brought

him in contact with such things as these, would it not be better for

him that he should do without rising? His sermon went off without

any special notice. Mrs. Harold Smith was not there, much to his

satisfaction; and the others who were did not seem to pay any special

attention to it. The subject had lost its novelty, except with the

ordinary church congregation, the farmers and labourers of the

parish; and the "quality" in the squire's great pew were content

to show their sympathy by a moderate subscription. Miss Dunstable,

however, gave a ten-pound note, which swelled up the sum total to a

respectable amount--for such a place as Chaldicotes.

"And now I hope I may never hear another word about New Guinea," said

Mr. Sowerby, as they all clustered round the drawing-room fire after

church. "That subject may be regarded as having been killed and

buried; eh, Harold?"

"Certainly murdered last night," said Mrs. Harold, "by that awful

woman, Mrs. Proudie."

"I wonder you did not make a dash at her and pull her out of the

arm-chair," said Miss Dunstable. "I was expecting it, and thought

that I should come to grief in the scrimmage."

"I never knew a lady do such a brazen-faced thing before," said Miss

Kerrigy, a travelling friend of Miss Dunstable's.

"Nor I--never; in a public place, too," said Dr. Easyman, a medical

gentleman, who also often accompanied her.

"As for brass," said Mr. Supplehouse, "she would never stop at

anything for want of that. It is well that she has enough, for the

poor bishop is but badly provided."

"I hardly heard what it was she did say," said Harold Smith; "so I

could not answer her, you know. Something about Sundays, I believe."

"She hoped you would not put the South Sea islanders up to Sabbath

travelling," said Mr. Sowerby.

"And specially begged that you would establish Lord's-day schools,"

said Mrs. Smith; and then they all went to work and picked Mrs.

Proudie to pieces from the top ribbon of her cap down to the sole of

her slipper.

"And then she expects the poor parsons to fall in love with her

daughters. That's the hardest thing of all," said Miss Dunstable.

But, on the whole, when our vicar went to bed he did not feel that he

had spent a profitable Sunday.

CHAPTER VIII

Gatherum Castle

On the Tuesday morning Mark did receive his wife's letter, and the

ten-pound note, whereby a strong proof was given of the honesty of

the post-office people in Barsetshire. That letter, written as it

had been in a hurry, while Robin post-boy was drinking a single mug

of beer,--well, what of it if it was half filled a second time?--was

nevertheless eloquent of his wife's love and of her great triumph.

"I have only half a moment to send you the money," she said, "for

the postman is here waiting. When I see you I'll explain why I am so

hurried. Let me know that you get it safe. It is all right now, and

Lady Lufton was here not a minute ago. She did not quite like it;

about Gatherum Castle, I mean; but you'll hear nothing about it. Only

remember that \_you must dine\_ at Framley Court on Wednesday week. \_I

have promised for you.\_ You will; won't you, dearest? I shall come

and fetch you away if you attempt to stay longer than you have said.

But I'm sure you won't. God bless you, my own one! Mr. Jones gave us

the same sermon he preached the second Sunday after Easter. Twice in

the same year is too often. God bless you! The children \_are quite

well\_. Mark sends a big kiss.--Your own F."

Robarts, as he read this letter and crumpled the note up into his

pocket, felt that it was much more satisfactory than he deserved. He

knew that there must have been a fight, and that his wife, fighting

loyally on his behalf, had got the best of it; and he knew also that

her victory had not been owing to the goodness of her cause. He

frequently declared to himself that he would not be afraid of Lady

Lufton; but nevertheless these tidings that no reproaches were to be

made to him afforded him great relief. On the following Friday they

all went to the duke's, and found that the bishop and Mrs. Proudie

were there before them; as were also sundry other people, mostly

of some note either in the estimation of the world at large or of

that of West Barsetshire. Lord Boanerges was there, an old man who

would have his own way in everything, and who was regarded by all

men--apparently even by the duke himself--as an intellectual king,

by no means of the constitutional kind--as an intellectual emperor,

rather, who took upon himself to rule all questions of mind without

the assistance of any ministers whatever. And Baron Brawl was of the

party, one of Her Majesty's puisne Judges, as jovial a guest as ever

entered a country house; but given to be rather sharp withal in his

jovialities. And there was Mr. Green Walker, a young but rising man,

the same who lectured not long since on a popular subject to his

constituents at the Crewe Junction. Mr. Green Walker was a nephew of

the Marchioness of Hartletop, and the Marchioness of Hartletop was a

friend of the Duke of Omnium's. Mr. Mark Robarts was certainly elated

when he ascertained who composed the company of which he had been so

earnestly pressed to make a portion. Would it have been wise in him

to forgo this on account of the prejudices of Lady Lufton?

As the guests were so many and so great, the huge front portals of

Gatherum Castle were thrown open, and the vast hall, adorned with

trophies--with marble busts from Italy and armour from Wardour

Street--was thronged with gentlemen and ladies, and gave forth

unwonted echoes to many a footstep. His grace himself, when Mark

arrived there with Sowerby and Miss Dunstable--for in this instance

Miss Dunstable did travel in the phaeton, while Mark occupied a

seat in the dicky--his grace himself was at this moment in the

drawing-room, and nothing could exceed his urbanity.

"Oh, Miss Dunstable," he said, taking that lady by the hand, and

leading her up to the fire, "now I feel for the first time that

Gatherum Castle has not been built for nothing."

"Nobody ever supposed it was, your grace," said Miss Dunstable. "I am

sure the architect did not think so when his bill was paid." And Miss

Dunstable put her toes up on the fender to warm them with as much

self-possession as though her father had been a duke also, instead of

a quack doctor.

"We have given the strictest orders about the parrot," said the

duke--

"Ah! but I have not brought him after all," said Miss Dunstable.

--"and I have had an aviary built on purpose,--just such as parrots

are used to in their own country. Well, Miss Dunstable, I do call

that unkind. Is it too late to send for him?"

"He and Dr. Easyman are travelling together. The truth was, I could

not rob the doctor of his companion."

"Why? I have had another aviary built for him. I declare, Miss

Dunstable, the honour you are doing me is shorn of half its glory.

But the poodle--I still trust in the poodle."

"And your grace's trust shall not in that respect be in vain. Where

is he, I wonder?" And Miss Dunstable looked round as though she

expected that somebody would certainly have brought her dog in after

her. "I declare I must go and look for him,--only think if they

were to put him among your grace's dogs,--how his morals would be

destroyed!"

"Miss Dunstable, is that intended to be personal?" but the lady had

turned away from the fire, and the duke was able to welcome his other

guests. This he did with much courtesy. "Sowerby," he said, "I am

glad to find that you have survived the lecture. I can assure you I

had fears for you."

"I was brought back to life after considerable delay by the

administration of tonics at the Dragon of Wantly. Will your grace

allow me to present to you Mr. Robarts, who on that occasion was not

so fortunate. It was found necessary to carry him off to the palace,

where he was obliged to undergo very vigorous treatment." And then

the duke shook hands with Mr. Robarts, assuring him that he was most

happy to make his acquaintance. He had often heard of him since he

came into the county; and then he asked after Lord Lufton, regretting

that he had been unable to induce his lordship to come to Gatherum

Castle.

"But you had a diversion at the lecture, I am told," continued the

duke. "There was a second performer, was there not, who almost

eclipsed poor Harold Smith?" And then Mr. Sowerby gave an amusing

sketch of the little Proudie episode.

"It has, of course, ruined your brother-in-law for ever as a

lecturer," said the duke, laughing.

"If so, we shall feel ourselves under the deepest obligations to Mrs.

Proudie," said Mr. Sowerby. And then Harold Smith himself came up and

received the duke's sincere and hearty congratulations on the success

of his enterprise at Barchester. Mark Robarts had now turned away,

and his attention was suddenly arrested by the loud voice of Miss

Dunstable, who had stumbled across some very dear friends in her

passage through the rooms, and who by no means hid from the public

her delight upon the occasion.

"Well--well--well!" she exclaimed, and then she seized upon a very

quiet-looking, well-dressed, attractive young woman who was walking

towards her, in company with a gentleman. The gentleman and lady, as

it turned out, were husband and wife. "Well--well--well! I hardly

hoped for this." And then she took hold of the lady and kissed her

enthusiastically, and after that grasped both the gentleman's hands,

shaking them stoutly.

"And what a deal I shall have to say to you!" she went on. "You'll

upset all my other plans. But, Mary, my dear, how long are you going

to stay here? I go--let me see--I forget when, but it's all put down

in a book upstairs. But the next stage is at Mrs. Proudie's. I shan't

meet you there, I suppose. And now, Frank, how's the governor?" The

gentleman called Frank declared that the governor was all right--"mad

about the hounds, of course, you know."

"Well, my dear, that's better than the hounds being mad about him,

like the poor gentleman they've put into a statue. But talking of

hounds, Frank, how badly they manage their foxes at Chaldicotes! I

was out hunting all one day--"

"You out hunting!" said the lady called Mary.

"And why shouldn't I go out hunting? I'll tell you what, Mrs. Proudie

was out hunting too. But they didn't catch a single fox; and, if you

must have the truth, it seemed to me to be rather slow."

"You were in the wrong division of the county," said the gentleman

called Frank.

"Of course I was. When I really want to practise hunting I'll go to

Greshamsbury; not a doubt about that."

"Or to Boxall Hill," said the lady; "you'll find quite as much zeal

there as at Greshamsbury."

"And more discretion, you should add," said the gentleman.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Miss Dunstable; "your discretion indeed! But

you have not told me a word about Lady Arabella."

"My mother is quite well," said the gentleman.

"And the doctor? By the by, my dear, I've had such a letter from the

doctor; only two days ago. I'll show it you upstairs to-morrow. But

mind, it must be a positive secret. If he goes on in this way he'll

get himself into the Tower, or Coventry, or a blue-book, or some

dreadful place."

"Why; what has he said?"

"Never you mind, Master Frank: I don't mean to show you the letter,

you may be sure of that. But if your wife will swear three times on

a poker and tongs that she won't reveal, I'll show it to her. And so

you are quite settled at Boxall Hill, are you?"

"Frank's horses are settled; and the dogs nearly so," said Frank's

wife; "but I can't boast much of anything else yet."

"Well, there's a good time coming. I must go and change my things

now. But, Mary, mind you get near me this evening; I have such a deal

to say to you." And then Miss Dunstable marched out of the room.

All this had been said in so loud a voice that it was, as a matter

of course, overheard by Mark Robarts--that part of the conversation

of course I mean which had come from Miss Dunstable. And then Mark

learned that this was young Frank Gresham of Boxall Hill, son of

old Mr. Gresham of Greshamsbury. Frank had lately married a great

heiress; a greater heiress, men said, even than Miss Dunstable;

and as the marriage was hardly as yet more than six months old the

Barsetshire world was still full of it.

"The two heiresses seem to be very loving, don't they?" said Mr.

Supplehouse. "Birds of a feather flock together, you know. But they

did say some little time ago that young Gresham was to have married

Miss Dunstable herself."

"Miss Dunstable! why, she might almost be his mother," said Mark.

"That makes but little difference. He was obliged to marry money, and

I believe there is no doubt that he did at one time propose to Miss

Dunstable."

"I have had a letter from Lufton," Mr. Sowerby said to him the next

morning. "He declares that the delay was all your fault. You were to

have told Lady Lufton before he did anything, and he was waiting to

write about it till he heard from you. It seems that you never said a

word to her ladyship on the subject."

"I never did, certainly. My commission from Lufton was to break the

matter to her when I found her in a proper humour for receiving it.

If you knew Lady Lufton as well as I do, you would know that it is

not every day that she would be in a humour for such tidings."

"And so I was to be kept waiting indefinitely because you two between

you were afraid of an old woman! However, I have not a word to say

against her, and the matter is settled now."

"Has the farm been sold?"

"Not a bit of it. The dowager could not bring her mind to suffer

such profanation for the Lufton acres, and so she sold five

thousand pounds out of the funds and sent the money to Lufton as a

present;--sent it to him without saying a word, only hoping that it

would suffice for his wants. I wish I had a mother, I know."

Mark found it impossible at the moment to make any remark upon what

had been told him, but he felt a sudden qualm of conscience and a

wish that he was at Framley instead of at Gatherum Castle at the

present moment. He knew a good deal respecting Lady Lufton's income

and the manner in which it was spent. It was very handsome for a

single lady, but then she lived in a free and open-handed style; her

charities were noble; there was no reason why she should save money,

and her annual income was usually spent within the year. Mark knew

this, and he knew also that nothing short of an impossibility to

maintain them would induce her to lessen her charities. She had now

given away a portion of her principal to save the property of her

son--her son, who was so much more opulent than herself,--upon whose

means, too, the world made fewer effectual claims. And Mark knew,

too, something of the purpose for which this money had gone. There

had been unsettled gambling claims between Sowerby and Lord Lufton,

originating in affairs of the turf. It had now been going on for four

years, almost from the period when Lord Lufton had become of age.

He had before now spoken to Robarts on the matter with much bitter

anger, alleging that Mr. Sowerby was treating him unfairly, nay,

dishonestly--that he was claiming money that was not due to him;

and then he declared more than once that he would bring the matter

before the Jockey Club. But Mark, knowing that Lord Lufton was not

clear-sighted in those matters, and believing it to be impossible

that Mr. Sowerby should actually endeavour to defraud his friend, had

smoothed down the young lord's anger, and recommended him to get the

case referred to some private arbiter. All this had afterwards been

discussed between Robarts and Mr. Sowerby himself, and hence had

originated their intimacy. The matter was so referred, Mr. Sowerby

naming the referee; and Lord Lufton, when the matter was given

against him, took it easily. His anger was over by that time. "I've

been clean done among them," he said to Mark, laughing; "but it does

not signify; a man must pay for his experience. Of course, Sowerby

thinks it all right; I am bound to suppose so." And then there had

been some further delay as to the amount, and part of the money had

been paid to a third person, and a bill had been given, and Heaven

and the Jews only know how much money Lord Lufton had paid in all;

and now it was ended by his handing over to some wretched villain of

a money-dealer, on behalf of Mr. Sowerby, the enormous sum of five

thousand pounds, which had been deducted from the means of his

mother, Lady Lufton!

Mark, as he thought of all this, could not but feel a certain

animosity against Mr. Sowerby--could not but suspect that he was a

bad man. Nay, must he not have known that he was very bad? And yet he

continued walking with him through the duke's grounds, still talking

about Lord Lufton's affairs, and still listening with interest to

what Sowerby told him of his own. "No man was ever robbed as I have

been," said he. "But I shall win through yet, in spite of them all.

But those Jews, Mark"--he had become very intimate with him in these

latter days--"whatever you do, keep clear of them. Why, I could paper

a room with their signatures; and yet I never had a claim upon one of

them, though they always have claims on me!"

I have said above that this affair of Lord Lufton's was ended, but

it now appeared to Mark that it was not quite ended. "Tell Lufton,

you know," said Sowerby, "that every bit of paper with his name has

been taken up, except what that ruffian Tozer has. Tozer may have

one bill, I believe,--something that was not given up when it was

renewed. But I'll make my lawyer Gumption get that up. It may cost

ten pounds or twenty pounds, not more. You'll remember that when you

see Lufton, will you?"

"You'll see Lufton, in all probability, before I shall."

"Oh, did I not tell you? He's going to Framley Court at once; you'll

find him there when you return."

"Find him at Framley?"

"Yes; this little \_cadeau\_ from his mother has touched his filial

heart. He is rushing home to Framley to pay back the dowager's hard

moidores in soft caresses. I wish I had a mother; I know that." And

Mark still felt that he feared Mr. Sowerby, but he could not make up

his mind to break away from him.

And there was much talk of politics just then at the castle. Not that

the duke joined in it with any enthusiasm. He was a Whig--a huge

mountain of a colossal Whig--all the world knew that. No opponent

would have dreamed of tampering with his Whiggery, nor would any

brother Whig have dreamed of doubting it. But he was a Whig who gave

very little practical support to any set of men, and very little

practical opposition to any other set. He was above troubling himself

with such sublunar matters. At election time he supported, and always

carried, Whig candidates: and in return he had been appointed lord

lieutenant of the county by one Whig minister, and had received the

Garter from another. But these things were matters of course to a

Duke of Omnium, He was born to be a lord lieutenant and a Knight of

the Garter. But not the less on account of his apathy, or rather

quiescence, was it thought that Gatherum Castle was a fitting place

in which politicians might express to each other their present hopes

and future aims, and concoct together little plots in a half-serious

and half-mocking way. Indeed it was hinted that Mr. Supplehouse and

Harold Smith, with one or two others, were at Gatherum for this

express purpose. Mr. Fothergill, too, was a noted politician, and

was supposed to know the duke's mind well; and Mr. Green Walker, the

nephew of the marchioness, was a young man whom the duke desired to

have brought forward. Mr. Sowerby also was the duke's own member, and

so the occasion suited well for the interchange of a few ideas.

The then prime minister, angry as many men were with him, had not

been altogether unsuccessful. He had brought the Russian war to a

close, which, if not glorious, was at any rate much more so than

Englishmen at one time had ventured to hope. And he had had wonderful

luck in that Indian Mutiny. It is true that many of those even who

voted with him would declare that this was in no way attributable

to him. Great men had risen in India and done all that. Even his

minister there, the Governor whom he had sent out, was not allowed

in those days any credit for the success which was achieved under

his orders. There was great reason to doubt the man at the helm. But

nevertheless he had been lucky. There is no merit in a public man

like success! But now, when the evil days were wellnigh over, came

the question whether he had not been too successful. When a man has

nailed fortune to his chariot-wheels he is apt to travel about in

rather a proud fashion. There are servants who think that their

masters cannot do without them; and the public also may occasionally

have some such servant. What if this too successful minister were

one of them! And then a discreet, commonplace, zealous member of the

Lower House does not like to be jeered at, when he does his duty by

his constituents and asks a few questions. An all-successful minister

who cannot keep his triumph to himself, but must needs drive about in

a proud fashion, laughing at commonplace zealous members--laughing

even occasionally at members who are by no means commonplace, which

is outrageous!--may it not be as well to ostracize him for awhile?

"Had we not better throw in our shells against him?" says Mr. Harold

Smith.

"Let us throw in our shells, by all means," says Mr. Supplehouse,

mindful as Juno of his despised charms. And when Mr. Supplehouse

declares himself an enemy, men know how much it means. They know that

that much-belaboured head of affairs must succumb to the terrible

blows which are now in store for him. "Yes, we will throw in our

shells." And Mr. Supplehouse rises from his chair with gleaming

eyes. "Has not Greece as noble sons as him? aye, and much nobler,

traitor that he is. We must judge a man by his friends," says Mr.

Supplehouse; and he points away to the East, where our dear allies

the French are supposed to live, and where our head of affairs is

supposed to have too close an intimacy.

They all understand this, even Mr. Green Walker. "I don't know that

he is any good to any of us at all, now," says the talented member

for the Crewe Junction. "He's a great deal too uppish to suit my

book: and I know a great many people that think so too. There's my

uncle--"

"He's the best fellow in the world," said Mr. Fothergill, who felt,

perhaps, that that coming revelation about Mr. Green Walker's uncle

might not be of use to them; "but the fact is one gets tired of the

same men always. One does not like partridge every day. As for me,

I have nothing to do with it myself; but I would certainly like to

change the dish."

"If we're merely to do as we are bid, and have no voice of our own,

I don't see what's the good of going to the shop at all," said Mr.

Sowerby.

"Not the least use," said Mr. Supplehouse. "We are false to our

constituents in submitting to such a dominion."

"Let's have a change, then," said Mr. Sowerby. "The matter's pretty

much in our own hands."

"Altogether," said Mr. Green Walker. "That's what my uncle always

says."

"The Manchester men will only be too happy for the chance," said

Harold Smith.

"And as for the high and dry gentlemen," said Mr. Sowerby, "it's not

very likely that they will object to pick up the fruit when we shake

the tree."

"As to picking up the fruit, that's as may be," said Mr. Supplehouse.

Was he not the man to save the nation; and if so, why should he not

pick up the fruit himself? Had not the greatest power in the country

pointed him out as such a saviour? What though the country at the

present moment needed no more saving, might there not, nevertheless,

be a good time coming? Were there not rumours of other wars still

prevalent--if indeed the actual war then going on was being brought

to a close without his assistance by some other species of salvation?

He thought of that country to which he had pointed, and of that

friend of his enemies, and remembered that there might be still work

for a mighty saviour. The public mind was now awake, and understood

what it was about. When a man gets into his head an idea that the

public voice calls for him, it is astonishing how greet becomes his

trust in the wisdom of the public. \_Vox populi, vox Dei.\_ "Has it not

been so always?" he says to himself, as he gets up and as he goes to

bed. And then Mr. Supplehouse felt that he was the master mind there

at Gatherum Castle, and that those there were all puppets in his

hand. It is such a pleasant thing to feel that one's friends are

puppets, and that the strings are in one's own possession. But what

if Mr. Supplehouse himself were a puppet? Some months afterwards,

when the much-belaboured head of affairs was in very truth made

to retire, when unkind shells were thrown in against him in great

numbers, when he exclaimed, "\_Et tu, Brute!\_" till the words were

stereotyped upon his lips, all men in all places talked much about

the great Gatherum Castle confederation. The Duke of Omnium, the

world said, had taken into his high consideration the state of

affairs, and seeing with his eagle's eye that the welfare of

his countrymen at large required that some great step should be

initiated, he had at once summoned to his mansion many members of the

Lower House, and some also of the House of Lords,--mention was here

especially made of the all-venerable and all-wise Lord Boanerges; and

men went on to say that there, in deep conclave, he had made known

to them his views. It was thus agreed that the head of affairs, Whig

as he was, must fall. The country required it, and the duke did his

duty. This was the beginning, the world said, of that celebrated

confederation, by which the ministry was overturned, and--as the

\_Goody Twoshoes\_ added--the country saved. But the \_Jupiter\_ took all

the credit to itself; and the \_Jupiter\_ was not far wrong. All the

credit was due to the \_Jupiter\_--in that, as in everything else.

In the meantime the Duke of Omnium entertained his guests in

the quiet princely style, but did not condescend to have much

conversation on politics either with Mr. Supplehouse or with Mr.

Harold Smith. And as for Lord Boanerges, he spent the morning on

which the above-described conversation took place in teaching Miss

Dunstable to blow soap-bubbles on scientific principles.

"Dear, dear!" said Miss Dunstable, as sparks of knowledge came

flying in upon her mind. "I always thought that a soap-bubble was a

soap-bubble, and I never asked the reason why. One doesn't, you know,

my lord."

"Pardon me, Miss Dunstable," said the old lord, "one does; but nine

hundred and ninety-nine do not."

"And the nine hundred and ninety-nine have the best of it," said Miss

Dunstable. "What pleasure can one have in a ghost after one has seen

the phosphorus rubbed on?"

"Quite true, my dear lady. 'If ignorance be bliss, 'tis folly to be

wise.' It all lies in the 'if.'"

Then Miss Dunstable began to sing:--

"'What tho' I trace each herb and flower

That sips the morning dew--'

--you know the rest, my lord." Lord Boanerges did know almost

everything, but he did not know that; and so Miss Dunstable went

on:--

"'Did I not own Jehovah's power

How vain were all I knew.'"

"Exactly, exactly, Miss Dunstable," said his lordship; "but why not

own the power and trace the flower as well? perhaps one might help

the other." Upon the whole, I am afraid that Lord Boanerges got the

best of it. But, then, that is his line. He has been getting the best

of it all his life.

It was observed by all that the duke was especially attentive to

young Mr. Frank Gresham, the gentleman on whom and on whose wife Miss

Dunstable had seized so vehemently. This Mr. Gresham was the richest

commoner in the county, and it was rumoured that at the next election

he would be one of the members for the East Riding. Now the duke had

little or nothing to do with the East Riding, and it was well known

that young Gresham would be brought forward as a strong Conservative.

But, nevertheless, his acres were so extensive and his money so

plentiful that he was worth a duke's notice. Mr. Sowerby, also, was

almost more than civil to him, as was natural, seeing that this very

young man by a mere scratch of his pen could turn a scrap of paper

into a bank-note of almost fabulous value.

"So you have the East Barsetshire hounds at Boxall Hill; have you

not?" said the duke.

"The hounds are there," said Frank. "But I am not the master."

"Oh! I understood--"

"My father has them. But he finds Boxall Hill more centrical than

Greshamsbury. The dogs and horses have to go shorter distances."

"Boxall Hill is very centrical."

"Oh, exactly!"

"And your young gorse coverts are doing well?"

"Pretty well--gorse won't thrive everywhere, I find. I wish it

would."

"That's just what I say to Fothergill; and then where there's much

woodland you can't get the vermin to leave it."

"But we haven't a tree at Boxall Hill," said Mrs. Gresham.

"Ah, yes; you're new there, certainly; you've enough of it at

Greshamsbury in all conscience. There's a larger extent of wood there

than we have; isn't there, Fothergill?" Mr. Fothergill said that

the Greshamsbury woods were very extensive, but that, perhaps, he

thought--

"Oh, ah! I know," said the duke. "The Black Forest in its old days

was nothing to Gatherum woods, according to Fothergill. And then,

again, nothing in East Barsetshire could be equal to anything in West

Barsetshire. Isn't that it; eh, Fothergill?" Mr. Fothergill professed

that he had been brought up in that faith and intended to die in it.

"Your exotics at Boxall Hill are very fine, magnificent!" said Mr.

Sowerby.

"I'd sooner have one full-grown oak standing in its pride alone,"

said young Gresham, rather grandiloquently, "than all the exotics in

the world."

"They'll come in due time," said the duke.

"But the due time won't be in my days. And so they're going to cut

down Chaldicotes Forest, are they, Mr. Sowerby?"

"Well, I can't tell you that. They are going to disforest it. I have

been ranger since I was twenty-two, and I don't yet know whether that

means cutting down."

"Not only cutting down, but rooting up," said Mr. Fothergill.

"It's a murderous shame," said Frank Gresham; "and I will say one

thing, I don't think any but a Whig government would do it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed his grace. "At any rate, I'm sure of this," he

said, "that if a Conservative government did do so, the Whigs would

be just as indignant as you are now."

"I'll tell you what you ought to do, Mr. Gresham," said Sowerby: "put

in an offer for the whole of the West Barsetshire Crown property;

they will be very glad to sell it."

"And we should be delighted to welcome you on this side of the

border," said the duke. Young Gresham did feel rather flattered.

There were not many men in the county to whom such an offer could

be made without an absurdity. It might be doubted whether the duke

himself could purchase the Chace of Chaldicotes with ready money; but

that he, Gresham, could do so--he and his wife between them--no man

did doubt. And then Mr. Gresham thought of a former day when he had

once been at Gatherum Castle. He had been poor enough then, and the

duke had not treated him in the most courteous manner in the world.

How hard it is for a rich man not to lean upon his riches! harder,

indeed, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

All Barsetshire knew--at any rate all West Barsetshire--that Miss

Dunstable had been brought down in those parts in order that Mr.

Sowerby might marry her. It was not surmised that Miss Dunstable

herself had had any previous notice of this arrangement, but it was

supposed that the thing would turn out as a matter of course. Mr.

Sowerby had no money, but then he was witty, clever, good-looking,

and a member of Parliament. He lived before the world, represented an

old family, and had an old place. How could Miss Dunstable possibly

do better? She was not so young now, and it was time that she

should look about her. The suggestion, as regarded Mr. Sowerby, was

certainly true, and was not the less so as regarded some of Mr.

Sowerby's friends. His sister, Mrs. Harold Smith, had devoted herself

to the work, and with this view had run up a dear friendship with

Miss Dunstable. The bishop had intimated, nodding his head knowingly,

that it would be a very good thing. Mrs. Proudie had given in her

adherence. Mr. Supplehouse had been made to understand that it must

be a case of "Paws off" with him, as long as he remained in that part

of the world; and even the duke himself had desired Fothergill to

manage it.

"He owes me an enormous sum of money," said the duke, who held all

Mr. Sowerby's title-deeds, "and I doubt whether the security will be

sufficient."

"Your grace will find the security quite sufficient," said Mr.

Fothergill; "but nevertheless it would be a good match."

"Very good," said the duke. And then it became Mr. Fothergill's duty

to see that Mr. Sowerby and Miss Dunstable became man and wife as

speedily as possible. Some of the party, who were more wide awake

than others, declared that he had made the offer; others, that he was

just going to do so; and one very knowing lady went so far at one

time as to say that he was making it at that moment. Bets also were

laid as to the lady's answer, as to the terms of the settlement, and

as to the period of the marriage--of all which poor Miss Dunstable of

course knew nothing. Mr. Sowerby, in spite of the publicity of his

proceedings, proceeded in the matter very well. He said little about

it to those who joked with him, but carried on the fight with what

best knowledge he had in such matters. But so much it is given to us

to declare with certainty, that he had not proposed on the evening

previous to the morning fixed for the departure of Mark Robarts.

During the last two days Mr. Sowerby's intimacy with Mark had grown

warmer and warmer. He had talked to the vicar confidentially about

the doings of these bigwigs now present at the castle, as though

there were no other guest there with whom he could speak in so free

a manner. He confided, it seemed, much more in Mark than in his

brother-in-law, Harold Smith, or in any of his brother members of

Parliament, and had altogether opened his heart to him in this affair

of his anticipated marriage. Now Mr. Sowerby was a man of mark in the

world, and all this flattered our young clergyman not a little. On

that evening before Robarts went away Sowerby asked him to come up

into his bedroom when the whole party was breaking up, and there got

him into an easy chair, while he, Sowerby, walked up and down the

room.

"You can hardly tell, my dear fellow," said he, "the state of nervous

anxiety in which this puts me."

"Why don't you ask her and have done with it? She seems to me to be

fond of your society."

"Ah, it is not that only; there are wheels within wheels:" and then

he walked once or twice up and down the room, during which Mark

thought that he might as well go to bed.

"Not that I mind telling you everything," said Sowerby. "I am

infernally hard up for a little ready money just at the present

moment. It may be, and indeed I think it will be, the case that I

shall be ruined in this matter for the want of it."

"Could not Harold Smith give it you?"

"Ha, ha, ha! you don't know Harold Smith. Did you ever hear of his

lending a man a shilling in his life."

"Or Supplehouse?"

"Lord love you! You see me and Supplehouse together here, and he

comes and stays at my house, and all that; but Supplehouse and I are

no friends. Look you here, Mark--I would do more for your little

finger than for his whole hand, including the pen which he holds in

it. Fothergill indeed might--but then I know Fothergill is pressed

himself at the present moment. It is deuced hard, isn't it? I must

give up the whole game if I can't put my hand upon Â£400 within the

next two days."

"Ask her for it, herself."

"What, the woman I wish to marry! No, Mark, I'm not quite come to

that. I would sooner lose her than that." Mark sat silent, gazing at

the fire and wishing that he was in his own bedroom. He had an idea

that Mr. Sowerby wished him to produce this Â£400, and he knew also

that he had not Â£400 in the world, and that if he had he would be

acting very foolishly to give it to Mr. Sowerby. But nevertheless he

felt half fascinated by the man, and half afraid of him.

"Lufton owes it to me to do more than this," continued Mr. Sowerby,

"but then Lufton is not here."

"Why, he has just paid five thousand pounds for you."

"Paid five thousand pounds for me! Indeed he has done no such thing:

not a sixpence of it came into my hands. Believe me, Mark, you don't

know the whole of that yet. Not that I mean to say a word against

Lufton. He is the soul of honour; though so deucedly dilatory in

money matters. He thought he was right all through that affair, but

no man was ever so confoundedly wrong. Why, don't you remember that

that was the very view you took of it yourself?"

"I remember saying that I thought he was mistaken."

"Of course he was mistaken. And dearly the mistake cost me; I had to

make good the money for two or three years. And my property is not

like his--I wish it were."

"Marry Miss Dunstable, and that will set it all right for you."

"Ah! so I would if I had this money. At any rate I would bring it to

the point. Now, I tell you what, Mark, if you'll assist me at this

strait I'll never forget it. And the time will come round when I may

be able to do something for you."

"I have not got a hundred, no, not fifty pounds by me in the world."

"Of course you've not. Men don't walk about the streets with Â£400 in

their pockets. I don't suppose there's a single man here in the house

with such a sum at his bankers', unless it be the duke."

"What is it you want, then?"

"Why, your name, to be sure. Believe me, my dear fellow, I would not

ask you really to put your hand into your pocket to such a tune as

that. Allow me to draw on you for that amount at three months. Long

before that time I shall be flush enough." And then, before Mark

could answer, he had a bill stamp and pen and ink out on the table

before him, and was filling in the bill as though his friend had

already given his consent.

"Upon my word, Sowerby, I had rather not do that."

"Why? what are you afraid of?"--Mr. Sowerby asked this very sharply.

"Did you ever hear of my having neglected to take up a bill when it

fell due?" Robarts thought that he had heard of such a thing; but in

his confusion he was not exactly sure, and so he said nothing.

"No, my boy; I have not come to that. Look here: just you write,

'Accepted, Mark Robarts,' across that, and then you shall never hear

of the transaction again; and you will have obliged me for ever."

"As a clergyman it would be wrong of me," said Robarts.

"As a clergyman! Come, Mark! If you don't like to do as much as that

for a friend, say so; but don't let us have that sort of humbug. If

there be one class of men whose names would be found more frequent on

the backs of bills in the provincial banks than another, clergymen

are that class. Come, old fellow, you won't throw me over when I am

so hard pushed." Mark Robarts took the pen and signed the bill. It

was the first time in his life that he had ever done such an act.

Sowerby then shook him cordially by the hand, and he walked off to

his own bedroom a wretched man.

CHAPTER IX

The Vicar's Return

The next morning Mr. Robarts took leave of all his grand friends with

a heavy heart. He had lain awake half the night thinking of what he

had done and trying to reconcile himself to his position. He had not

well left Mr. Sowerby's room before he felt certain that at the end

of three months he would again be troubled about that Â£400. As he

went along the passage, all the man's known antecedents crowded upon

him much quicker than he could remember them when seated in that

arm-chair with the bill stamp before him, and the pen and ink ready

to his hand. He remembered what Lord Lufton had told him--how he had

complained of having been left in the lurch; he thought of all the

stories current through the entire country as to the impossibility

of getting money from Chaldicotes; he brought to mind the known

character of the man, and then he knew that he must prepare himself

to make good a portion at least of that heavy payment. Why had he

come to this horrid place? Had he not everything at home at Framley

which the heart of man could desire? No; the heart of man can desire

deaneries--the heart, that is, of the man vicar; and the heart of the

man dean can desire bishoprics; and before the eyes of the man bishop

does there not loom the transcendental glory of Lambeth? He had owned

to himself that he was ambitious; but he had to own to himself now

also that he had hitherto taken but a sorry path towards the object

of his ambition. On the next morning at breakfast-time, before his

horse and gig arrived for him, no one was so bright as his friend

Sowerby. "So you are off, are you?" said he.

"Yes, I shall go this morning."

"Say everything that's kind from me to Lufton. I may possibly see him

out hunting; otherwise we shan't meet till the spring. As to my going

to Framley, that's out of the question. Her ladyship would look for

my tail, and swear that she smelt brimstone. By-bye, old fellow!"

The German student when he first made his bargain with the devil felt

an indescribable attraction to his new friend; and such was the case

now with Robarts. He shook Sowerby's hand very warmly, said that

he hoped he should meet him soon somewhere, and professed himself

specially anxious to hear how that affair with the lady came off.

As he had made his bargain--as he had undertaken to pay nearly half

a year's income for his dear friend--ought he not to have as much

value as possible for his money? If the dear friendship of this flash

member of Parliament did not represent that value, what else did do

so? But then he felt, or fancied that he felt, that Mr. Sowerby did

not care for him so much this morning as he had done on the previous

evening. "By-bye," said Mr. Sowerby, but he spoke no word as to

such future meetings, nor did he even promise to write. Mr. Sowerby

probably had many things on his mind; and it might be that it behoved

him, having finished one piece of business, immediately to look to

another.

The sum for which Robarts had made himself responsible--which he so

much feared that he would be called upon to pay--was very nearly half

a year's income; and as yet he had not put by one shilling since he

had been married. When he found himself settled in his parsonage,

he found also that all the world regarded him as a rich man. He had

taken the dictum of all the world as true, and had set himself to

work to live comfortably. He had no absolute need of a curate; but he

could afford the Â£70--as Lady Lufton had said rather injudiciously;

and by keeping Jones in the parish he would be acting charitably to a

brother clergyman, and would also place himself in a more independent

position. Lady Lufton had wished to see her pet clergyman well-to-do

and comfortable; but now, as matters had turned out, she much

regretted this affair of the curate. Mr. Jones, she said to herself,

more than once, must be made to depart from Framley. He had given

his wife a pony-carriage, and for himself he had a saddle-horse, and

a second horse for his gig. A man in his position, well-to-do as he

was, required as much as that. He had a footman also, and a gardener,

and a groom. The two latter were absolutely necessary, but about the

former there had been a question. His wife had been decidedly hostile

to the footman; but in all such matters as that, to doubt is to be

lost. When the footman had been discussed for a week it became quite

clear to the master that he also was a necessary.

As he drove home that morning he pronounced to himself the doom of

that footman, and the doom also of that saddle-horse. They at any

rate should go. And then he would spend no more money in trips

to Scotland; and above all, he would keep out of the bedrooms of

impoverished members of Parliament at the witching hour of midnight.

Such resolves did he make to himself as he drove home; and bethought

himself wearily how that Â£400 might be made to be forthcoming. As to

any assistance in the matter from Sowerby,--of that he gave himself

no promise. But he almost felt himself happy again as his wife came

out into the porch to meet him with a silk shawl over her head, and

pretending to shiver as she watched him descending from his gig. "My

dear old man," she said, as she led him into the warm drawing-room

with all his wrappings still about him, "you must be starved." But

Mark during the whole drive had been thinking too much of that

transaction in Mr. Sowerby's bedroom to remember that the air was

cold. Now he had his arm round his own dear Fanny's waist; but was he

to tell her of that transaction? At any rate he would not do it now,

while his two boys were in his arms, rubbing the moisture from his

whiskers with their kisses. After all, what is there equal to that

coming home?

"And so Lufton is here. I say, Frank, gently, old boy,"--Frank was

his eldest son--"you'll have baby into the fender."

"Let me take baby; it's impossible to hold the two of them, they

are so strong," said the proud mother. "Oh, yes, he came home early

yesterday."

"Have you seen him?"

"He was here yesterday, with her ladyship; and I lunched there

to-day. The letter came, you know, in time to stop the Merediths.

They don't go till to-morrow, so you will meet them after all. Sir

George is wild about it, but Lady Lufton would have her way. You

never saw her in such a state as she is."

"Good spirits, eh?"

"I should think so. All Lord Lufton's horses are coming, and he's to

be here till March."

"Till March!"

"So her ladyship whispered to me. She could not conceal her triumph

at his coming. He's going to give up Leicestershire this year

altogether. I wonder what has brought it all about?" Mark knew very

well what had brought it about; he had been made acquainted, as the

reader has also, with the price at which Lady Lufton had purchased

her son's visit. But no one had told Mrs. Robarts that the mother had

made her son a present of five thousand pounds.

"She's in a good humour about everything now," continued Fanny; "so

you need say nothing at all about Gatherum Castle."

"But she was very angry when she first heard it; was she not?"

"Well, Mark, to tell the truth, she was; and we had quite a scene

there up in her own room upstairs--Justinia and I. She had heard

something else that she did not like at the same time; and then--but

you know her way. She blazed up quite hot."

"And said all manner of horrid things about me."

"About the duke she did. You know she never did like the duke; and

for the matter of that, neither do I. I tell you that fairly, Master

Mark!"

"The duke is not so bad as he's painted."

"Ah, that's what you say about another great person. However, he

won't come here to trouble us, I suppose. And then I left her, not in

the best temper in the world; for I blazed up too, you must know."

"I am sure you did," said Mark, pressing his arm round her waist.

"And then we were going to have a dreadful war, I thought; and I came

home and wrote such a doleful letter to you. But what should happen

when I had just closed it, but in came her ladyship--all alone,

and-- But I can't tell you what she did or said, only she behaved

beautifully; just like herself too; so full of love and truth and

honesty. There's nobody like her, Mark; and she's better than all the

dukes that ever wore--whatever dukes do wear."

"Horns and hoofs; that's their usual apparel, according to you and

Lady Lufton," said he, remembering what Mr. Sowerby had said of

himself.

"You may say what you like about me, Mark, but you shan't abuse Lady

Lufton. And if horns and hoofs mean wickedness and dissipation,

I believe it's not far wrong. But get off your big coat and make

yourself comfortable." And that was all the scolding that Mark

Robarts got from his wife on the occasion of his great iniquity.

"I will certainly tell her about this bill transaction," he said to

himself; "but not to-day; not till after I have seen Lufton." That

evening they dined at Framley Court, and there they met the young

lord; they found also Lady Lufton still in high good-humour. Lord

Lufton himself was a fine, bright-looking young man; not so tall as

Mark Robarts, and with perhaps less intelligence marked on his face;

but his features were finer, and there was in his countenance a

thorough appearance of good-humour and sweet temper. It was, indeed,

a pleasant face to look upon, and dearly Lady Lufton loved to gaze at

it.

"Well, Mark, So you have been among the Philistines?" that was his

lordship's first remark. Robarts laughed as he took his friend's

hands, and bethought himself how truly that was the case; that he

was, in very truth, already "himself in bonds under Philistian

yoke." Alas, alas, it is very hard to break asunder the bonds of the

latter-day Philistines. When a Samson does now and then pull a temple

down about their ears, is he not sure to be engulfed in the ruin with

them? There is no horse-leech that sticks so fast as your latter-day

Philistine.

"So you have caught Sir George, after all," said Lady Lufton; and

that was nearly all she did say in allusion to his absence. There

was afterwards some conversation about the lecture, and from her

ladyship's remarks it certainly was apparent that she did not like

the people among whom the vicar had been lately staying; but she said

no word that was personal to him himself, or that could be taken

as a reproach. The little episode of Mrs. Proudie's address in the

lecture-room had already reached Framley, and it was only to be

expected that Lady Lufton should enjoy the joke. She would affect to

believe that the body of the lecture had been given by the bishop's

wife; and afterwards, when Mark described her costume at that Sunday

morning breakfast table, Lady Lufton would assume that such had been

the dress in which she had exercised her faculties in public.

"I would have given a five-pound note to have heard it," said Sir

George.

"So would not I," said Lady Lufton. "When one hears of such things

described so graphically as Mr. Robarts now tells it, one can hardly

help laughing. But it would give me great pain to see the wife of one

of our bishops place herself in such a situation. For he is a bishop

after all."

"Well, upon my word, my lady, I agree with Meredith," said Lord

Lufton. "It must have been good fun. As it did happen, you know,--as

the Church was doomed to the disgrace,--I should like to have heard

it."

"I know you would have been shocked, Ludovic."

"I should have got over that in time, mother. It would have been like

a bull-fight, I suppose--horrible to see, no doubt, but extremely

interesting. And Harold Smith, Mark; what did he do all the while?"

"It didn't take so very long, you know," said Robarts.

"And the poor bishop," said Lady Meredith; "how did he look? I really

do pity him."

"Well, he was asleep, I think."

"What, slept through it all?" said Sir George.

"It awakened him; and then he jumped up and said something."

"What, out loud, too?"

"Only one word, or so."

"What a disgraceful scene!" said Lady Lufton. "To those who remember

the good old man who was in the diocese before him it is perfectly

shocking. He confirmed you, Ludovic, and you ought to remember

him. It was over at Barchester, and you went and lunched with him

afterwards."

"I do remember; and especially this, that I never ate such tarts

in my life, before or since. The old man particularly called my

attention to them, and seemed remarkably pleased that I concurred in

his sentiments. There are no such tarts as those going in the palace,

now, I'll be bound."

"Mrs. Proudie will be very happy to do her best for you if you will

go and try," said Sir George.

"I beg that he will do no such thing," said Lady Lufton; and that was

the only severe word she said about any of Mark's visitings. As Sir

George Meredith was there, Robarts could say nothing then to Lord

Lufton about Mr. Sowerby and Mr. Sowerby's money affairs; but he did

make an appointment for a \_tÃªte-Ã -tÃªte\_ on the next morning.

"You must come down and see my nags, Mark; they came to-day. The

Merediths will be off at twelve, and then we can have an hour

together." Mark said he would, and then went home with his wife under

his arm.

"Well, now, is not she kind?" said Fanny, as soon as they were out on

the gravel together.

"She is kind; kinder than I can tell you just at present. But did you

ever know anything so bitter as she is to the poor bishop? And really

the bishop is not so bad."

"Yes; I know something much more bitter: and that is what she thinks

of the bishop's wife. And you know, Mark, it was so unladylike, her

getting up in that way. What must the people of Barchester think of

her?"

"As far as I could see, the people of Barchester liked it."

"Nonsense, Mark; they could not. But never mind that now. I want you

to own that she is good." And then Mrs. Robarts went on with another

long eulogy on the dowager. Since that affair of the pardon-begging

at the parsonage, Mrs. Robarts hardly knew how to think well enough

of her friend. And the evening had been so pleasant after the

dreadful storm and threatenings of hurricanes; her husband had been

so well received after his lapse of judgement; the wounds that had

looked so sore had been so thoroughly healed, and everything was so

pleasant. How all of this would have been changed had she known of

that little bill! At twelve the next morning the lord and the vicar

were walking through the Framley stables together. Quite a commotion

had been made there, for the larger portion of those buildings had of

late years seldom been used. But now all was crowding and activity.

Seven or eight very precious animals had followed Lord Lufton from

Leicestershire, and all of them required dimensions that were thought

to be rather excessive by the Framley old-fashioned groom. My lord,

however, had a head man of his own who took the matter quite into his

own hands. Mark, priest as he was, was quite worldly enough to be

fond of a good horse; and for some little time allowed Lord Lufton

to descant on the merit of this four-year-old filly, and that

magnificent Rattlebones colt, out of a Mousetrap mare; but he had

other things that lay heavy on his mind, and after bestowing half

an hour on the stud, he contrived to get his friend away to the

shrubbery walks.

"So you have settled with Sowerby," Robarts began by saying.

"Settled with him; yes, but do you know the price?"

"I believe that you have paid five thousand pounds."

"Yes, and about three before; and that in a matter in which I did not

really owe one shilling. Whatever I do in future, I'll keep out of

Sowerby's grip."

"But you don't think he has been unfair to you."

"Mark, to tell you the truth I have banished the affair from my mind,

and don't wish to take it up again. My mother has paid the money to

save the property, and of course I must pay her back. But I think

I may promise that I will not have any more money dealings with

Sowerby. I will not say that he is dishonest, but at any rate he is

sharp."

"Well, Lufton; what will you say when I tell you that I have put my

name to a bill for him, for four hundred pounds?"

"Say; why I should say--; but you're joking; a man in your position

would never do such a thing."

"But I have done it." Lord Lufton gave a long low whistle.

"He asked me the last night that I was there, making a great favour

of it, and declaring that no bill of his had ever yet been

dishonoured."

Lord Lufton whistled again. "No bill of his dishonoured! Why, the

pocket-books of the Jews are stuffed full of his dishonoured papers!

And you have really given him your name for four hundred pounds?"

"I have certainly."

"At what date?"

"Three months."

"And have you thought where you are to get the money?"

"I know very well that I can't get it, not at least by that time. The

bankers must renew it for me, and I must pay it by degrees. That is,

if Sowerby really does not take it up."

"It is just as likely that he will take up the National Debt."

Robarts then told him about the projected marriage with Miss

Dunstable, giving it as his opinion that the lady would probably

accept the gentleman.

"Not at all improbable," said his lordship, "for Sowerby is an

agreeable fellow; and if it be so, he will have all that he wants

for life. But his creditors will gain nothing. The duke, who has his

title-deeds, will doubtless get his money, and the estate will in

fact belong to the wife. But the small fry, such as you, will not get

a shilling." Poor Mark! He had had an inkling of this before; but it

had hardly presented itself to him in such certain terms. It was,

then, a positive fact, that in punishment for his weakness in having

signed that bill he would have to pay, not only four hundred pounds,

but four hundred pounds with interest, and expenses of renewal, and

commission, and bill stamps. Yes; he had certainly got among the

Philistines during that visit of his to the duke. It began to appear

to him pretty clearly that it would have been better for him to have

relinquished altogether the glories of Chaldicotes and Gatherum

Castle.

And now, how was he to tell his wife?

CHAPTER X

Lucy Robarts

And now, how was he to tell his wife? That was the consideration

heavy on Mark Robarts's mind when last we left him; and he turned

the matter often in his thoughts before he could bring himself to

a resolution. At last he did do so, and one may say that it was

not altogether a bad one, if only he could carry it out. He would

ascertain in what bank that bill of his had been discounted. He

would ask Sowerby, and if he could not learn from him, he would go

to the three banks in Barchester. That it had been taken to one of

them he felt tolerably certain. He would explain to the manager his

conviction that he would have to make good the amount, his inability

to do so at the end of the three months, and the whole state of his

income; and then the banker would explain to him how the matter might

be arranged. He thought that he could pay Â£50 every three months with

interest. As soon as this should have been concerted with the banker,

he would let his wife know all about it. Were he to tell her at the

present moment, while the matter was all unsettled, the intelligence

would frighten her into illness. But on the next morning there came

to him tidings by the hands of Robin postman, which for a long while

upset all his plans. The letter was from Exeter. His father had been

taken ill, and had very quickly been pronounced to be in danger. That

evening--the evening on which his sister wrote--the old man was much

worse, and it was desirable that Mark should go off to Exeter as

quickly as possible. Of course he went to Exeter--again leaving the

Framley souls at the mercy of the Welsh Low Churchman. Framley is

only four miles from Silverbridge, and at Silverbridge he was on

the direct road to the West. He was, therefore, at Exeter before

nightfall on that day. But, nevertheless, he arrived there too late

to see his father again alive. The old man's illness had been sudden

and rapid, and he expired without again seeing his eldest son. Mark

arrived at the house of mourning just as they were learning to

realize the full change in their position.

The doctor's career had been on the whole successful, but

nevertheless he did not leave behind him as much money as the world

had given him credit for possessing. Who ever does? Dr. Robarts had

educated a large family, had always lived with every comfort, and

had never possessed a shilling but what he had earned himself. A

physician's fees come in, no doubt, with comfortable rapidity as soon

as rich old gentlemen and middle-aged ladies begin to put their faith

in him; but fees run out almost with equal rapidity when a wife and

seven children are treated to everything that the world considers

most desirable. Mark, we have seen, had been educated at Harrow and

Oxford, and it may be said, therefore, that he had received his

patrimony early in life. For Gerald Robarts, the second brother, a

commission had been bought in a crack regiment. He also had been

lucky, having lived and become a captain in the Crimea; and the

purchase-money was lodged for his majority. And John Robarts, the

youngest, was a clerk in the Petty Bag Office, and was already

assistant private secretary to the Lord Petty Bag himself--a place of

considerable trust, if not hitherto of large emolument; and on his

education money had been spent freely, for in these days a young man

cannot get into the Petty Bag Office without knowing at least three

modern languages; and he must be well up in trigonometry too, in

Bible theology, or in one dead language--at his option. And the

doctor had four daughters. The two elder were married, including

that Blanche with whom Lord Lufton was to have fallen in love at the

vicar's wedding. A Devonshire squire had done this in the lord's

place; but on marrying her it was necessary that he should have a few

thousand pounds, two or three perhaps, and the old doctor had managed

that they should be forthcoming. The elder also had not been sent

away from the paternal mansion quite empty-handed. There were,

therefore, at the time of the doctor's death two children left at

home, of whom one only, Lucy, the younger, will come much across us

in the course of our story.

Mark stayed for ten days at Exeter, he and the Devonshire squire

having been named as executors in the will. In this document it was

explained that the doctor trusted that provision had been made for

most of his children. As for his dear son Mark, he said, he was aware

that he need be under no uneasiness. On hearing this read Mark smiled

sweetly, and looked very gracious; but, nevertheless, his heart did

sink somewhat within him, for there had been a hope that a small

windfall, coming now so opportunely, might enable him to rid himself

at once of that dreadful Sowerby incubus. And then the will went on

to declare that Mary, and Gerald, and Blanche, had also, by God's

providence, been placed beyond want. And here, looking into the

squire's face, one might have thought that his heart fell a little

also; for he had not so full a command of his feelings as his

brother-in-law, who had been so much more before the world. To John,

the assistant private secretary, was left a legacy of a thousand

pounds; and to Jane and Lucy certain sums in certain four per cents.,

which were quite sufficient to add an efficient value to the hands

of those young ladies in the eyes of most prudent young would-be

Benedicts. Over and beyond this there was nothing but the furniture,

which he desired might be sold, and the proceeds divided among them

all. It might come to sixty or seventy pounds a piece, and pay the

expenses incidental on his death. And then all men and women there

and thereabouts said that old Dr. Robarts had done well. His life

had been good and prosperous, and his will was just. And Mark, among

others, so declared--and was so convinced in spite of his own little

disappointment. And on the third morning after the reading of the

will Squire Crowdy, of Creamclotted Hall, altogether got over his

grief, and said that it was all right. And then it was decided that

Jane should go home with him--for there was a brother squire who,

it was thought, might have an eye to Jane;--and Lucy, the younger,

should be taken to Framley parsonage. In a fortnight from the receipt

of that letter Mark arrived at his own house with his sister Lucy

under his wing.

All this interfered greatly with Mark's wise resolution as to the

Sowerby-bill incubus. In the first place, he could not get to

Barchester as soon as he had intended, and then an idea came across

him that possibly it might be well that he should borrow the money of

his brother John, explaining the circumstances, of course, and paying

him due interest. But he had not liked to broach the subject when

they were there in Exeter, standing, as it were, over their father's

grave, and so the matter was postponed. There was still ample time

for arrangement before the bill would come due, and he would not tell

Fanny till he had made up his mind what that arrangement would be. It

would kill her, he said to himself over and over again, were he to

tell her of it without being able to tell her also that the means of

liquidating the debt were to be forthcoming.

And now I must say a word about Lucy Robarts. If one might only go

on without those descriptions how pleasant it would all be! But Lucy

Robarts has to play a forward part in this little drama, and those

who care for such matters must be made to understand something of her

form and likeness. When last we mentioned her as appearing, though

not in any prominent position, at her brother's wedding, she was only

sixteen; but now, at the time of her father's death, somewhat over

two years having since elapsed, she was nearly nineteen. Laying aside

for the sake of clearness that indefinite term of girl--for girls

are girls from the age of three up to forty-three, if not previously

married--dropping that generic word, we may say that then, at that

wedding of her brother, she was a child; and now, at the death of her

father, she was a woman. Nothing, perhaps, adds so much to womanhood,

turns the child so quickly into a woman, as such death-bed scenes as

these. Hitherto but little had fallen to Lucy to do in the way of

woman's duties. Of money transactions she had known nothing, beyond

a jocose attempt to make her annual allowance of twenty-five pounds

cover all her personal wants--an attempt which was made jocose by

the loving bounty of her father. Her sister, who was three years her

elder--for John came in between them--had managed the house; that

is, she had made the tea and talked to the house-keeper about the

dinners. But Lucy had sat at her father's elbow, had read to him of

evenings when he went to sleep, had brought him his slippers and

looked after the comforts of his easy chair. All this she had done

as a child; but when she stood at the coffin head, and knelt at the

coffin side, then she was a woman.

She was smaller in stature than either of her three sisters, to all

of whom had been acceded the praise of being fine women--a eulogy

which the people of Exeter, looking back at the elder sisters, and

the general remembrance of them which pervaded the city, were not

willing to extend to Lucy. "Dear--dear!" had been said of her; "poor

Lucy is not like a Robarts at all; is she, now, Mrs. Pole?"--for

as the daughters had become fine women, so had the sons grown into

stalwart men. And then Mrs. Pole had answered: "Not a bit; is she,

now? Only think what Blanche was at her age. But she has fine eyes,

for all that; and they do say she is the cleverest of them all." And

that, too, is so true a description of her that I do not know that

I can add much to it. She was not like Blanche; for Blanche had

a bright complexion, and a fine neck, and a noble bust, \_et vera

incessu patuit Dea\_--a true goddess, that is, as far as the eye

went. She had a grand idea, moreover, of an apple-pie, and had not

reigned eighteen months at Creamclotted Hall before she knew all the

mysteries of pigs and milk, and most of those appertaining to cider

and green cheese.

Lucy had no neck at all worth speaking of,--no neck, I mean, that

ever produced eloquence; she was brown, too, and had addicted herself

in nowise, as she undoubtedly should have done, to larder utility. In

regard to the neck and colour, poor girl, she could not help herself;

but in that other respect she must be held as having wasted her

opportunities. But then what eyes she had! Mrs. Pole was right there.

They flashed upon you, not always softly; indeed not often softly

if you were a stranger to her; but whether softly or savagely, with

a brilliancy that dazzled you as you looked at them. And who shall

say of what colour they were? Green, probably, for most eyes are

green--green or grey, if green be thought uncomely for an eye-colour.

But it was not their colour, but their fire, which struck one with

such surprise.

Lucy Robarts was thoroughly a brunette. Sometimes the dark tint

of her cheek was exquisitely rich and lovely, and the fringes of

her eyes were long and soft, and her small teeth, which one so

seldom saw, were white as pearls, and her hair, though short, was

beautifully soft--by no means black, but yet of so dark a shade of

brown. Blanche, too, was noted for fine teeth. They were white and

regular and lofty as a new row of houses in a French city. But then

when she laughed she was all teeth; as she was all neck when she sat

at the piano. But Lucy's teeth!--it was only now and again, when in

some sudden burst of wonder she would sit for a moment with her lips

apart, that the fine finished lines and dainty pearl-white colour

of that perfect set of ivory could be seen. Mrs. Pole would have

said a word of her teeth also, but that to her they had never been

made visible. "But they do say that she is the cleverest of them

all," Mrs. Pole had added, very properly. The people of Exeter had

expressed such an opinion, and had been quite just in doing so. I do

not know how it happens, but it always does happen, that everybody

in every small town knows which is the brightest-witted in every

family. In this respect Mrs. Pole had only expressed public opinion,

and public opinion was right. Lucy Robarts was blessed with an

intelligence keener than that of her brothers or sisters.

"To tell the truth, Mark, I admire Lucy more than I do Blanche."

This had been said by Mrs. Robarts within a few hours of her having

assumed that name. "She's not a beauty, I know, but yet I do."

"My dearest Fanny!" Mark had answered in a tone of surprise.

"I do then; of course people won't think so; but I never seem to care

about regular beauties. Perhaps I envy them too much." What Mark

said next need not be repeated, but everybody may be sure that it

contained some gross flattery for his young bride. He remembered

this, however, and had always called Lucy his wife's pet. Neither

of the sisters had since that been at Framley; and though Fanny

had spent a week at Exeter on the occasion of Blanche's marriage,

it could hardly be said that she was very intimate with them.

Nevertheless, when it became expedient that one of them should go

to Framley, the remembrance of what his wife had said immediately

induced Mark to make the offer to Lucy; and Jane, who was of a

kindred soul with Blanche, was delighted to go to Creamclotted

Hall. The acres of Heavybed House, down in that fat Totnes country,

adjoined those of Creamclotted Hall, and Heavybed House still wanted

a mistress.

Fanny was delighted when the news reached her. It would of course

be proper that one of his sisters should live with Mark under their

present circumstances, and she was happy to think that that quiet

little bright-eyed creature was to come and nestle with her under the

same roof. The children should so love her--only not quite so much as

they loved mamma; and the snug little room that looks out over the

porch, in which the chimney never smokes, should be made ready for

her; and she should be allowed her share of driving the pony--which

was a great sacrifice of self on the part of Mrs. Robarts--and Lady

Lufton's best good-will should be bespoken. In fact, Lucy was not

unfortunate in the destination that was laid out for her. Lady Lufton

had of course heard of the doctor's death, and had sent all manner of

kind messages to Mark, advising him not to hurry home by any means

until everything was settled at Exeter. And then she was told of the

new-comer that was expected in the parish. When she heard that it

was Lucy, the younger, she also was satisfied; for Blanche's charms,

though indisputable, had not been altogether to her taste. If a

second Blanche were to arrive there what danger might there not be

for young Lord Lufton! "Quite right," said her ladyship, "just what

he ought to do. I think I remember the young lady; rather small, is

she not, and very retiring?"

"Rather small and very retiring. What a description!" said Lord

Lufton.

"Never mind, Ludovic; some young ladies must be small, and some

at least ought to be retiring. We shall be delighted to make her

acquaintance."

"I remember your other sister-in-law very well," said Lord Lufton.

"She was a beautiful woman."

"I don't think you will consider Lucy a beauty," said Mrs. Robarts.

"Small, retiring, and--" so far Lord Lufton had gone, when Mrs.

Robarts finished by the word, "plain." She had liked Lucy's face, but

she had thought that others probably did not do so.

"Upon my word," said Lady Lufton, "you don't deserve to have a

sister-in-law. I remember her very well, and can say that she is not

plain. I was very much taken with her manner at your wedding, my

dear, and thought more of her than I did of the beauty, I can tell

you."

"I must confess I do not remember her at all," said his lordship. And

so the conversation ended. And then at the end of the fortnight Mark

arrived with his sister. They did not reach Framley till long after

dark--somewhere between six and seven--and by this time it was

December. There was snow on the ground, and frost in the air, and no

moon, and cautious men when they went on the roads had their horses'

shoes cocked. Such being the state of the weather Mark's gig had

been nearly filled with cloaks and shawls when it was sent over to

Silverbridge. And a cart was sent for Lucy's luggage, and all manner

of preparations had been made. Three times had Fanny gone herself to

see that the fire burned brightly in the little room over the porch,

and at the moment that the sound of the wheels was heard she was

engaged in opening her son's mind as to the nature of an aunt.

Hitherto papa and mamma and Lady Lufton were all that he had known,

excepting, of course, the satellites of the nursery. And then in

three minutes Lucy was standing by the fire. Those three minutes

had been taken up in embraces between the husband and the wife. Let

who would be brought as a visitor to the house, after a fortnight's

absence, she would kiss him before she welcomed any one else. But

then she turned to Lucy, and began to assist her with her cloaks.

"Oh, thank you," said Lucy; "I'm not cold,--not very at least. Don't

trouble yourself: I can do it." But here she had made a false boast,

for her fingers had been so numbed that she could not do nor undo

anything. They were all in black, of course; but the sombreness of

Lucy's clothes struck Fanny much more than her own. They seemed to

have swallowed her up in their blackness, and to have made her almost

an emblem of death. She did not look up, but kept her face turned

towards the fire, and seemed almost afraid of her position.

"She may say what she likes, Fanny," said Mark, "but she is very

cold. And so am I,--cold enough. You had better go up with her to her

room. We won't do much in the dressing way to-night; eh, Lucy?" In

the bedroom Lucy thawed a little, and Fanny, as she kissed her, said

to herself that she had been wrong as to that word "plain." Lucy, at

any rate, was not plain.

"You will be used to us soon," said Fanny, "and then I hope we shall

make you comfortable." And she took her sister-in-law's hand and

pressed it. Lucy looked up at her, and her eyes then were tender

enough. "I am sure I shall be happy here," she said, "with you.

But--but--dear papa!" And then they got into each other's arms,

and had a great bout of kissing and crying. "Plain," said Fanny to

herself, as at last she got her guest's hair smoothed and the tears

washed from her eyes--"plain! She has the loveliest countenance that

I ever looked at in my life!"

"Your sister is quite beautiful," she said to Mark, as they talked

her over alone before they went to sleep that night.

"No, she's not beautiful; but she's a very good girl, and clever

enough too, in her sort of way."

"I think her perfectly lovely. I never saw such eyes in my life

before."

"I'll leave her in your hands, then; you shall get her a husband."

"That mayn't be so easy. I don't think she'd marry anybody."

"Well, I hope not. But she seems to me to be exactly cut out for an

old maid;--to be Aunt Lucy for ever and ever to your bairns."

"And so she shall, with all my heart. But I don't think she will,

very long. I have no doubt she will be hard to please; but if I were

a man I should fall in love with her at once. Did you ever observe

her teeth, Mark?"

"I don't think I ever did."

"You wouldn't know whether any one had a tooth in their head, I

believe."

"No one except you, my dear; and I know all yours by heart."

"You are a goose."

"And a very sleepy one; so, if you please, I'll go to roost."

And thus there was nothing more said about Lucy's beauty on that

occasion.

For the first two days Mrs. Robarts did not make much of her

sister-in-law. Lucy, indeed, was not demonstrative: and she was,

moreover, one of those few persons--for they are very few--who are

contented to go on with their existence without making themselves the

centre of any special outward circle. To the ordinary run of minds

it is impossible not to do this. A man's own dinner is to himself

so important that he cannot bring himself to believe that it is a

matter utterly indifferent to every one else. A lady's collection of

baby-clothes, in early years, and of house linen and curtain-fringes

in later life, is so very interesting to her own eyes, that she

cannot believe but what other people will rejoice to behold it. I

would not, however, be held as regarding this tendency as evil. It

leads to conversation of some sort among people, and perhaps to a

kind of sympathy. Mrs. Jones will look at Mrs. White's linen chest,

hoping that Mrs. White may be induced to look at hers. One can only

pour out of a jug that which is in it. For the most of us, if we do

not talk of ourselves, or at any rate of the individual circles of

which we are the centres, we can talk of nothing. I cannot hold with

those who wish to put down the insignificant chatter of the world.

As for myself, I am always happy to look at Mrs. Jones's linen,

and never omit an opportunity of giving her the details of my own

dinners. But Lucy Robarts had not this gift. She had come there as

a stranger into her sister-in-law's house, and at first seemed as

though she would be contented in simply having her corner in the

drawing-room and her place at the parlour-table. She did not seem to

need the comforts of condolence and open-hearted talking. I do not

mean to say that she was moody, that she did not answer when she was

spoken to, or that she took no notice of the children; but she did

not at once throw herself and all her hopes and sorrows into Fanny's

heart, as Fanny would have had her do.

Mrs. Robarts herself was what we call demonstrative. When she was

angry with Lady Lufton she showed it. And as since that time her

love and admiration for Lady Lufton had increased, she showed that

also. When she was in any way displeased with her husband, she could

not hide it, even though she tried to do so, and fancied herself

successful;--no more than she could hide her warm, constant,

overflowing woman's love. She could not walk through a room hanging

on her husband's arm without seeming to proclaim to every one there

that she thought him the best man in it. She was demonstrative, and

therefore she was the more disappointed in that Lucy did not rush at

once with all her cares into her open heart. "She is so quiet," Fanny

said to her husband.

"That's her nature," said Mark. "She always was quiet as a child.

While we were smashing everything, she would never crack a teacup."

"I wish she would break something now," said Fanny, "and then perhaps

we should get to talk about it." But she did not on this account give

over loving her sister-in-law. She probably valued her the more,

unconsciously, for not having those aptitudes with which she herself

was endowed. And then after two days Lady Lufton called: of course

it may be supposed that Fanny had said a good deal to her new inmate

about Lady Lufton. A neighbour of that kind in the country exercises

so large an influence upon the whole tenor of one's life, that to

abstain from such talk is out of the question. Mrs. Robarts had

been brought up almost under the dowager's wing, and of course she

regarded her as being worthy of much talking. Do not let persons

on this account suppose that Mrs. Robarts was a tuft-hunter, or a

toad-eater. If they do not see the difference they have yet got to

study the earliest principles of human nature.

Lady Lufton called, and Lucy was struck dumb. Fanny was particularly

anxious that her ladyship's first impression should be favourable,

and to effect this, she especially endeavoured to throw the two

together during that visit. But in this she was unwise. Lady Lufton,

however, had woman-craft enough not to be led into any egregious

error by Lucy's silence. "And what day will you come and dine with

us?" said Lady Lufton, turning expressly to her old friend Fanny.

"Oh, do you name the day. We never have many engagements, you know."

"Will Thursday do, Miss Robarts? You will meet nobody you know, only

my son; so you need not regard it as going out. Fanny here will tell

you that stepping over to Framley Court is no more going out, than

when you go from one room to another in the parsonage. Is it, Fanny?"

Fanny laughed, and said that that stepping over to Framley Court

certainly was done so often that perhaps they did not think so much

about it as they ought to do.

"We consider ourselves a sort of happy family here, Miss Robarts,

and are delighted to have the opportunity of including you in the

\_mÃ©nage\_." Lucy gave her ladyship one of her sweetest smiles, but

what she said at that moment was inaudible. It was plain, however,

that she could not bring herself even to go as far as Framley Court

for her dinner just at present. "It was very kind of Lady Lufton,"

she said to Fanny; "but it was so very soon, and--and--and if they

would only go without her, she would be so happy." But as the object

was to go with her--expressly to take her there--the dinner was

adjourned for a short time--\_sine die\_.

CHAPTER XI

Griselda Grantly

It was nearly a month after this that Lucy was first introduced to

Lord Lufton, and then it was brought about only by accident. During

that time Lady Lufton had been often at the parsonage, and had in a

certain degree learned to know Lucy; but the stranger in the parish

had never yet plucked up courage to accept one of the numerous

invitations that had reached her. Mr. Robarts and his wife had

frequently been at Framley Court, but the dreaded day of Lucy's

initiation had not yet arrived. She had seen Lord Lufton in church,

but hardly so as to know him, and beyond that she had not seen him at

all. One day, however--or rather, one evening, for it was already

dusk--he overtook her and Mrs. Robarts on the road walking towards

the vicarage. He had his gun on his shoulder, three pointers were at

his heels, and a gamekeeper followed a little in the rear.

"How are you, Mrs. Robarts?" he said, almost before he had overtaken

them. "I have been chasing you along the road for the last half-mile.

I never knew ladies walk so fast.".

"We should be frozen if we were to dawdle about as you gentlemen do,"

and then she stopped and shook hands with him. She forgot at the

moment that Lucy and he had not met, and therefore she did not

introduce them.

"Won't you make me known to your sister-in-law!" said he taking off

his hat, and bowing to Lucy. "I have never yet had the pleasure of

meeting her, though we have been neighbours for a month and more."

Fanny made her excuses and introduced them, and then they went on

till they came to Framley Gate, Lord Lufton talking to them both, and

Fanny answering for the two, and there they stopped for a moment.

"I am surprised to see you alone," Mrs. Robarts had just said; "I

thought that Captain Culpepper was with you."

"The captain has left me for this one day. If you'll whisper I'll

tell you where he has gone. I dare not speak it out loud, even to the

woods."

"To what terrible place can he have taken himself? I'll have no

whisperings about such horrors."

"He has gone to--to--but you'll promise not to tell my mother?"

"Not tell your mother! Well, now you have excited my curiosity! where

can he be?"

"Do you promise, then?"

"Oh, yes! I will promise, because I am sure Lady Lufton won't ask me

as to Captain Culpepper's whereabouts. We won't tell; will we, Lucy?"

"He has gone to Gatherum Castle for a day's pheasant-shooting. Now,

mind, you must not betray us. Her ladyship supposes that he is shut

up in his room with a toothache. We did not dare to mention the name

to her." And then it appeared that Mrs. Robarts had some engagement

which made it necessary that she should go up and see Lady Lufton,

whereas Lucy was intending to walk on to the parsonage alone.

"And I have promised to go to your husband," said Lord Lufton; "or

rather to your husband's dog, Ponto. And I will do two other good

things--I will carry a brace of pheasants with me, and protect Miss

Robarts from the evil spirits of the Framley roads." And so Mrs.

Robarts turned in at the gate, and Lucy and his lordship walked off

together. Lord Lufton, though he had never before spoken to Miss

Robarts, had already found out that she was by no means plain. Though

he had hardly seen her except at church, he had already made himself

certain that the owner of that face must be worth knowing, and was

not sorry to have the present opportunity of speaking to her. "So you

have an unknown damsel shut up in your castle," he had once said to

Mrs. Robarts. "If she be kept a prisoner much longer, I shall find it

my duty to come and release her by force of arms." He had been there

twice with the object of seeing her, but on both occasions Lucy had

managed to escape. Now we may say she was fairly caught, and Lord

Lufton, taking a pair of pheasants from the gamekeeper, and swinging

them over his shoulder, walked off with his prey. "You have been here

a long time," he said, "without our having had the pleasure of seeing

you."

"Yes, my lord," said Lucy. Lords had not been frequent among her

acquaintance hitherto.

"I tell Mrs. Robarts that she has been confining you illegally, and

that we shall release you by force or stratagem."

"I--I--I have had a great sorrow lately."

"Yes, Miss Robarts; I know you have; and I am only joking, you know.

But I do hope that now you will be able to come amongst us. My mother

is so anxious that you should do so."

"I am sure she is very kind, and you also--my lord."

"I never knew my own father," said Lord Lufton, speaking gravely.

"But I can well understand what a loss you have had." And then, after

pausing a moment, he continued, "I remember Dr. Robarts well."

"Do you, indeed?" said Lucy, turning sharply towards him, and

speaking now with some animation in her voice. Nobody had yet spoken

to her about her father since she had been at Framley. It had been as

though the subject were a forbidden one. And how frequently is this

the case! When those we love are dead, our friends dread to mention

them, though to us who are bereaved no subject would be so pleasant

as their names. But we rarely understand how to treat our own sorrow

or those of others.

There was once a people in some land--and they may be still there

for what I know--who thought it sacrilegious to stay the course of a

raging fire. If a house were being burned, burn it must, even though

there were facilities for saving it. For who would dare to interfere

with the course of the god? Our idea of sorrow is much the same. We

think it wicked, or at any rate heartless, to put it out. If a man's

wife be dead, he should go about lugubrious, with long face, for at

least two years, or perhaps with full length for eighteen months,

decreasing gradually during the other six. If he be a man who can

quench his sorrow--put out his fire as it were--in less time than

that, let him at any rate not show his power!

"Yes: I remember him," continued Lord Lufton. "He came twice to

Framley while I was a boy, consulting with my mother about Mark and

myself,--whether the Eton floggings were not more efficacious than

those at Harrow. He was very kind to me, foreboding all manner of

good things on my behalf."

"He was very kind to every one," said Lucy.

"I should think he would have been--a kind, good, genial man--just

the man to be adored by his own family."

"Exactly; and so he was. I do not remember that I ever heard an

unkind word from him, There was not a harsh tone in his voice. And

he was generous as the day." Lucy, we have said, was not generally

demonstrative, but now, on this subject, and with this absolute

stranger, she became almost eloquent.

"I do not wonder that you should feel his loss, Miss Robarts."

"Oh, I do feel it. Mark is the best of brothers, and, as for Fanny,

she is too kind and too good to me. But I had always been specially

my father's friend. For the last year or two we had lived so much

together!"

"He was an old man when he died, was he not?"

"Just seventy, my lord."

"Ah, then he was old. My mother is only fifty, and we sometimes call

her the old woman. Do you think she looks older than that? We all say

that she makes herself out to be so much more ancient than she need

do."

"Lady Lufton does not dress young."

"That is it. She never has, in my memory. She always used to wear

black when I first recollect her. She has given that up now; but she

is still very sombre; is she not?"

"I do not like ladies to dress very young, that is, ladies of--of--"

"Ladies of fifty, we will say?"

"Very well; ladies of fifty, if you like it."

"Then I am sure you will like my mother."

They had now turned up through the parsonage wicket, a little gate

that opened into the garden at a point on the road nearer than the

chief entrance. "I suppose I shall find Mark up at the house?" said

he.

"I dare say you will, my lord."

"Well, I'll go round this way, for my business is partly in the

stable. You see I am quite at home here, though you never have seen

me before. But, Miss Robarts, now that the ice is broken, I hope that

we may be friends." He then put out his hand, and when she gave him

hers he pressed it almost as an old friend might have done. And,

indeed, Lucy had talked to him almost as though he were an old

friend. For a minute or two she had forgotten that he was a lord and

a stranger--had forgotten also to be stiff and guarded as was her

wont. Lord Lufton had spoken to her as though he had really cared to

know her; and she, unconsciously, had been taken by the compliment.

Lord Lufton, indeed, had not thought much about it--excepting as

thus, that he liked the glance of a pair of bright eyes, as most

other young men do like it. But, on this occasion, the evening had

been so dark, that he had hardly seen Lucy's eyes at all.

"Well, Lucy, I hope you liked your companion," Mrs. Robarts said, as

the three of them clustered round the drawing-room fire before

dinner.

"Oh, yes; pretty well," said Lucy.

"That is not at all complimentary to his lordship."

"I did not mean to be complimentary, Fanny."

"Lucy is a great deal too matter-of-fact for compliments," said Mark.

"What I meant was, that I had no great opportunity for judging,

seeing that I was only with Lord Lufton for about ten minutes."

"Ah! but there are girls here who would give their eyes for ten

minutes of Lord Lufton to themselves. You do not know how he's

valued. He has the character of being always able to make himself

agreeable to ladies at half a minute's warning."

"Perhaps he had not the half-minute's warning in this case," said

Lucy,--hypocrite that she was.

"Poor Lucy," said her brother; "he was coming up to see Ponto's

shoulder, and I am afraid he was thinking more about the dog than

you."

"Very likely," said Lucy; and then they went in to dinner. Lucy had

been a hypocrite, for she had confessed to herself, while dressing,

that Lord Lufton had been very pleasant; but then it is allowed to

young ladies to be hypocrites when the subject under discussion is

the character of a young gentleman.

Soon after that Lucy did dine at Framley Court. Captain Culpepper, in

spite of his enormity with reference to Gatherum Castle, was still

staying there, as was also a clergyman from the neighbourhood of

Barchester with his wife and daughter. This was Archdeacon Grantly,

a gentleman whom we have mentioned before, and who was as well known

in the diocese as the bishop himself--and more thought about by many

clergymen than even that illustrious prelate. Miss Grantly was a

young lady not much older than Lucy Robarts, and she also was quiet,

and not given to much talking in open company. She was decidedly a

beauty, but somewhat statuesque in her loveliness. Her forehead was

high and white, but perhaps too like marble to gratify the taste

of those who are fond of flesh and blood. Her eyes were large and

exquisitely formed, but they seldom showed much emotion. She, indeed,

was impassive herself, and betrayed but little of her feelings. Her

nose was nearly Grecian, not coming absolutely in a straight line

from her forehead, but doing so nearly enough to entitle it to be

considered as classical. Her mouth, too, was very fine--artists, at

least, said so, and connoisseurs in beauty; but to me she always

seemed as though she wanted fullness of lip. But the exquisite

symmetry of her cheek and chin and lower face no man could deny. Her

hair was light, and being always dressed with considerable care, did

not detract from her appearance; but it lacked that richness which

gives such luxuriance to feminine loveliness. She was tall and

slight, and very graceful in her movements; but there were those who

thought that she wanted the ease and abandon of youth. They said that

she was too composed and stiff for her age, and that she gave but

little to society beyond the beauty of her form and face. There can

be no doubt, however, that she was considered by most men and women

to be the beauty of Barsetshire, and that gentlemen from neighbouring

counties would come many miles through dirty roads on the mere hope

of being able to dance with her. Whatever attractions she may have

lacked, she had at any rate created for herself a great reputation.

She had spent two months of the last spring in London, and even there

she had made a sensation; and people had said that Lord Dumbello,

Lady Hartletop's eldest son, had been peculiarly struck with her.

It may be imagined that the archdeacon was proud of her, and so,

indeed, was Mrs. Grantly--more proud, perhaps, of her daughter's

beauty, than so excellent a woman should have allowed herself to be

of such an attribute. Griselda--that was her name--was now an only

daughter. One sister she had had, but that sister had died. There

were two brothers also left, one in the Church, and the other in the

Army. That was the extent of the archdeacon's family, and as the

archdeacon was a very rich man--he was the only child of his father,

who had been Bishop of Barchester for a great many years; and

in those years it had been worth a man's while to be Bishop of

Barchester--it was supposed that Miss Grantly would have a large

fortune. Mrs. Grantly, however, had been heard to say, that she was

in no hurry to see her daughter established in the world;--ordinary

young ladies are merely married, but those of real importance

are established:--and this, if anything, added to the value of

the prize. Mothers sometimes depreciate their wares by an undue

solicitude to dispose of them. But to tell the truth openly and

at once--a virtue for which a novelist does not receive very much

commendation--Griselda Grantly was, to a certain extent, already

given away. Not that she, Griselda, knew anything about it, or that

the thrice happy gentleman had been made aware of his good fortune;

nor even had the archdeacon been told. But Mrs. Grantly and Lady

Lufton had been closeted together more than once, and terms had

been signed and sealed between them. Not signed on parchment, and

sealed with wax, as is the case with treaties made by kings and

diplomats--to be broken by the same; but signed with little words,

and sealed with certain pressings of the hand--a treaty which between

two such contracting parties would be binding enough. And by the

terms of this treaty Griselda Grantly was to become Lady Lufton. Lady

Lufton had hitherto been fortunate in her matrimonial speculations.

She had selected Sir George for her daughter, and Sir George, with

the utmost good-nature, had fallen in with her views. She had

selected Fanny Monsell for Mr. Robarts, and Fanny Monsell had not

rebelled against her for a moment. There was a prestige of success

about her doings, and she felt almost confident that her dear son

Ludovic must fall in love with Griselda. As to the lady herself,

nothing, Lady Lufton thought, could be much better than such a match

for her son. Lady Lufton, I have said, was a good Churchwoman, and

the archdeacon was the very type of that branch of the Church which

she venerated. The Grantlys, too, were of a good family--not noble,

indeed; but in such matters Lady Lufton did not want everything. She

was one of those persons who, in placing their hopes at a moderate

pitch, may fairly trust to see them realized. She would fain that her

son's wife should be handsome; this she wished for his sake, that he

might be proud of his wife, and because men love to look on beauty.

But she was afraid of vivacious beauty, of those soft, sparkling

feminine charms which are spread out as lures for all the world,

soft dimples, laughing eyes, luscious lips, conscious smiles, and

easy whispers. What if her son should bring her home a rattling,

rapid-spoken, painted piece of Eve's flesh such as this? Would not

the glory and joy of her life be over, even though such child of

their first mother should have come forth to the present day ennobled

by the blood of two dozen successive British peers?

And then, too, Griselda's money would not be useless. Lady Lufton,

with all her high-flown ideas, was not an imprudent woman. She knew

that her son had been extravagant, though she did not believe that he

had been reckless; and she was well content to think that some balsam

from the old bishop's coffers should be made to cure the slight

wounds which his early imprudence might have inflicted on the carcass

of the family property. And thus, in this way, and for these reasons,

Griselda Grantly had been chosen out from all the world to be the

future Lady Lufton. Lord Lufton had met Griselda more than once

already; had met her before these high contracting parties had come

to any terms whatsoever, and had evidently admired her. Lord Dumbello

had remained silent one whole evening in London with ineffable

disgust, because Lord Lufton had been rather particular in his

attentions; but then Lord Dumbello's muteness was his most eloquent

mode of expression. Both Lady Hartletop and Mrs. Grantly, when they

saw him, knew very well what he meant. But that match would not

exactly have suited Mrs. Grantly's views. The Hartletop people were

not in her line. They belonged altogether to another set, being

connected, as we have heard before, with the Omnium interest--"those

horrid Gatherum people," as Lady Lufton would say to her, raising

her hands and eyebrows, and shaking her head. Lady Lufton probably

thought that they ate babies in pies during their midnight orgies at

Gatherum Castle; and that widows were kept in cells, and occasionally

put on racks for the amusement of the duke's guests.

When the Robarts's party entered the drawing-room the Grantlys were

already there, and the archdeacon's voice sounded loud and imposing

in Lucy's ears, as she heard him speaking, while she was yet on the

threshold of the door. "My dear Lady Lufton, I would believe anything

on earth about her--anything. There is nothing too outrageous for

her. Had she insisted on going there with the bishop's apron on, I

should not have been surprised." And then they all knew that the

archdeacon was talking about Mrs. Proudie, for Mrs. Proudie was his

bugbear.

Lady Lufton after receiving her guests introduced Lucy to Griselda

Grantly. Miss Grantly smiled graciously, bowed slightly, and then

remarked in the lowest voice possible that it was exceedingly cold. A

low voice, we know, is an excellent thing in woman. Lucy, who thought

that she was bound to speak, said that it was cold, but that she did

not mind it when she was walking. And then Griselda smiled again,

somewhat less graciously than before, and so the conversation ended.

Miss Grantly was the elder of the two, and having seen most of the

world, should have been the best able to talk, but perhaps she was

not very anxious for a conversation with Miss Robarts.

"So, Robarts, I hear that you have been preaching at Chaldicotes,"

said the archdeacon, still rather loudly. "I saw Sowerby the other

day, and he told me that you gave them the fag end of Mrs. Proudie's

lecture."

"It was ill-natured of Sowerby to say the fag end," said Robarts. "We

divided the matter into thirds. Harold Smith took the first part, I

the last--"

"And the lady the intervening portion. You have electrified the

county between you; but I am told that she had the best of it."

"I was so sorry that Mr. Robarts went there," said Lady Lufton, as

she walked into the dining-room leaning on the archdeacon's arm.

"I am inclined to think he could not very well have helped himself,"

said the archdeacon, who was never willing to lean heavily on a

brother parson, unless on one who had utterly and irrevocably gone

away from his side of the Church.

"Do you think not, archdeacon?"

"Why, no: Sowerby is a friend of Lufton's--"

"Not particularly," said poor Lady Lufton, in a deprecating tone.

"Well, they have been intimate; and Robarts, when he was asked to

preach at Chaldicotes, could not well refuse."

"But then he went afterwards to Gatherum Castle. Not that I am vexed

with him at all now, you understand. But it is such a dangerous

house, you know."

"So it is.--But the very fact of the duke's wishing to have a

clergyman there, should always be taken as a sign of grace, Lady

Lufton. The air was impure, no doubt; but it was less impure with

Robarts there than it would have been without him. But, gracious

heavens! what blasphemy have I been saying about impure air? Why,

the bishop was there!"

"Yes, the bishop was there," said Lady Lufton, and they both

understood each other thoroughly.

Lord Lufton took out Mrs. Grantly to dinner, and matters were so

managed that Miss Grantly sat on his other side. There was no

management apparent in this to anybody; but there she was, while

Lucy was placed between her brother and Captain Culpepper. Captain

Culpepper was a man with an enormous moustache, and a great aptitude

for slaughtering game; but as he had no other strong characteristics

it was not probable that he would make himself very agreeable to poor

Lucy. She had seen Lord Lufton once, for two minutes, since the day

of that walk, and then he had addressed her quite like an old friend.

It had been in the parsonage drawing-room, and Fanny had been there.

Fanny now was so well accustomed to his lordship, that she thought

but little of this, but to Lucy it had been very pleasant. He was not

forward or familiar, but kind, and gentle, and pleasant; and Lucy did

feel that she liked him. Now, on this evening, he had hitherto hardly

spoken to her; but then she knew that there were other people in

the company to whom he was bound to speak. She was not exactly

humble-minded in the usual sense of the word; but she did recognise

the fact that her position was less important than that of other

people there, and that therefore it was probable that to a certain

extent she would be overlooked. But not the less would she have liked

to occupy the seat to which Miss Grantly had found her way. She did

not want to flirt with Lord Lufton; she was not such a fool as that;

but she would have liked to have heard the sound of his voice close

to her ear, instead of that of Captain Culpepper's knife and fork.

This was the first occasion on which she had endeavoured to dress

herself with care since her father had died; and now, sombre though

she was in her deep mourning, she did look very well.

"There is an expression about her forehead that is full of poetry,"

Fanny had said to her husband.

"Don't you turn her head, Fanny, and make her believe that she is a

beauty," Mark had answered.

"I doubt it is not so easy to turn her head, Mark. There is more in

Lucy than you imagine, and so you will find out before long." It was

thus that Mrs. Robarts prophesied about her sister-in-law. Had she

been asked she might perhaps have said that Lucy's presence would be

dangerous to the Grantly interest at Framley Court.

Lord Lufton's voice was audible enough as he went on talking to Miss

Grantly--his voice, but not his words. He talked in such a way that

there was no appearance of whispering, and yet the person to whom he

spoke, and she only, could hear what he said. Mrs. Grantly the while

conversed constantly with Lucy's brother, who sat at Lucy's left

hand. She never lacked for subjects on which to speak to a country

clergyman of the right sort, and thus Griselda was left quite

uninterrupted. But Lucy could not but observe that Griselda herself

seemed to have very little to say--or at any rate to say very little.

Every now and then she did open her mouth, and some word or brace

of words would fall from it. But for the most part she seemed to be

content in the fact that Lord Lufton was paying her attention. She

showed no animation, but sat there still and graceful, composed and

classical, as she always was. Lucy, who could not keep her ears from

listening or her eyes from looking, thought that had she been there

she would have endeavoured to take a more prominent part in the

conversation. But then Griselda Grantly probably knew much better

than Lucy did how to comport herself in such a situation. Perhaps it

might be that young men, such as Lord Lufton, liked to hear the sound

of their own voices.

"Immense deal of game about here," Captain Culpepper said to her

towards the end of the dinner. It was the second attempt he had made;

on the former he had asked her whether she knew any of the fellows of

the 9th.

"Is there?" said Lucy. "Oh! I saw Lord Lufton the other day with a

great armful of pheasants."

"An armful! Why we had seven cartloads the other day at Gatherum."

"Seven carts full of pheasants!" said Lucy, amazed.

"That's not so much. We had eight guns, you know. Eight guns will do

a deal of work when the game has been well got together. They manage

all that capitally at Gatherum. Been at the duke's, eh?" Lucy had

heard the Framley report as to Gatherum Castle, and said with a sort

of shudder that she had never been at that place. After this, Captain

Culpepper troubled her no further.

When the ladies had taken themselves to the drawing-room Lucy found

herself hardly better off than she had been at the dinner-table. Lady

Lufton and Mrs. Grantly got themselves on to a sofa together, and

there chatted confidentially into each other's ears. Her ladyship

had introduced Lucy and Miss Grantly, and then she naturally thought

that the young people might do very well together. Mrs. Robarts did

attempt to bring about a joint conversation, which should include the

three, and for ten minutes or so she worked hard at it. But it did

not thrive. Miss Grantly was monosyllabic, smiling, however, at every

monosyllable; and Lucy found that nothing would occur to her at that

moment worthy of being spoken. There she sat, still and motionless,

afraid to take up a book, and thinking in her heart how much happier

she would have been at home at the parsonage. She was not made for

society; she felt sure of that; and another time she would let Mark

and Fanny come to Framley Court by themselves. And then the gentlemen

came in, and there was another stir in the room. Lady Lufton got up

and bustled about; she poked the fire and shifted the candles, spoke

a few words to Dr. Grantly, whispered something to her son, patted

Lucy on the cheek, told Fanny, who was a musician, that they would

have a little music, and ended by putting her two hands on Griselda's

shoulders and telling her that the fit of her frock was perfect. For

Lady Lufton, though she did dress old herself, as Lucy had said,

delighted to see those around her neat and pretty, jaunty and

graceful.

"Dear Lady Lufton!" said Griselda, putting up her hand so as to

press the end of her ladyship's fingers. It was the first piece of

animation she had shown, and Lucy Robarts watched it all. And then

there was music. Lucy neither played nor sang; Fanny did both, and

for an amateur did both well. Griselda did not sing, but she played;

and did so in a manner that showed that neither her own labour nor

her father's money had been spared in her instruction. Lord Lufton

sang also, a little, and Captain Culpepper a very little; so that

they got up a concert among them. In the meantime the doctor and Mark

stood talking together on the rug before the fire; the two mothers

sat contented, watching the billings and the cooings of their

offspring--and Lucy sat alone, turning over the leaves of a book of

pictures. She made up her mind fully, then and there, that she was

quite unfitted by disposition for such work as this. She cared for

no one, and no one cared for her. Well, she must go through with it

now; but another time she would know better. With her own book and a

fireside she never felt herself to be miserable as she was now. She

had turned her back to the music for she was sick of seeing Lord

Lufton watch the artistic motion of Miss Grantly's fingers, and

was sitting at a small table as far away from the piano as a long

room would permit, when she was suddenly roused from a reverie of

self-reproach by a voice close behind her: "Miss Robarts," said

the voice, "why have you cut us all?" and Lucy felt that, though

she heard the words plainly, nobody else did. Lord Lufton was now

speaking to her as he had before spoken to Miss Grantly.

"I don't play, my lord," said Lucy, "nor yet sing."

"That would have made your company so much more valuable to us, for

we are terribly badly off for listeners. Perhaps you don't like

music?"

"I do like it,--sometimes very much."

"And when are the sometimes? But we shall find it all out in time. We

shall have unravelled all your mysteries, and read all your riddles

by--when shall I say?--by the end of the winter. Shall we not?"

"I do not know that I have got any mysteries."

"Oh, but you have! It is very mysterious in you to come and sit

here--with your back to us all--"

"Oh, Lord Lufton; if I have done wrong--!" and poor Lucy almost

started from her chair, and a deep flush came across her dark cheek.

"No--no; you have done no wrong. I was only joking. It is we who

have done wrong in leaving you to yourself--you who are the greatest

stranger among us."

"I have been very well, thank you. I don't care about being left

alone. I have always been used to it."

"Ah! but we must break you of the habit. We won't allow you to make a

hermit of yourself. But the truth is, Miss Robarts, you don't know us

yet, and therefore you are not quite happy among us."

"Oh! yes, I am; you are all very good to me."

"You must let us be good to you. At any rate, you must let me be so.

You know, don't you, that Mark and I have been dear friends since we

were seven years old. His wife has been my sister's dearest friend

almost as long; and now that you are with them, you must be a dear

friend too. You won't refuse the offer, will you?"

"Oh, no," she said, quite in a whisper; and, indeed, she could hardly

raise her voice above a whisper, fearing that tears would fall from

her tell-tale eyes.

"Dr. and Mrs. Grantly will have gone in a couple of days, and then we

must get you down here. Miss Grantly is to remain for Christmas, and

you two must become bosom friends." Lucy smiled, and tried to look

pleased, but she felt that she and Griselda Grantly could never be

bosom friends--could never have anything in common between them.

She felt sure that Griselda despised her, little, brown, plain, and

unimportant as she was. She herself could not despise Griselda in

turn; indeed she could not but admire Miss Grantly's great beauty and

dignity of demeanour; but she knew that she could never love her.

It is hardly possible that the proud-hearted should love those who

despise them; and Lucy Robarts was very proud-hearted.

"Don't you think she is very handsome?" said Lord Lufton.

"Oh, very," said Lucy. "Nobody can doubt that."

"Ludovic," said Lady Lufton--not quite approving of her son's

remaining so long at the back of Lucy's chair--"won't you give us

another song? Mrs. Robarts and Miss Grantly are still at the piano."

"I have sung away all that I knew, mother. There's Culpepper has not

had a chance yet. He has got to give us his dream--how he 'dreamt

that he dwelt in marble halls!'"

"I sang that an hour ago," said the captain, not over-pleased.

"But you certainly have not told us how 'your little lovers came!'"

The captain, however, would not sing any more. And then the party was

broken up, and the Robartses went home to their parsonage.

CHAPTER XII

The Little Bill

Lucy, during those last fifteen minutes of her sojourn in the Framley

Court drawing-room, somewhat modified the very strong opinion she

had before formed as to her unfitness for such society. It was very

pleasant sitting there in that easy chair, while Lord Lufton stood at

the back of it saying nice, soft, good-natured words to her. She was

sure that in a little time she could feel a true friendship for him,

and that she could do so without any risk of falling in love with

him. But then she had a glimmering of an idea that such a friendship

would be open to all manner of remarks, and would hardly be

compatible with the world's ordinary ways. At any rate it would be

pleasant to be at Framley Court, if he would come and occasionally

notice her. But she did not admit to herself that such a visit would

be intolerable if his whole time were devoted to Griselda Grantly.

She neither admitted it, nor thought it; but nevertheless, in a

strange unconscious way, such a feeling did find entrance in her

bosom. And then the Christmas holidays passed away. How much of this

enjoyment fell to her share, and how much of this suffering she

endured, we will not attempt accurately to describe. Miss Grantly

remained at Framley Court up to Twelfth Night, and the Robartses also

spent most of the season at the house. Lady Lufton, no doubt, had

hoped that everything might have been arranged on this occasion in

accordance with her wishes, but such had not been the case. Lord

Lufton had evidently admired Miss Grantly very much: indeed, he

had said so to his mother half a dozen times; but it may almost be

questioned whether the pleasure Lady Lufton derived from this was not

more than neutralized by an opinion he once put forward that Griselda

Grantly wanted some of the fire of Lucy Robarts.

"Surely, Ludovic, you would never compare the two girls," said Lady

Lufton.

"Of course not. They are the very antipodes to each other. Miss

Grantly would probably be more to my taste; but then I am wise enough

to know that it is so because my taste is a bad taste."

"I know no man with a more accurate or refined taste in such

matters," said Lady Lufton. Beyond this she did not dare to go. She

knew very well that her strategy would be vain should her son once

learn that she had a strategy. To tell the truth, Lady Lufton was

becoming somewhat indifferent to Lucy Robarts. She had been very kind

to the little girl; but the little girl seemed hardly to appreciate

the kindness as she should do--and then Lord Lufton would talk to

Lucy, "which was so unnecessary, you know;" and Lucy had got into

a way of talking quite freely with Lord Lufton, having completely

dropped that short, spasmodic, ugly exclamation of "my lord." And so

the Christmas festivities were at an end, and January wore itself

away. During the greater part of this month Lord Lufton did not

remain at Framley, but was nevertheless in the county, hunting with

the hounds of both divisions, and staying at various houses. Two or

three nights he spent at Chaldicotes; and one--let it only be told in

an under voice--at Gatherum Castle! Of this he said nothing to Lady

Lufton. "Why make her unhappy?" as he said to Mark. But Lady Lufton

knew it, though she said not a word to him--knew it, and was unhappy.

"If he would only marry Griselda, there would be an end of that

danger," she said to herself.

But now we must go back for a while to the vicar and his little bill.

It will be remembered, that his first idea with reference to that

trouble, after the reading of his father's will, was to borrow the

money from his brother John. John was down at Exeter at the time,

and was to stay one night at the parsonage on his way to London.

Mark would broach the matter to him on the journey, painful though

it would be to him to tell the story of his own folly to a brother

so much younger than himself, and who had always looked up to him,

clergyman and full-blown vicar as he was, with a deference greater

than that which such difference in age required. The story was told,

however; but was told all in vain, as Mark found out before he

reached Framley. His brother John immediately declared that he would

lend him the money, of course--eight hundred, if his brother wanted

it. He, John, confessed that, as regarded the remaining two, he

should like to feel the pleasure of immediate possession. As for

interest, he would not take any--take interest from a brother! of

course not. Well, if Mark made such a fuss about it, he supposed he

must take it; but would rather not. Mark should have his own way, and

do just what he liked.

This was all very well, and Mark had fully made up his mind that his

brother should not be kept long out of his money. But then arose the

question, how was that money to be reached? He, Mark, was executor,

or one of the executors under his father's will, and, therefore, no

doubt, could put his hand upon it; but his brother wanted five months

of being of age, and could not therefore as yet be put legally in

possession of the legacy. "That's a bore," said the assistant private

secretary to the Lord Petty Bag, thinking, perhaps, as much of

his own immediate wish for ready cash as he did of his brother's

necessities. Mark felt that it was a bore, but there was nothing

more to be done in that direction. He must now find out how far the

bankers could assist him.

Some week or two after his return to Framley he went over to

Barchester, and called there on a certain Mr. Forrest, the manager

of one of the banks, with whom he was acquainted; and with many

injunctions as to secrecy told this manager the whole of his story.

At first he concealed the name of his friend Sowerby, but it soon

appeared that no such concealment was of any avail. "That Sowerby, of

course," said Mr. Forrest. "I know you are intimate with him; and all

his friends go through that, sooner or later." It seemed to Mark as

though Mr. Forrest made very light of the whole transaction.

"I cannot possibly pay the bill when it falls due," said Mark.

"Oh, no, of course not," said Mr. Forrest. "It's never very

convenient to hand out four hundred pounds at a blow. Nobody will

expect you to pay it!"

"But I suppose I shall have to do it sooner or later?"

"Well, that's as may be. It will depend partly on how you manage with

Sowerby, and partly on the hands it gets into. As the bill has your

name on it, they'll have patience as long as the interest is paid,

and the commissions on renewal. But no doubt it will have to be met

some day by somebody." Mr. Forrest said that he was sure that the

bill was not in Barchester; Mr. Sowerby would not, he thought, have

brought it to a Barchester bank. The bill was probably in London, but

doubtless would be sent to Barchester for collection. "If it comes in

my way," said Mr. Forrest, "I will give you plenty of time, so that

you may manage about the renewal with Sowerby. I suppose he'll pay

the expense of doing that."

Mark's heart was somewhat lighter as he left the bank. Mr. Forrest

had made so little of the whole transaction that he felt himself

justified in making little of it also. "It may be as well," said he

to himself, as he drove home, "not to tell Fanny anything about it

till the three months have run round. I must make some arrangement

then." And in this way his mind was easier during the last of those

three months than it had been during the two former. That feeling

of over-due bills, of bills coming due, of accounts overdrawn, of

tradesmen unpaid, of general money cares, is very dreadful at first;

but it is astonishing how soon men get used to it. A load which would

crush a man at first becomes, by habit, not only endurable, but

easy and comfortable to the bearer. The habitual debtor goes along

jaunty and with elastic step, almost enjoying the excitement of his

embarrassments. There was Mr. Sowerby himself; who ever saw a cloud

on his brow? It made one almost in love with ruin to be in his

company. And even now, already, Mark Robarts was thinking to himself

quite comfortably about this bill;--how very pleasantly those bankers

managed these things. Pay it! No; no one will be so unreasonable

as to expect you to do that! And then Mr. Sowerby certainly was a

pleasant fellow, and gave a man something in return for his money. It

was still a question with Mark whether Lord Lufton had not been too

hard on Sowerby. Had that gentleman fallen across his clerical friend

at the present moment, he might no doubt have gotten from him an

acceptance for another four hundred pounds.

One is almost inclined to believe that there is something pleasurable

in the excitement of such embarrassments, as there is also in the

excitement of drink. But then, at last, the time does come when the

excitement is over, and when nothing but the misery is left. If there

be an existence of wretchedness on earth it must be that of the

elderly, worn-out rouÃ©, who has run this race of debt and bills of

accommodation and acceptances--of what, if we were not in these

days somewhat afraid of good broad English, we might call lying and

swindling, falsehood and fraud--and who, having ruined all whom he

should have loved, having burnt up every one who would trust him

much, and scorched all who would trust him a little, is at last

left to finish his life with such bread and water as these men get,

without one honest thought to strengthen his sinking heart, or one

honest friend to hold his shivering hand! If a man could only think

of that, as he puts his name to the first little bill, as to which he

is so good-naturedly assured that it can easily be renewed!

When the three months had nearly run out, it so happened that Robarts

met his friend Sowerby. Mark had once or twice ridden with Lord

Lufton as far as the meet of the hounds, and may, perhaps, have gone

a field or two farther on some occasions. The reader must not think

that he had taken to hunting, as some parsons do; and it is singular

enough that whenever they do so they always show a special aptitude

for the pursuit, as though hunting were an employment peculiarly

congenial with a cure of souls in the country. Such a thought would

do our vicar injustice. But when Lord Lufton would ask him what on

earth could be the harm of riding along the roads to look at the

hounds, he hardly knew what sensible answer to give his lordship. It

would be absurd to say that his time would be better employed at home

in clerical matters, for it was notorious that he had not clerical

pursuits for the employment of half his time. In this way, therefore,

he had got into a habit of looking at the hounds, and keeping up his

acquaintance in the county, meeting Lord Dumbello, Mr. Green Walker,

Harold Smith, and other such like sinners; and on one such occasion,

as the three months were nearly closing, he did meet Mr. Sowerby.

"Look here, Sowerby; I want to speak to you for half a moment. What

are you doing about that bill?"

"Bill--bill! what bill?--which bill? The whole bill, and nothing but

the bill. That seems to be the conversation nowadays of all men,

morning, noon, and night?"

"Don't you know the bill I signed for you for four hundred pounds?"

"Did you, though? Was not that rather green of you?" This did seem

strange to Mark. Could it really be the fact that Mr. Sowerby had

so many bills flying about that he had absolutely forgotten that

occurrence in the Gatherum Castle bedroom? And then to be called

green by the very man whom he had obliged!

"Perhaps I was," said Mark, in a tone that showed that he was

somewhat piqued. "But all the same I should be glad to know how it

will be taken up."

"Oh, Mark, what a ruffian you are to spoil my day's sport in this

way. Any man but a parson would be too good a Christian for such

intense cruelty. But let me see--four hundred pounds? Oh, yes--Tozer

has it."

"And what will Tozer do with it?"

"Make money of it; whatever way he may go to work he will do that."

"But will Tozer bring it to me on the 20th?"

"Oh, Lord, no! Upon my word, Mark, you are deliciously green. A cat

would as soon think of killing a mouse directly she got it into her

claws. But, joking apart, you need not trouble yourself. Maybe you

will hear no more about it; or, perhaps, which no doubt is more

probable, I may have to send it to you to be renewed. But you need

do nothing till you hear from me or somebody else."

"Only do not let any one come down upon me for the money."

"There is not the slightest fear of that. Tally-ho, old fellow! He's

away. Tally-ho! right over by Gossetts' barn. Come along, and never

mind Tozer--'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'" And away

they both went together, parson and member of Parliament. And then

again on that occasion Mark went home with a sort of feeling that the

bill did not matter. Tozer would manage it somehow; and it was quite

clear that it would not do to tell his wife of it just at present.

On the 21st of that month of February, however, he did receive a

reminder that the bill and all concerning it had not merely been a

farce. This was a letter from Mr. Sowerby, dated from Chaldicotes,

though not bearing the Barchester post-mark, in which that gentleman

suggested a renewal--not exactly of the old bill, but of a new one.

It seemed to Mark that the letter had been posted in London. If I

give it entire, I shall, perhaps, most quickly explain its purport:

Chaldicotes,--20th February, 185--.

MY DEAR MARK,

"Lend not thy name to the money-dealers, for the same is a

destruction and a snare." If that be not in the Proverbs,

it ought to be. Tozer has given me certain signs of his

being alive and strong this cold weather. As we can

neither of us take up that bill for Â£400 at the moment, we

must renew it, and pay him his commission and interest,

with all the rest of his perquisites, and pickings, and

stealings--from all which, I can assure you, Tozer does

not keep his hands as he should do. To cover this and some

other little outstanding trifles, I have filled in the new

bill for Â£500, making it due 23rd of May next. Before that

time, a certain accident will, I trust, have occurred to

your impoverished friend. By the by, I never told you how

she went off from Gatherum Castle, the morning after you

left us, with the Greshams. Cart-ropes would not hold her,

even though the duke held them; which he did, with all the

strength of his ducal hands. She would go to meet some

doctor of theirs, and so I was put off for that time; but

I think that the matter stands in a good train.

Do not lose a post in sending back the bill accepted, as

Tozer may annoy you--nay, undoubtedly will, if the matter

be not in his hand, duly signed by both of us, the day

after to-morrow. He is an ungrateful brute; he has lived

on me for these eight years, and would not let me off a

single squeeze now to save my life. But I am specially

anxious to save you from the annoyance and cost of

lawyers' letters; and if delayed, it might get into the

papers. Put it under cover to me, at No. 7, Duke Street,

St. James's. I shall be in town by that time.

Good-bye, old fellow. That was a decent brush we had the

other day from Cobbold's Ashes. I wish I could get that

brown horse from you. I would not mind going to a hundred

and thirty.

Yours ever,

N. SOWERBY.

When Mark had read it through he looked down on his table to see

whether the old bill had fallen from the letter; but no, there was

no enclosure, and had been no enclosure but the new bill. And then

he read the letter through again, and found that there was no word

about the old bill--not a syllable, at least, as to its whereabouts.

Sowerby did not even say that it would remain in his own hands. Mark

did not in truth know much about such things. It might be that the

very fact of his signing this second document would render that first

document null and void; and from Sowerby's silence on the subject, it

might be argued that this was so well known to be the case, that he

had not thought of explaining it. But yet Mark could not see how this

should be so. But what was he to do? That threat of cost and lawyers,

and specially of the newspapers, did have its effect upon him--as

no doubt it was intended to do. And then he was utterly dumbfounded

by Sowerby's impudence in drawing on him for Â£500 instead of Â£400,

"covering," as Sowerby so good-humouredly said, "sundry little

outstanding trifles."

But at last he did sign the bill, and sent it off, as Sowerby had

directed. What else was he to do? Fool that he was. A man always can

do right, even though he has done wrong before. But that previous

wrong adds so much difficulty to the path--a difficulty which

increases in tremendous ratio, till a man at last is choked in his

struggling, and is drowned beneath the waters. And then he put away

Sowerby's letter carefully, locking it up from his wife's sight. It

was a letter that no parish clergyman should have received. So much

he acknowledged to himself. But nevertheless it was necessary that he

should keep it. And now again for a few hours this affair made him

very miserable.

CHAPTER XIII

Delicate Hints

Lady Lufton had been greatly rejoiced at that good deed which her son

did in giving up his Leicestershire hunting, and coming to reside for

the winter at Framley. It was proper, and becoming, and comfortable

in the extreme. An English nobleman ought to hunt in the county where

he himself owns the fields over which he rides; he ought to receive

the respect and honour due to him from his own tenants; he ought to

sleep under a roof of his own, and he ought also--so Lady Lufton

thought--to fall in love with a young embryo bride of his own

mother's choosing. And then it was so pleasant to have him there in

the house. Lady Lufton was not a woman who allowed her life to be

what people in common parlance call dull. She had too many duties,

and thought too much of them, to allow of her suffering from tedium

and \_ennui\_. But nevertheless the house was more joyous to her when

he was there. There was a reason for some little gaiety, which

would never have been attracted thither by herself, but which,

nevertheless, she did enjoy when it was brought about by his

presence. She was younger and brighter when he was there, thinking

more of the future and less of the past. She could look at him, and

that alone was happiness to her. And then he was pleasant-mannered

with her; joking with her on her little old-world prejudices in a

tone that was musical to her ear as coming from him; smiling on her,

reminding her of those smiles which she had loved so dearly when as

yet he was all her own, lying there in his little bed beside her

chair. He was kind and gracious to her, behaving like a good son, at

any rate while he was there in her presence. When we add to this, her

fears that he might not be so perfect in his conduct when absent, we

may well imagine that Lady Lufton was pleased to have him there at

Framley Court.

She had hardly said a word to him as to that five thousand pounds.

Many a night, as she lay thinking on her pillow, she said to herself

that no money had ever been better expended, since it had brought him

back to his own house. He had thanked her for it in his own open way,

declaring that he would pay it back to her during the coming year,

and comforting her heart by his rejoicing that the property had not

been sold. "I don't like the idea of parting with an acre of it," he

had said.

"Of course not, Ludovic. Never let the estate decrease in your hands.

It is only by such resolutions as that that English noblemen and

English gentlemen can preserve their country. I cannot bear to see

property changing hands."

"Well, I suppose it's a good thing to have land in the market

sometimes, so that the millionaires may know what to do with their

money."

"God forbid that yours should be there!" And the widow made a little

mental prayer that her son's acres might be protected from the

millionaires and other Philistines.

"Why, yes: I don't exactly want to see a Jew tailor investing his

earnings at Lufton," said the lord.

"Heaven forbid!" said the widow. All this, as I have said, was very

nice. It was manifest to her ladyship, from his lordship's way of

talking, that no vital injury had as yet been done: he had no cares

on his mind, and spoke freely about the property: but nevertheless

there were clouds even now, at this period of bliss, which somewhat

obscured the brilliancy of Lady Lufton's sky. Why was Ludovic so slow

in that affair of Griselda Grantly? why so often in these latter

winter days did he saunter over to the parsonage? And then that

terrible visit to Gatherum Castle! What actually did happen at

Gatherum Castle, she never knew. We, however, are more intrusive,

less delicate in our inquiries, and we can say. He had a very bad

day's sport with the West Barsetshire. The county is altogether short

of foxes, and some one who understands the matter must take that

point up before they can do any good. And after that he had had

rather a dull dinner with the duke. Sowerby had been there, and in

the evening he and Sowerby had played billiards. Sowerby had won a

pound or two, and that had been the extent of the damage done. But

those saunterings over to the parsonage might be more dangerous. Not

that it ever occurred to Lady Lufton as possible that her son should

fall in love with Lucy Robarts. Lucy's personal attractions were not

of a nature to give ground for such a fear as that. But he might turn

the girl's head with his chatter; she might be fool enough to fancy

any folly; and, moreover, people would talk. Why should he go to the

parsonage now more frequently than he had ever done before Lucy came

there?

And then her ladyship, in reference to the same trouble, hardly knew

how to manage her invitations to the parsonage. These hitherto had

been very frequent, and she had been in the habit of thinking that

they could hardly be too much so; but now she was almost afraid

to continue the custom. She could not ask the parson and his wife

without Lucy; and when Lucy was there, her son would pass the greater

part of the evening in talking to her, or playing chess with her. Now

this did disturb Lady Lufton not a little. And then Lucy took it all

so quietly. On her first arrival at Framley she had been so shy, so

silent, and so much awestruck by the grandeur of Framley Court, that

Lady Lufton had sympathized with her and encouraged her. She had

endeavoured to moderate the blaze of her own splendour, in order

that Lucy's unaccustomed eyes might not be dazzled. But all this

was changed now. Lucy could listen to the young lord's voice by

the hour together--without being dazzled in the least. Under these

circumstances two things occurred to her. She would speak either to

her son or to Fanny Robarts, and by a little diplomacy have this evil

remedied. And then she had to determine on which step she would take.

"Nothing could be more reasonable than Ludovic." So at least she said

to herself over and over again. But then Ludovic understood nothing

about such matters; and had, moreover, a habit, inherited from his

father, of taking the bit between his teeth whenever he suspected

interference. Drive him gently without pulling his mouth about, and

you might take him anywhere, almost at any pace; but a smart touch,

let it be ever so slight, would bring him on his haunches, and then

it might be a question whether you could get him another mile that

day. So that on the whole Lady Lufton thought that the other plan

would be the best. I have no doubt that Lady Lufton was right.

She got Fanny up into her own den one afternoon, and seated her

discreetly in an easy arm-chair, making her guest take off her

bonnet, and showing by various signs that the visit was regarded as

one of great moment. "Fanny," she said, "I want to speak to you about

something that is important and necessary to mention, and yet it is

a very delicate affair to speak of." Fanny opened her eyes, and said

that she hoped that nothing was wrong. "No, my dear, I think nothing

is wrong: I hope so, and I think I may say I'm sure of it; but then

it's always well to be on one's guard."

"Yes, it is," said Fanny, who knew that something unpleasant was

coming--something as to which she might probably be called upon to

differ from her ladyship. Mrs. Robarts's own fears, however, were

running entirely in the direction of her husband;--and, indeed,

Lady Lufton had a word or two to say on that subject also, only not

exactly now. A hunting parson was not at all to her taste; but that

matter might be allowed to remain in abeyance for a few days.

"Now, Fanny, you know that we have all liked your sister-in-law,

Lucy, very much." And then Mrs. Robarts's mind was immediately

opened, and she knew the rest as well as though it had all been

spoken. "I need hardly tell you that, for I am sure we have shown

it."

"You have, indeed, as you always do."

"And you must not think that I am going to complain," continued Lady

Lufton.

"I hope there is nothing to complain of," said Fanny, speaking by

no means in a defiant tone, but humbly as it were, and deprecating

her ladyship's wrath. Fanny had gained one signal victory over Lady

Lufton, and on that account, with a prudence equal to her generosity,

felt that she could afford to be submissive. It might, perhaps, not

be long before she would be equally anxious to conquer again.

"Well, no; I don't think there is," said Lady Lufton. "Nothing to

complain of; but a little chat between you and me may, perhaps, set

matters right, which, otherwise, might become troublesome."

"Is it about Lucy?"

"Yes, my dear--about Lucy. She is a very nice, good girl, and a

credit to her father--"

"And a great comfort to us," said Fanny.

"I am sure she is: she must be a very pleasant companion to you, and

so useful about the children; but--" And then Lady Lufton paused for

a moment; for she, eloquent and discreet as she always was, felt

herself rather at a loss for words to express her exact meaning.

"I don't know what I should do without her," said Fanny, speaking

with the object of assisting her ladyship in her embarrassment.

"But the truth is this: she and Lord Lufton are getting into the way

of being too much together--of talking to each other too exclusively.

I am sure you must have noticed it, Fanny. It is not that I suspect

any evil. I don't think that I am suspicious by nature."

"Oh! no," said Fanny.

"But they will each of them get wrong ideas about the other, and

about themselves. Lucy will, perhaps, think that Ludovic means more

than he does, and Ludovic will--" But it was not quite so easy to say

what Ludovic might do or think; but Lady Lufton went on:

"I am sure that you understand me, Fanny, with your excellent sense

and tact. Lucy is clever, and amusing, and all that; and Ludovic,

like all young men, is perhaps ignorant that his attentions may be

taken to mean more than he intends--"

"You don't think that Lucy is in love with him?"

"Oh dear, no--nothing of the kind. If I thought it had come to that,

I should recommend that she should be sent away altogether. I am sure

she is not so foolish as that."

"I don't think there is anything in it at all, Lady Lufton."

"I don't think there is, my dear, and therefore I would not for

worlds make any suggestion about it to Lord Lufton. I would not let

him suppose that I suspected Lucy of being so imprudent. But still,

it may be well that you should just say a word to her. A little

management now and then, in such matters, is so useful."

"But what shall I say to her?"

"Just explain to her that any young lady who talks so much to the

same young gentleman will certainly be observed--that people will

accuse her of setting her cap at Lord Lufton. Not that I suspect

her--I give her credit for too much proper feeling: I know her

education has been good, and her principles are upright. But people

will talk of her. You must understand that, Fanny, as well as I do."

Fanny could not help meditating whether proper feeling, education,

and upright principles did forbid Lucy Robarts to fall in love with

Lord Lufton; but her doubts on this subject, if she held any, were

not communicated to her ladyship. It had never entered into her mind

that a match was possible between Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts, nor

had she the slightest wish to encourage it now that the idea was

suggested to her. On such a matter she could sympathize with Lady

Lufton, though she did not completely agree with her as to the

expediency of any interference. Nevertheless, she at once offered to

speak to Lucy. "I don't think that Lucy has any idea in her head upon

the subject," said Mrs. Robarts.

"I dare say not--I don't suppose she has. But young ladies sometimes

allow themselves to fall in love, and then to think themselves very

ill-used, just because they have had no idea in their head."

"I will put her on her guard if you wish it, Lady Lufton."

"Exactly, my dear; that is just it. Put her on her guard--that is all

that is necessary. She is a dear, good, clever girl, and it would be

very sad if anything were to interrupt our comfortable way of getting

on with her." Mrs. Robarts knew to a nicety the exact meaning of this

threat. If Lucy would persist in securing to herself so much of Lord

Lufton's time and attention, her visits to Framley Court must become

less frequent. Lady Lufton would do much, very much, indeed, for her

friends at the parsonage; but not even for them could she permit her

son's prospects in life to be endangered. There was nothing more

said between them, and Mrs. Robarts got up to take her leave, having

promised to speak to Lucy.

"You manage everything so perfectly," said Lady Lufton, as she

pressed Mrs. Robarts's hand, "that I am quite at ease now that I find

you will agree with me." Mrs. Robarts did not exactly agree with her

ladyship, but she hardly thought it worth her while to say so. Mrs.

Robarts immediately started off on her walk to her own home, and when

she had got out of the grounds into the road, where it makes a turn

towards the parsonage, nearly opposite to Podgens' shop, she saw Lord

Lufton on horseback, and Lucy standing beside him. It was already

nearly five o'clock, and it was getting dusk; but as she approached,

or rather as she came suddenly within sight of them, she could see

that they were in close conversation. Lord Lufton's face was towards

her, and his horse was standing still; he was leaning over towards

his companion, and the whip, which he held in his right hand, hung

almost over her arm and down her back, as though his hand had touched

and perhaps rested on her shoulder. She was standing by his side,

looking up into his face, with one gloved hand resting on the horse's

neck. Mrs. Robarts, as she saw them, could not but own that there

might be cause for Lady Lufton's fears. But then Lucy's manner, as

Mrs. Robarts approached, was calculated to dissipate any such fears,

and to prove that there was no ground for them. She did not move from

her position, or allow her hand to drop, or show that she was in any

way either confused or conscious. She stood her ground, and when her

sister-in-law came up was smiling and at her ease. "Lord Lufton wants

me to learn to ride," said she.

"To learn to ride!" said Fanny, not knowing what answer to make to

such a proposition.

"Yes," said he. "This horse would carry her beautifully: he is as

quiet as a lamb, and I made Gregory go out with him yesterday with a

sheet hanging over him like a lady's habit, and the man got up into a

lady's saddle."

"I think Gregory would make a better hand of it than Lucy."

"The horse cantered with him as though he had carried a lady all his

life, and his mouth is like velvet; indeed, that is his fault--he is

too soft-mouthed."

"I suppose that's the same sort of thing as a man being

soft-hearted," said Lucy.

"Exactly: you ought to ride them both with a very light hand. They

are difficult cattle to manage, but very pleasant when you know how

to do it."

"But you see I don't know how to do it," said Lucy.

"As regards the horse, you will learn in two days, and I do hope you

will try. Don't you think it will be an excellent thing for her, Mrs.

Robarts?"

"Lucy has got no habit," said Mrs. Robarts, making use of the excuse

common on all such occasions.

"There is one of Justinia's in the house, I know. She always leaves

one here, in order that she may be able to ride when she comes."

"She would not think of taking such a liberty with Lady Meredith's

things," said Fanny, almost frightened at the proposal.

"Of course it is out of the question, Fanny," said Lucy, now speaking

rather seriously. "In the first place, I would not take Lord Lufton's

horse; in the second place, I would not take Lady Meredith's habit;

in the third place, I should be a great deal too much frightened;

and, lastly, it is quite out of the question for a great many other

very good reasons."

"Nonsense," said Lord Lufton.

"A great deal of nonsense," said Lucy, laughing, "but all of it

of Lord Lufton's talking. But we are getting cold--are we not,

Fanny?--so we will wish you good-night." And then the two ladies

shook hands with him, and walked on towards the parsonage. That

which astonished Mrs. Robarts the most in all this was the perfectly

collected manner in which Lucy spoke and conducted herself. This,

connected, as she could not but connect it, with the air of chagrin

with which Lord Lufton received Lucy's decision, made it manifest

to Mrs. Robarts that Lord Lufton was annoyed because Lucy would not

consent to learn to ride; whereas she, Lucy herself, had given her

refusal in a firm and decided tone, as though resolved that nothing

more should be said about it. They walked on in silence for a minute

or two, till they reached the parsonage gate, and then Lucy said,

laughing, "Can't you fancy me sitting on that great big horse? I

wonder what Lady Lufton would say if she saw me there, and his

lordship giving me my first lesson?"

"I don't think she would like it," said Fanny.

"I'm sure she would not. But I will not try her temper in that

respect. Sometimes I fancy that she does not even like seeing Lord

Lufton talking to me."

"She does not like it, Lucy, when she sees him flirting with you."

This Mrs. Robarts said rather gravely, whereas Lucy had been speaking

in a half-bantering tone. As soon as even the word flirting was out

of Fanny's mouth, she was conscious that she had been guilty of an

injustice in using it. She had wished to say something which would

convey to her sister-in-law an idea of what Lady Lufton would

dislike; but in doing so, she had unintentionally brought against her

an accusation.

"Flirting, Fanny!" said Lucy, standing still in the path, and looking

up into her companion's face with all her eyes. "Do you mean to say

that I have been flirting with Lord Lufton?"

"I did not say that."

"Or that I have allowed him to flirt with me?"

"I did not mean to shock you, Lucy."

"What did you mean, Fanny?"

"Why, just this: that Lady Lufton would not be pleased if he paid you

marked attentions, and if you received them; just like that affair of

the riding; it was better to decline it."

"Of course I declined it; of course I never dreamt of accepting such

an offer. Go riding about the country on his horses! What have I

done, Fanny, that you should suppose such a thing?"

"You have done nothing, dearest."

"Then why did you speak as you did just now?"

"Because I wished to put you on your guard. You know, Lucy, that I do

not intend to find fault with you; but you may be sure, as a rule,

that intimate friendships between young gentlemen and young ladies

are dangerous things." They then walked up to the hall-door in

silence. When they had reached it, Lucy stood in the doorway instead

of entering it, and said, "Fanny, let us take another turn together,

if you are not tired."

"No, I'm not tired."

"It will be better that I should understand you at once,"--and then

they again moved away from the house. "Tell me truly now, do you

think that Lord Lufton and I have been flirting?"

"I do think that he is a little inclined to flirt with you."

"And Lady Lufton has been asking you to lecture me about it?" Poor

Mrs. Robarts hardly knew what to say. She thought well of all the

persons concerned, and was very anxious to behave well by all of

them;--was particularly anxious to create no ill feeling, and

wished that everybody should be comfortable, and on good terms with

everybody else. But yet the truth was forced out of her when this

question was asked so suddenly. "Not to lecture you, Lucy," she said

at last.

"Well, to preach to me, or to talk to me, or to give me a lesson;

to say something that shall drive me to put my back up against Lord

Lufton?"

"To caution you, dearest. Had you heard what she said, you would

hardly have felt angry with Lady Lufton."

"Well, to caution me. It is such a pleasant thing for a girl to be

cautioned against falling in love with a gentleman, especially when

the gentleman is very rich, and a lord, and all that sort of thing!"

"Nobody for a moment attributes anything wrong to you, Lucy."

"Anything wrong--no. I don't know whether it would be anything wrong,

even if I were to fall in love with him. I wonder whether they

cautioned Griselda Grantly when she was here? I suppose when young

lords go about, all the girls are cautioned as a matter of course.

Why do they not label him 'dangerous'?" And then again they were

silent for a moment, as Mrs. Robarts did not feel that she had

anything further to say on the matter.

"'Poison' should be the word with any one so fatal as Lord Lufton;

and he ought to be made up of some particular colour, for fear he

should be swallowed in mistake."

"You will be safe, you see," said Fanny, laughing, "as you have been

specially cautioned as to this individual bottle."

"Ah! but what's the use of that after I have had so many doses? It is

no good telling me about it now; when the mischief is done,--after I

have been taking it for I don't know how long. Dear! dear! dear! and

I regarded it as a mere commonplace powder, good for the complexion.

I wonder whether it's too late, or whether there's any antidote?"

Mrs. Robarts did not always quite understand her sister-in-law, and

now she was a little at a loss. "I don't think there's much harm done

yet on either side," she said, cheerily.

"Ah! you don't know, Fanny. But I do think that if I die--as I

shall--I feel I shall;--and if so, I do think it ought to go very

hard with Lady Lufton. Why didn't she label him 'dangerous' in time?"

And then they went into the house and up to their own rooms. It was

difficult for any one to understand Lucy's state of mind at present,

and it can hardly be said that she understood it herself. She felt

that she had received a severe blow in having been thus made the

subject of remark with reference to Lord Lufton. She knew that her

pleasant evenings at Framley Court were now over, and that she

could not again talk to him in an unrestrained tone and without

embarrassment. She had felt the air of the whole place to be very

cold before her intimacy with him, and now it must be cold again.

Two homes had been open to her; Framley Court and the parsonage;

and now, as far as comfort was concerned, she must confine herself

to the latter. She could not again be comfortable in Lady Lufton's

drawing-room. But then she could not help asking herself whether Lady

Lufton was not right. She had had courage enough, and presence of

mind, to joke about the matter when her sister-in-law spoke to her,

and yet she was quite aware that it was no joking matter. Lord Lufton

had not absolutely made love to her, but he had latterly spoken to

her in a manner which she knew was not compatible with that ordinary

comfortable masculine friendship with the idea of which she had once

satisfied herself. Was not Fanny right when she said that intimate

friendships of that nature were dangerous things?

Yes, Lucy, very dangerous. Lucy, before she went to bed that night,

had owned to herself that they were so; and lying there with

sleepless eyes and a moist pillow, she was driven to confess that the

label would in truth be now too late, that the caution had come to

her after the poison had been swallowed. Was there any antidote? That

was all that was left for her to consider. But, nevertheless, on the

following morning she could appear quite at her ease. And when Mark

had left the house after breakfast, she could still joke with Fanny

as to Lady Lufton's poisoned cupboard.

CHAPTER XIV

Mr. Crawley of Hogglestock

And then there was that other trouble in Lady Lufton's mind, the

sins, namely, of her selected parson. She had selected him, and she

was by no means inclined to give him up, even though his sins against

parsondom were grievous. Indeed she was a woman not prone to give up

anything, and of all things not prone to give up a protÃ©gÃ©. The very

fact that she herself had selected him was the strongest argument

in his favour. But his sins against parsondom were becoming very

grievous in her eyes, and she was at a loss to know what steps to

take. She hardly dared to take him to task, him himself. Were she to

do so, and should he then tell her to mind her own business--as he

probably might do, though not in those words--there would be a schism

in the parish; and almost anything would be better than that. The

whole work of her life would be upset, all the outlets of her energy

would be impeded if not absolutely closed, if a state of things were

to come to pass in which she and the parson of her parish should not

be on good terms.

But what was to be done? Early in the winter he had gone to

Chaldicotes and to Gatherum Castle, consorting with gamblers, Whigs,

atheists, men of loose pleasure, and Proudieites. That she had

condoned; and now he was turning out a hunting parson on her hands.

It was all very well for Fanny to say that he merely looked at the

hounds as he rode about his parish. Fanny might be deceived. Being

his wife, it might be her duty not to see her husband's iniquities.

But Lady Lufton could not be deceived. She knew very well in what

part of the county Cobbold's Ashes lay. It was not in Framley

parish, nor in the next parish to it. It was half-way across to

Chaldicotes--in the western division; and she had heard of that run

in which two horses had been killed, and in which Parson Robarts had

won such immortal glory among West Barsetshire sportsmen. It was not

easy to keep Lady Lufton in the dark as to matters occurring in her

own county.

All these things she knew, but as yet had not noticed, grieving over

them in her own heart the more on that account. Spoken grief relieves

itself; and when one can give counsel, one always hopes at least

that that counsel will be effective. To her son she had said, more

than once, that it was a pity that Mr. Robarts should follow the

hounds.--"The world has agreed that it is unbecoming in a clergyman,"

she would urge, in her deprecatory tone. But her son would by no

means give her any comfort. "He doesn't hunt, you know--not as I do,"

he would say. "And if he did, I really don't see the harm of it. A

man must have some amusement, even if he be an archbishop." "He has

amusement at home," Lady Lufton would answer. "What does his wife

do--and his sister?" This allusion to Lucy, however, was very soon

dropped.

Lord Lufton would in no wise help her. He would not even passively

discourage the vicar, or refrain from offering to give him a seat in

going to the meets. Mark and Lord Lufton had been boys together, and

his lordship knew that Mark in his heart would enjoy a brush across

the country quite as well as he himself; and then what was the harm

of it? Lady Lufton's best aid had been in Mark's own conscience. He

had taken himself to task more than once, and had promised himself

that he would not become a sporting parson. Indeed, where would be

his hopes of ulterior promotion, if he allowed himself to degenerate

so far as that? It had been his intention, in reviewing what he

considered to be the necessary proprieties of clerical life, in

laying out his own future mode of living, to assume no peculiar

sacerdotal strictness; he would not be known as a denouncer of

dancing or of card-tables, of theatres or of novel-reading; he would

take the world around him as he found it, endeavouring by precept

and practice to lend a hand to the gradual amelioration which

Christianity is producing; but he would attempt no sudden or majestic

reforms. Cake and ale would still be popular, and ginger be hot in

the mouth, let him preach ever so--let him be never so solemn a

hermit; but a bright face, a true trusting heart, a strong arm, and

an humble mind, might do much in teaching those around him that men

may be gay and yet not profligate, that women may be devout and yet

not dead to the world.

Such had been his ideas as to his own future life; and though many

would think that, as a clergyman, he should have gone about his work

with more serious devotion of thought, nevertheless there was some

wisdom in them;--some folly also, undoubtedly, as appeared by the

troubles into which they led him. "I will not affect to think that

to be bad," said he to himself, "which in my heart of hearts does

not seem to be bad." And thus he resolved that he might live without

contamination among hunting squires. And then, being a man only too

prone by nature to do as others did around him, he found by degrees

that that could hardly be wrong for him which he admitted to be right

for others.

But still his conscience upbraided him, and he declared to himself

more than once that after this year he would hunt no more. And then

his own Fanny would look at him on his return home on those days in a

manner that cut him to the heart. She would say nothing to him. She

never inquired in a sneering tone, and with angry eyes, whether he

had enjoyed his day's sport: but when he spoke of it, she could not

answer him with enthusiasm; and in other matters which concerned him

she was always enthusiastic. After a while, too, he made matters

worse, for about the end of March he did another very foolish thing.

He almost consented to buy an expensive horse from Sowerby--an animal

which he by no means wanted, and which, if once possessed, would

certainly lead him into further trouble. A gentleman, when he has a

good horse in his stable, does not like to leave him there eating

his head off. If he be a gig-horse, the owner of him will be keen to

drive a gig; if a hunter, the happy possessor will wish to be with a

pack of hounds.

"Mark," said Sowerby to him one day, when they were out together,

"this brute of mine is so fresh, I can hardly ride him; you are young

and strong; change with me for an hour or so." And then they did

change, and the horse on which Robarts found himself mounted went

away with him beautifully.

"He's a splendid animal," said Mark, when they again met.

"Yes, for a man of your weight. He's thrown away upon me;--too much

of a horse for my purposes. I don't get along now quite as well as

I used to do. He is a nice sort of hunter; just rising six, you

know." How it came to pass that the price of the splendid animal was

mentioned between them, I need not describe with exactness. But it

did come to pass that Mr. Sowerby told the parson that the horse

should be his for Â£130. "And I really wish you'd take him," said

Sowerby. "It would be the means of partially relieving my mind of a

great weight." Mark looked up into his friend's face with an air of

surprise, for he did not at the moment understand how this should be

the case.

"I am afraid, you know, that you will have to put your hand into your

pocket sooner or later about that accursed bill"--Mark shrank as the

profane words struck his ears--"and I should be glad to think that

you had got something in hand in the way of value."

"Do you mean that I shall have to pay the whole sum of Â£500?"

"Oh dear, no; nothing of the kind. But something I dare say you will

have to pay: if you like to take Dandy for a hundred and thirty, you

can be prepared for that amount when Tozer comes to you. The horse

is dog cheap, and you will have a long day for your money." Mark at

first declared, in a quiet, determined tone, that he did not want the

horse; but it afterwards appeared to him that if it were so fated

that he must pay a portion of Mr. Sowerby's debts, he might as well

repay himself to any extent within his power. It would be as well

perhaps that he should take the horse and sell him. It did not occur

to him that by so doing he would put it in Mr. Sowerby's power to

say that some valuable consideration had passed between them with

reference to this bill, and that he would be aiding that gentleman

in preparing an inextricable confusion of money-matters between them.

Mr. Sowerby well knew the value of this. It would enable him to make

a plausible story, as he had done in that other case of Lord Lufton.

"Are you going to have Dandy?" Sowerby said to him again.

"I can't say that I will just at present," said the parson. "What

should I want of him now the season's over?"

"Exactly, my dear fellow; and what do I want of him now the season's

over? If it were the beginning of October instead of the end of

March, Dandy would be up at two hundred and thirty instead of one:

in six months' time that horse will be worth anything you like to

ask for him. Look at his bone." The vicar did look at his bones,

examining the brute in a very knowing and unclerical manner. He

lifted the animal's four feet, one after another, handling the frogs,

and measuring with his eye the proportion of the parts; he passed his

hand up and down the legs, spanning the bones of the lower joint; he

peered into his eyes, took into consideration the width of his chest,

the dip of his back, the form of his ribs, the curve of his haunches,

and his capabilities for breathing when pressed by work. And then

he stood away a little, eyeing him from the side, and taking in a

general idea of the form and make of the whole. "He seems to stand

over a little, I think," said the parson.

"It's the lie of the ground. Move him about, Bob. There now, let him

stand there."

"He's not perfect," said Mark. "I don't quite like his heels; but no

doubt he's a niceish cut of a horse."

"I rather think he is. If he were perfect, as you say, he would not

be going into your stables for a hundred and thirty. Do you ever

remember to have seen a perfect horse?"

"Your mare Mrs. Gamp was as nearly perfect as possible."

"Even Mrs. Gamp had her faults. In the first place she was a bad

feeder. But one certainly doesn't often come across anything much

better than Mrs. Gamp." And thus the matter was talked over between

them with much stable conversation, all of which tended to make

Sowerby more and more oblivious of his friend's sacred profession,

and perhaps to make the vicar himself too frequently oblivious of it

also. But no: he was not oblivious of it. He was even mindful of it;

but mindful of it in such a manner that his thoughts on the subject

were nowadays always painful.

There is a parish called Hogglestock lying away quite in the northern

extremity of the eastern division of the county--lying also on the

borders of the western division. I almost fear that it will become

necessary, before this history be completed, to provide a map of

Barsetshire for the due explanation of all these localities. Framley

is also in the northern portion of the county, but just to the

south of the grand trunk line of railway from which the branch to

Barchester strikes off at a point some thirty miles nearer to London.

The station for Framley Court is Silverbridge, which is, however, in

the western division of the county. Hogglestock is to the north of

the railway, the line of which, however, runs through a portion of

the parish, and it adjoins Framley, though the churches are as much

as seven miles apart. Barsetshire, taken altogether, is a pleasant

green tree-becrowded county, with large bosky hedges, pretty damp

deep lanes, and roads with broad grass margins running along them.

Such is the general nature of the county; but just up in its northern

extremity this nature alters. There it is bleak and ugly, with low

artificial hedges and without wood; not uncultivated, as it is all

portioned out into new-looking large fields, bearing turnips, and

wheat, and mangel, all in due course of agricultural rotation; but it

has none of the special beauties of English cultivation. There is not

a gentleman's house in the parish of Hogglestock besides that of the

clergyman; and this, though it is certainly the house of a gentleman,

can hardly be said to be fit to be so. It is ugly, and straight, and

small. There is a garden attached to the house, half in front of it

and half behind; but this garden, like the rest of the parish, is

by no means ornamental, though sufficiently useful. It produces

cabbages, but no trees: potatoes of, I believe, an excellent

description, but hardly any flowers, and nothing worthy of the name

of a shrub. Indeed the whole parish of Hogglestock should have been

in the adjoining county, which is by no means so attractive as

Barsetshire;--a fact well known to those few of my readers who are

well acquainted with their own country.

Mr. Crawley, whose name has been mentioned in these pages, was the

incumbent of Hogglestock. On what principle the remuneration of our

parish clergymen was settled when the original settlement was made,

no deepest, keenest lover of middle-aged ecclesiastical black-letter

learning can, I take it, now say. That the priests were to be paid

from tithes of the parish produce, out of which tithes certain other

good things were to be bought and paid for, such as church repairs

and education, of so much the most of us have an inkling. That

a rector, being a big sort of parson, owned the tithes of his

parish in full,--or at any rate that part of them intended for the

clergyman,--and that a vicar was somebody's deputy, and therefore

entitled only to little tithes, as being a little body: of so much we

that are simple in such matters have a general idea. But one cannot

conceive that even in this way any approximation could have been

made, even in those old mediÃ¦val days, towards a fair proportioning

of the pay to the work. At any rate, it is clear enough that there

is no such approximation now. And what a screech would there not be

among the clergy of the Church, even in these reforming days, if any

over-bold reformer were to suggest that such an approximation should

be attempted? Let those who know clergymen, and like them, and have

lived with them, only fancy it! Clergymen to be paid, not according

to the temporalities of any living which they may have acquired,

either by merit or favour, but in accordance with the work to be

done! O Doddington! and O Stanhope, think of this, if an idea so

sacrilegious can find entrance into your warm ecclesiastical bosoms!

Ecclesiastical work to be bought and paid for according to its

quantity and quality!

But, nevertheless, one may prophesy that we Englishmen must come to

this, disagreeable as the idea undoubtedly is. Most pleasant-minded

Churchmen feel, I think, on this subject pretty much in the same way.

Our present arrangement of parochial incomes is beloved as being

time-honoured, gentleman-like, English, and picturesque. We would

fain adhere to it closely as long as we can, but we know that we do

so by the force of our prejudices, and not by that of our judgement.

A time-honoured, gentleman-like, English, picturesque arrangement

is so far very delightful. But are there not other attributes very

desirable--nay, absolutely necessary--in respect to which this

time-honoured, picturesque arrangement is so very deficient?

How pleasant it was, too, that one bishop should be getting fifteen

thousand a year, and another with an equal cure of parsons only four!

That a certain prelate could get twenty thousand one year and his

successor in the same diocese only five the next! There was something

in it pleasant, and picturesque; it was an arrangement endowed with

feudal charms, and the change which they have made was distasteful to

many of us. A bishop with a regular salary, and no appanage of land

and land-bailiffs, is only half a bishop. Let any man prove to me the

contrary ever so thoroughly--let me prove it to my own self ever so

often--my heart in this matter is not thereby a whit altered. One

liked to know that there was a dean or two who got his three thousand

a year, and that old Dr. Purple held four stalls, one of which was

golden, and the other three silver-gilt! Such knowledge was always

pleasant to me! A golden stall! How sweet is the sound thereof to

church-loving ears! But bishops have been shorn of their beauty, and

deans are in their decadence. A utilitarian age requires the fatness

of the ecclesiastical land, in order that it may be divided out into

small portions of provender, on which necessary working clergymen may

live,--into portions so infinitesimally small that working clergymen

can hardly live. And the full-blown rectors and vicars, with

full-blown tithes--with tithes when too full-blown for strict

utilitarian principles--will necessarily follow. Stanhope and

Doddington must bow their heads, with such compensation for temporal

rights as may be extracted,--but probably without such compensation

as may be desired. In other trades, professions, and lines of life,

men are paid according to their work. Let it be so in the Church.

Such will sooner or later be the edict of a utilitarian, reforming,

matter-of-fact House of Parliament.

I have a scheme of my own on the subject, which I will not introduce

here, seeing that neither men nor women would read it. And with

reference to this matter, I will only here further explain that all

these words have been brought about by the fact, necessary to be here

stated, that Mi. Crawley only received one hundred and thirty pounds

a year for performing the whole parochial duty of the parish of

Hogglestock. And Hogglestock is a large parish. It includes two

populous villages, abounding in brickmakers, a race of men very

troublesome to a zealous parson who won't let men go rollicking to

the devil without interference. Hogglestock has full work for two

men; and yet all the funds therein applicable to parson's work is

this miserable stipend of one hundred and thirty pounds a year. It

is a stipend neither picturesque, nor time-honoured, nor feudal, for

Hogglestock takes rank only as a perpetual curacy.

Mr. Crawley has been mentioned before as a clergyman of whom Mr.

Robarts said, that he almost thought it wrong to take a walk out of

his own parish. In so saying Mark Robarts of course burlesqued his

brother parson; but there can be no doubt that Mr. Crawley was a

strict man,--a strict, stern, unpleasant man, and one who feared God

and his own conscience. We must say a word or two of Mr. Crawley and

his concerns. He was now some forty years of age, but of these he had

not been in possession even of his present benefice for more than

four or five. The first ten years of his life as a clergyman had

been passed in performing the duties and struggling through the life

of a curate in a bleak, ugly, cold parish on the northern coast of

Cornwall. It had been a weary life and a fearful struggle, made up

of duties ill requited and not always satisfactorily performed, of

love and poverty, of increasing cares, of sickness, debt, and death.

For Mr. Crawley had married almost as soon as he was ordained, and

children had been born to him in that chill, comfortless Cornish

cottage. He had married a lady well educated and softly nurtured, but

not dowered with worldly wealth. They two had gone forth determined

to fight bravely together; to disregard the world and the world's

ways, looking only to God and to each other for their comfort. They

would give up ideas of gentle living, of soft raiment, and delicate

feeding. Others,--those that work with their hands, even the

bettermost of such workers--could live in decency and health upon

even such provision as he could earn as a clergyman. In such manner

would they live, so poorly and so decently, working out their work,

not with their hands but with their hearts.

And so they had established themselves, beginning the world with

one bare-footed little girl of fourteen to aid them in their small

household matters; and for a while they had both kept heart, loving

each other dearly, and prospering somewhat in their work. But a man

who has once walked the world as a gentleman knows not what it is to

change his position, and place himself lower down in the social rank.

Much less can he know what it is so to put down the woman whom he

loves. There are a thousand things, mean and trifling in themselves,

which a man despises when he thinks of them in his philosophy, but

to dispense with which puts his philosophy to so stern a proof. Let

any plainest man who reads this think of his usual mode of getting

himself into his matutinal garments, and confess how much such a

struggle would cost him. And then children had come. The wife of the

labouring man does rear her children, and often rears them in health,

without even so many appliances of comfort as found their way into

Mrs. Crawley's cottage; but the task to her was almost more than she

could accomplish. Not that she ever fainted or gave way: she was

made of the sterner metal of the two, and could last on while he was

prostrate.

And sometimes he was prostrate--prostrate in soul and spirit. Then

would he complain with bitter voice, crying out that the world was

too hard for him, that his back was broken with his burden, that his

God had deserted him. For days and days, in such moods, he would stay

within his cottage, never darkening the door or seeing other face

than those of his own inmates. Those days were terrible both to him

and her. He would sit there unwashed, with his unshorn face resting

on his hand, with an old dressing-gown hanging loose about him,

hardly tasting food, seldom speaking, striving to pray, but striving

so frequently in vain. And then he would rise from his chair, and,

with a burst of frenzy, call upon his Creator to remove him from this

misery. In these moments she never deserted him. At one period they

had had four children, and though the whole weight of this young

brood rested on her arms, on her muscles, on her strength of mind and

body, she never ceased in her efforts to comfort him. Then at length,

falling utterly upon the ground, he would pour forth piteous prayers

for mercy, and after a night of sleep would once more go forth to his

work.

But she never yielded to despair: the struggle was never beyond

her powers of endurance. She had possessed her share of woman's

loveliness, but that was now all gone. Her colour quickly faded, and

the fresh, soft tints soon deserted her face and forehead. She became

thin, and rough, and almost haggard: thin till her cheek-bones were

nearly pressing through her skin, till her elbows were sharp, and her

finger-bones as those of a skeleton. Her eye did not lose its lustre,

but it became unnaturally bright, prominent, and too large for her

wan face. The soft brown locks which she had once loved to brush

back, scorning, as she would boast to herself, to care that they

should be seen were now sparse enough and all untidy and unclean.

It was matter of little thought now whether they were seen or no.

Whether he could be made fit to go into his pulpit--whether they

might be fed--those four innocents--and their backs kept from the

cold wind--that was now the matter of her thought. And then two of

them died, and she went forth herself to see them laid under the

frost-bound sod, lest he should faint in his work over their graves.

For he would ask aid from no man--such at least was his boast through

all. Two of them died, but their illness had been long; and then

debts came upon them. Debt, indeed, had been creeping on them with

slow but sure feet during the last five years. Who can see his

children hungry, and not take bread if it be offered? Who can see

his wife lying in sharpest want, and not seek a remedy if there be a

remedy within reach? So debt had come upon them, and rude men pressed

for small sums of money--for sums small to the world, but impossibly

large to them. And he would hide himself within there, in that cranny

of an inner chamber--hide himself with deep shame from the world,

with shame, and a sinking heart, and a broken spirit.

But had such a man no friend? it will be said. Such men, I take it,

do not make many friends. But this man was not utterly friendless.

Almost every year one visit was paid to him in his Cornish curacy

by a brother clergyman, an old college friend, who, as far as

might in him lie, did give aid to the curate and his wife. This

gentleman would take up his abode for a week at a farmer's, in the

neighbourhood, and though he found Mr. Crawley in despair, he would

leave him with some drops of comfort in his soul. Nor were the

benefits in this respect all on one side. Mr. Crawley, though at some

periods weak enough for himself, could be strong for others; and,

more than once, was strong to the great advantage of this man whom he

loved. And then, too, pecuniary assistance was forthcoming--in those

earlier years not in great amount, for this friend was not then

among the rich ones of the earth--but in amount sufficient for that

moderate hearth, if only its acceptance could have been managed. But

in that matter there were difficulties without end. Of absolute money

tenders Mr. Crawley would accept none. But a bill here and there was

paid, the wife assisting; and shoes came for Kate--till Kate was

placed beyond the need of shoes; and cloth for Harry and Frank found

its way surreptitiously in beneath the cover of that wife's solitary

trunk--cloth with which those lean fingers worked garments for the

two boys, to be worn--such was God's will--only by the one.

Such were Mr. and Mrs. Crawley in their Cornish curacy, and during

their severest struggles. To one who thinks that a fair day's work is

worth a fair day's wages, it seems hard enough that a man should work

so hard and receive so little. There will be those who think that the

fault was all his own in marrying so young. But still there remains

that question, Is not a fair day's work worth a fair day's wages?

This man did work hard--at a task perhaps the hardest of any that a

man may do; and for ten years he earned some seventy pounds a year.

Will any one say that he received fair wages for his fair work, let

him be married or single? And yet there are so many who would fain

pay their clergy, if they only knew how to apply their money! But

that is a long subject, as Mr. Robarts had told Miss Dunstable. Such

was Mr. Crawley in his Cornish curacy.

CHAPTER XV

Lady Lufton's Ambassador

And then, in the days which followed, that friend of Mr. Crawley's,

whose name, by the by, is yet to be mentioned, received quick

and great promotion. Mr. Arabin by name he was then; Dr. Arabin

afterwards, when that quick and great promotion reached its climax.

He had been simply a Fellow of Lazarus in those former years. Then he

became vicar of St. Ewold's, in East Barsetshire, and had not yet got

himself settled there when he married the Widow Bold, a widow with

belongings in land and funded money, and with but one small baby as

an encumbrance. Nor had he even yet married her, had only engaged

himself so to do, when they made him Dean of Barchester--all which

may be read in the diocesan and county chronicles. And now that he

was wealthy, the new dean did contrive to pay the debts of his poor

friend, some lawyer of Camelford assisting him. It was but a paltry

schedule after all, amounting in the total to something not much

above a hundred pounds. And then, in the course of eighteen months,

this poor piece of preferment fell in the dean's way, this incumbency

of Hogglestock with its stipend reaching one hundred and thirty

pounds a year. Even that was worth double the Cornish curacy, and

there was, moreover, a house attached to it. Poor Mrs. Crawley, when

she heard of it, thought that their struggles of poverty were now

wellnigh over. What might not be done with a hundred and thirty

pounds by people who had lived for ten years on seventy?

And so they moved away out of that cold, bleak country, carrying with

them their humble household gods, and settled themselves in another

country, cold and bleak also, but less terribly so than the former.

They settled themselves, and again began their struggles against

man's hardness and the devil's zeal. I have said that Mr. Crawley was

a stern, unpleasant man; and it certainly was so. The man must be

made of very sterling stuff, whom continued and undeserved misfortune

does not make unpleasant. This man had so far succumbed to grief,

that it had left upon him its marks, palpable and not to be effaced.

He cared little for society, judging men to be doing evil who did

care for it. He knew as a fact, and believed with all his heart, that

these sorrows had come to him from the hand of God, and that they

would work for his weal in the long run; but not the less did they

make him morose, silent, and dogged. He had always at his heart a

feeling that he and his had been ill-used, and too often solaced

himself, at the devil's bidding, with the conviction that eternity

would make equal that which life in this world had made so unequal;

the last bait that with which the devil angles after those who are

struggling to elude his rod and line.

The Framley property did not run into the parish of Hogglestock; but

nevertheless Lady Lufton did what she could in the way of kindness to

these new-comers. Providence had not supplied Hogglestock with a Lady

Lufton, or with any substitute in the shape of lord or lady, squire

or squiress. The Hogglestock farmers, male and female, were a rude,

rough set, not bordering in their social rank on the farmer gentle;

and Lady Lufton, knowing this, and hearing something of these

Crawleys from Mrs. Arabin the dean's wife, trimmed her lamps, so

that they should shed a wider light, and pour forth some of their

influence on that forlorn household. And as regards Mrs. Crawley,

Lady Lufton by no means found that her work and good-will were thrown

away. Mrs. Crawley accepted her kindness with thankfulness, and

returned to some of the softnesses of life under her hand. As for

dining at Framley Court, that was out of the question. Mr. Crawley,

she knew, would not hear of it, even if other things were fitting and

appliances were at command. Indeed Mrs. Crawley at once said that she

felt herself unfit to go through such a ceremony with anything like

comfort. The dean, she said, would talk of their going to stay at

the deanery; but she thought it quite impossible that either of them

should endure even that. But, all the same, Lady Lufton was a comfort

to her; and the poor woman felt that it was well to have a lady near

her in case of need.

The task was much harder with Mr. Crawley, but even with him it was

not altogether unsuccessful. Lady Lufton talked to him of his parish

and of her own; made Mark Robarts go to him, and by degrees did

something towards civilizing him. Between him and Robarts too there

grew up an intimacy rather than a friendship. Robarts would submit

to his opinion on matters of ecclesiastical and even theological law,

would listen to him with patience, would agree with him where he

could, and differ from him mildly when he could not. For Robarts

was a man who made himself pleasant to all men. And thus, under

Lady Lufton's wing, there grew up a connexion between Framley and

Hogglestock, in which Mrs. Robarts also assisted. And now that Lady

Lufton was looking about her, to see how she might best bring proper

clerical influence to bear upon her own recreant fox-hunting parson,

it occurred to her that she might use Mr. Crawley in the matter.

Mr. Crawley would certainly be on her side as far as opinion went,

and would have no fear as to expressing his opinion to his brother

clergyman. So she sent for Mr. Crawley. In appearance he was the

very opposite to Mark Robarts. He was a lean, slim, meagre man, with

shoulders slightly curved, and pale, lank, long locks of ragged hair;

his forehead was high, but his face was narrow; his small grey eyes

were deeply sunken in his head, his nose was well-formed, his lips

thin, and his mouth expressive. Nobody could look at him without

seeing that there was a purpose and a meaning in his countenance.

He always wore, in summer and winter, a long dusky grey coat, which

buttoned close up to his neck and descended almost to his heels. He

was full six feet high, but being so slight in build, he looked as

though he were taller. He came at once at Lady Lufton's bidding,

putting himself into the gig beside the servant, to whom he spoke no

single word during the journey. And the man, looking into his face,

was struck with taciturnity. Now Mark Robarts would have talked with

him the whole way from Hogglestock to Framley Court; discoursing

partly as to horses and land, but partly also as to higher things.

And then Lady Lufton opened her mind and told her griefs to Mr.

Crawley, urging, however, through the whole length of her narrative,

that Mr. Robarts was an excellent parish clergyman,--"just such a

clergyman in his church as I would wish him to be," she explained,

with the view of saving herself from an expression of any of Mr.

Crawley's special ideas as to church teaching, and of confining him

to the one subject-matter in hand; "but he got this living so young,

Mr. Crawley, that he is hardly quite as steady as I could wish him to

be. It has been as much my fault as his own in placing him in such a

position so early in life."

"I think it has," said Mr. Crawley, who might perhaps be a little

sore on such a subject.

"Quite so, quite so," continued her ladyship, swallowing down with

a gulp a certain sense of anger. "But that is done now, and is past

cure. That Mr. Robarts will become a credit to his profession, I do

not doubt, for his heart is in the right place and his sentiments are

good; but I fear that at present he is succumbing to temptation."

"I am told that he hunts two or three times a week. Everybody round

us is talking about it."

"No, Mr. Crawley; not two or three times a week; very seldom above

once, I think. And then I do believe he does it more with the view of

being with Lord Lufton than anything else."

"I cannot see that that would make the matter better," said Mr.

Crawley.

"It would show that he was not strongly imbued with a taste which I

cannot but regard as vicious in a clergyman."

"It must be vicious in all men," said Mr. Crawley. "It is in itself

cruel, and leads to idleness and profligacy." Again Lady Lufton made

a gulp. She had called Mr. Crawley thither to her aid, and felt that

it would be inexpedient to quarrel with him. But she did not like to

be told that her son's amusement was idle and profligate. She had

always regarded hunting as a proper pursuit for a country gentleman.

It was, indeed, in her eyes one of the peculiar institutions of

country life in England, and it may be almost said that she looked

upon the Barsetshire Hunt as something sacred. She could not endure

to hear that a fox was trapped, and allowed her turkeys to be

purloined without a groan. Such being the case, she did not like

being told that it was vicious, and had by no means wished to consult

Mr. Crawley on that matter. But nevertheless she swallowed down her

wrath.

"It is at any rate unbecoming in a clergyman," she said; "and as I

know that Mr. Robarts places a high value on your opinion, perhaps

you will not object to advise him to discontinue it. He might

possibly feel aggrieved were I to interfere personally on such a

question."

"I have no doubt he would," said Mr. Crawley. "It is not within a

woman's province to give counsel to a clergyman on such a subject,

unless she be very near and very dear to him--his wife, or mother, or

sister."

"As living in the same parish, you know, and being, perhaps--" the

leading person in it, and the one who naturally rules the others.

Those would have been the fitting words for the expression of her

ladyship's ideas; but she remembered herself, and did not use them.

She had made up her mind that, great as her influence ought to be,

she was not the proper person to speak to Mr. Robarts as to his

pernicious, unclerical habits, and she would not now depart from her

resolve by attempting to prove that she was the proper person.

"Yes," said Mr. Crawley, "just so. All that would entitle him to

offer you his counsel if he thought that your mode of life was such

as to require it, but could by no means justify you in addressing

yourself to him." This was very hard upon Lady Lufton. She was

endeavouring with all her woman's strength to do her best, and

endeavouring so to do it that the feelings of the sinner might be

spared; and yet the ghostly comforter whom she had evoked to her

aid, treated her as though she were arrogant and overbearing. She

acknowledged the weakness of her own position with reference to her

parish clergyman by calling in the aid of Mr. Crawley; and, under

such circumstances, he might, at any rate, have abstained from

throwing that weakness in her teeth.

"Well, sir; I hope my mode of life may not require it; but that is

not exactly to the point: what I wish to know is, whether you will

speak to Mr. Robarts?"

"Certainly I will," said he.

"Then I shall be much obliged to you. But, Mr. Crawley, pray--pray,

remember this: I would not on any account wish that you should be

harsh with him. He is an excellent young man, and--"

"Lady Lufton, if I do this, I can only do it in my own way, as best

I may, using such words as God may give me at the time. I hope that

I am harsh to no man; but it is worse than useless, in all cases, to

speak anything but the truth."

"Of course--of course."

"If the ears be too delicate to hear the truth, the mind will be

too perverse to profit by it." And then Mr. Crawley got up to take

his leave. But Lady Lufton insisted that he should go with her to

luncheon. He hummed and ha'd and would fain have refused, but on this

subject she was peremptory. It might be that she was unfit to advise

a clergyman as to his duties, but in a matter of hospitality she

did know what she was about. Mr. Crawley should not leave the house

without refreshment. As to this, she carried her point; and Mr.

Crawley--when the matter before him was cold roast-beef and hot

potatoes, instead of the relative position of a parish priest and his

parishioner--became humble, submissive, and almost timid. Lady Lufton

recommended Madeira instead of sherry, and Mr. Crawley obeyed at

once, and was, indeed, perfectly unconscious of the difference. Then

there was a basket of seakale in the gig for Mrs. Crawley; that he

would have left behind had he dared, but he did not dare. Not a word

was said to him as to the marmalade for the children which was hidden

under the seakale, Lady Lufton feeling well aware that that would

find its way to its proper destination without any necessity for his

co-operation. And then Mr. Crawley returned home in the Framley Court

gig.

Three or four days after this he walked over to Framley parsonage.

This he did on a Saturday, having learned that the hounds never

hunted on that day; and he started early, so that he might be sure

to catch Mr. Robarts before he went out on his parish business. He

was quite early enough to attain this object, for when he reached

the parsonage door at about half-past nine, the vicar, with his

wife and sister, were just sitting down to breakfast. "Oh, Crawley,"

said Robarts, before the other had well spoken, "you are a capital

fellow;" and then he got him into a chair, and Mrs. Robarts had

poured him out tea, and Lucy had surrendered to him a knife and

plate, before he knew under what guise to excuse his coming among

them.

"I hope you will excuse this intrusion," at last he muttered; "but I

have a few words of business to which I will request your attention

presently."

"Certainly," said Robarts, conveying a broiled kidney on to the plate

before Mr. Crawley; "but there is no preparation for business like

a good breakfast. Lucy, hand Mr. Crawley the buttered toast. Eggs,

Fanny; where are the eggs?" And then John, in livery, brought in the

fresh eggs. "Now we shall do. I always eat my eggs while they're

hot, Crawley, and I advise you to do the same." To all this Mr.

Crawley said very little, and he was not at all at home under the

circumstances. Perhaps a thought did pass across his brain, as to

the difference between the meal which he had left on his own table,

and that which he now saw before him; and as to any cause which

might exist for such difference. But, if so, it was a very fleeting

thought, for he had far other matter now fully occupying his mind.

And then the breakfast was over, and in a few minutes the two

clergymen found themselves together in the parsonage study.

"Mr. Robarts," began the senior, when he had seated himself

uncomfortably on one of the ordinary chairs at the farther side

of the well-stored library table, while Mark was sitting at his

ease in his own arm-chair by the fire, "I have called upon you on

an unpleasant business." Mark's mind immediately flew off to Mr.

Sowerby's bill, but he could not think it possible that Mr. Crawley

could have had anything to do with that.

"But as a brother clergyman, and as one who esteems you much and

wishes you well, I have thought myself bound to take this matter in

hand."

"What matter is it, Crawley?"

"Mr. Robarts, men say that your present mode of life is one that is

not befitting a soldier in Christ's army."

"Men say so! what men?"

"The men around you, of your own neighbourhood; those who watch

your life, and know all your doings; those who look to see you

walking as a lamp to guide their feet, but find you consorting with

horse-jockeys and hunters, galloping after hounds, and taking your

place among the vainest of worldly pleasure-seekers. Those who have a

right to expect an example of good living, and who think that they do

not see it." Mr. Crawley had gone at once to the root of the matter,

and in doing so had certainly made his own task so much the easier.

There is nothing like going to the root of the matter at once when

one has on hand an unpleasant piece of business.

"And have such men deputed you to come here?"

"No one has or could depute me. I have come to speak my own mind, not

that of any other. But I refer to what those around you think and

say, because it is to them that your duties are due. You owe it to

those around you to live a godly, cleanly life;--as you owe it also,

in a much higher way, to your Father who is in heaven. I now make

bold to ask you whether you are doing your best to lead such a life

as that?" And then he remained silent, waiting for an answer. He

was a singular man; so humble and meek, so unutterably inefficient

and awkward in the ordinary intercourse of life, but so bold and

enterprising, almost eloquent, on the one subject which was the work

of his mind! As he sat there, he looked into his companion's face

from out his sunken grey eyes with a gaze which made his victim

quail. And then repeated his words: "I now make bold to ask you,

Mr. Robarts, whether you are doing your best to lead such a life as

may become a parish clergyman among his parishioners?" And again he

paused for an answer.

"There are but few of us," said Mark, in a low tone, "who could

safely answer that question in the affirmative."

"But are there many, think you, among us who would find the question

so unanswerable as yourself? And even were there many, would you,

young, enterprising, and talented as you are, be content to be

numbered among them? Are you satisfied to be a castaway after you

have taken upon yourself Christ's armour? If you will say so, I am

mistaken in you, and will go my way." There was again a pause, and

then he went on. "Speak to me, my brother, and open your heart, if it

be possible." And rising from his chair, he walked across the room,

and laid his hand tenderly on Mark's shoulder. Mark had been sitting

lounging in his chair, and had at first, for a moment only, thought

to brazen it out. But all idea of brazening had now left him. He had

raised himself from his comfortable ease, and was leaning forward

with his elbow on the table; but now, when he heard these words,

he allowed his head to sink upon his arms, and he buried his face

between his hands.

"It is a terrible falling off," continued Crawley: "terrible in the

fall, but doubly terrible through that difficulty of returning. But

it cannot be that it should content you to place yourself as one

among those thoughtless sinners, for the crushing of whose sin you

have been placed here among them. You become a hunting parson, and

ride with a happy mind among blasphemers and mocking devils--you,

whose aspirations were so high, who have spoken so often and so well

of the duties of a minister of Christ; you, who can argue in your

pride as to the petty details of your Church, as though the broad

teachings of its great and simple lessons were not enough for your

energies! It cannot be that I have had a hypocrite beside me in all

those eager controversies!

"Not a hypocrite--not a hypocrite," said Mark, in a tone which was

almost reduced to sobbing.

"But a castaway! Is it so that I must call you? No, Mr. Robarts,

not a castaway; neither a hypocrite, nor a castaway; but one who

in walking has stumbled in the dark and bruised his feet among

the stones. Henceforth let him take a lantern in his hand, and

look warily to his path, and walk cautiously among the thorns and

rocks--cautiously, but yet boldly, with manly courage, but Christian

meekness, as all men should walk on their pilgrimage through this

vale of tears." And then, without giving his companion time to stop

him he hurried out of the room, and from the house, and without

again seeing any others of the family, stalked back on his road to

Hogglestock, thus tramping fourteen miles through the deep mud in

performance of the mission on which he had been sent.

It was some hours before Mr. Robarts left his room. As soon as he

found that Crawley was really gone, and that he should see him no

more, he turned the lock of his door, and sat himself down to think

over his present life. At about eleven his wife knocked, not knowing

whether that other strange clergyman were there or no, for none had

seen his departure. But Mark, answering cheerily, desired that he

might be left to his studies. Let us hope that his thoughts and

mental resolves were then of service to him.

CHAPTER XVI

Mrs. Podgens' Baby

The hunting season had now nearly passed away, and the great ones

of the Barsetshire world were thinking of the glories of London.

Of these glories Lady Lufton always thought with much inquietude

of mind. She would fain have remained throughout the whole year at

Framley Court, did not certain grave considerations render such a

course on her part improper in her own estimation. All the Lady

Luftons of whom she had heard, dowager and ante-dowager, had always

had their seasons in London, till old age had incapacitated them for

such doings--sometimes for clearly long after the arrival of such

period. And then she had an idea, perhaps not altogether erroneous,

that she annually imported back with her into the country somewhat of

the passing civilization of the times:--may we not say an idea that

certainly was not erroneous? for how otherwise is it that the forms

of new caps and remodelled shapes for women's waists find their

way down into agricultural parts, and that the rural eye learns

to appreciate grace and beauty? There are those who think that

remodelled waists and new caps had better be kept to the towns; but

such people, if they would follow out their own argument, would wish

to see plough-boys painted with ruddle and milkmaids covered with

skins. For these and other reasons Lady Lufton always went to London

in April, and stayed there till the beginning of June. But for her

this was usually a period of penance. In London she was no very great

personage. She had never laid herself out for greatness of that sort,

and did not shine as a lady-patroness or state secretary in the

female cabinet of fashion. She was dull and listless, and without

congenial pursuits in London, and spent her happiest moments in

reading accounts of what was being done at Framley, and in writing

orders for further local information of the same kind. But on this

occasion there was a matter of vital import to give an interest of

its own to her visit to town. She was to entertain Griselda Grantly,

and, as far as might be possible, to induce her son to remain

in Griselda's society. The plan of the campaign was to be as

follows:--Mrs. Grantly and the archdeacon were in the first place to

go up to London for a month, taking Griselda with them; and then,

when they returned to Plumstead, Griselda was to go to Lady Lufton.

This arrangement was not at all points agreeable to Lady Lufton, for

she knew that Mrs. Grantly did not turn her back on the Hartletop

people quite as cordially as she should do, considering the terms of

the Lufton-Grantly family treaty. But then Mrs. Grantly might have

alleged in excuse the slow manner in which Lord Lufton proceeded in

the making and declaring of his love, and the absolute necessity

which there is for two strings to one's bow, when one string may be

in any way doubtful. Could it be possible that Mrs. Grantly had heard

anything of that unfortunate Platonic friendship with Lucy Robarts?

There came a letter from Mrs. Grantly just about the end of March,

which added much to Lady Lufton's uneasiness, and made her more

than ever anxious to be herself on the scene of action, and to have

Griselda in her own hands. After some communications of mere ordinary

importance with reference to the London world in general and the

Lufton-Grantly world in particular, Mrs. Grantly wrote confidentially

about her daughter:--"It would be useless to deny," she said, with

a mother's pride and a mother's humility, "that she is very much

admired. She is asked out a great deal more than I can take her,

and to houses to which I myself by no means wish to go. I could not

refuse her as to Lady Hartletop's first ball, for there will be

nothing else this year like them; and of course when with you, dear

Lady Lufton, that house will be out of the question. So indeed would

it be with me, were I myself only concerned. The duke was there,

of course, and I really wonder Lady Hartletop should not be more

discreet in her own drawing-room when all the world is there. It is

clear to me that Lord Dumbello admires Griselda much more than I

could wish. She, dear girl, has such excellent sense that I do not

think it likely that her head should be turned by it; but with how

many girls would not the admiration of such a man be irresistible?

The marquis, you know, is very feeble, and I am told that since this

rage for building has come on, the Lancashire property is over two

hundred thousand a year!! I do not think that Lord Dumbello has said

much to her. Indeed it seems to me that he never does say much to any

one. But he always stands up to dance with her, and I see that he is

uneasy and fidgety when she stands up with any other partner whom he

could care about. It was really embarrassing to see him the other

night at Miss Dunstable's, when Griselda was dancing with a certain

friend of ours. But she did look very well that evening, and I have

seldom seen her more animated!"

All this, and a great deal more of the same sort in the same letter,

tended to make Lady Lufton anxious to be in London. It was quite

certain--there was no doubt of that, at any rate--that Griselda would

see no more of Lady Hartletop's meretricious grandeur when she had

been transferred to Lady Lufton's guardianship. And she, Lady Lufton,

did wonder that Mrs. Grantly should have taken her daughter to such a

house. All about Lady Hartletop was known to all the world. It was

known that it was almost the only house in London at which the Duke

of Omnium was constantly to be met. Lady Lufton herself would almost

as soon think of taking a young girl to Gatherum Castle; and on these

accounts she did feel rather angry with her friend Mrs. Grantly. But

then perhaps she did not sufficiently calculate that Mrs. Grantly's

letter had been written purposely to produce such feelings--with the

express view of awakening her ladyship to the necessity of action.

Indeed, in such a matter as this, Mrs. Grantly was a more able woman

than Lady Lufton--more able to see her way and to follow it out.

The Lufton-Grantly alliance was in her mind the best, seeing that

she did not regard money as everything. But failing that, the

Hartletop-Grantly alliance was not bad. Regarding it as a second

string to her bow, she thought that it was not at all bad. Lady

Lufton's reply was very affectionate. She declared how happy she was

to know that Griselda was enjoying herself; she insinuated that Lord

Dumbello was known to the world as a fool, and his mother as--being

not a bit better than she ought to be; and then she added that

circumstances would bring herself up to town four days sooner than

she had expected, and that she hoped her dear Griselda would come

to her at once. Lord Lufton, she said, though he would not sleep in

Bruton Street--Lady Lufton lived in Bruton Street--had promised to

pass there as much of his time as his parliamentary duties would

permit.

O Lady Lufton! Lady Lufton! did it not occur to you when you wrote

those last words, intending that they should have so strong an

effect on the mind of your correspondent, that you were telling

a--tarradiddle? Was it not the case that you had said to your son, in

your own dear, kind, motherly way: "Ludovic, we shall see something

of you in Bruton Street this year, shall we not? Griselda Grantly

will be with me, and we must not let her be dull--must we?" And then

had he not answered, "Oh, of course, mother," and sauntered out of

the room, not altogether graciously? Had he, or you, said a word

about his parliamentary duties? Not a word! O Lady Lufton! have you

not now written a tarradiddle to your friend? In these days we are

becoming very strict about truth with our children; terribly strict

occasionally, when we consider the natural weakness of the moral

courage at the ages of ten, twelve, and fourteen. But I do not know

that we are at all increasing the measure of strictness with which

we, grown-up people, regulate our own truth and falsehood. Heaven

forbid that I should be thought to advocate falsehood in children;

but an untruth is more pardonable in them than in their parents.

Lady Lufton's tarradiddle was of a nature that is usually considered

excusable--at least with grown people; but, nevertheless, she would

have been nearer to perfection could she have confined herself to

the truth. Let us suppose that a boy were to write home from school,

saying that another boy had promised to come and stay with him, that

other having given no such promise--what a very naughty boy would

that first boy be in the eyes of his pastors and masters!

That little conversation between Lord Lufton and his mother--in which

nothing was said about his lordship's parliamentary duties--took

place on the evening before he started for London. On that occasion

he certainly was not in his best humour, nor did he behave to his

mother in his kindest manner. He had then left the room when she

began to talk about Miss Grantly; and once again in the course of the

evening, when his mother, not very judiciously, said a word or two

about Griselda's beauty, he had remarked that she was no conjurer,

and would hardly set the Thames on fire. "If she were a conjurer,"

said Lady Lufton, rather piqued, "I should not now be going to take

her out in London. I know many of those sort of girls whom you call

conjurers; they can talk for ever, and always talk either loudly or

in a whisper. I don't like them, and I am sure that you do not in

your heart."

"Oh, as to liking them in my heart--that is being very particular."

"Griselda Grantly is a lady, and as such I shall be happy to have her

with me in town. She is just the girl that Justinia will like to have

with her."

"Exactly," said Lord Lufton. "She will do exceedingly well for

Justinia." Now this was not good-natured on the part of Lord Lufton;

and his mother felt it the more strongly, inasmuch as it seemed to

signify that he was setting his back up against the Lufton-Grantly

alliance. She had been pretty sure that he would do so in the event

of his suspecting that a plot was being laid to catch him; and now

it almost appeared that he did suspect such a plot. Why else that

sarcasm as to Griselda doing very well for his sister?

And now we must go back and describe a little scene at Framley,

which will account for his Lordship's ill-humour and suspicions, and

explain how it came to pass that he so snubbed his mother. This scene

took place about ten days after the evening on which Mrs. Robarts and

Lucy were walking together in the parsonage garden, and during those

ten days Lucy had not once allowed herself to be entrapped into

any special conversation with the young peer. She had dined at

Framley Court during that interval, and had spent a second evening

there; Lord Lufton had also been up at the parsonage on three or

four occasions, and had looked for her in her usual walks; but,

nevertheless, they had never come together in their old familiar

way, since the day on which Lady Lufton had hinted her fears to Mrs.

Robarts.

Lord Lufton had very much missed her. At first he had not attributed

this change to a purposed scheme of action on the part of any one;

nor, indeed, had he much thought about it, although he had felt

himself to be annoyed. But as the period fixed for his departure

grew near, it did occur to him as very odd that he should never hear

Lucy's voice unless when she said a few words to his mother, or to

her sister-in-law. And then he made up his mind that he would speak

to her before he went, and that the mystery should be explained to

him. And he carried out his purpose, calling at the parsonage on one

special afternoon; and it was on the evening of the same day that

his mother sang the praises of Griselda Grantly so inopportunely.

Robarts, he knew, was then absent from home, and Mrs. Robarts was

with his mother down at the house, preparing lists of the poor people

to be specially attended to in Lady Lufton's approaching absence.

Taking advantage of this, he walked boldly in through the parsonage

garden; asked the gardener, with an indifferent voice, whether either

of the ladies were at home, and then caught poor Lucy exactly on the

doorstep of the house.

"Were you going in or out, Miss Robarts?"

"Well, I was going out," said Lucy; and she began to consider how

best she might get quit of any prolonged encounter.

"Oh, going out, were you? I don't know whether I may offer to--"

"Well, Lord Lufton, not exactly, seeing that I am about to pay a

visit to our near neighbour, Mrs. Podgens. Perhaps, you have no

particular call towards Mrs. Podgens' just at present, or to her new

baby?"

"And have you any very particular call that way?"

"Yes, and especially to Baby Podgens. Baby Podgens is a real little

duck--only just two days old." And Lucy, as she spoke, progressed

a step or two, as though she were determined not to remain there

talking on the doorstep. A slight cloud came across his brow as he

saw this, and made him resolve that she should not gain her purpose.

He was not going to be foiled in that way by such a girl as Lucy

Robarts. He had come there to speak to her, and speak to her he

would. There had been enough of intimacy between them to justify him

in demanding, at any rate, as much as that.

"Miss Robarts," he said, "I am starting for London to-morrow, and if

I do not say good-bye to you now, I shall not be able to do so at

all."

"Good-bye, Lord Lufton," she said, giving him her hand, and smiling

on him with her old genial, good-humoured, racy smile. "And mind you

bring into Parliament that law which you promised me for defending my

young chickens."

He took her hand, but that was not all he wanted. "Surely Mrs.

Podgens and her baby can wait ten minutes. I shall not see you again

for months to come, and yet you seem to begrudge me two words."

"Not two hundred if they can be of any service to you," said she,

walking cheerily back into the drawing-room; "only I did not think

it worth while to waste your time, as Fanny is not here." She was

infinitely more collected, more master of herself than he was.

Inwardly, she did tremble at the idea of what was coming, but

outwardly she showed no agitation--none as yet; if only she could so

possess herself as to refrain from doing so, when she heard what he

might have to say to her.

He hardly knew what it was for the saying of which he had so

resolutely come thither. He had by no means made up his mind that

he loved Lucy Robarts; nor had he made up his mind that, loving her,

he would, or that, loving her, he would not, make her his wife. He

had never used his mind in the matter in any way, either for good

or evil. He had learned to like her and to think that she was very

pretty. He had found out that it was very pleasant to talk to her;

whereas, talking to Griselda Grantly, and, indeed, to some other

young ladies of his acquaintance, was often hard work. The half-hours

which he had spent with Lucy had always been satisfactory to him. He

had found himself to be more bright with her than with other people,

and more apt to discuss subjects worth discussing; and thus it had

come about that he thoroughly liked Lucy Robarts. As to whether his

affection was Platonic or anti-Platonic he had never asked himself;

but he had spoken words to her, shortly before that sudden cessation

of their intimacy, which might have been taken as anti-Platonic by

any girl so disposed to regard them. He had not thrown himself at her

feet, and declared himself to be devoured by a consuming passion;

but he had touched her hand as lovers touch those of women whom they

love; he had had his confidences with her, talking to her of his own

mother, of his sister, and of his friends; and he had called her his

own dear friend Lucy. All this had been very sweet to her, but very

poisonous also. She had declared to herself very frequently that

her liking for this young nobleman was as purely a feeling of mere

friendship as was that of her brother; and she had professed to

herself that she would give the lie to the world's cold sarcasms on

such subjects. But she had now acknowledged that the sarcasms of the

world on that matter, cold though they may be, are not the less true;

and having so acknowledged, she had resolved that all close alliance

between herself and Lord Lufton must be at an end. She had come to

a conclusion, but he had come to none; and in this frame of mind he

was now there with the object of reopening that dangerous friendship

which she had had the sense to close.

"And so you are going to-morrow?" she said, as soon as they were both

within the drawing-room.

"Yes: I'm off by the early train to-morrow morning, and Heaven knows

when we may meet again."

"Next winter, shall we not?"

"Yes, for a day or two, I suppose. I do not know whether I shall pass

another winter here. Indeed, one can never say where one will be."

"No, one can't; such as you, at least, cannot. I am not of a

migratory tribe myself."

"I wish you were."

"I'm not a bit obliged to you. Your nomad life does not agree with

young ladies."

"I think they are taking to it pretty freely, then. We have

unprotected young women all about the world."

"And great bores you find them, I suppose?"

"No; I like it. The more we can get out of old-fashioned grooves the

better I am pleased. I should be a Radical to-morrow--a regular man

of the people--only I should break my mother's heart."

"Whatever you do, Lord Lufton, do not do that."

"That is why I have liked you so much," he continued, "because you

get out of the grooves."

"Do I?"

"Yes; and go along by yourself, guiding your own footsteps; not

carried hither and thither, just as your grandmother's old tramway

may chance to take you."

"Do you know I have a strong idea that my grandmother's tramway will

be the safest and the best after all? I have not left it very far,

and I certainly mean to go back to it."

"That's impossible! An army of old women, with coils of ropes made

out of time-honoured prejudices, could not draw you back."

"No, Lord Lufton, that is true. But one--" and then she stopped

herself. She could not tell him that one loving mother, anxious for

her only son, had sufficed to do it. She could not explain to him

that this departure from the established tramway had already broken

her own rest, and turned her peaceful happy life into a grievous

battle.

"I know that you are trying to go back," he said. "Do you think that

I have eyes and cannot see? Come, Lucy, you and I have been friends,

and we must not part in this way. My mother is a paragon among women.

I say it in earnest;--a paragon among women: and her love for me is

the perfection of motherly love."

"It is, it is; and I am so glad that you acknowledge it."

"I should be worse than a brute did I not do so; but, nevertheless, I

cannot allow her to lead me in all things. Were I to do so, I should

cease to be a man."

"Where can you find any one who will counsel you so truly?"

"But, nevertheless, I must rule myself. I do not know whether my

suspicions may be perfectly just, but I fancy that she has created

this estrangement between you and me. Has it not been so?"

"Certainly not by speaking to me," said Lucy, blushing ruby-red

through every vein of her deep-tinted face. But though she could not

command her blood, her voice was still under her control--her voice

and her manner.

"But has she not done so? You, I know, will tell me nothing but the

truth."

"I will tell you nothing on this matter, Lord Lufton, whether true or

false. It is a subject on which it does not concern me to speak."

"Ah! I understand," he said; and rising from his chair, he stood

against the chimney-piece with his back to the fire. "She cannot

leave me alone to choose for myself, my friends, and my own--;" but

he did not fill up the void.

"But why tell me this, Lord Lufton?"

"No! I am not to choose my own friends, though they be amongst the

best and purest of God's creatures. Lucy, I cannot think that you

have ceased to have a regard for me. That you had a regard for me,

I am sure." She felt that it was almost unmanly of him thus to seek

her out, and hunt her down, and then throw upon her the whole weight

of the explanation that his coming thither made necessary. But,

nevertheless, the truth must be told, and with God's help she would

find strength for the telling of it.

"Yes, Lord Lufton, I had a regard for you--and have. By that word you

mean something more than the customary feeling of acquaintance which

may ordinarily prevail between a gentleman and lady of different

families, who have known each other so short a time as we have done."

"Yes, something much more," said he with energy.

"Well, I will not define the much--something closer than that?"

"Yes, and warmer, and dearer, and more worthy of two human creatures

who value each other's minds and hearts."

"Some such closer regard I have felt for you--very foolishly. Stop!

You have made me speak, and do not interrupt me now. Does not your

conscience tell you that in doing so I have unwisely deserted those

wise old grandmother's tramways of which you spoke just now? It

has been pleasant to me to do so. I have liked the feeling of

independence with which I have thought that I might indulge in an

open friendship with such as you are. And your rank, so different

from my own, has doubtless made this more attractive."

"Nonsense!"

"Ah! but it has. I know it now. But what will the world say of me as

to such an alliance?"

"The world!"

"Yes, the world! I am not such a philosopher as to disregard it,

though you may afford to do so. The world will say that I, the

parson's sister, set my cap at the young lord, and that the young

lord had made a fool of me."

"The world shall say no such thing!" said Lord Lufton, very

imperiously.

"Ah! but it will. You can no more stop it, than King Canute could the

waters. Your mother has interfered wisely to spare me from this; and

the only favour that I can ask you is, that you will spare me also."

And then she got up, as though she intended at once to walk forth to

her visit to Mrs. Podgens' baby.

"Stop, Lucy!" he said, putting himself between her and the door.

"It must not be Lucy any longer, Lord Lufton; I was madly foolish

when I first allowed it."

"By heavens! but it shall be Lucy--Lucy before all the world. My

Lucy, my own Lucy--my heart's best friend, and chosen love. Lucy,

there is my hand. How long you may have had my heart it matters not

to say now." The game was at her feet now, and no doubt she felt her

triumph. Her ready wit and speaking lip, not her beauty, had brought

him to her side; and now he was forced to acknowledge that her power

over him had been supreme. Sooner than leave her he would risk all.

She did feel her triumph; but there was nothing in her face to tell

him that she did so. As to what she would now do she did not for a

moment doubt. He had been precipitated into the declaration he had

made not by his love, but by his embarrassment. She had thrown in his

teeth the injury which he had done her, and he had then been moved

by his generosity to repair that injury by the noblest sacrifice

which he could make. But Lucy Robarts was not the girl to accept a

sacrifice. He had stepped forward as though he were going to clasp

her round the waist, but she receded, and got beyond the reach of his

hand. "Lord Lufton!" she said, "when you are more cool you will know

that this is wrong. The best thing for both of us now is to part."

"Not the best thing, but the very worst, till we perfectly understand

each other."

"Then perfectly understand me, that I cannot be your wife."

"Lucy! do you mean that you cannot learn to love me?"

"I mean that I shall not try. Do not persevere in this, or you will

have to hate yourself for your own folly."

"But I will persevere till you accept my love, or say with your hand

on your heart that you cannot and will not love me."

"Then I must beg you to let me go," and having so said, she paused

while he walked once or twice hurriedly up and down the room. "And

Lord Lufton," she continued, "if you will leave me now, the words

that you have spoken shall be as though they had never been uttered."

"I care not who knows they have been uttered. The sooner that they

are known to all the world the better I shall be pleased, unless

indeed--"

"Think of your mother, Lord Lufton."

"What can I do better than give her as a daughter the best and

sweetest girl I have ever met? When my mother really knows you, she

will love you as I do. Lucy, say one word to me of comfort."

"I will say no word to you that shall injure your future comfort. It

is impossible that I should be your wife."

"Do you mean that you cannot love me?"

"You have no right to press me any further," she said; and sat down

upon the sofa, with an angry frown upon her forehead.

"By heavens," he said, "I will take no such answer from you till you

put your hand upon your heart, and say that you cannot love me."

"Oh, why should you press me so, Lord Lufton?"

"Why, because my happiness depends upon it; because it behoves me to

know the very truth. It has come to this, that I love you with my

whole heart, and I must know how your heart stands towards me." She

had now again risen from the sofa, and was looking steadily in his

face.

"Lord Lufton," she said, "I cannot love you," and as she spoke she

did put her hand, as he had desired, upon her heart.

"Then God help me! for I am wretched. Good-bye, Lucy," and he

stretched out his hand to her.

"Good-bye, my lord. Do not be angry with me."

"No, no, no!" and without further speech he left the room and the

house and hurried home. It was hardly surprising that he should that

evening tell his mother that Griselda Grantly would be a companion

sufficiently good for his sister. He wanted no such companion.

And when he was well gone--absolutely out of sight from the

window--Lucy walked steadily up to her room, locked the door, and

then threw herself on the bed. Why--oh! why had she told such

a falsehood? Could anything justify her in a lie? was it not a

lie--knowing as she did that she loved him with all her loving heart?

But, then, his mother! and the sneers of the world, which would have

declared that she had set her trap, and caught the foolish young

lord! Her pride would not have submitted to that. Strong as her

love was, yet her pride was, perhaps, stronger--stronger at any

rate during that interview. But how was she to forgive herself the

falsehood she had told?

CHAPTER XVII

Mrs. Proudie's Conversazione

It was grievous to think of the mischief and danger into which

Griselda Grantly was brought by the worldliness of her mother in

those few weeks previous to Lady Lufton's arrival in town--very

grievous, at least, to her ladyship, as from time to time she heard

of what was done in London. Lady Hartletop's was not the only

objectionable house at which Griselda was allowed to reap fresh

fashionable laurels. It had been stated openly in the \_Morning Post\_

that that young lady had been the most admired among the beautiful at

one of Miss Dunstable's celebrated \_soirÃ©es\_ and then she was heard

of as gracing the drawing-room at Mrs. Proudie's conversazione.

Of Miss Dunstable herself Lady Lufton was not able openly to allege

any evil. She was acquainted, Lady Lufton knew, with very many people

of the right sort, and was the dear friend of Lady Lufton's highly

conservative and not very distant neighbours, the Greshams. But then

she was also acquainted with so many people of the bad sort. Indeed,

she was intimate with everybody, from the Duke of Omnium to old

Dowager Lady Goodygaffer, who had represented all the cardinal

virtues for the last quarter of a century. She smiled with equal

sweetness on treacle and on brimstone; was quite at home at Exeter

Hall, having been consulted--so the world said, probably not with

exact truth--as to the selection of more than one disagreeably Low

Church bishop; and was not less frequent in her attendance at the

ecclesiastical doings of a certain terrible prelate in the Midland

counties, who was supposed to favour stoles and vespers, and to have

no proper Protestant hatred for auricular confession and fish on

Fridays. Lady Lufton, who was very staunch, did not like this, and

would say of Miss Dunstable that it was impossible to serve both

God and Mammon. But Mrs. Proudie was much more objectionable to her.

Seeing how sharp was the feud between the Proudies and the Grantlys

down in Barsetshire, how absolutely unable they had always been to

carry a decent face towards each other in Church matters, how they

headed two parties in the diocese, which were, when brought together,

as oil and vinegar, in which battles the whole Lufton influence had

always been brought to bear on the Grantly side;--seeing all this, I

say, Lady Lufton was surprised to hear that Griselda had been taken

to Mrs. Proudie's evening exhibition. "Had the archdeacon been

consulted about it," she said to herself, "this would never have

happened." But there she was wrong, for in matters concerning his

daughter's introduction to the world the archdeacon never interfered.

On the whole, I am inclined to think that Mrs. Grantly understood

the world better than did Lady Lufton. In her heart of hearts Mrs.

Grantly hated Mrs. Proudie--that is, with that sort of hatred one

Christian lady allows herself to feel towards another. Of course Mrs.

Grantly forgave Mrs. Proudie all her offences, and wished her well,

and was at peace with her, in the Christian sense of the word, as

with all other women. But under this forbearance and meekness, and

perhaps, we may say, wholly unconnected with it, there was certainly

a current of antagonistic feeling which, in the ordinary unconsidered

language of every day, men and women do call hatred. This raged and

was strong throughout the whole year in Barsetshire, before the eyes

of all mankind. But, nevertheless, Mrs. Grantly took Griselda to

Mrs. Proudie's evening parties in London. In these days Mrs. Proudie

considered herself to be by no means the least among bishops' wives.

She had opened the season this year in a new house in Gloucester

Place, at which the reception rooms, at any rate, were all that a

lady bishop could desire. Here she had a front drawing-room of very

noble dimensions, a second drawing-room rather noble also, though it

had lost one of its back corners awkwardly enough, apparently in a

jostle with the neighbouring house; and then there was a third--shall

we say drawing-room, or closet?--in which Mrs. Proudie delighted to

be seen sitting, in order that the world might know that there was a

third room; altogether a noble suite, as Mrs. Proudie herself said

in confidence to more than one clergyman's wife from Barsetshire.

"A noble suite, indeed, Mrs. Proudie!" the clergymen's wives from

Barsetshire would usually answer.

For some time Mrs. Proudie was much at a loss to know by what sort

of party or entertainment she would make herself famous. Balls and

suppers were of course out of the question. She did not object to her

daughters dancing all night at other houses--at least, of late she

had not objected, for the fashionable world required it, and the

young ladies had perhaps a will of their own--but dancing at her

house--absolutely under the shade of the bishop's apron--would be a

sin and a scandal. And then as to suppers--of all modes in which one

may extend one's hospitality to a large acquaintance, they are the

most costly. "It is horrid to think that we should go out among our

friends for the mere sake of eating and drinking," Mrs. Proudie would

say to the clergymen's wives from Barsetshire. "It shows such a

sensual propensity."

"Indeed it does, Mrs. Proudie; and is so vulgar too!" those ladies

would reply. But the elder among them would remember with regret, the

unsparing, open-handed hospitality of Barchester Palace in the good

old days of Bishop Grantly--God rest his soul! One old vicar's wife

there was whose answer had not been so courteous--

"When we are hungry, Mrs. Proudie," she had said, "we do all have

sensual propensities."

"It would be much better, Mrs. Athill, if the world would provide

for all that at home," Mrs. Proudie had rapidly replied; with which

opinion I must here profess that I cannot by any means bring myself

to coincide. But a conversazione would give play to no sensual

propensity, nor occasion that intolerable expense which the

gratification of sensual propensities too often produces. Mrs.

Proudie felt that the word was not all that she could have desired.

It was a little faded by old use and present oblivion, and seemed to

address itself to that portion of the London world that is considered

blue, rather than fashionable. But, nevertheless, there was a

spirituality about it which suited her, and one may also say an

economy. And then as regarded fashion, it might perhaps not be beyond

the power of a Mrs. Proudie to regild the word with a newly burnished

gilding. Some leading person must produce fashion at first hand, and

why not Mrs. Proudie?

Her plan was to set the people by the ears talking, if talk they

would, or to induce them to show themselves there inert if no more

could be got from them. To accommodate with chairs and sofas as many

as the furniture of her noble suite of rooms would allow, especially

with the two chairs and padded bench against the wall in the back

closet--the small inner drawing-room, as she would call it to the

clergymen's wives from Barsetshire--and to let the others stand

about upright, or "group themselves," as she described it. Then four

times during the two hours' period of her conversazione tea and cake

were to be handed round on salvers. It is astonishing how far a

very little cake will go in this way, particularly if administered

tolerably early after dinner. The men can't eat it, and the women,

having no plates and no table, are obliged to abstain. Mrs. Jones

knows that she cannot hold a piece of crumbly cake in her hand till

it be consumed without doing serious injury to her best dress. When

Mrs. Proudie, with her weekly books before her, looked into the

financial upshot of her conversazione, her conscience told her that

she had done the right thing. Going out to tea is not a bad thing,

if one can contrive to dine early, and then be allowed to sit round

a big table with a tea urn in the middle. I would, however, suggest

that breakfast cups should always be provided for the gentlemen. And

then with pleasant neighbours,--or more especially with a pleasant

neighbour,--the affair is not, according to my taste, by any means

the worst phase of society. But I do dislike that handing round,

unless it be of a subsidiary thimbleful when the business of the

social intercourse has been dinner.

And indeed this handing round has become a vulgar and an intolerable

nuisance among us second-class gentry with our eight hundred a

year--there or thereabouts;--doubly intolerable as being destructive

of our natural comforts, and a wretchedly vulgar aping of men with

large incomes. The Duke of Omnium and Lady Hartletop are undoubtedly

wise to have everything handed round. Friends of mine who

occasionally dine at such houses tell me that they get their wine

quite as quickly as they can drink it, that their mutton is brought

to them without delay, and that the potato bearer follows quick upon

the heels of carnifer. Nothing can be more comfortable, and we may no

doubt acknowledge that these first-class grandees do understand their

material comforts. But we of the eight hundred can no more come up to

them in this than we can in their opera-boxes and equipages. May I

not say that the usual tether of this class, in the way of carnifers,

cup-bearers, and the rest, does not reach beyond neat-handed Phyllis

and the greengrocer? and that Phyllis, neat-handed as she probably

is, and the greengrocer, though he be ever so active, cannot

administer a dinner to twelve people who are prohibited by a

Medo-Persian law from all self-administration whatever? And may I not

further say that the lamentable consequence to us eight hundreders

dining out among each other is this, that we too often get no dinner

at all. Phyllis, with the potatoes, cannot reach us till our mutton

is devoured, or in a lukewarm state past our power of managing; and

Ganymede, the greengrocer, though we admire the skill of his necktie

and the whiteness of his unexceptionable gloves, fails to keep us

going in sherry. Seeing a lady the other day in this strait, left

without a small modicum of stimulus which was no doubt necessary for

her good digestion, I ventured to ask her to drink wine with me. But

when I bowed my head at her, she looked at me with all her eyes,

struck with amazement. Had I suggested that she should join me in a

wild Indian war-dance, with nothing on but my paint, her face could

not have shown greater astonishment. And yet I should have thought

she might have remembered the days when Christian men and women used

to drink wine with each other. God be with the good old days when

I could hob-nob with my friend over the table as often as I was

inclined to lift my glass to my lips, and make a long arm for a hot

potato whenever the exigencies of my plate required it.

I think it may be laid down as a rule in affairs of hospitality, that

whatever extra luxury or grandeur we introduce at our tables when

guests are with us, should be introduced for the advantage of the

guest and not for our own. If, for instance, our dinner be served in

a manner different from that usual to us, it should be so served in

order that our friends may with more satisfaction eat our repast than

our everyday practice would produce on them. But the change should

by no means be made to their material detriment in order that our

fashion may be acknowledged. Again, if I decorate my sideboard and

table, wishing that the eyes of my visitors may rest on that which

is elegant and pleasant to the sight, I act in that matter with a

becoming sense of hospitality; but if my object be to kill Mrs.

Jones with envy at the sight of all my silver trinkets, I am a very

mean-spirited fellow. This, in a broad way, will be acknowledged; but

if we would bear in mind the same idea at all times,--on occasions

when the way perhaps may not be so broad, when more thinking may

be required to ascertain what is true hospitality,--I think we

of the eight hundred would make a greater advance towards really

entertaining our own friends than by any rearrangement of the actual

meats and dishes which we set before them.

Knowing as we do, that the terms of the Lufton-Grantly alliance had

been so solemnly ratified between the two mothers, it is perhaps

hardly open to us to suppose that Mrs. Grantly was induced to take

her daughter to Mrs. Proudie's by any knowledge which she may have

acquired that Lord Dumbello had promised to grace the bishop's

assembly. It is certainly the fact that high contracting parties

do sometimes allow themselves a latitude which would be considered

dishonest by contractors of a lower sort; and it may be possible that

the archdeacon's wife did think of that second string with which

her bow was furnished. Be that as it may, Lord Dumbello was at Mrs.

Proudie's, and it did so come to pass that Griselda was seated at

a corner of a sofa close to which was a vacant space in which his

lordship could--"group himself." They had not been long there before

Lord Dumbello did group himself. "Fine day," he said, coming up and

occupying the vacant position by Miss Grantly's elbow.

"We were driving to-day, and we thought it rather cold," said

Griselda.

"Deuced cold," said Lord Dumbello, and then he adjusted his white

cravat and touched up his whiskers. Having got so far, he did not

proceed to any other immediate conversational efforts; nor did

Griselda. But he grouped himself again as became a marquis, and gave

very intense satisfaction to Mrs. Proudie.

"This is so kind of you, Lord Dumbello," said that lady, coming up to

him and shaking his hand warmly; "so very kind of you to come to my

poor little tea-party."

"Uncommonly pleasant, I call it," said his lordship. "I like this

sort of thing--no trouble, you know."

"No; that is the charm of it: isn't it? no trouble, or fuss,

or parade. That's what I always say. According to my ideas,

society consists in giving people facility for an interchange of

thoughts--what we call conversation."

"Aw, yes, exactly."

"Not in eating and drinking together--eh, Lord Dumbello? And yet the

practice of our lives would seem to show that the indulgence of those

animal propensities can alone suffice to bring people together. The

world in this has surely made a great mistake."

"I like a good dinner all the same," said Lord Dumbello.

"Oh, yes, of course--of course. I am by no means one of those who

would pretend to preach that our tastes have not been given to us for

our enjoyment. Why should things be nice if we are not to like them?"

"A man who can really give a good dinner has learned a great deal,"

said Lord Dumbello, with unusual animation.

"An immense deal. It is quite an art in itself: and one which I, at

any rate, by no means despise. But we cannot always be eating--can

we?"

"No," said Lord Dumbello, "not always." And he looked as though he

lamented that his powers should be so circumscribed. And then Mrs.

Proudie passed on to Mrs. Grantly. The two ladies were quite friendly

in London; though down in their own neighbourhood they waged a

war so internecine in its nature. But nevertheless Mrs. Proudie's

manner might have showed to a very close observer that she knew the

difference between a bishop and an archdeacon. "I am so delighted to

see you," said she. "No, don't mind moving; I won't sit down just at

present. But why didn't the archdeacon come?"

"It was quite impossible; it was indeed," said Mrs. Grantly. "The

archdeacon never has a moment in London that he can call his own."

"You don't stay up very long, I believe."

"A good deal longer than we either of us like, I can assure you.

London life is a perfect nuisance to me."

"But people in a certain position must go through with it, you know,"

said Mrs. Proudie. "The bishop, for instance, must attend the House."

"Must he?" asked Mrs. Grantly, as though she were not at all well

informed with reference to this branch of a bishop's business. "I am

very glad that archdeacons are under no such liability."

"Oh, no; there's nothing of that sort," said Mrs. Proudie, very

seriously. "But how uncommonly well Miss Grantly is looking! I do

hear that she has quite been admired." This phrase certainly was a

little hard for the mother to bear. All the world had acknowledged,

so Mrs. Grantly had taught herself to believe, that Griselda was

undoubtedly the beauty of the season. Marquises and lords were

already contending for her smiles, and paragraphs had been written in

newspapers as to her profile. It was too hard to be told, after that,

that her daughter had been "quite admired." Such a phrase might suit

a pretty little red-cheeked milkmaid of a girl.

"She cannot, of course, come near your girls in that respect," said

Mrs. Grantly, very quietly. Now the Miss Proudies had not elicited

from the fashionable world any very loud encomiums on their beauty.

Their mother felt the taunt in its fullest force, but she would not

essay to do battle on the present arena. She jotted down the item in

her mind, and kept it over for Barchester and the chapter. Such debts

as those she usually paid on some day, if the means of doing so were

at all within her power. "But there is Miss Dunstable, I declare,"

she said, seeing that that lady had entered the room; and away went

Mrs. Proudie to welcome her distinguished guest.

"And so this is a conversazione, is it?" said that lady, speaking, as

usual, not in a suppressed voice. "Well, I declare, it's very nice.

It means conversation, don't it, Mrs. Proudie?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Miss Dunstable, there is nobody like you, I declare."

"Well, but don't it? and tea and cake? and then, when we're tired of

talking, we go away,--isn't that it?"

"But you must not be tired for these three hours yet."

"Oh, I am never tired of talking; all the world knows that. How do,

bishop? A very nice sort of thing this conversazione, isn't it now?"

The bishop rubbed his hands together and smiled, and said that he

thought it was rather nice.

"Mrs. Proudie is so fortunate in all her little arrangements," said

Miss Dunstable.

"Yes, yes," said the bishop. "I think she is happy in these matters.

I do flatter myself that she is so. Of course, Miss Dunstable, you

are accustomed to things on a much grander scale."

"I! Lord bless you, no! Nobody hates grandeur so much as I do. Of

course I must do as I am told. I must live in a big house, and have

three footmen six feet high. I must have a coachman with a top-heavy

wig, and horses so big that they frighten me. If I did not, I should

be made out a lunatic and declared unable to manage my own affairs.

But as for grandeur, I hate it. I certainly think that I shall have

some of these conversaziones. I wonder whether Mrs. Proudie will

come and put me up to a wrinkle or two." The bishop again rubbed his

hands, and said that he was sure she would. He never felt quite at

his ease with Miss Dunstable, as he rarely could ascertain whether

or no she was earnest in what she was saying. So he trotted off,

muttering some excuse as he went, and Miss Dunstable chuckled with an

inward chuckle at his too evident bewilderment. Miss Dunstable was by

nature kind, generous, and open-hearted; but she was living now very

much with people on whom kindness, generosity, and open-heartedness

were thrown away. She was clever also, and could be sarcastic; and

she found that those qualities told better in the world around her

than generosity and an open heart. And so she went on from month to

month, and year to year, not progressing in a good spirit as she

might have done, but still carrying within her bosom a warm affection

for those she could really love. And she knew that she was hardly

living as she should live,--that the wealth which she affected to

despise was eating into the soundness of her character, not by its

splendour, but by the style of life which it had seemed to produce

as a necessity. She knew that she was gradually becoming irreverent,

scornful, and prone to ridicule; but yet, knowing this, and hating

it, she hardly knew how to break from it. She had seen so much of

the blacker side of human nature that blackness no longer startled

her as it should do. She had been the prize at which so many ruined

spendthrifts had aimed; so many pirates had endeavoured to run her

down while sailing in the open waters of life, that she had ceased to

regard such attempts on her money-bags as unmanly or over-covetous.

She was content to fight her own battle with her own weapons, feeling

secure in her own strength of purpose and strength of wit.

Some few friends she had whom she really loved,--among whom her inner

self could come out and speak boldly what it had to say with its own

true voice. And the woman who thus so spoke was very different from

that Miss Dunstable whom Mrs. Proudie courted, and the Duke of Omnium

fÃªted, and Mrs. Harold Smith claimed as her bosom friend. If only she

could find among such one special companion on whom her heart might

rest, who would help her to bear the heavy burdens of her world!

But where was she to find such a friend?--she with her keen wit,

her untold money, and loud laughing voice. Everything about her was

calculated to attract those whom she could not value, and to scare

from her the sort of friend to whom she would fain have linked her

lot. And then she met Mrs. Harold Smith, who had taken Mrs. Proudie's

noble suite of rooms in her tour for the evening, and was devoting

to them a period of twenty minutes. "And so I may congratulate you,"

Miss Dunstable said eagerly to her friend.

"No, in mercy's name, do no such thing, or you may too probably have

to uncongratulate me again; and that will be so unpleasant."

"But they told me that Lord Brock had sent for him yesterday." Now at

this period Lord Brock was Prime Minister.

"So he did, and Harold was with him backwards and forwards all the

day. But he can't shut his eyes and open his mouth, and see what God

will send him, as a wise and prudent man should do. He is always for

bargaining, and no Prime Minister likes that."

"I would not be in his shoes if, after all, he has to come home and

say that the bargain is off."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, I should not take it very quietly. But what can we

poor women do, you know? When it is settled, my dear, I'll send you a

line at once." And then Mrs. Harold Smith finished her course round

the rooms, and regained her carriage within the twenty minutes.

"Beautiful profile, has she not?" said Miss Dunstable, somewhat later

in the evening, to Mrs. Proudie. Of course, the profile spoken of

belonged to Miss Grantly.

"Yes, it is beautiful, certainly," said Mrs. Proudie. "The pity is

that it means nothing."

"The gentlemen seem to think that it means a good deal."

"I am not sure of that. She has no conversation, you see; not a word.

She has been sitting there with Lord Dumbello at her elbow for the

last hour, and yet she has hardly opened her mouth three times."

"But, my dear Mrs. Proudie, who on earth could talk to Lord

Dumbello?" Mrs. Proudie thought that her own daughter Olivia would

undoubtedly be able to do so, if only she could get the opportunity.

But, then, Olivia had so much conversation. And while the two ladies

were yet looking at the youthful pair, Lord Dumbello did speak again.

"I think I have had enough of this now," said he, addressing himself

to Griselda.

"I suppose you have other engagements," said she.

"Oh, yes; and I believe I shall go to Lady Clantelbrocks." And then

he took his departure. No other word was spoken that evening between

him and Miss Grantly beyond those given in this chronicle, and yet

the world declared that he and that young lady had passed the evening

in so close a flirtation as to make the matter more than ordinarily

particular; and Mrs. Grantly, as she was driven home to her lodgings,

began to have doubts in her mind whether it would be wise to

discountenance so great an alliance as that which the head of the

great Hartletop family now seemed so desirous to establish. The

prudent mother had not yet spoken a word to her daughter on these

subjects, but it might soon become necessary to do so. It was all

very well for Lady Lufton to hurry up to town, but of what service

would that be, if Lord Lufton were not to be found in Bruton Street?

CHAPTER XVIII

The New Minister's Patronage

At that time, just as Lady Lufton was about to leave Framley for

London, Mark Robarts received a pressing letter, inviting him also to

go up to the metropolis for a day or two--not for pleasure, but on

business. The letter was from his indefatigable friend Sowerby. "My

dear Robarts," the letter ran:--"I have just heard that poor little

Burslem, the Barsetshire prebendary, is dead. We must all die some

day, you know,--as you have told your parishioners from the Framley

pulpit more than once, no doubt. The stall must be filled up, and

why should not you have it as well as another? It is six hundred a

year and a house. Little Burslem had nine, but the good old times

are gone. Whether the house is letable or not under the present

ecclesiastical rÃ©gime, I do not know. It used to be so, for I

remember Mrs. Wiggins, the tallow-chandler's widow, living in old

Stanhope's house.

"Harold Smith has just joined the Government as Lord Petty Bag, and

could, I think, at the present moment, get this for asking. He cannot

well refuse me, and, if you will say the word, I will speak to him.

You had better come up yourself; but say the word 'Yes,' or 'No,' by

the wires.

"If you say 'Yes,' as of course you will, do not fail to come up.

You will find me at the 'Travellers,' or at the House. The stall

will just suit you,--will give you no trouble, improve your position,

and give some little assistance towards bed and board, and rack and

manger.--Yours ever faithfully, N. SOWERBY.

"Singularly enough, I hear that your brother is private secretary to

the new Lord Petty Bag. I am told that his chief duty will consist in

desiring the servants to call my sister's carriage. I have only seen

Harold once since he accepted office; but my Lady Petty Bag says that

he has certainly grown an inch since that occurrence."

This was certainly very good-natured on the part of Mr. Sowerby, and

showed that he had a feeling within his bosom that he owed something

to his friend the parson for the injury he had done him. And such

was in truth the case. A more reckless being than the member for

West Barsetshire could not exist. He was reckless for himself, and

reckless for all others with whom he might be concerned. He could

ruin his friends with as little remorse as he had ruined himself. All

was fair game that came in the way of his net. But, nevertheless,

he was good-natured, and willing to move heaven and earth to do a

friend a good turn, if it came in his way to do so. He did really

love Mark Robarts as much as it was given him to love any among

his acquaintance. He knew that he had already done him an almost

irreparable injury, and might very probably injure him still deeper

before he had done with him. That he would undoubtedly do so, if it

came in his way, was very certain. But then, if it also came in his

way to repay his friend by any side blow, he would also undoubtedly

do that. Such an occasion had now come, and he had desired his sister

to give the new Lord Petty Bag no rest till he should have promised

to use all his influence in getting the vacant prebend for Mark

Robarts.

This letter of Sowerby's Mark immediately showed to his wife. How

lucky, thought he to himself, that not a word was said in it about

those accursed money transactions! Had he understood Sowerby better

he would have known that that gentleman never said anything about

money transactions until it became absolutely necessary. "I know you

don't like Mr. Sowerby," he said; "but you must own that this is very

good-natured."

"It is the character I hear of him that I don't like," said Mrs.

Robarts.

"But what shall I do now, Fanny? As he says, why should not I have

the stall as well as another?"

"I suppose it would not interfere with your parish?" she asked.

"Not in the least, at the distance at which we are. I did think of

giving up old Jones; but if I take this, of course I must keep a

curate." His wife could not find it in her heart to dissuade him from

accepting promotion when it came in his way--what vicar's wife would

have so persuaded her husband? But yet she did not altogether like

it. She feared that Greek from Chaldicotes, even when he came with

the present of a prebendal stall in his hands. And then what would

Lady Lufton say?

"And do you think that you must go up to London, Mark?"

"Oh, certainly; that is, if I intend to accept Harold Smith's kind

offices in the matter."

"I suppose it will be better to accept them," said Fanny, feeling

perhaps that it would be useless in her to hope that they should not

be accepted.

"Prebendal stalls, Fanny, don't generally go begging long among

parish clergymen. How could I reconcile it to the duty I owe to my

children to refuse such an increase to my income?" And so it was

settled that he should at once drive to Silverbridge and send off a

message by telegraph, and that he should himself proceed to London on

the following day. "But you must see Lady Lufton first, of course,"

said Fanny, as soon as all this was settled. Mark would have avoided

this if he could have decently done so, but he felt that it would be

impolitic, as well as indecent. And why should he be afraid to tell

Lady Lufton that he hoped to receive this piece of promotion from

the present Government? There was nothing disgraceful in a clergyman

becoming a prebendary of Barchester. Lady Lufton herself had always

been very civil to the prebendaries, and especially to little Dr.

Burslem, the meagre little man who had just now paid the debt of

nature. She had always been very fond of the chapter, and her

original dislike to Bishop Proudie had been chiefly founded on his

interference with the cathedral clergy,--on his interference, or on

that of his wife or chaplain. Considering these things Mark Robarts

tried to make himself believe that Lady Lufton would be delighted

at his good fortune. But yet he did not believe it. She at any rate

would revolt from the gift of the Greek of Chaldicotes. "Oh, indeed,"

she said, when the vicar had with some difficulty explained to her

all the circumstances of the case. "Well, I congratulate you, Mr.

Robarts, on your powerful new patron."

"You will probably feel with me, Lady Lufton, that the benefice is

one which I can hold without any detriment to me in my position here

at Framley," said he, prudently resolving to let the slur upon his

friends pass by unheeded.

"Well, I hope so. Of course, you are a very young man, Mr. Robarts,

and these things have generally been given to clergymen more advanced

in life."

"But you do not mean to say that you think I ought to refuse it?"

"What my advice to you might be if you really came to me for advice,

I am hardly prepared to say at so very short a notice. You seem to

have made up your mind, and therefore I need not consider it. As it

is, I wish you joy, and hope that it may turn out to your advantage

in every way."

"You understand, Lady Lufton, that I have by no means got it as yet."

"Oh, I thought it had been offered to you: I thought you spoke of

this new minister as having all that in his own hand."

"Oh dear, no. What may be the amount of his influence in that respect

I do not at all know. But my correspondent assures me--"

"Mr. Sowerby, you mean. Why don't you call him by his name?"

"Mr. Sowerby assures me that Mr. Smith will ask for it; and thinks it

most probable that his request will be successful."

"Oh, of course. Mr. Sowerby and Mr. Harold Smith together would no

doubt be successful in anything. They are the sort of men who are

successful nowadays. Well, Mr. Robarts, I wish you joy." And she gave

him her hand in token of her sincerity. Mark took her hand, resolving

to say nothing further on that occasion. That Lady Lufton was not now

cordial with him, as she used to be, he was well aware; and sooner or

later he was determined to have the matter out with her. He would ask

her why she now so constantly met him with a taunt, and so seldom

greeted him with that kind old affectionate smile which he knew and

appreciated so well. That she was honest and true he was quite sure.

If he asked her the question plainly, she would answer him openly.

And if he could induce her to say that she would return to her old

ways, return to them she would in a hearty manner. But he could not

do this just at present. It was but a day or two since Mr. Crawley

had been with him; and was it not probable that Mr. Crawley had been

sent thither by Lady Lufton? His own hands were not clean enough for

a remonstrance at the present moment. He would cleanse them, and then

he would remonstrate. "Would you like to live part of the year in

Barchester?" he said to his wife and sister that evening.

"I think that two houses are only a trouble," said his wife. "And we

have been very happy here."

"I have always liked a cathedral town," said Lucy; "and I am

particularly fond of the close."

"And Barchester Close is the closest of all closes," said Mark.

"There is not a single house within the gateways that does not belong

to the chapter."

"But if we are to keep up two houses, the additional income will soon

be wasted," said Fanny, prudently.

"The thing would be to let the house furnished every summer," said

Lucy.

"But I must take my residence as the terms come," said the vicar;

"and I certainly should not like to be away from Framley all the

winter; I should never see anything of Lufton." And perhaps he

thought of his hunting, and then thought again of that cleansing of

his hands.

"I should not a bit mind being away during the winter," said Lucy,

thinking of what the last winter had done for her.

"But where on earth should we find money to furnish one of those

large, old-fashioned houses? Pray, Mark, do not do anything rash."

And the wife laid her hand affectionately on her husband's arm. In

this manner the question of the prebend was discussed between them

on the evening before he started for London. Success had at last

crowned the earnest effort with which Harold Smith had carried on the

political battle of his life for the last ten years. The late Lord

Petty Bag had resigned in disgust, having been unable to digest the

Prime Minister's ideas on Indian Reform, and Mr. Harold Smith, after

sundry hitches in the business, was installed in his place. It was

said that Harold Smith was not exactly the man whom the Premier would

himself have chosen for that high office; but the Premier's hands

were a good deal tied by circumstances. The last great appointment he

had made had been terribly unpopular,--so much so as to subject him,

popular as he undoubtedly was himself, to a screech from the whole

nation. The \_Jupiter\_, with withering scorn, had asked whether vice

of every kind was to be considered, in these days of Queen Victoria,

as a passport to the Cabinet. Adverse members of both Houses had

arrayed themselves in a pure panoply of morality, and thundered forth

their sarcasms with the indignant virtue and keen discontent of

political Juvenals; and even his own friends had held up their hands

in dismay. Under those circumstances he had thought himself obliged

in the present instance to select a man who would not be especially

objectionable to any party. Now Harold Smith lived with his wife, and

his circumstances were not more than ordinarily embarrassed. He kept

no race-horses; and, as Lord Brock now heard for the first time,

gave lectures in provincial towns on popular subjects. He had a seat

which was tolerably secure, and could talk to the House by the yard

if required to do so. Moreover, Lord Brock had a great idea that

the whole machinery of his own ministry would break to pieces very

speedily. His own reputation was not bad, but it was insufficient

for himself and that lately selected friend of his. Under all these

circumstances combined, he chose Harold Smith to fill the vacant

office of Lord Petty Bag. And very proud the Lord Petty Bag was.

For the last three or four months, he and Mr. Supplehouse had been

agreeing to consign the ministry to speedy perdition. "This sort

of dictatorship will never do," Harold Smith had himself said,

justifying that future vote of his as to want of confidence in the

Queen's Government. And Mr. Supplehouse in this matter had fully

agreed with him. He was a Juno whose form that wicked old Paris had

utterly despised, and he, too, had quite made up his mind as to the

lobby in which he would be found when that day of vengeance should

arrive. But now things were much altered in Harold Smith's views.

The Premier had shown his wisdom in seeking for new strength where

strength ought to be sought, and introducing new blood into the body

of his ministry. The people would now feel fresh confidence, and

probably the House also. As to Mr. Supplehouse--he would use all his

influence on Supplehouse. But, after all, Mr. Supplehouse was not

everything.

On the morning after our vicar's arrival in London he attended at

the Petty Bag Office. It was situated in the close neighbourhood of

Downing Street and the higher governmental gods; and though the

building itself was not much, seeing that it was shored up on one

side, that it bulged out in the front, was foul with smoke, dingy

with dirt, and was devoid of any single architectural grace or modern

scientific improvement, nevertheless its position gave it a status in

the world which made the clerks in the Lord Petty Bag's office quite

respectable in their walk in life. Mark had seen his friend Sowerby

on the previous evening, and had then made an appointment with him

for the following morning at the new minister's office. And now he

was there a little before his time, in order that he might have a

few moments' chat with his brother. When Mark found himself in the

private secretary's room he was quite astonished to see the change in

his brother's appearance which the change in his official rank had

produced. Jack Robarts had been a well-built, straight-legged, lissom

young fellow, pleasant to the eye because of his natural advantages,

but rather given to a harum-scarum style of gait, and occasionally

careless, not to say slovenly, in his dress. But now he was the very

pink of perfection. His jaunty frock-coat fitted him to perfection;

not a hair of his head was out of place; his waistcoat and

trousers were glossy and new, and his umbrella, which stood in the

umbrella-stand in the corner, was tight, and neat, and small, and

natty. "Well, John, you've become quite a great man," said his

brother.

"I don't know much about that," said John; "but I find that I have an

enormous deal of fagging to go through."

"Do you mean work? I thought you had about the easiest berth in the

whole Civil Service."

"Ah! that's just the mistake that people make. Because we don't cover

whole reams of foolscap paper at the rate of fifteen lines to a page,

and five words to a line, people think that we private secretaries

have got nothing to do. Look here," and he tossed over scornfully a

dozen or so of little notes. "I tell you what, Mark; it is no easy

matter to manage the patronage of a Cabinet minister. Now I am bound

to write to every one of these fellows a letter that will please him;

and yet I shall refuse to every one of them the request which he

asks."

"That must be difficult."

"Difficult is no word for it. But, after all, it consists chiefly

in the knack of the thing. One must have the wit 'from such a sharp

and waspish word as No to pluck the sting.' I do it every day, and I

really think that the people like it."

"Perhaps your refusals are better than other people's acquiescences."

"I don't mean that at all. We private secretaries have all to do the

same thing. Now, would you believe it? I have used up three lifts of

notepaper already in telling people that there is no vacancy for a

lobby messenger in the Petty Bag Office. Seven peeresses have asked

for it for their favourite footmen. But there--there's the Lord Petty

Bag!" A bell rang and the private secretary, jumping up from his

notepaper, tripped away quickly to the great man's room. "He'll

see you at once," said he, returning. "Buggins, show the Reverend

Mr. Robarts to the Lord Petty Bag." Buggins was the messenger for

whose not vacant place all the peeresses were striving with so much

animation. And then Mark, following Buggins for two steps, was

ushered into the next room.

If a man be altered by becoming a private secretary, he is much more

altered by being made a Cabinet minister. Robarts, as he entered the

room, could hardly believe that this was the same Harold Smith whom

Mrs. Proudie bothered so cruelly in the lecture-room at Barchester.

Then he was cross, and touchy, and uneasy, and insignificant. Now,

as he stood smiling on the hearth-rug of his official fireplace, it

was quite pleasant to see the kind, patronizing smile which lighted

up his features. He delighted to stand there, with his hands in

his trousers' pocket, the great man of the place, conscious of his

lordship, and feeling himself every inch a minister. Sowerby had come

with him, and was standing a little in the background, from which

position he winked occasionally at the parson over the minister's

shoulder. "Ah, Robarts, delighted to see you. How odd, by the by,

that your brother should be my private secretary!" Mark said that it

was a singular coincidence.

"A very smart young fellow, and, if he minds himself, he'll do well."

"I'm quite sure he'll do well," said Mark.

"Ah! well, yes; I think he will. And now, what can I do for you,

Robarts?" Hereupon Mr. Sowerby struck in, making it apparent by his

explanation that Mr. Robarts himself by no means intended to ask for

anything; but that, as his friends had thought that this stall at

Barchester might be put into his hands with more fitness than in

those of any other clergyman of the day, he was willing to accept the

piece of preferment from a man whom he respected so much as he did

the new Lord Petty Bag. The minister did not quite like this, as it

restricted him from much of his condescension, and robbed him of

the incense of a petition which he had expected Mark Roberts would

make to him. But, nevertheless, he was very gracious. "He could not

take upon himself to declare," he said, "what might be Lord Brock's

pleasure with reference to the preferment at Barchester which was

vacant. He had certainly already spoken to his lordship on the

subject, and had perhaps some reason to believe that his own wishes

would be consulted. No distinct promise had been made, but he might

perhaps go so far as to say that he expected such result. If so, it

would give him the greatest pleasure in the world to congratulate Mr.

Robarts on the possession of the stall--a stall which he was sure

Mr. Robarts would fill with dignity, piety, and brotherly love." And

then, when he had finished, Mr. Sowerby gave a final wink, and said

that he regarded the matter as settled.

"No, not settled, Nathaniel," said the cautious minister.

"It's the same thing," rejoined Sowerby. "We all know what all

that flummery means. Men in office, Mark, never do make a distinct

promise,--not even to themselves of the leg of mutton which is

roasting before their kitchen fires. It is so necessary in these days

to be safe; is it not, Harold?

"Most expedient," said Harold Smith, shaking his head wisely. "Well,

Robarts, who is it now?" This he said to his private secretary,

who came to notice the arrival of some bigwig. "Well, yes. I will

say good morning, with your leave, for I am a little hurried. And

remember, Mr. Robarts, I will do what I can for you; but you must

distinctly understand that there is no promise."

"Oh, no promise at all," said Sowerby--"of course not." And then, as

he sauntered up Whitehall towards Charing Cross, with Robarts on his

arm, he again pressed upon him the sale of that invaluable hunter,

who was eating his head off his shoulders in the stable at

Chaldicotes.

CHAPTER XIX

Money Dealings

Mr. Sowerby, in his resolution to obtain this good gift for the vicar

of Framley, did not depend quite alone on the influence of his near

connexion with the Lord Petty Bag. He felt the occasion to be one

on which he might endeavour to move even higher powers than that,

and therefore he had opened the matter to the duke--not by direct

application, but through Mr. Fothergill. No man who understood

matters ever thought of going direct to the duke in such an affair as

that. If one wanted to speak about a woman or a horse or a picture

the duke could, on occasions, be affable enough. But through Mr.

Fothergill the duke was approached. It was represented, with some

cunning, that this buying over of the Framley clergyman from the

Lufton side would be a praiseworthy spoiling of the Amalekites. The

doing so would give the Omnium interest a hold even in the cathedral

close. And then it was known to all men that Mr. Robarts had

considerable influence over Lord Lufton himself. So guided, the Duke

of Omnium did say two words to the Prime Minister, and two words

from the duke went a great way, even with Lord Brock. The upshot of

all this was, that Mark Robarts did get the stall; but he did not

hear the tidings of his success till some days after his return to

Framley.

Mr. Sowerby did not forget to tell him of the great effort--the

unusual effort, as he of Chaldicotes called it--which the duke had

made on the subject. "I don't know when he has done such a thing

before," said Sowerby; "and you may be quite sure of this, he would

not have done it now, had you not gone to Gatherum Castle when he

asked you: indeed, Fothergill would have known that it was vain to

attempt it. And I'll tell you what, Mark--it does not do for me to

make little of my own nest, but I truly believe the duke's word will

be more efficacious than the Lord Petty Bag's solemn adjuration."

Mark, of course, expressed his gratitude in proper terms, and did buy

the horse for a hundred and thirty pounds. "He's as well worth it,"

said Sowerby, "as any animal that ever stood on four legs; and my

only reason for pressing him on you is, that when Tozer's day does

come round, I know you will have to stand to us to something about

that tune." It did not occur to Mark to ask him why the horse should

not be sold to some one else, and the money forthcoming in the

regular way. But this would not have suited Mr. Sowerby.

Mark knew that the beast was good, and as he walked to his lodgings

was half proud of his new possession. But then, how would he justify

it to his wife, or how introduce the animal into his stables without

attempting any justification in the matter? And yet, looking to the

absolute amount of his income, surely he might feel himself entitled

to buy a new horse when it suited him. He wondered what Mr. Crawley

would say when he heard of the new purchase. He had lately fallen

into a state of much wondering as to what his friends and neighbours

would say about him. He had now been two days in town, and was to go

down after breakfast on the following morning so that he might reach

home by Friday afternoon. But on that evening, just as he was going

to bed, he was surprised by Lord Lufton coming into the coffee-room

at his hotel. He walked in with a hurried step, his face was red, and

it was clear that he was very angry. "Robarts," said he, walking up

to his friend and taking the hand that was extended to him, "do you

know anything about this man Tozer?"

"Tozer--what Tozer? I have heard Sowerby speak of such a man."

"Of course you have. If I do not mistake you have written to me about

him yourself."

"Very probably. I remember Sowerby mentioning the man with reference

to your affairs. But why do you ask me?"

"This man has not only written to me, but has absolutely forced his

way into my rooms when I was dressing for dinner; and absolutely had

the impudence to tell me that if I did not honour some bill which he

holds for eight hundred pounds he would proceed against me."

"But you settled all that matter with Sowerby?"

"I did settle it at a very great cost to me. Sooner than have a fuss,

I paid him through the nose--like a fool that I was--everything that

he claimed. This is an absolute swindle, and if it goes on I will

expose it as such." Robarts looked round the room, but luckily there

was not a soul in it but themselves. "You do not mean to say that

Sowerby is swindling you?" said the clergyman.

"It looks very like it," said Lord Lufton; "and I tell you fairly

that I am not in a humour to endure any more of this sort of thing.

Some years ago I made an ass of myself through that man's fault. But

four thousand pounds should have covered the whole of what I really

lost. I have now paid more than three times that sum; and, by

heavens! I will not pay more without exposing the whole affair."

"But, Lufton, I do not understand. What is this bill?--has it your

name to it?

"Yes, it has: I'll not deny my name, and if there be absolute need I

will pay it; but, if I do so, my lawyer shall sift it, and it shall

go before a jury."

"But I thought all those bills were paid?"

"I left it to Sowerby to get up the old bills when they were renewed,

and now one of them that has in truth been already honoured is

brought against me." Mark could not but think of the two documents

which he himself had signed, and both of which were now undoubtedly

in the hands of Tozer, or of some other gentleman of the same

profession;--which both might be brought against him, the second as

soon as he should have satisfied the first. And then he remembered

that Sowerby had said something to him about an outstanding bill,

for the filling up of which some trifle must be paid, and of this he

reminded Lord Lufton.

"And do you call eight hundred pounds a trifle? If so, I do not."

"They will probably make no such demand as that."

"But I tell you they do make such a demand, and have made it. The

man whom I saw, and who told me that he was Tozer's friend, but who

was probably Tozer himself, positively swore to me that he would be

obliged to take legal proceedings if the money were not forthcoming

within a week or ten days. When I explained to him that it was an old

bill that had been renewed, he declared that his friend had given

full value for it."

"Sowerby said that you would probably have to pay ten pounds to

redeem it. I should offer the man some such sum as that."

"My intention is to offer the man nothing, but to leave the affair

in the hands of my lawyer with instructions to him to spare none;

neither myself nor any one else. I am not going to allow such a man

as Sowerby to squeeze me like an orange."

"But, Lufton, you seem as though you were angry with me."

"No, I am not. But I think it is as well to caution you about this

man; my transactions with him lately have chiefly been through you,

and therefore--"

"But they have only been so through his and your wish: because I have

been anxious to oblige you both. I hope you don't mean to say that I

am concerned in these bills."

"I know that you are concerned in bills with him."

"Why, Lufton, am I to understand, then, that you are accusing me

of having any interest in these transactions which you have called

swindling?"

"As far as I am concerned there has been swindling, and there is

swindling going on now."

"But you do not answer my question. Do you bring any accusation

against me? If so, I agree with you that you had better go to your

lawyer."

"I think that is what I shall do."

"Very well. But, upon the whole, I never heard of a more unreasonable

man, or of one whose thoughts are more unjust than yours. Solely

with the view of assisting you, and solely at your request, I spoke

to Sowerby about these money transactions of yours. Then, at his

request, which originated out of your request, he using me as his

ambassador to you, as you had used me as yours to him, I wrote and

spoke to you. And now this is the upshot."

"I bring no accusation against you, Robarts; but I know you have

dealings with this man. You have told me so yourself."

"Yes, at his request to accommodate him. I have put my name to a

bill."

"Only to one?

"Only to one; and then to that same renewed, or not exactly to that

same, but to one which stands for it. The first was for four hundred

pounds; the last for five hundred."

"All which you will have to make good, and the world will of course

tell you that you have paid that price for this stall at Barchester."

This was terrible to be borne. He had heard much lately which had

frightened and scared him, but nothing so terrible as this; nothing

which so stunned him, or conveyed to his mind so frightful a reality

of misery and ruin. He made no immediate answer, but standing on the

hearth-rug with his back to the fire, looked up the whole length of

the room. Hitherto his eyes had been fixed upon Lord Lufton's face,

but now it seemed to him as though he had but little more to do with

Lord Lufton. Lord Lufton and Lord Lufton's mother were neither now to

be counted among those who wished him well. Upon whom indeed could he

now count, except that wife of his bosom upon whom he was bringing

all this wretchedness? In that moment of agony ideas ran quickly

through his brain. He would immediately abandon this preferment at

Barchester, of which it might be said with so much colour that he had

bought it. He would go to Harold Smith, and say positively that he

declined it. Then he would return home and tell his wife all that had

occurred;--tell the whole also to Lady Lufton, if that might still

be of any service. He would make arrangement for the payment of both

those bills as they might be presented, asking no questions as to the

justice of the claim, making no complaint to any one, not even to

Sowerby. He would put half his income, if half were necessary, into

the hands of Forrest the banker, till all was paid. He would sell

every horse he had. He would part with his footman and groom, and

at any rate strive like a man to get again a firm footing on good

ground. Then, at that moment, he loathed with his whole soul the

position in which he found himself placed, and his own folly which

had placed him there. How could he reconcile it to his conscience

that he was there in London with Sowerby and Harold Smith,

petitioning for Church preferment to a man who should have been

altogether powerless in such a matter, buying horses, and arranging

about past due bills? He did not reconcile it to his conscience. Mr.

Crawley had been right when he told him that he was a castaway.

Lord Lufton, whose anger during the whole interview had been extreme,

and who had become more angry the more he talked, had now walked once

or twice up and down the room; and as he so walked the idea did occur

to him that he had been unjust. He had come there with the intention

of exclaiming against Sowerby, and of inducing Robarts to convey to

that gentleman, that if he, Lord Lufton, were made to undergo any

further annoyance about this bill, the whole affair should be thrown

into the lawyer's hands; but instead of doing this, he had brought

an accusation against Robarts. That Robarts had latterly become

Sowerby's friend rather than his own in all these horrid money

dealings, had galled him; and now he had expressed himself in terms

much stronger than he had intended to use. "As to you personally,

Mark," he said, coming back to the spot on which Robarts was

standing, "I do not wish to say anything that shall annoy you."

"You have said quite enough, Lord Lufton."

"You cannot be surprised that I should be angry and indignant at the

treatment I have received."

"You might, I think, have separated in your mind those who have

wronged you, if there has been such wrong, from those who have

only endeavoured to do your will and pleasure for you. That I, as

a clergyman, have been very wrong in taking any part whatsoever

in these matters, I am well aware. That as a man I have been

outrageously foolish in lending my name to Mr. Sowerby, I also know

well enough: it is, perhaps, as well that I should be told of this

somewhat rudely; but I certainly did not expect the lesson to come

from you."

"Well, there has been mischief enough. The question is, what we had

better now both do?"

"You have said what you mean to do. You will put the affair into the

hands of your lawyer."

"Not with any object of exposing you."

"Exposing me, Lord Lufton! Why, one would think that I had had the

handling of your money."

"You will misunderstand me. I think no such thing. But do you not

know yourself that if legal steps be taken in this wretched affair,

your arrangements with Sowerby will be brought to light?"

"My arrangements with Sowerby will consist in paying or having to

pay, on his account, a large sum of money, for which I have never had

and shall never have any consideration whatever."

"And what will be said about this stall at Barchester?"

"After the charge which you brought against me just now, I shall

decline to accept it." At this moment three or four other gentlemen

entered the room, and the conversation between our two friends was

stopped. They still remained standing near the fire, but for a few

minutes neither of them said anything. Robarts was waiting till Lord

Lufton should go away, and Lord Lufton had not yet said that which

he had come to say. At last he spoke again, almost in a whisper: "I

think it will be best to ask Sowerby to come to my rooms to-morrow,

and I think also that you should meet him there."

"I do not see any necessity for my presence," said Robarts. "It seems

probable that I shall suffer enough for meddling with your affairs,

and I will do so no more."

"Of course, I cannot make you come; but I think it will be only just

to Sowerby, and it will be a favour to me." Robarts again walked up

and down the room for half a dozen times, trying to resolve what it

would most become him to do in the present emergency. If his name

were dragged before the courts,--if he should be shown up in the

public papers as having been engaged in accommodation bills, that

would certainly be ruinous to him. He had already learned from Lord

Lufton's innuendoes what he might expect to hear as the public

version of his share in these transactions! And then his wife,--how

would she bear such exposure? "I will meet Mr. Sowerby at your rooms

to-morrow, on one condition," he at last said.

"And what is that?"

"That I receive your positive assurance that I am not suspected

by you of having had any pecuniary interest whatever in any money

matters with Mr. Sowerby, either as concerns your affairs or those

of anybody else."

"I have never suspected you of any such thing. But I have thought

that you were compromised with him."

"And so I am--I am liable for these bills. But you ought to have

known, and do know, that I have never received a shilling on account

of such liability. I have endeavoured to oblige a man whom I regarded

first as your friend, and then as my own; and this has been the

result." Lord Lufton did at last give him the assurance that he

desired, as they sat with their heads together over one of the

coffee-room tables; and then Robarts promised that he would postpone

his return to Framley till the Saturday, so that he might meet

Sowerby at Lord Lufton's chambers in the Albany on the following

afternoon. As soon as this was arranged, Lord Lufton took his leave

and went his way.

After that poor Mark had a very uneasy night of it. It was clear

enough that Lord Lufton had thought, if he did not still think, that

the stall at Barchester was to be given as pecuniary recompense in

return for certain money accommodation to be afforded by the nominee

to the dispenser of this patronage. Nothing on earth could be worse

than this. In the first place it would be simony; and then it would

be simony beyond all description mean and simoniacal. The very

thought of it filled Mark's soul with horror and dismay. It might

be that Lord Lufton's suspicions were now at rest; but others would

think the same thing, and their suspicions it would be impossible to

allay; those others would consist of the outer world, which is always

so eager to gloat over the detected vice of a clergyman. And then

that wretched horse which he had purchased, and the purchase of which

should have prohibited him from saying that nothing of value had

accrued to him in these transactions with Mr. Sowerby! what was he

to do about that? And then of late he had been spending, and had

continued to spend, more money than he could well afford. This very

journey of his up to London would be most imprudent, if it should

become necessary for him to give up all hope of holding the prebend.

As to that he had made up his mind; but then again he unmade it, as

men always do in such troubles. That line of conduct which he had

laid down for himself in the first moments of his indignation against

Lord Lufton, by adopting which he would have to encounter poverty,

and ridicule, and discomfort, the annihilation of his high hopes,

and the ruin of his ambition--that, he said to himself over and over

again, would now be the best for him. But it is so hard for us to

give up our high hopes, and willingly encounter poverty, ridicule,

and discomfort!

On the following morning, however, he boldly walked down to the

Petty Bag Office, determined to let Harold Smith know that he was no

longer desirous of the Barchester stall. He found his brother there,

still writing artistic notes to anxious peeresses on the subject of

Buggins's non-vacant situation; but the great man of the place, the

Lord Petty Bag himself, was not there. He might probably look in when

the House was beginning to sit, perhaps at four or a little after;

but he certainly would not be at the office in the morning. The

functions of the Lord Petty Bag he was no doubt performing elsewhere.

Perhaps he had carried his work home with him--a practice which the

world should know is not uncommon with civil servants of exceeding

zeal. Mark did think of opening his heart to his brother, and of

leaving his message with him. But his courage failed him, or perhaps

it might be more correct to say that his prudence prevented him. It

would be better for him, he thought, to tell his wife before he told

any one else. So he merely chatted with his brother for half an hour

and then left him. The day was very tedious till the hour came at

which he was to attend at Lord Lufton's rooms; but at last it did

come, and just as the clock struck he turned out of Piccadilly into

the Albany. As he was going across the court before he entered the

building, he was greeted by a voice just behind him. "As punctual as

the big clock on Barchester tower," said Mr. Sowerby. "See what it

is to have a summons from a great man, Mr. Prebendary." He turned

round and extended his hand mechanically to Mr. Sowerby, and as he

looked at him he thought he had never before seen him so pleasant in

appearance, so free from care, and so joyous in demeanour.

"You have heard from Lord Lufton," said Mark, in a voice that was

certainly very lugubrious.

"Heard from him! oh, yes, of course I have heard from him. I'll tell

you what it is, Mark," and he now spoke almost in a whisper as they

walked together along the Albany passage, "Lufton is a child in money

matters--a perfect child. The dearest, finest fellow in the world,

you know; but a very baby in money matters." And then they entered

his lordship's rooms. Lord Lufton's countenance also was lugubrious

enough, but this did not in the least abash Sowerby, who walked

quickly up to the young lord with his gait perfectly self-possessed

and his face radiant with satisfaction.

"Well, Lufton, how are you?" said he. "It seems that my worthy friend

Tozer has been giving you some trouble?" Then Lord Lufton with a

face by no means radiant with satisfaction again began the story of

Tozer's fraudulent demand upon him. Sowerby did not interrupt him,

but listened patiently to the end;--quite patiently, although Lord

Lufton, as he made himself more and more angry by the history of his

own wrongs, did not hesitate to pronounce certain threats against Mr.

Sowerby, as he had pronounced them before against Mark Robarts. He

would not, he said, pay a shilling, except through his lawyer; and

he would instruct his lawyer, that before he paid anything, the

whole matter should be exposed openly in court. He did not care, he

said, what might be the effect on himself or any one else. He was

determined that the whole case should go to a jury. "To grand jury,

and special jury, and common jury, and Old Jewry, if you like," said

Sowerby. "The truth is, Lufton, you lost some money, and as there was

some delay in paying it, you have been harassed."

"I have paid more than I lost three times over," said Lord Lufton,

stamping his foot.

"I will not go into that question now. It was settled, as I thought,

some time ago by persons to whom you yourself referred it. But will

you tell me this: Why on earth should Robarts be troubled in this

matter? What has he done?"

"Well, I don't know. He arranged the matter with you."

"No such thing. He was kind enough to carry a message from you to me,

and to convey back a return message from me to you. That has been his

part in it."

"You don't suppose that I want to implicate him: do you?"

"I don't think you want to implicate any one, but you are hot-headed

and difficult to deal with, and very irrational into the bargain.

And, what is worse, I must say you are a little suspicious. In all

this matter I have harassed myself greatly to oblige you, and in

return I have got more kicks than halfpence."

"Did not you give this bill to Tozer--the bill which he now holds?"

"In the first place he does not hold it; and in the next place I did

not give it to him. These things pass through scores of hands before

they reach the man who makes the application for payment."

"And who came to me the other day?"

"That, I take it, was Tom Tozer, a brother of our Tozer's."

"Then he holds the bill, for I saw it with him."

"Wait a moment; that is very likely. I sent you word that you would

have to pay for taking it up. Of course they don't abandon those sort

of things without some consideration."

"Ten pounds, you said," observed Mark.

"Ten or twenty; some such sum as that. But you were hardly so soft

as to suppose that the man would ask for such a sum. Of course he

would demand the full payment. There is the bill, Lord Lufton," and

Sowerby, producing a document, handed it across the table to his

lordship. "I gave five-and-twenty pounds for it this morning." Lord

Lufton took the paper and looked at it.

"Yes," said he, "that's the bill. What am I to do with it now?"

"Put it with the family archives," said Sowerby,--"or behind the

fire, just which you please."

"And is this the last of them? Can no other be brought up?"

"You know better than I do what paper you may have put your hand to.

I know of no other. At the last renewal that was the only outstanding

bill of which I was aware."

"And you have paid five-and-twenty pounds for it?"

"I have. Only that you have been in such a tantrum about it, and

would have made such a noise this afternoon if I had not brought it,

I might have had it for fifteen or twenty. In three or four days they

would have taken fifteen."

"The odd ten pounds does not signify, and I'll pay you the

twenty-five, of course," said Lord Lufton, who now began to feel a

little ashamed of himself.

"You may do as you please about that."

"Oh! it's my affair, as a matter of course. Any amount of that kind I

don't mind," and he sat down to fill in a cheque for the money.

"Well, now, Lufton, let me say a few words to you," said Sowerby,

standing with his back against the fireplace, and playing with a

small cane which he held in his hand. "For heaven's sake try and be a

little more charitable to those around you. When you become fidgety

about anything, you indulge in language which the world won't stand,

though men who know you as well as Robarts and I may consent to put

up with it. You have accused me, since I have been here, of all

manner of iniquity--"

"Now, Sowerby--"

"My dear fellow, let me have my say out. You have accused me, I say,

and I believe that you have accused him. But it has never occurred to

you, I dare say, to accuse yourself."

"Indeed it has.

"Of course you have been wrong in having to do with such men as

Tozer. I have also been very wrong. It wants no great moral authority

to tell us that. Pattern gentlemen don't have dealings with Tozer,

and very much the better they are for not having them. But a man

should have back enough to bear the weight which he himself puts on

it. Keep away from Tozer, if you can, for the future; but if you do

deal with him, for heaven's sake keep your temper."

"That's all very fine, Sowerby; but you know as well as I do--"

"I know this," said the devil, quoting Scripture, as he folded up the

check for twenty-five pounds, and put it in his pocket, "that when a

man sows tares, he won't reap wheat, and it's no use to expect it. I

am tough in these matters, and can bear a great deal--that is, if I

be not pushed too far," and he looked full into Lord Lufton's face as

he spoke; "but I think you have been very hard upon Robarts."

"Never mind me, Sowerby; Lord Lufton and I are very old friends."

"And may therefore take a liberty with each other. Very well. And

now I've done my sermon. My dear dignitary, allow me to congratulate

you. I hear from Fothergill that that little affair of yours has been

definitely settled." Mark's face again became clouded. "I rather

think," said he, "that I shall decline the presentation."

"Decline it!" said Sowerby, who, having used his utmost efforts

to obtain it, would have been more absolutely offended by such

vacillation on the vicar's part than by any personal abuse which

either he or Lord Lufton could heap upon him.

"I think I shall," said Mark.

"And why?" Mark looked up at Lord Lufton, and then remained silent

for a moment.

"There can be no occasion for such a sacrifice under the present

circumstances," said his lordship.

"And under what circumstances could there be occasion for it?" asked

Sowerby. "The Duke of Omnium has used some little influence to get

the place for you as a parish clergyman belonging to his county, and

I should think it monstrous if you were now to reject it." And then

Robarts openly stated the whole of his reasons, explaining exactly

what Lord Lufton had said with reference to the bill transactions,

and to the allegation which would be made as to the stall having been

given in payment for the accommodation.

"Upon my word that's too bad," said Sowerby.

"Now, Sowerby, I won't be lectured," said Lord Lufton.

"I have done my lecture," said he, aware, perhaps, that it would

not do for him to push his friend too far, "and I shall not give a

second. But, Robarts, let me tell you this: as far as I know, Harold

Smith has had little or nothing to do with the appointment. The duke

has told the Prime Minister that he was very anxious that a parish

clergyman from the county should go into the chapter, and then, at

Lord Brock's request, he named you. If under those circumstances you

talk of giving it up, I shall believe you to be insane. As for the

bill which you accepted for me, you need have no uneasiness about it.

The money will be ready; but of course, when that time comes, you

will let me have the hundred and thirty for--" And then Mr. Sowerby

took his leave, having certainly made himself master of the occasion.

If a man of fifty have his wits about him, and be not too prosy,

he can generally make himself master of the occasion, when his

companions are under thirty. Robarts did not stay at the Albany long

after him, but took his leave, having received some assurances of

Lord Lufton's regret for what had passed and many promises of his

friendship for the future. Indeed Lord Lufton was a little ashamed of

himself. "And as for the prebend, after what has passed, of course

you must accept it." Nevertheless his lordship had not omitted to

notice Mr. Sowerby's hint about the horse and the hundred and thirty

pounds.

Robarts, as he walked back to his hotel, thought that he certainly

would accept the Barchester promotion, and was very glad that he had

said nothing on the subject to his brother. On the whole his spirits

were much raised. That assurance of Sowerby's about the bill was very

comforting to him; and, strange to say, he absolutely believed it. In

truth, Sowerby had been so completely the winning horse at the late

meeting, that both Lord Lufton and Robarts were inclined to believe

almost anything he said;--which was not always the case with either

of them.

CHAPTER XX

Harold Smith in the Cabinet

For a few days the whole Harold Smith party held their heads very

high. It was not only that their man had been made a Cabinet

minister; but a rumour had got abroad that Lord Brock, in selecting

him, had amazingly strengthened his party, and done much to cure the

wounds which his own arrogance and lack of judgement had inflicted

on the body politic of his Government. So said the Harold-Smithians,

much elated. And when we consider what Harold had himself achieved,

we need not be surprised that he himself was somewhat elated also. It

must be a proud day for any man when he first walks into a Cabinet.

But when a humble-minded man thinks of such a phase of life, his

mind becomes lost in wondering what a Cabinet is. Are they gods that

attend there or men? Do they sit on chairs, or hang about on clouds?

When they speak, is the music of the spheres audible in their

Olympian mansion, making heaven drowsy with its harmony? In what way

do they congregate? In what order do they address each other? Are the

voices of all the deities free and equal? Is plodding Themis from

the Home Department, or Ceres from the Colonies, heard with as rapt

attention as powerful Pallas of the Foreign Office, the goddess that

is never seen without her lance and helmet? Does our Whitehall Mars

make eyes there at bright young Venus of the Privy Seal, disgusting

that quaint tinkering Vulcan, who is blowing his bellows at our

Exchequer, not altogether unsuccessfully? Old Saturn of the Woolsack

sits there mute, we will say, a relic of other days, as seated in

this divan. The hall in which he rules is now elsewhere. Is our

Mercury of the Post Office ever ready to fly nimbly from globe to

globe, as great Jove may order him, while Neptune, unaccustomed to

the waves, offers needful assistance to the Apollo of the India

Board? How Juno sits apart, glum and huffy, uncared for, Council

President though she be, great in name, but despised among gods--that

we can guess. If Bacchus and Cupid share Trade and the Board of Works

between them, the fitness of things will have been as fully consulted

as is usual. And modest Diana of the Petty Bag, latest summoned to

these banquets of ambrosia,--does she not cling retiring near the

doors, hardy able as yet to make her low voice heard among her

brother deities? But Jove, great Jove--old Jove, the King of Olympus,

hero among gods and men, how does he carry himself in these councils

summoned by his voice? Does he lie there at his ease, with his purple

cloak cut from the firmament around his shoulders? Is his thunderbolt

ever at his hand to reduce a recreant god to order? Can he proclaim

silence in that immortal hall? Is it not there, as elsewhere, in all

places, and among all nations, that a king of gods and a king of men

is and will be king, rules and will rule, over those who are smaller

than himself?

Harold Smith, when he was summoned to the august hall of divine

councils, did feel himself to be a proud man; but we may perhaps

conclude that at the first meeting or two he did not attempt to take

a very leading part. Some of my readers may have sat at vestries, and

will remember how mild, and, for the most part, mute is a new-comer

at their board. He agrees generally, with abated enthusiasm; but

should he differ, he apologizes for the liberty. But anon, when the

voices of his colleagues have become habitual in his ears--when the

strangeness of the room is gone, and the table before him is known

and trusted--he throws off his awe and dismay, and electrifies his

brotherhood by the vehemence of his declamation and the violence of

his thumping. So let us suppose it will be with Harold Smith, perhaps

in the second or third season of his Cabinet practice. Alas! alas!

that such pleasures should be so fleeting! And then, too, there came

upon him a blow which somewhat modified his triumph--a cruel, dastard

blow, from a hand which should have been friendly to him, from one to

whom he had fondly looked to buoy him up in the great course that was

before him. It had been said by his friends that in obtaining Harold

Smith's services the Prime Minister had infused new young healthy

blood into his body. Harold himself had liked the phrase, and had

seen at a glance how it might have been made to tell by some friendly

Supplehouse or the like. But why should a Supplehouse out of Elysium

be friendly to a Harold Smith within it? Men lapped in Elysium,

steeped to the neck in bliss, must expect to see their friends

fall off from them. Human nature cannot stand it. If I want to get

anything from my old friend Jones, I like to see him shoved up into a

high place. But if Jones, even in his high place, can do nothing for

me, then his exaltation above my head is an insult and an injury.

Who ever believes his own dear intimate companion to be fit for the

highest promotion? Mr. Supplehouse had known Mr. Smith too closely to

think much of his young blood.

Consequently, there appeared an article in the \_Jupiter\_, which was

by no means complimentary to the ministry in general. It harped a

good deal on the young-blood view of the question, and seemed to

insinuate that Harold Smith was not much better than diluted water.

"The Prime Minister," the article said, "having lately recruited

his impaired vigour by a new infusion of aristocratic influence of

the highest moral tone, had again added to himself another tower of

strength chosen from among the people. What might he not hope, now

that he possessed the services of Lord Brittleback and Mr. Harold

Smith! Renovated in a Medea's cauldron of such potency, all his

effete limbs--and it must be acknowledged that some of them had

become very effete--would come forth young and round and robust.

A new energy would diffuse itself through every department; India

would be saved and quieted; the ambition of France would be tamed;

even-handed reform would remodel our courts of law and parliamentary

elections; and Utopia would be realized. Such, it seems, is the

result expected in the ministry from Mr. Harold Smith's young blood!"

This was cruel enough, but even this was hardly so cruel as the words

with which the article ended. By that time irony had been dropped,

and the writer spoke out earnestly his opinion upon the matter. "We

beg to assure Lord Brock," said the article, "that such alliances as

these will not save him from the speedy fall with which his arrogance

and want of judgement threaten to overwhelm it. As regards himself

we shall be sorry to hear of his resignation. He is in many respects

the best statesman that we possess for the emergencies of the present

period. But if he be so ill-judged as to rest on such men as Mr.

Harold Smith and Lord Brittleback for his assistants in the work

which is before him, he must not expect that the country will

support him. Mr. Harold Smith is not made of the stuff from which

Cabinet ministers should be formed." Mr. Harold Smith, as he read

this, seated at his breakfast-table, recognized, or said that he

recognized, the hand of Mr. Supplehouse in every touch. That phrase

about the effete limbs was Supplehouse all over, as was also the

realization of Utopia. "When he wants to be witty, he always talks

about Utopia," said Mr. Harold Smith--to himself: for Mrs. Harold was

not usually present in the flesh at these matutinal meals. And then

he went down to his office, and saw in the glance of every man that

he met an announcement that that article in the \_Jupiter\_ had been

read. His private secretary tittered in evident allusion to the

article, and the way in which Buggins took his coat made it clear

that it was well known in the messengers' lobby. "He won't have to

fill up my vacancy when I go," Buggins was saying to himself. And

then in the course of the morning came the Cabinet council, the

second that he had attended, and he read in the countenance of every

god and goddess there assembled that their chief was thought to have

made another mistake. If Mr. Supplehouse could have been induced to

write in another strain, then indeed that new blood might have been

felt to have been efficacious.

All this was a great drawback to his happiness, but still it could

not rob him of the fact of his position. Lord Brock could not ask him

to resign because the \_Jupiter\_ had written against him; nor was Lord

Brock the man to desert a new colleague for such a reason. So Harold

Smith girded his loins, and went about the duties of the Petty Bag

with new zeal. "Upon my word, the \_Jupiter\_ is right," said young

Robarts to himself, as he finished his fourth dozen of private notes

explanatory of everything in and about the Petty Bag Office. Harold

Smith required that his private secretary's notes should be so

terribly precise. But nevertheless, in spite of his drawbacks, Harold

Smith was happy in his new honours, and Mrs. Harold Smith enjoyed

them also. She certainly, among her acquaintance, did quiz the new

Cabinet minister not a little, and it may be a question whether

she was not as hard upon him as the writer in the \_Jupiter\_. She

whispered a great deal to Miss Dunstable about new blood, and talked

of going down to Westminster Bridge to see whether the Thames were

really on fire. But though she laughed, she triumphed, and though she

flattered herself that she bore her honours without any outward sign,

the world knew that she was triumphing, and ridiculed her elation.

About this time she also gave a party--not a pure-minded

conversazione like Mrs. Proudie, but a downright wicked worldly

dance, at which there were fiddles, ices, and champagne sufficient to

run away with the first quarter's salary accruing to Harold from the

Petty Bag Office. To us this ball is chiefly memorable from the fact

that Lady Lufton was among the guests. Immediately on her arrival in

town she received cards from Mrs. H. Smith for herself and Griselda,

and was about to send back a reply at once declining the honour.

What had she to do at the house of Mr. Sowerby's sister? But it

so happened that at that moment her son was with her, and as he

expressed a wish that she should go, she yielded. Had there been

nothing in his tone of persuasion more than ordinary,--had it merely

had reference to herself,--she would have smiled on him for his kind

solicitude, have made out some occasion for kissing his forehead as

she thanked him, and would still have declined. But he had reminded

her both of himself and Griselda. "You might as well go, mother, for

the sake of meeting me," he said; "Mrs. Harold caught me the other

day, and would not liberate me till I had given her a promise."

"That is an attraction certainly," said Lady Lufton. "I do like going

to a house when I know that you will be there."

"And now that Miss Grantly is with you--you owe it to her to do the

best you can for her."

"I certainly do, Ludovic; and I have to thank you for reminding me

of my duty so gallantly." And so she said that she would go to Mrs.

Harold Smith's. Poor lady! She gave much more weight to those few

words about Miss Grantly than they deserved. It rejoiced her heart

to think that her son was anxious to meet Griselda--that he should

perpetrate this little ruse in order to gain his wish. But he had

spoken out of the mere emptiness of his mind, without thought of

what he was saying, excepting that he wished to please his mother.

But nevertheless he went to Mrs. Harold Smith's, and when there he

did dance more than once with Griselda Grantly--to the manifest

discomfiture of Lord Dumbello. He came in late, and at the moment

Lord Dumbello was moving slowly up the room, with Griselda on his

arm, while Lady Lufton was sitting near looking on with unhappy eyes.

And then Griselda sat down, and Lord Dumbello stood mute at her

elbow.

"Ludovic," whispered his mother, "Griselda is absolutely bored by

that man, who follows her like a ghost. Do go and rescue her." He did

go and rescue her, and afterwards danced with her for the best part

of an hour consecutively. He knew that the world gave Lord Dumbello

the credit of admiring the young lady, and was quite alive to the

pleasure of filling his brother nobleman's heart with jealousy and

anger. Moreover, Griselda was in his eyes very beautiful, and had she

been one whit more animated, or had his mother's tactics been but a

thought better concealed, Griselda might have been asked that night

to share the vacant throne at Lufton, in spite of all that had been

said and sworn in the drawing-room of Framley parsonage. It must

be remembered that our gallant, gay Lothario had passed some

considerable number of days with Miss Grantly in his mother's house,

and the danger of such contiguity must be remembered also. Lord

Lufton was by no means a man capable of seeing beauty unmoved or of

spending hours with a young lady without some approach to tenderness.

Had there been no such approach, it is probable that Lady Lufton

would not have pursued the matter. But, according to her ideas on

such subjects, her son Ludovic had on some occasions shown quite

sufficient partiality for Miss Grantly to justify her in her hopes,

and to lead her to think that nothing but opportunity was wanted.

Now, at this ball of Mrs. Smith's, he did, for a while, seem to

be taking advantage of such opportunity, and his mother's heart

was glad. If things should turn out well on this evening she would

forgive Mrs. Harold Smith all her sins. And for a while it looked

as though things would turn out well. Not that it must be supposed

that Lord Lufton had come there with any intention of making love to

Griselda, or that he ever had any fixed thought that he was doing so.

Young men in such matters are so often without any fixed thoughts!

They are such absolute moths. They amuse themselves with the light of

the beautiful candle, fluttering about, on and off, in and out of the

flame with dazzled eyes, till in a rash moment they rush in too near

the wick, and then fall with singed wings and crippled legs, burnt

up and reduced to tinder by the consuming fire of matrimony. Happy

marriages, men say, are made in heaven, and I believe it. Most

marriages are fairly happy, in spite of Sir Cresswell Cresswell; and

yet how little care is taken on earth towards such a result!--"I hope

my mother is using you well?" said Lord Lufton to Griselda, as they

were standing together in a doorway between the dances.

"Oh, yes: she is very kind."

"You have been rash to trust yourself in the hands of so very staid

and demure a person. And, indeed, you owe your presence here at Mrs.

Harold Smith's first Cabinet ball altogether to me. I don't know

whether you are aware of that."

"Oh, yes: Lady Lufton told me."

"And are you grateful or otherwise? Have I done you an injury or a

benefit? Which do you find best, sitting with a novel in the corner

of a sofa in Bruton Street, or pretending to dance polkas here with

Lord Dumbello?"

"I don't know what you mean. I haven't stood up with Lord Dumbello

all the evening. We were going to dance a quadrille, but we didn't."

"Exactly; just what I say;--pretending to do it. Even that's a good

deal for Lord Dumbello; isn't it?" And then Lord Lufton, not being a

pretender himself, put his arm round her waist, and away they went up

and down the room, and across and about, with an energy which showed

that what Griselda lacked in her tongue she made up with her feet.

Lord Dumbello, in the meantime, stood by, observant, thinking to

himself that Lord Lufton was a glib-tongued, empty-headed ass, and

reflecting that if his rival were to break the tendons of his leg in

one of those rapid evolutions, or suddenly come by any other dreadful

misfortune, such as the loss of all his property, absolute blindness,

or chronic lumbago, it would only serve him right. And in that frame

of mind he went to bed, in spite of the prayer which no doubt he said

as to his forgiveness of other people's trespasses. And then, when

they were again standing, Lord Lufton, in the little intervals

between his violent gasps for fresh breath, asked Griselda if she

liked London. "Pretty well," said Griselda, gasping also a little

herself.

"I am afraid--you were very dull--down at Framley."

"Oh, no;--I liked it particularly."

"It was a great bore when you went--away, I know. There wasn't a

soul--about the house worth speaking to." And they remained silent

for a minute till their lungs had become quiescent.

"Not a soul," he continued--not of falsehood prepense, for he was not

in fact thinking of what he was saying. It did not occur to him at

the moment that he had truly found Griselda's going a great relief,

and that he had been able to do more in the way of conversation with

Lucy Robarts in one hour than with Miss Grantly during a month of

intercourse in the same house. But, nevertheless, we should not be

hard upon him. All is fair in love and war; and if this was not love,

it was the usual thing that stands as a counterpart for it.

"Not a soul," said Lord Lufton. "I was very nearly hanging myself in

the Park next morning--only it rained."

"What nonsense! You had your mother to talk to."

"Oh, my mother,--yes; and you may tell me too, if you please, that

Captain Culpepper was there. I do love my mother dearly; but do you

think that she could make up for your absence?" And his voice was

very tender, and so were his eyes.

"And Miss Robarts; I thought you admired her very much?"

"What, Lucy Robarts?" said Lord Lufton, feeling that Lucy's name

was more than he at present knew how to manage. Indeed that name

destroyed all the life there was in that little flirtation. "I do

like Lucy Robarts, certainly. She is very clever; but it so happened

that I saw little or nothing of her after you were gone." To this

Griselda made no answer, but drew herself up, and looked as cold

as Diana when she froze Orion in the cave. Nor could she be got to

give more than monosyllabic answers to the three or four succeeding

attempts at conversation which Lord Lufton made. And then they danced

again, but Griselda's steps were by no means so lively as before.

What took place between them on that occasion was very little more

than what has been here related. There may have been an ice or a

glass of lemonade into the bargain, and perhaps the faintest possible

attempt at hand-pressing. But if so, it was all on one side. To such

overtures as that Griselda Grantly was as cold as any Diana. But

little as all this was, it was sufficient to fill Lady Lufton's

mind and heart. No mother with six daughters was ever more anxious

to get them off her hands, than Lady Lufton was to see her son

married,--married, that is, to some girl of the right sort. And now

it really did seem as though he were actually going to comply with

her wishes. She had watched him during the whole evening, painfully

endeavouring not to be observed in doing so. She had seen Lord

Dumbello's failure and wrath, and she had seen her son's victory and

pride. Could it be the case that he had already said something, which

was still allowed to be indecisive only through Griselda's coldness?

Might it not be the case, that by some judicious aid on her part,

that indecision might be turned into certainty, and that coldness

into warmth? But then any such interference requires so delicate a

touch,--as Lady Lufton was well aware.--"Have you had a pleasant

evening?" Lady Lufton said, when she and Griselda were seated

together with their feet on the fender of her ladyship's

dressing-room. Lady Lufton had especially invited her guest into

this, her most private sanctum, to which as a rule none had

admittance but her daughter, and sometimes Fanny Robarts. But to what

sanctum might not such a daughter-in-law as Griselda have admittance?

"Oh, yes--very," said Griselda.

"It seemed to me that you bestowed most of your smiles upon Ludovic."

And Lady Lufton put on a look of good pleasure that such should have

been the case.

"Oh! I don't know," said Griselda; "I did dance with him two or three

times."

"Not once too often to please me, my dear. I like to see Ludovic

dancing with my friends."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, Lady Lufton."

"Not at all, my dear. I don't know where he could get so nice a

partner." And then she paused a moment, not feeling how far she might

go. In the meantime Griselda sat still, staring at the hot coals.

"Indeed, I know that he admires you very much," continued Lady

Lufton.--"Oh! no, I am sure he doesn't," said Griselda; and then

there was another pause.

"I can only say this," said Lady Lufton, "that if he does do so--and

I believe he does--it would give me very great pleasure. For you

know, my dear, that I am very fond of you myself."

"Oh! thank you," said Griselda, and stared at the coals more

perseveringly than before.

"He is a young man of a most excellent disposition--though he is my

own son, I will say that--and if there should be anything between you

and him--"

"There isn't, indeed, Lady Lufton."

"But if there ever should be, I should be delighted to think that

Ludovic had made so good a choice."

"But there will never be anything of the sort, I'm sure, Lady Lufton.

He is not thinking of such a thing in the least."

"Well, perhaps he may, some day. And now, good night, my dear."

"Good night, Lady Lufton." And Griselda kissed her with the utmost

composure, and betook herself to her own bedroom. Before she retired

to sleep she looked carefully to her different articles of dress,

discovering what amount of damage the evening's wear and tear might

have inflicted.

CHAPTER XXI

Why Puck, the Pony, Was Beaten

Mark Robarts returned home the day after the scene at the Albany,

considerably relieved in spirit. He now felt that he might accept

the stall without discredit to himself as a clergyman in doing so.

Indeed, after what Mr. Sowerby had said, and after Lord Lufton's

assent to it, it would have been madness, he considered, to decline

it. And then, too, Mr. Sowerby's promise about the bills was very

comfortable to him. After all, might it not be possible that he might

get rid of all these troubles with no other drawback than that of

having to pay Â£130 for a horse that was well worth the money?

On the day after his return he received proper authentic tidings of

his presentation to the prebend. He was, in fact, already prebendary,

or would be as soon as the dean and chapter had gone through the form

of instituting him in his stall. The income was already his own; and

the house also would be given up to him in a week's time--a part of

the arrangement with which he would most willingly have dispensed had

it been at all possible to do so. His wife congratulated him nicely,

with open affection, and apparent satisfaction at the arrangement.

The enjoyment of one's own happiness at such windfalls depends so

much on the free and freely expressed enjoyment of others! Lady

Lufton's congratulations had nearly made him throw up the whole

thing; but his wife's smiles re-encouraged him; and Lucy's warm and

eager joy made him feel quite delighted with Mr. Sowerby and the Duke

of Omnium. And then that splendid animal, Dandy, came home to the

parsonage stables, much to the delight of the groom and gardener,

and of the assistant stable boy who had been allowed to creep into

the establishment, unawares, as it were, since "master" had taken

so keenly to hunting. But this satisfaction was not shared in the

drawing-room. The horse was seen on his first journey round to the

stable gate, and questions were immediately asked. It was a horse,

Mark said, "which he had bought from Mr. Sowerby some little time

since, with the object of obliging him. He, Mark, intended to sell

him again, as soon as he could do so judiciously." This, as I have

said above, was not satisfactory. Neither of the two ladies at

Framley parsonage knew much about horses, or of the manner in which

one gentleman might think it proper to oblige another by purchasing

the superfluities of his stable; but they did both feel that there

were horses enough in the parsonage stable without Dandy, and that

the purchasing of a hunter with a view of immediately selling him

again, was, to say the least of it, an operation hardly congenial

with the usual tastes and pursuits of a clergyman. "I hope you did

not give very much money for him, Mark," said Fanny.

"Not more than I shall get again," said Mark; and Fanny saw from the

form of his countenance that she had better not pursue the subject

any further at that moment.

"I suppose I shall have to go into residence almost immediately,"

said Mark, recurring to the more agreeable subject of the stall.

"And shall we all have to go and live at Barchester at once?" asked

Lucy.

"The house will not be furnished, will it, Mark!" said his wife. "I

don't know how we shall get on."

"Don't frighten yourselves. I shall take lodgings in Barchester."

"And we shall not see you all the time," said Mrs. Robarts with

dismay. But the prebendary explained that he would be backwards and

forwards at Framley every week, and that in all probability he would

only sleep at Barchester on the Saturdays, and Sundays--and, perhaps,

not always then.

"It does not seem very hard work, that of a prebendary," said Lucy.

"But it is very dignified," said Fanny. "Prebendaries are dignitaries

of the Church--are they not, Mark?"

"Decidedly," said he; "and their wives also, by special canon law.

The worst of it is that both of them are obliged to wear wigs."

"Shall you have a hat, Mark, with curly things at the side, and

strings through to hold them up?" asked Lucy.

"I fear that does not come within my perquisites."

"Nor a rosette? Then I shall never believe that you are a dignitary.

Do you mean to say that you will wear a hat like a common

parson--like Mr. Crawley, for instance?"

"Well--I believe I may give a twist to the leaf; but I am by no means

sure till I shall have consulted the dean in chapter."

And thus at the parsonage they talked over the good things that were

coming to them, and endeavoured to forget the new horse, and the

hunting boots that had been used so often during the last winter, and

Lady Lufton's altered countenance. It might be that the evils would

vanish away, and the good things alone remain to them. It was now

the month of April, and the fields were beginning to look green, and

the wind had got itself out of the east and was soft and genial, and

the early spring flowers were showing their bright colours in the

parsonage garden, and all things were sweet and pleasant. This was a

period of the year that was usually dear to Mrs. Robarts. Her husband

was always a better parson when the warm months came than he had been

during the winter. The distant county friends whom she did not know

and of whom she did not approve, went away when the spring came,

leaving their houses innocent and empty. The parish duty was better

attended to, and perhaps domestic duties also. At such period he was

a pattern parson and a pattern husband, atoning to his own conscience

for past shortcomings by present zeal. And then, though she had never

acknowledged it to herself, the absence of her dear friend Lady

Lufton was perhaps in itself not disagreeable. Mrs. Robarts did love

Lady Lufton heartily; but it must be acknowledged of her ladyship,

that with all her good qualities, she was inclined to be masterful.

She liked to rule, and she made people feel that she liked it. Mrs.

Robarts would never have confessed that she laboured under a sense

of thraldom; but perhaps she was mouse enough to enjoy the temporary

absence of her kind-hearted cat. When Lady Lufton was away Mrs.

Robarts herself had more play in the parish. And Mark also was not

unhappy, though he did not find it practicable immediately to turn

Dandy into money. Indeed, just at this moment, when he was a good

deal over at Barchester, going through those deep mysteries and rigid

ecclesiastical examinations which are necessary before a clergyman

can become one of a chapter, Dandy was rather a thorn in his side.

Those wretched bills were to come due early in May, and before the

end of April Sowerby wrote to him saying that he was doing his utmost

to provide for the evil day; but that if the price of Dandy could

be remitted to him at once, it would greatly facilitate his object.

Nothing could be more different than Mr. Sowerby's tone about money

at different times. When he wanted to raise the wind, everything was

so important; haste and superhuman efforts, and men running to and

fro with blank acceptances in their hands, could alone stave off the

crack of doom; but at other times, when retaliatory applications were

made to him, he could prove with the easiest voice and most jaunty

manner that everything was quite serene. Now, at this period, he was

in that mood of superhuman efforts, and he called loudly for the

hundred and thirty pounds for Dandy. After what had passed, Mark

could not bring himself to say that he would pay nothing till the

bills were safe; and therefore with the assistance of Mr. Forrest of

the Bank, he did remit the price of Dandy to his friend Sowerby in

London.

And Lucy Robarts--we must now say a word of her. We have seen how, on

that occasion, when the world was at her feet, she had sent her noble

suitor away, not only dismissed, but so dismissed that he might be

taught never again to offer to her the sweet incense of his vows. She

had declared to him plainly that she did not love him and could not

love him, and had thus thrown away not only riches and honour and

high station, but more than that--much worse than that--she had flung

away from her the lover to whose love her warm heart clung. That her

love did cling to him, she knew even then, and owned more thoroughly

as soon as he was gone. So much her pride had done for her, and that

strong resolve that Lady Lufton should not scowl on her and tell

her that she had entrapped her son. I know it will be said of Lord

Lufton himself that, putting aside his peerage and broad acres, and

handsome, sonsy face, he was not worth a girl's care and love. That

will be said because people think that heroes in books should be so

much better than heroes got up for the world's common wear and tear.

I may as well confess that of absolute, true heroism there was only

a moderate admixture in Lord Lufton's composition; but what would

the world come to if none but absolute true heroes were to be thought

worthy of women's love? What would the men do? and what--oh! what

would become of the women? Lucy Robarts in her heart did not give her

dismissed lover credit for much more heroism than did truly appertain

to him;--did not, perhaps, give him full credit for a certain amount

of heroism which did really appertain to him; but, nevertheless, she

would have been very glad to take him could she have done so without

wounding her pride.

That girls should not marry for money we are all agreed. A lady who

can sell herself for a title or an estate, for an income or a set

of family diamonds, treats herself as a farmer treats his sheep and

oxen--makes hardly more of herself, of her own inner self, in which

are comprised a mind and soul, than the poor wretch of her own sex

who earns her bread in the lowest stage of degradation. But a title,

and an estate, and an income, are matters which will weigh in the

balance with all Eve's daughters--as they do with all Adam's sons.

Pride of place, and the power of living well in front of the world's

eye, are dear to us all;--are, doubtless, intended to be dear. Only

in acknowledging so much, let us remember that there are prices at

which these good things may be too costly. Therefore, being desirous,

too, of telling the truth in this matter, I must confess that Lucy

did speculate with some regret on what it would have been to be Lady

Lufton. To have been the wife of such a man, the owner of such a

heart, the mistress of such a destiny--what more or what better could

the world have done for her? And now she had thrown all that aside

because she would not endure that Lady Lufton should call her a

scheming, artful girl! Actuated by that fear she had repulsed him

with a falsehood, though the matter was one on which it was so

terribly expedient that she should tell the truth. And yet she was

cheerful with her brother and sister-in-law. It was when she was

quite alone, at night in her own room, or in her solitary walks,

that a single silent tear would gather in the corner of her eye and

gradually moisten her eyelids. "She never told her love," nor did

she allow concealment to "feed on her damask cheek." In all her

employments, in her ways about the house, and her accustomed quiet

mirth, she was the same as ever. In this she showed the peculiar

strength which God had given her. But not the less did she in truth

mourn for her lost love and spoiled ambition. "We are going to drive

over to Hogglestock this morning," Fanny said one day at breakfast.

"I suppose, Mark, you won't go with us?"

"Well, no; I think not. The pony carriage is wretched for three."

"Oh, as for that, I should have thought the new horse might have been

able to carry you as far as that. I heard you say you wanted to see

Mr. Crawley."

"So I do; and the new horse, as you call him, shall carry me there

to-morrow. Will you say that I'll be over about twelve o'clock?"

"You had better say earlier, as he is always out about the parish."

"Very well, say eleven. It is parish business about which I am going,

so it need not irk his conscience to stay in for me."

"Well, Lucy, we must drive ourselves, that's all. You shall be

charioteer going, and then we'll change coming back." To all which

Lucy agreed, and as soon as their work in the school was over they

started. Not a word had been spoken between them about Lord Lufton

since that evening, now more than a month ago, on which they had been

walking together in the garden. Lucy had so demeaned herself on that

occasion as to make her sister-in-law quite sure that there had been

no love passages up to that time; and nothing had since occurred

which had created any suspicion in Mrs. Robarts's mind. She had

seen at once that all the close intimacy between them was over, and

thought that everything was as it should be.

"Do you know, I have an idea," she said in the pony carriage that

day, "that Lord Lufton will marry Griselda Grantly." Lucy could

not refrain from giving a little check at the reins which she was

holding, and she felt that the blood rushed quickly to her heart. But

she did not betray herself. "Perhaps he may," she said, and then gave

the pony a little touch with her whip.

"Oh, Lucy, I won't have Puck beaten. He was going very nicely."

"I beg Puck's pardon. But you see when one is trusted with a whip one

feels such a longing to use it."

"Oh, but you should keep it still. I feel almost certain that Lady

Lufton would like such a match."

"I dare say she might. Miss Grantly will have a large fortune, I

believe."

"It is not that altogether: but she is the sort of young lady that

Lady Lufton likes. She is ladylike and very beautiful--"

"Come, Fanny!"

"I really think she is; not what I should call lovely, you know, but

very beautiful. And then she is quiet and reserved; she does not

require excitement, and I am sure is conscientious in the performance

of her duties."

"Very conscientious, I have no doubt," said Lucy, with something like

a sneer in her tone. "But the question, I suppose, is, whether Lord

Lufton likes her."

"I think he does,--in a sort of way. He did not talk to her so much

as he did to you--"

"Ah! that was all Lady Lufton's fault, because she didn't have him

properly labelled."

"There does not seem to have been much harm done?"

"Oh! by God's mercy, very little. As for me, I shall get over it in

three or four years I don't doubt--that's if I can get ass's milk and

change of air."

"We'll take you to Barchester for that. But as I was saying, I really

do think Lord Lufton likes Griselda Grantly."

"Then I really do think that he has uncommon bad taste," said Lucy,

with a reality in her voice differing much from the tone of banter

she had hitherto used.

"What, Lucy!" said her sister-in-law, looking at her. "Then I fear we

shall really want the ass's milk."

"Perhaps, considering my position, I ought to know nothing of Lord

Lufton, for you say that it is very dangerous for young ladies to

know young gentlemen. But I do know enough of him to understand that

he ought not to like such a girl as Griselda Grantly. He ought to

know that she is a mere automaton, cold, lifeless, spiritless, and

even vapid. There is, I believe, nothing in her mentally, whatever

may be her moral excellences. To me she is more absolutely like a

statue than any other human being I ever saw. To sit still and be

admired is all that she desires; and if she cannot get that, to sit

still and not be admired would almost suffice for her. I do not

worship Lady Lufton as you do; but I think quite well enough of her

to wonder that she should choose such a girl as that for her son's

wife. That she does wish it I do not doubt. But I shall indeed be

surprised if he wishes it also." And then as she finished her speech,

Lucy again flogged the pony. This she did in vexation, because she

felt that the tell-tale blood had suffused her face.

"Why, Lucy, if he were your brother you could not be more eager about

it."

"No, I could not. He is the only man friend with whom I was ever

intimate, and I cannot bear to think that he should throw himself

away. It's horridly improper to care about such a thing, I have no

doubt."

"I think we might acknowledge that if he and his mother are both

satisfied, we may be satisfied also."

"I shall not be satisfied. It's no use your looking at me, Fanny. You

will make me talk of it, and I won't tell a lie on the subject. I do

like Lord Lufton very much; and I do dislike Griselda Grantly almost

as much. Therefore I shall not be satisfied if they become man and

wife. However, I do not suppose that either of them will ask my

consent; nor is it probable that Lady Lufton will do so." And then

they went on for perhaps a quarter of a mile without speaking.

"Poor Puck!" at last Lucy said. "He shan't be whipped any more, shall

he, because Miss Grantly looks like a statue? And, Fanny, don't tell

Mark to put me into a lunatic asylum. I also know a hawk from a

heron, and that's why I don't like to see such a very unfitting

marriage." There was then nothing more said on the subject, and in

two minutes they arrived at the house of the Hogglestock clergyman.

Mrs. Crawley had brought two children with her when she came from the

Cornish curacy to Hogglestock, and two other babies had been added to

her cares since then. One of these was now ill with croup, and it was

with the object of offering to the mother some comfort and solace,

that the present visit was made. The two ladies got down from their

carriage, having obtained the services of a boy to hold Puck, and

soon found themselves in Mrs. Crawley's single sitting-room. She was

sitting there with her foot on the board of a child's cradle, rocking

it, while an infant about three months old was lying in her lap. For

the elder one, who was the sufferer, had in her illness usurped the

baby's place. Two other children, considerably older, were also in

the room. The eldest was a girl, perhaps nine years of age, and the

other a boy three years her junior. These were standing at their

father's elbow, who was studiously endeavouring to initiate them in

the early mysteries of grammar. To tell the truth Mrs. Robarts would

much have preferred that Mr. Crawley had not been there, for she had

with her and about her certain contraband articles, presents for the

children, as they were to be called, but in truth relief for that

poor, much-tasked mother, which they knew it would be impossible to

introduce in Mr. Crawley's presence. She, as we have said, was not

quite so gaunt, not altogether so haggard as in the latter of those

dreadful Cornish days. Lady Lufton and Mrs. Arabin between them, and

the scanty comfort of their improved, though still wretched, income,

had done something towards bringing her back to the world in which

she had lived in the soft days of her childhood. But even the liberal

stipend of a hundred and thirty pounds a year--liberal according

to the scale by which the incomes of clergymen in some of our new

districts are now apportioned--would not admit of a gentleman with

his wife and four children living with the ordinary comforts of

an artisan's family. As regards the mere eating and drinking,

the amounts of butcher's meat and tea and butter, they of course

were used in quantities which any artisan would have regarded as

compatible only with demi-starvation. Better clothing for her

children was necessary, and better clothing for him. As for her own

raiment, the wives of few artisans would have been content to put up

with Mrs. Crawley's best gown. The stuff of which it was made had

been paid for by her mother when she with much difficulty bestowed

upon her daughter her modest wedding \_trousseau\_.

Lucy had never seen Mrs. Crawley. These visits to Hogglestock were

not frequent, and had generally been made by Lady Lufton and Mrs.

Robarts together. It was known that they were distasteful to Mr.

Crawley, who felt a savage satisfaction in being left to himself.

It may almost be said of him that he felt angry with those who

relieved him, and he had certainly never as yet forgiven the Dean

of Barchester for paying his debts. The dean had also given him his

present living; and consequently his old friend was not now so dear

to him as when in old days he would come down to that farm-house,

almost as penniless as the curate himself. Then they would walk

together for hours along the rock-bound shore, listening to the

waves, discussing deep polemical mysteries, sometimes with hot fury,

then again with tender, loving charity, but always with a mutual

acknowledgement of each other's truth. Now they lived comparatively

near together, but no opportunities arose for such discussions. At

any rate once a quarter Mr. Crawley was pressed by his old friend to

visit him at the deanery, and Dr. Arabin had promised that no one

else should be in the house if Mr. Crawley objected to society. But

this was not what he wanted. The finery and grandeur of the deanery,

and the comfort of that warm, snug library, would silence him at

once. Why did not Dr. Arabin come out there to Hogglestock, and tramp

with him through the dirty lanes as they used to tramp? Then he could

have enjoyed himself; then he could have talked; then old days would

have come back to them. But now!--"Arabin always rides on a sleek,

fine horse, nowadays," he once said to his wife with a sneer. His

poverty had been so terrible to himself that it was not in his heart

to love a rich friend.

CHAPTER XXII

Hogglestock Parsonage

At the end of the last chapter, we left Lucy Robarts waiting for an

introduction to Mrs. Crawley, who was sitting with one baby in her

lap while she was rocking another who lay in a cradle at her feet.

Mr. Crawley, in the meanwhile, had risen from his seat with his

finger between the leaves of an old grammar out of which he had been

teaching his two elder children. The whole Crawley family was thus

before them when Mrs. Robarts and Lucy entered the sitting-room.

"This is my sister-in-law, Lucy," said Mrs. Robarts. "Pray don't move

now, Mrs. Crawley; or if you do, let me take baby." And she put out

her arms and took the infant into them, making him quite at home

there; for she had work of this kind of her own, at home, which she

by no means neglected, though the attendance of nurses was more

plentiful with her than at Hogglestock. Mrs. Crawley did get up, and

told Lucy that she was glad to see her, and Mr. Crawley came forward,

grammar in hand, looking humble and meek. Could we have looked into

the innermost spirit of him and his life's partner, we should have

seen that mixed with the pride of his poverty there was some feeling

of disgrace that he was poor, but that with her, regarding this

matter, there was neither pride nor shame. The realities of life had

become so stern to her that the outward aspects of them were as

nothing. She would have liked a new gown because it would have been

useful; but it would have been nothing to her if all the county knew

that the one in which she went to church had been turned three times.

It galled him, however, to think that he and his were so poorly

dressed. "I am afraid you can hardly find a chair, Miss Robarts,"

said Mr. Crawley.

"Oh, yes, there is nothing here but this young gentleman's library,"

said Lucy, moving a pile of ragged, coverless books on to the table.

"I hope he'll forgive me for moving them."

"They are not Bob's,--at least, not the most of them,--but mine,"

said the girl.

"But some of them are mine," said the boy; "ain't they, Grace?"

"And are you a great scholar?" asked Lucy, drawing the child to her.

"I don't know," said Grace, with a sheepish face. "I am in Greek

Delectus and the irregular verbs."

"Greek Delectus and the irregular verbs!" And Lucy put up her hands

with astonishment.

"And she knows an ode of Horace all by heart," said Bob.

"An ode of Horace!" said Lucy, still holding the young shamefaced

female prodigy close to her knees.

"It is all that I can give them," said Mr. Crawley, apologetically.

"A little scholarship is the only fortune that has come in my way,

and I endeavour to share that with my children."

"I believe men say that it is the best fortune any of us can have,"

said Lucy, thinking, however, in her own mind, that Horace and the

irregular Greek verbs savoured too much of precocious forcing in a

young lady of nine years old. But, nevertheless, Grace was a pretty,

simple-looking girl, and clung to her ally closely, and seemed to

like being fondled. So that Lucy anxiously wished that Mr. Crawley

could be got rid of and the presents produced.

"I hope you have left Mr. Robarts quite well," said Mr. Crawley, with

a stiff, ceremonial voice, differing very much from that in which he

had so energetically addressed his brother clergyman when they were

alone together in the study at Framley. "He is quite well, thank you.

I suppose you have heard of his good fortune?"

"Yes; I have heard of it," said Mr. Crawley, gravely. "I hope that

his promotion may tend in every way to his advantage here and

hereafter." It seemed, however, to be manifest from the manner in

which he expressed his kind wishes, that his hopes and expectations

did not go hand-in-hand together.

"By the by, he desired us to say that he will call here to-morrow; at

about eleven, didn't he say, Fanny?"

"Yes; he wishes to see you about some parish business, I think," said

Mrs. Robarts, looking up for a moment from the anxious discussion in

which she was already engaged with Mrs. Crawley on nursery matters.

"Pray tell him," said Mr. Crawley, "that I shall be happy to see him;

though, perhaps, now that new duties have been thrown upon him, it

will be better that I should visit him at Framley."

"His new duties do not disturb him much as yet," said Lucy. "And his

riding over here will be no trouble to him."

"Yes; there he has the advantage over me. I unfortunately have no

horse." And then Lucy began petting the little boy, and by degrees

slipped a small bag of gingerbread-nuts out of her muff into his

hands. She had not the patience necessary for waiting, as had her

sister-in-law. The boy took the bag, peeped into it, and then looked

up into her face.

"What is that, Bob?" said Mr. Crawley.

"Gingerbread," faltered Bobby, feeling that a sin had been committed,

though, probably, feeling also that he himself could hardly as yet be

accounted as deeply guilty.

"Miss Robarts," said the father, "we are very much obliged to you;

but our children are hardly used to such things."

"I am a lady with a weak mind, Mr. Crawley, and always carry things

of this sort about with me when I go to visit children; so you must

forgive me, and allow your little boy to accept them."

"Oh, certainly. Bob, my child, give the bag to your mamma, and she

will let you and Grace have them, one at a time." And then the bag in

a solemn manner was carried over to their mother, who, taking it from

her son's hands, laid it high on a bookshelf.

"And not one now?" said Lucy Robarts, very piteously. "Don't be so

hard, Mr. Crawley,--not upon them, but upon me. May I not learn

whether they are good of their kind?"

"I am sure they are very good; but I think their mamma will prefer

their being put by for the present." This was very discouraging to

Lucy. If one small bag of gingerbread-nuts created so great a

difficulty, how was she to dispose of the pot of guava jelly and box

of bonbons, which were still in her muff; or how distribute the

packet of oranges with which the pony carriage was laden? And there

was jelly for the sick child, and chicken broth, which was, indeed,

another jelly; and, to tell the truth openly, there was also a joint

of fresh pork and a basket of eggs from the Framley parsonage

farmyard, which Mrs. Robarts was to introduce, should she find

herself capable of doing so; but which would certainly be cast out

with utter scorn by Mr. Crawley, if tendered in his immediate

presence. There had also been a suggestion as to adding two or three

bottles of port: but the courage of the ladies had failed them on

that head, and the wine was not now added to their difficulties. Lucy

found it very difficult to keep up a conversation with Mr.

Crawley--the more so, as Mrs. Robarts and Mrs. Crawley presently

withdrew into a bedroom, taking the two younger children with them.

"How unlucky," thought Lucy, "that she has not got my muff with her!"

But the muff lay in her lap, ponderous with its rich enclosures.

"I suppose you will live in Barchester for a portion of the year

now," said Mr. Crawley.

"I really do not know as yet; Mark talks of taking lodgings for his

first month's residence."

"But he will have the house, will he not?"

"Oh, yes; I suppose so."

"I fear he will find it interfere with his own parish--with his

general utility there: the schools, for instance."

"Mark thinks that, as he is so near, he need not be much absent from

Framley, even during his residence. And then Lady Lufton is so good

about the schools."

"Ah! yes: but Lady Lufton is not a clergyman, Miss Robarts." It was

on Lucy's tongue to say that her ladyship was pretty nearly as bad,

but she stopped herself. At this moment Providence sent great relief

to Miss Robarts in the shape of Mrs. Crawley's red-armed

maid-of-all-work, who, walking up to her master, whispered into his

ear that he was wanted. It was the time of day at which his

attendance was always required in his parish school; and that

attendance being so punctually given, those who wanted him looked for

him there at this hour, and if he were absent, did not scruple to

send for him. "Miss Robarts, I am afraid you must excuse me," said

he, getting up and taking his hat and stick. Lucy begged that she

might not be at all in the way, and already began to speculate how

she might best unload her treasures. "Will you make my compliments to

Mrs. Robarts, and say that I am sorry to miss the pleasure of wishing

her good-bye? But I shall probably see her as she passes the

school-house." And then, stick in hand, he walked forth, and Lucy

fancied that Bobby's eyes immediately rested on the bag of

gingerbread-nuts.

"Bob," said she, almost in a whisper, "do you like sugar-plums?"

"Very much, indeed," said Bob, with exceeding gravity, and with his

eye upon the window to see whether his father had passed.

"Then come here," said Lucy. But as she spoke the door again opened,

and Mr. Crawley reappeared. "I have left a book behind me," he said;

and coming back through the room, he took up the well-worn Prayer

Book which accompanied him in all his wanderings through the parish.

Bobby, when he saw his father, had retreated a few steps back, as

also did Grace, who, to confess the truth, had been attracted by the

sound of sugar-plums, in spite of the irregular verbs. And Lucy

withdrew her hand from her muff, and looked guilty. Was she not

deceiving the good man--nay, teaching his own children to deceive

him? But there are men made of such stuff that an angel could hardly

live with them without some deceit. "Papa's gone now," whispered

Bobby; "I saw him turn round the corner." He, at any rate, had

learned his lesson--as it was natural that he should do. Some one

else, also, had learned that papa was gone; for while Bob and Grace

were still counting the big lumps of sugar-candy, each employed the

while for inward solace with an inch of barley-sugar, the front-door

opened, and a big basket, and a bundle done up in a kitchen-cloth,

made surreptitious entrance into the house, and were quickly unpacked

by Mrs. Robarts herself on the table in Mrs. Crawley's bedroom.

"I did venture to bring them," said Fanny, with a look of shame, "for

I know how a sick child occupies the whole house."

"Ah! my friend," said Mrs. Crawley, taking hold of Mrs. Robarts's arm

and looking into her face, "that sort of shame is over with me. God

has tried us with want, and for my children's sake I am glad of such

relief."

"But will he be angry?"

"I will manage it. Dear Mrs. Robarts, you must not be surprised at

him. His lot is sometimes very hard to bear; such things are so much

worse for a man than for a woman." Fanny was not quite prepared to

admit this in her own heart, but she made no reply on that head. "I

am sure I hope we may be able to be of use to you," she said, "if you

will only look upon me as an old friend, and write to me if you want

me. I hesitate to come frequently for fear that I should offend him."

And then, by degrees, there was confidence between them, and the

poverty-stricken helpmate of the perpetual curate was able to speak

of the weight of her burden to the well-to-do young wife of the

Barchester prebendary. "It was hard," the former said, "to feel

herself so different from the wives of other clergymen around her--to

know that they lived softly, while she, with all the work of her

hands, and unceasing struggle of her energies, could hardly manage to

place wholesome food before her husband and children. It was a

terrible thing--a grievous thing to think of, that all the work of

her mind should be given up to such subjects as these. But,

nevertheless, she could bear it," she said, "as long as he would

carry himself like a man, and face his lot boldly before the world."

And then she told how he had been better there at Hogglestock than in

their former residence down in Cornwall, and in warm language she

expressed her thanks to the friend who had done so much for them.

"Mrs. Arabin told me that she was so anxious you should go to them,"

said Mrs. Robarts.

"Ah, yes; but that, I fear, is impossible. The children, you know,

Mrs. Robarts."

"I would take care of two of them for you."

"Oh, no; I could not punish you for your goodness in that way. But he

would not go. He could go and leave me at home. Sometimes I have

thought that it might be so, and I have done all in my power to

persuade him. I have told him that if he could mix once more with the

world, with the clerical world, you know, that he would be better

fitted for the performance of his own duties. But he answers me

angrily, that it is impossible--that his coat is not fit for the

dean's table," and Mrs. Crawley almost blushed as she spoke of such a

reason.

"What! with an old friend like Dr. Arabin? Surely that must be

nonsense."

"I know that it is. The dean would be glad to see him with any coat.

But the fact is that he cannot bear to enter the house of a rich man

unless his duty calls him there."

"But surely that is a mistake?"

"It is a mistake. But what can I do? I fear that he regards the rich

as his enemies. He is pining for the solace of some friend to whom he

could talk--for some equal, with a mind educated like his own, to

whose thoughts he could listen, and to whom he could speak his own

thoughts. But such a friend must be equal, not only in mind, but in

purse; and where can he ever find such a man as that?"

"But you may get better preferment."

"Ah, no; and if he did, we are hardly fit for it now. If I could

think that I could educate my children; if I could only do something

for my poor Grace--" In answer to this Mrs. Robarts said a word or

two, but not much. She resolved, however, that if she could get her

husband's leave, something should be done for Grace. Would it not be

a good work? and was it not incumbent on her to make some kindly use

of all the goods with which Providence had blessed herself? And then

they went back to the sitting-room, each again with a young child in

her arms, Mrs. Crawley having stowed away in the kitchen the chicken

broth and the leg of pork and the supply of eggs. Lucy had been

engaged the while with the children, and when the two married ladies

entered, they found that a shop had been opened at which all manner

of luxuries were being readily sold and purchased at marvellously

easy prices; the guava jelly was there, and the oranges, and the

sugar-plums, red and yellow and striped; and, moreover, the

gingerbread had been taken down in the audacity of their commercial

speculations, and the nuts were spread out upon a board, behind which

Lucy stood as shop-girl, disposing of them for kisses. "Mamma,

mamma," said Bobby, running up to his mother, "you must buy something

of her," and he pointed with his fingers at the shop-girl. "You must

give her two kisses for that heap of barley-sugar." Looking at

Bobby's mouth at the time, one would have said that his kisses might

be dispensed with.

When they were again in the pony carriage behind the impatient Puck,

and were well away from the door, Fanny was the first to speak. "How

very different those two are," she said; "different in their minds

and in their spirit!"

"But how much higher toned is her mind than his! How weak he is in

many things, and how strong she is in everything! How false is his

pride, and how false his shame!"

"But we must remember what he has to bear. It is not every one that

can endure such a life as his without false pride and false shame."

"But she has neither," said Lucy.

"Because you have one hero in a family, does that give you a right to

expect another?" said Mrs. Robarts. "Of all my own acquaintance, Mrs.

Crawley, I think, comes nearest to heroism." And then they passed by

the Hogglestock school, and Mr. Crawley, when he heard the noise of

the wheels, came out. "You have been very kind," said he, "to remain

so long with my poor wife."

"We had a great many things to talk about, after you went."

"It is very kind of you, for she does not often see a friend,

nowadays. Will you have the goodness to tell Mr. Robarts that I shall

be here at the school, at eleven o'clock to-morrow?" And then he

bowed, taking off his hat to them, and they drove on.

"If he really does care about her comfort, I shall not think so badly

of him," said Lucy.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Triumph of the Giants

And now about the end of April news arrived almost simultaneously

in all quarters of the habitable globe that was terrible in its

import to one of the chief persons of our history;--some may think

to the chief person in it. All high parliamentary people will

doubtless so think, and the wives and daughters of such. The Titans

warring against the gods had been for awhile successful. Typhoeus

and Mimas, Porphyrion and Rhoecus, the giant brood of old,

steeped in ignorance and wedded to corruption, had scaled the

heights of Olympus, assisted by that audacious flinger of deadly

ponderous missiles, who stands ever ready armed with his terrific

sling--Supplehouse, the Enceladus of the press. And in this universal

cataclasm of the starry councils, what could a poor Diana do, Diana

of the Petty Bag, but abandon her pride of place to some rude Orion?

In other words, the ministry had been compelled to resign, and with

them Mr. Harold Smith. "And so poor Harold is out, before he has well

tasted the sweets of office," said Sowerby, writing to his friend the

parson; "and as far as I know, the only piece of Church patronage

which has fallen in the way of the ministry since he joined it, has

made its way down to Framley--to my great joy and contentment." But

it hardly tended to Mark's joy and contentment on the same subject

that he should be so often reminded of the benefit conferred upon

him.

Terrible was this break-down of the ministry, and especially to

Harold Smith, who to the last had had confidence in that theory of

new blood. He could hardly believe that a large majority of the House

should vote against a Government which he had only just joined. "If

we are to go on in this way," he said to his young friend Green

Walker, "the Queen's Government cannot be carried on." That alleged

difficulty as to carrying on the Queen's Government has been

frequently mooted in late years since a certain great man first

introduced the idea. Nevertheless, the Queen's Government is carried

on, and the propensity and aptitude of men for this work seems to be

not at all on the decrease. If we have but few young statesmen, it is

because the old stagers are so fond of the rattle of their harness.

"I really do not see how the Queen's Government is to be carried on,"

said Harold Smith to Green Walker, standing in a corner of one of the

lobbies of the House of Commons on the first of those days of awful

interest, in which the Queen was sending for one crack statesman

after another; and some anxious men were beginning to doubt whether

or no we should, in truth, be able to obtain the blessing of another

Cabinet. The gods had all vanished from their places. Would the

giants be good enough to do anything for us or no? There were men who

seemed to think that the giants would refuse to do anything for us.

"The House will now be adjourned over till Monday, and I would not be

in Her Majesty's shoes for something," said Mr. Harold Smith.

"By Jove! no," said Green Walker, who in these days was a staunch

Harold Smithian, having felt a pride in joining himself on as a

substantial support to a Cabinet minister. Had he contented himself

with being merely a Brockite, he would have counted as nobody. "By

Jove! no," and Green Walker opened his eyes and shook his head, as

he thought of the perilous condition in which Her Majesty must be

placed. "I happen to know that Lord ---- won't join them unless he

has the Foreign Office," and he mentioned some hundred-handed Gyas

supposed to be of the utmost importance to the counsels of the

Titans.

"And that, of course, is impossible. I don't see what on earth

they are to do. There's Sidonia; they do say that he's making some

difficulty now." Now Sidonia was another giant, supposed to be very

powerful.

"We all know that the Queen won't see him," said Green Walker, who,

being a member of Parliament for the Crewe Junction, and nephew to

Lady Hartletop, of course had perfectly correct means of ascertaining

what the Queen would do, and what she would not.

"The fact is," said Harold Smith, recurring again to his own

situation as an ejected god, "that the House does not in the least

understand what it is about;--doesn't know what it wants. The

question I should like to ask them is this: do they intend that the

Queen shall have a Government, or do they not? Are they prepared to

support such men as Sidonia and Lord De Terrier? If so, I am their

obedient humble servant; but I shall be very much surprised, that's

all." Lord De Terrier was at this time recognized by all men as the

leader of the giants.

"And so shall I, deucedly surprised. They can't do it, you know.

There are the Manchester men. I ought to know something about them

down in my country; and I say they can't support Lord De Terrier. It

wouldn't be natural."

"Natural! Human nature has come to an end, I think," said Harold

Smith, who could hardly understand that the world should conspire to

throw over a Government which he had joined, and that, too, before

the world had waited to see how much he would do for it; "the fact

is this, Walker, we have no longer among us any strong feeling of

party."

"No, not a d----," said Green Walker, who was very energetic in his

present political aspirations.

"And till we can recover that, we shall never be able to have a

Government firm-seated and sure-handed. Nobody can count on men

from one week to another. The very members who in one month place a

minister in power, are the very first to vote against him in the

next."

"We must put a stop to that sort of thing, otherwise we shall never

do any good."

"I don't mean to deny that Brock was wrong with reference to Lord

Brittleback. I think that he was wrong, and I said so all through.

But, heavens on earth--!" and instead of completing his speech Harold

Smith turned away his head, and struck his hands together in token of

his astonishment at the fatuity of the age. What he probably meant to

express was this: that if such a good deed as that late appointment

made at the Petty Bag Office were not held sufficient to atone for

that other evil deed to which he had alluded, there would be an end

of all justice in sublunary matters. Was no offence to be forgiven,

even when so great virtue had been displayed? "I attribute it all to

Supplehouse," said Green Walker, trying to console his friend.

"Yes," said Harold Smith, now verging on the bounds of parliamentary

eloquence, although he still spoke with bated breath, and to one

solitary hearer. "Yes; we are becoming the slaves of a mercenary and

irresponsible press--of one single newspaper. There is a man endowed

with no great talent, enjoying no public confidence, untrusted as a

politician, and unheard of even as a writer by the world at large,

and yet, because he is on the staff of the \_Jupiter\_, he is able to

overturn the Government and throw the whole country into dismay. It

is astonishing to me that a man like Lord Brock should allow himself

to be so timid." And nevertheless it was not yet a month since Harold

Smith had been counselling with Supplehouse how a series of strong

articles in the \_Jupiter\_, together with the expected support of the

Manchester men, might probably be effective in hurling the minister

from his seat. But at that time the minister had not revigorated

himself with young blood. "How the Queen's Government is to be

carried on, that is the question now," Harold Smith repeated. A

difficulty which had not caused him much dismay at that period, about

a mouth since, to which we have alluded. At this moment Sowerby and

Supplehouse together joined them, having come out of the House,

in which some unimportant business had been completed after the

minister's notice of adjournment.

"Well, Harold," said Sowerby, "what do you say to your governor's

statement?"

"I have nothing to say to it," said Harold Smith, looking up very

solemnly from under the penthouse of his hat, and, perhaps, rather

savagely. Sowerby had supported the Government at the late crisis;

but why was he now seen herding with such a one as Supplehouse?

"He did it pretty well, I think," said Sowerby.

"Very well, indeed," said Supplehouse; "as he always does those sort

of things. No man makes so good an explanation of circumstances, or

comes out with so telling a personal statement. He ought to keep

himself in reserve for those sort of things."

"And who in the meantime is to carry on the Queen's Government?" said

Harold Smith, looking very stern.

"That should be left to men of lesser mark," said he of the

\_Jupiter\_. "The points as to which one really listens to a minister,

the subjects about which men really care, are always personal. How

many of us are truly interested as to the best mode of governing

India? But in a question touching the character of a prime minister

we all muster together like bees round a sounding cymbal."

"That arises from envy, malice, and all uncharitableness," said

Harold Smith.

"Yes; and from picking and stealing, evil speaking, lying, and

slandering," said Mr. Sowerby.

"We are so prone to desire and covet other men's places," said

Supplehouse.

"Some men are so," said Sowerby; "but it is the evil speaking, lying,

and slandering, which does the mischief. Is it not, Harold?"

"And in the meantime how is the Queen's Government to be carried on?"

said Mr. Green Walker. On the following morning it was known that

Lord De Terrier was with the Queen at Buckingham Palace, and at about

twelve a list of the new ministry was published, which must have

been in the highest degree satisfactory to the whole brood of giants.

Every son of Tellus was included in it, as were also very many of

the daughters. But then, late in the afternoon, Lord Brock was again

summoned to the palace, and it was thought in the West End among the

clubs that the gods had again a chance. "If only," said the \_Purist\_,

an evening paper which was supposed to be very much in the interest

of Mr. Harold Smith, "if only Lord Brock can have the wisdom to place

the right men in the right places. It was only the other day that he

introduced Mr. Smith into his Government. That this was a step in

the right direction every one has acknowledged, though unfortunately

it was made too late to prevent the disturbance which has since

occurred. It now appears probable that his lordship will again have

an opportunity of selecting a list of statesmen with the view of

carrying on the Queen's Government; and it is to be hoped that such

men as Mr. Smith may be placed in situations in which their talents,

industry, and acknowledged official aptitudes, may be of permanent

service to the country." Supplehouse, when he read this at the club

with Mr. Sowerby at his elbow, declared that the style was too well

marked to leave any doubt as to the author; but we ourselves are not

inclined to think that Mr. Harold Smith wrote the article himself,

although it may be probable that he saw it in type. But the \_Jupiter\_

the next morning settled the whole question, and made it known to the

world that, in spite of all the sendings and resendings, Lord Brock

and the gods were permanently out, and Lord De Terrier and the

giants permanently in. That fractious giant who would only go to

the Foreign Office, had, in fact, gone to some sphere of much less

important duty, and Sidonia, in spite of the whispered dislike of

an illustrious personage, opened the campaign with all the full

appanages of a giant of the highest standing. "We hope," said the

\_Jupiter\_, "that Lord Brock may not yet be too old to take a lesson.

If so, the present decision of the House of Commons, and we may say

of the country also, may teach him not to put his trust in such

princes as Lord Brittleback, or such broken reeds as Mr. Harold

Smith." Now this parting blow we always thought to be exceedingly

unkind, and altogether unnecessary, on the part of Mr. Supplehouse.

"My dear," said Mrs. Harold, when she first met Miss Dunstable

after the catastrophe was known, "how am I possibly to endure this

degradation?" And she put her deeply laced handkerchief up to her

eyes.

"Christian resignation," suggested Miss Dunstable.

"Fiddlestick!" said Mrs. Harold Smith. "You millionaires always talk

of Christian resignation, because you never are called on to resign

anything. If I had any Christian resignation, I shouldn't have cared

for such pomps and vanities. Think of it, my dear; a Cabinet

minister's wife for only three weeks!"

"How does poor Mr. Smith endure it?"

"What? Harold? He only lives on the hope of vengeance. When he has

put an end to Mr. Supplehouse, he will be content to die." And then

there were further explanations in both Houses of Parliament, which

were altogether satisfactory. The high-bred, courteous giants assured

the gods that they had piled Pelion on Ossa and thus climbed up into

power, very much in opposition to their own good-wills; for they, the

giants themselves, preferred the sweets of dignified retirement. But

the voice of the people had been too strong for them; the effort had

been made, not by themselves, but by others, who were determined that

the giants should be at the head of affairs. Indeed, the spirit of

the times was so clearly in favour of giants that there had been no

alternative. So said Briareus to the Lords, and Orion to the Commons.

And then the gods were absolutely happy in ceding their places; and

so far were they from any uncelestial envy or malice which might not

be divine, that they promised to give the giants all the assistance

in their power in carrying on the work of government; upon which the

giants declared how deeply indebted they would be for such valuable

counsel and friendly assistance. All this was delightful in the

extreme; but not the less did ordinary men seem to expect that the

usual battle would go on in the old customary way. It is easy to love

one's enemy when one is making fine speeches; but so difficult to do

so in the actual everyday work of life. But there was and always has

been this peculiar good point about the giants, that they are never

too proud to follow in the footsteps of the gods. If the gods,

deliberating painfully together, have elaborated any skilful project,

the giants are always willing to adopt it as their own, not treating

the bantling as a foster child, but praising it and pushing it so

that men should regard it as the undoubted offspring of their own

brains. Now just at this time there had been a plan much thought

of for increasing the number of the bishops. Good active bishops

were very desirable, and there was a strong feeling among certain

excellent Churchmen that there could hardly be too many of them.

Lord Brock had his measure cut and dry. There should be a Bishop of

Westminster to share the Herculean toils of the metropolitan prelate,

and another up in the North to Christianize the mining interests and

wash white the blackamoors of Newcastle: Bishop of Beverley he should

be called. But, in opposition to this, the giants, it was known, had

intended to put forth the whole measure of their brute force. More

curates, they said, were wanting, and district incumbents; not more

bishops rolling in carriages. That bishops should roll in carriages

was very good; but of such blessings the English world for the

present had enough. And therefore Lord Brock and the gods had had

much fear as to their little project. But now, immediately on the

accession of the giants, it was known that the bishop bill was to be

gone on with immediately. Some small changes would be effected so

that the bill should be gigantic rather than divine; but the result

would be altogether the same. It must, however, be admitted that

bishops appointed by ourselves may be very good things, whereas those

appointed by our adversaries will be anything but good. And, no

doubt, this feeling went a long way with the giants. Be that as it

may, the new bishop bill was to be their first work of government,

and it was to be brought forward and carried, and the new prelates

selected and put into their chairs all at once,--before the grouse

should begin to crow and put an end to the doings of gods as well as

giants. Among other minor effects arising from this decision was the

following, that Archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly returned to London, and

again took the lodgings in which they had before been staying. On

various occasions also during the first week of this second sojourn,

Dr. Grantly might be seen entering the official chambers of the First

Lord of the Treasury. Much counsel was necessary among High-Churchmen

of great repute before any fixed resolution could wisely be made in

such a matter as this; and few Churchmen stood in higher repute than

the Archdeacon of Barchester. And then it began to be rumoured in

the world that the minister had disposed at any rate of the see

of Westminster. This present time was a very nervous one for Mrs.

Grantly. What might be the aspirations of the archdeacon himself,

we will not stop to inquire. It may be that time and experience had

taught him the futility of earthly honours, and made him content

with the comfortable opulence of his Barsetshire rectory. But there

is no theory of Church discipline which makes it necessary that

a clergyman's wife should have an objection to a bishopric. The

archdeacon probably was only anxious to give a disinterested aid to

the minister, but Mrs. Grantly did long to sit in high places, and

be at any rate equal to Mrs. Proudie. It was for her children, she

said to herself, that she was thus anxious--that they should have a

good position before the world, and the means of making the best of

themselves. "One is able to do nothing, you know, shut up there, down

at Plumstead," she had remarked to Lady Lufton on the occasion of

her first visit to London, and yet the time was not long past when

she had thought that rectory house at Plumstead to be by no means

insufficient or contemptible. And then there came a question whether

or no Griselda should go back to her mother; but this idea was very

strongly opposed by Lady Lufton, and ultimately with success. "I

really think the dear girl is very happy with me," said Lady Lufton;

"and if ever she is to belong to me more closely, it will be so well

that we should know and love one another."

To tell the truth, Lady Lufton had been trying hard to know and love

Griselda, but hitherto she had scarcely succeeded to the full extent

of her wishes. That she loved Griselda was certain,--with that sort

of love which springs from a person's volition and not from the

judgement. She had said all along to herself and others that she did

love Griselda Grantly. She had admired the young lady's face, liked

her manner, approved of her fortune and family, and had selected her

for a daughter-in-law in a somewhat impetuous manner. Therefore she

loved her. But it was by no means clear to Lady Lufton that she did

as yet know her young friend. The match was a plan of her own, and

therefore she stuck to it as warmly as ever, but she began to have

some misgivings whether or no the dear girl would be to her herself

all that she had dreamed of in a daughter-in-law. "But, dear Lady

Lufton," said Mrs. Grantly, "is it not possible that we may put her

affections to too severe a test? What, if she should learn to regard

him, and then--"

"Ah! if she did, I should have no fear of the result. If she showed

anything like love for Ludovic, he would be at her feet in a moment.

He is impulsive, but she is not."

"Exactly, Lady Lufton. It is his privilege to be impulsive and to

sue for her affection, and hers to have her love sought for without

making any demonstration. It is perhaps the fault of young ladies of

the present day that they are too impulsive. They assume privileges

which are not their own, and thus lose those which are."

"Quite true! I quite agree with you. It is probably that very feeling

that has made me think so highly of Griselda. But then--" But then a

young lady, though she need not jump down a gentleman's throat, or

throw herself into his face, may give some signs that she is made of

flesh and blood; especially when her papa and mamma and all belonging

to her are so anxious to make the path of her love run smooth. That

was what was passing through Lady Lufton's mind; but she did not say

it all; she merely looked it.

"I don't think she will ever allow herself to indulge in an

unauthorized passion," said Mrs. Grantly.

"I am sure she will not," said Lady Lufton, with ready agreement,

fearing perhaps in her heart that Griselda would never indulge in any

passion, authorized or unauthorized.

"I don't know whether Lord Lufton sees much of her now," said Mrs.

Grantly, thinking perhaps of that promise of Lady Lufton's with

reference to his lordship's spare time.

"Just lately, during these changes, you know, everybody has been so

much engaged. Ludovic has been constantly at the House, and then men

find it so necessary to be at their clubs just now."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Mrs. Grantly, who was not at all disposed

to think little of the importance of the present crisis, or to wonder

that men should congregate together when such deeds were to be done

as those which now occupied the breasts of the Queen's advisers.

At last, however, the two mothers perfectly understood each other.

Griselda was still to remain with Lady Lufton; and was to accept her

ladyship's son, if he could only be induced to exercise his privilege

of asking her; but in the meantime, as this seemed to be doubtful,

Griselda was not to be debarred from her privilege of making what use

she could of any other string which she might have to her bow.

"But, mamma," said Griselda, in a moment of unwatched intercourse

between the mother and daughter, "is it really true that they are

going to make papa a bishop?"

"We can tell nothing as yet, my dear. People in the world are talking

about it. Your papa has been a good deal with Lord De Terrier."

"And isn't he Prime Minister?"

"Oh, yes; I am happy to say that he is."

"I thought the Prime Minister could make any one a bishop that he

chooses,--any clergyman, that is."

"But there is no see vacant," said Mrs. Grantly.

"Then there isn't any chance," said Griselda, looking very glum.

"They are going to have an Act of Parliament for making two more

bishops. That's what they are talking about at least. And if they

do--"

"Papa will be Bishop of Westminster--won't he? And we shall live in

London?"

"But you must not talk about it, my dear."

"No, I won't. But, mamma, a Bishop of Westminster will be higher

than a Bishop of Barchester; won't he? I shall so like to be able

to snub those Miss Proudies." It will therefore be seen that there

were matters on which even Griselda Grantly could be animated. Like

the rest of her family she was devoted to the Church. Late on that

afternoon the archdeacon returned home to dine in Mount Street,

having spent the whole of the day between the Treasury chambers, a

meeting of Convocation, and his club. And when he did get home it

was soon manifest to his wife that he was not laden with good news.

"It is almost incredible," he said, standing with his back to the

drawing-room fire.

"What is incredible?" said his wife, sharing her husband's anxiety to

the full.

"If I had not learned it as fact, I would not have believed it, even

of Lord Brock," said the archdeacon.

"Learned what?" said the anxious wife.

"After all, they are going to oppose the bill."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Grantly.

"But they are."

"The bill for the two new bishops, archdeacon? oppose their own

bill!"

"Yes--oppose their own bill. It is almost incredible; but so it is.

Some changes have been forced upon us; little things which they had

forgotten--quite minor matters; and they now say that they will

be obliged to divide against us on these twopenny-halfpenny,

hair-splitting points. It is Lord Brock's own doing too, after

all that he said about abstaining from factious opposition to the

Government."

"I believe there is nothing too bad or too false for that man," said

Mrs. Grantly.

"After all they said, too, when they were in power themselves, as to

the present Government opposing the cause of religion! They declare

now that Lord De Terrier cannot be very anxious about it, as he had

so many good reasons against it a few weeks ago. Is it not dreadful

that there should be such double-dealing in men in such positions?"

"It is sickening," said Mrs. Grantly. And then there was a pause

between them as each thought of the injury that was done to them.

"But, archdeacon--"

"Well?"

"Could you not give up those small points and shame them into

compliance?"

"Nothing would shame them."

"But would it not be well to try?" The game was so good a one, and

the stake so important, that Mrs. Grantly felt that it would be worth

playing for to the last.

"It is no good."

"But I certainly would suggest it to Lord De Terrier. I am sure the

country would go along with him; at any rate the Church would."

"It is impossible," said the archdeacon. "To tell the truth, it did

occur to me. But some of them down there seemed to think that it

would not do." Mrs. Grantly sat awhile on the sofa, still meditating

in her mind whether there might not yet be some escape from so

terrible a downfall.

"But, archdeacon--"

"I'll go upstairs and dress," said he, in despondency.

"But, archdeacon, surely the present ministry may have a majority on

such a subject as that; I thought they were sure of a majority now."

"No; not sure."

"But at any rate the chances are in their favour? I do hope they'll

do their duty, and exert themselves to keep their members together."

And then the archdeacon told out the whole of the truth.

"Lord De Terrier says that under the present circumstances he will

not bring the matter forward this session at all. So we had better

go back to Plumstead." Mrs. Grantly then felt that there was nothing

further to be said, and it will be proper that the historian should

drop a veil over their sufferings.

CHAPTER XXIV

Magna Est Veritas

It was made known to the reader that in the early part of the winter

Mr. Sowerby had a scheme for retrieving his lost fortunes, and

setting himself right in the world, by marrying that rich heiress,

Miss Dunstable. I fear my friend Sowerby does not, at present, stand

high in the estimation of those who have come on with me thus far in

this narrative. He has been described as a spendthrift and gambler,

and as one scarcely honest in his extravagance and gambling. But

nevertheless there are worse men than Mr. Sowerby, and I am not

prepared to say that, should he be successful with Miss Dunstable,

that lady would choose by any means the worst of the suitors who are

continually throwing themselves at her feet. Reckless as this man

always appeared to be, reckless as he absolutely was, there was still

within his heart a desire for better things, and in his mind an

understanding that he had hitherto missed the career of an honest

English gentleman. He was proud of his position as member for his

county, though hitherto he had done so little to grace it; he was

proud of his domain at Chaldicotes, though the possession of it

had so nearly passed out of his own hands; he was proud of the old

blood that flowed in his veins; and he was proud also of that easy,

comfortable, gay manner, which went so far in the world's judgement

to atone for his extravagance and evil practices. If only he could

get another chance, as he now said to himself, things should go very

differently with him. He would utterly forswear the whole company of

Tozers. He would cease to deal in bills, and to pay Heaven only knows

how many hundred per cent. for his moneys. He would no longer prey

upon his friends, and would redeem his title-deeds from the clutches

of the Duke of Omnium. If only he could get another chance! Miss

Dunstable's fortune would do all this and ever so much more, and

then, moreover, Miss Dunstable was a woman whom he really liked. She

was not soft, feminine, or pretty, nor was she very young; but she

was clever, self-possessed, and quite able to hold her own in any

class; and as to age, Mr. Sowerby was not very young himself. In

making such a match he would have no cause of shame. He could speak

of it before his friends without fear of their grimaces, and ask

them to his house, with the full assurance that the head of his

table would not disgrace him. And then as the scheme grew clearer

and clearer to him, he declared to himself that if he should

be successful, he would use her well, and not rob her of her

money--beyond what was absolutely necessary. He had intended to have

laid his fortunes at her feet at Chaldicotes; but the lady had been

coy. Then the deed was to have been done at Gatherum Castle, but the

lady ran away from Gatherum Castle just at the time on which he had

fixed. And since that, one circumstance after another had postponed

the affair in London, till now at last he was resolved that he would

know his fate, let it be what it might. If he could not contrive that

things should speedily be arranged, it might come to pass that he

would be altogether debarred from presenting himself to the lady

as Mr. Sowerby of Chaldicotes. Tidings had reached him, through Mr.

Fothergill, that the duke would be glad to have matters arranged; and

Mr. Sowerby well knew the meaning of that message.

Mr. Sowerby was not fighting this campaign alone, without the aid of

an ally. Indeed, no man ever had a more trusty ally in any campaign

than he had in this. And it was this ally, the only faithful comrade

that clung to him through good and ill during his whole life, who

first put it into his head that Miss Dunstable was a woman and might

be married. "A hundred needy adventurers have attempted it, and

failed already," Mr. Sowerby had said, when the plan was first

proposed to him.

"But, nevertheless, she will some day marry some one; and why not you

as well as another?" his sister had answered. For Mrs. Harold Smith

was the ally of whom I have spoken. Mrs. Harold Smith, whatever may

have been her faults, could boast of this virtue--that she loved

her brother. He was probably the only human being that she did love.

Children she had none; and as for her husband, it had never occurred

to her to love him. She had married him for a position; and being a

clever woman, with a good digestion and command of her temper, had

managed to get through the world without much of that unhappiness

which usually follows ill-assorted marriages. At home she managed to

keep the upper hand, but she did so in an easy, good-humoured way

that made her rule bearable; and away from home she assisted her

lord's political standing, though she laughed more keenly than

any one else at his foibles. But the lord of her heart was her

brother; and in all his scrapes, all his extravagances, and all his

recklessness, she had ever been willing to assist him. With the view

of doing this she had sought the intimacy of Miss Dunstable, and

for the last year past had indulged every caprice of that lady. Or

rather, she had had the wit to learn that Miss Dunstable was to

be won, not by the indulgence of caprices, but by free and easy

intercourse, with a dash of fun, and, at any rate, a semblance of

honesty. Mrs. Harold Smith was not, perhaps, herself very honest by

disposition; but in these latter days she had taken up a theory of

honesty for the sake of Miss Dunstable--not altogether in vain, for

Miss Dunstable and Mrs. Harold Smith were certainly very intimate.

"If I am to do it at all, I must not wait any longer," said Mr.

Sowerby to his sister a day or two after the final breakdown of the

gods. The affection of the sister for the brother may be imagined

from the fact that at such a time she could give up her mind to

such a subject. But, in truth, her husband's position as a Cabinet

minister was as nothing to her compared with her brother's position

as a county gentleman. "One time is as good as another," said Mrs.

Harold Smith.

"You mean that you would advise me to ask her at once."

"Certainly. But you must remember, Nat, that you will have no easy

task. It will not do for you to kneel down and swear that you love

her."

"If I do it at all, I shall certainly do it without kneeling--you may

be sure of that, Harriet."

"Yes, and without swearing that you love her. There is only one way

in which you can be successful with Miss Dunstable--you must tell her

the truth."

"What! tell her that I am ruined, horse, foot, and dragoons, and then

bid her help me out of the mire?"

"Exactly: that will be your only chance, strange as it may appear."

"This is very different from what you used to say, down at

Chaldicotes."

"So it is; but I know her much better than I did when we were there.

Since then I have done but little else than study the freaks of her

character. If she really likes you--and I think she does--she could

forgive you any other crime but that of swearing that you loved her."

"I should hardly know how to propose without saying something about

it."

"But you must say nothing--not a word; you must tell her that you are

a gentleman of good blood and high station, but sadly out at elbows."

"She knows that already."

"Of course she does; but she must know it as coming directly from

your own mouth. And then tell her that you propose to set yourself

right by marrying her--by marrying her for the sake of her money."

"That will hardly win her, I should say."

"If it does not, no other way, that I know of, will do so. As I told

you before, it will be no easy task. Of course you must make her

understand that her happiness shall be cared for; but that must not

be put prominently forward as your object. Your first object is her

money, and your only chance for success is in telling the truth."

"It is very seldom that a man finds himself in such a position as

that," said Sowerby, walking up and down his sister's room; "and,

upon my word, I don't think I am up to the task. I should certainly

break down. I don't believe there's a man in London could go to a

woman with such a story as that, and then ask her to marry him."

"If you cannot, you may as well give it up," said Mrs. Harold

Smith. "But if you can do it--if you can go through with it in that

manner--my own opinion is that your chance of success would not be

bad. The fact is," added the sister after awhile, during which her

brother was continuing his walk and meditating on the difficulties

of his position--"the fact is, you men never understand a woman; you

give her credit neither for her strength, nor for her weakness. You

are too bold, and too timid: you think she is a fool and tell her so,

and yet never can trust her to do a kind action. Why should she not

marry you with the intention of doing you a good turn? Alter all, she

would lose very little: there is the estate, and if she redeemed it,

it would belong to her as well as to you."

"It would be a good turn, indeed. I fear I should be too modest to

put it to her in that way."

"Her position would be much better as your wife than it is at

present. You are good-humoured and good-tempered, you would intend to

treat her well, and, on the whole, she would be much happier as Mrs.

Sowerby, of Chaldicotes, than she can be in her present position."

"If she cared about being married, I suppose she could be a peer's

wife to-morrow."

"But I don't think she cares about being a peer's wife. A needy peer

might perhaps win her in the way that I propose to you; but then

a needy peer would not know how to set about it. Needy peers have

tried--half a dozen I have no doubt--and have failed, because they

have pretended that they were in love with her. It may be difficult,

but your only chance is to tell her the truth."

"And where shall I do it?"

"Here if you choose; but her own house will be better."

"But I never can see her there--at least not alone. I believe that

she never is alone. She always keeps a lot of people round her in

order to stave off her lovers. Upon my word, Harriet, I think I'll

give it up. It is impossible that I should make such a declaration to

her as that you propose."

"Faint heart, Nat--you know the rest."

"But the poet never alluded to such wooing as that you have

suggested. I suppose I had better begin with a schedule of my debts,

and make reference, if she doubts me, to Fothergill, the sheriff's

officers, and the Tozer family."

"She will not doubt you, on that head; nor will she be a bit

surprised." Then there was again a pause, during which Mr. Sowerby

still walked up and down the room, thinking whether or no he might

possibly have any chance of success in so hazardous an enterprise.

"I tell you what, Harriet," at last he said; "I wish you'd do it for

me."

"Well," said she, "if you really mean it, I will make the attempt."

"I am sure of this, that I shall never make it myself. I positively

should not have the courage to tell her in so many words, that I

wanted to marry her for her money."

"Well, Nat, I will attempt it. At any rate, I am not afraid of her.

She and I are excellent friends, and, to tell the truth, I think I

like her better than any other woman that I know; but I never should

have been intimate with her, had it not been for your sake."

"And now you will have to quarrel with her, also for my sake?"

"Not at all. You'll find that whether she accedes to my proposition

or not, we shall continue friends. I do not think that she would die

for me--nor I for her. But as the world goes we suit each other.

Such a little trifle as this will not break our loves." And so it

was settled. On the following day Mrs. Harold Smith was to find an

opportunity of explaining the whole matter to Miss Dunstable, and

was to ask that lady to share her fortune--some incredible number of

thousands of pounds--with the bankrupt member for West Barsetshire,

who in return was to bestow on her--himself and his debts. Mrs.

Harold Smith had spoken no more than the truth in saying that she

and Miss Dunstable suited one another. And she had not improperly

described their friendship. They were not prepared to die, one for

the sake of the other. They had said nothing to each other of mutual

love and affection. They never kissed, or cried, or made speeches,

when they met or when they parted. There was no great benefit for

which either had to be grateful to the other; no terrible injury

which either had forgiven. But they suited each other; and this, I

take it, is the secret of most of our pleasantest intercourse in the

world. And it was almost grievous that they should suit each other,

for Miss Dunstable was much the worthier of the two, had she but

known it herself. It was almost to be lamented that she should have

found herself able to live with Mrs. Harold Smith on terms that were

perfectly satisfactory to herself. Mrs. Harold Smith was worldly,

heartless--to all the world but her brother--and, as has been above

hinted, almost dishonest. Miss Dunstable was not worldly, though it

was possible that her present style of life might make her so; she

was affectionate, fond of truth, and prone to honesty, if those

around would but allow her to exercise it. But she was fond of ease

and humour, sometimes of wit that might almost be called broad, and

she had a thorough love of ridiculing the world's humbugs. In all

these propensities Mrs. Harold Smith indulged her.

Under these circumstances they were now together almost every day.

It had become quite a habit with Mrs. Harold Smith to have herself

driven early in the forenoon to Miss Dunstable's house; and that

lady, though she could never be found alone by Mr. Sowerby, was

habitually so found by his sister. And after that they would go out

together, or each separately, as fancy or the business of the day

might direct them. Each was easy to the other in this alliance, and

they so managed that they never trod on each other's corns. On the

day following the agreement made between Mr. Sowerby and Mrs. Harold

Smith, that lady as usual called on Miss Dunstable, and soon found

herself alone with her friend in a small room which the heiress kept

solely for her own purposes. On special occasions persons of various

sorts were there admitted; occasionally a parson who had a church to

build, or a dowager laden with the last morsel of town slander, or

a poor author who could not get due payment for the efforts of his

brain, or a poor governess on whose feeble stamina the weight of

the world had borne too hardly. But men who by possibility could be

lovers did not make their way thither, nor women who could be bores.

In these latter days, that is, during the present London season, the

doors of it had been oftener opened to Mrs. Harold Smith than to any

other person. And now the effort was to be made with the object of

which all this intimacy had been effected. As she came thither in her

carriage, Mrs. Harold Smith herself was not altogether devoid of that

sinking of the heart which is so frequently the forerunner of any

difficult and hazardous undertaking. She had declared that she would

feel no fear in making the little proposition. But she did feel

something very like it: and when she made her entrance into the

little room she certainly wished that the work was done and over.

"How is poor Mr. Smith to-day?" asked Miss Dunstable, with an air of

mock condolence, as her friend seated herself in her accustomed easy

chair. The downfall of the gods was as yet a history hardly three

days old, and it might well be supposed that the late lord of the

Petty Bag had hardly recovered from his misfortune. "Well, he is

better, I think, this morning; at least I should judge so from the

manner in which he confronted his eggs. But still I don't like the

way he handles the carving-knife. I am sure he is always thinking of

Mr. Supplehouse at those moments."

"Poor man! I mean Supplehouse. After all, why shouldn't he follow his

trade as well as another? Live and let live, that's what I say."

"Aye, but it's kill and let kill with him. That is what Horace says.

However, I am tired of all that now, and I came here to-day to talk

about something else."

"I rather like Mr. Supplehouse myself," exclaimed Miss Dunstable. "He

never makes any bones about the matter. He has a certain work to do,

and a certain cause to serve--namely, his own; and in order to do

that work, and serve that cause, he uses such weapons as God has

placed in his hands."

"That's what the wild beasts do."

"And where will you find men honester than they? The tiger tears you

up because he is hungry and wants to eat you. That's what Supplehouse

does. But there are so many among us tearing up one another without

any excuse of hunger. The mere pleasure of destroying is reason

enough."

"Well, my dear, my mission to you to-day is certainly not one of

destruction, as you will admit when you hear it. It is one, rather,

very absolutely of salvation. I have come to make love to you."

"Then the salvation, I suppose, is not for myself," said Miss

Dunstable. It was quite clear to Mrs. Harold Smith that Miss

Dunstable had immediately understood the whole purport of this visit,

and that she was not in any great measure surprised. It did not seem

from the tone of the heiress's voice, or from the serious look which

at once settled on her face, that she would be prepared to give a

very ready compliance. But then great objects can only be won with

great efforts.

"That's as may be," said Mrs. Harold Smith. "For you and another

also, I hope. But I trust, at any rate, that I may not offend you?"

"Oh, laws, no; nothing of that kind ever offends me now."

"Well, I suppose you're used to it."

"Like the eels, my dear. I don't mind it the least in the world--only

sometimes, you know, it is a little tedious."

"I'll endeavour to avoid that, so I may as well break the ice at

once. You know enough of Nathaniel's affairs to be aware that he is

not a very rich man."

"Since you do ask me about it, I suppose there's no harm in saying

that I believe him to be a very poor man."

"Not the least harm in the world, but just the reverse. Whatever may

come of this, my wish is that the truth should be told scrupulously

on all sides; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"\_Magna est veritas\_," said Miss Dunstable. "The Bishop of Barchester

taught me as much Latin as that at Chaldicotes; and he did add some

more, but there was a long word, and I forgot it."

"The bishop was quite right, my dear, I'm sure. But if you go to your

Latin, I'm lost. As we were just now saying, my brother's pecuniary

affairs are in a very bad state. He has a beautiful property of

his own, which has been in the family for I can't say how many

centuries--long before the Conquest, I know."

"I wonder what my ancestors were then?"

"It does not much signify to any of us," said Mrs. Harold Smith, with

a moral shake of her head, "what our ancestors were; but it's a sad

thing to see an old property go to ruin."

"Yes, indeed; we none of us like to see our property going to ruin,

whether it be old or new. I have some of that sort of feeling

already, although mine was only made the other day out of an

apothecary's shop."

"God forbid that I should ever help you to ruin it," said Mrs. Harold

Smith. "I should be sorry to be the means of your losing a ten-pound

note."

"\_Magna est veritas\_, as the dear bishop said," exclaimed Miss

Dunstable. "Let us have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but

the truth, as we agreed just now." Mrs. Harold Smith did begin to

find that the task before her was difficult. There was a hardness

about Miss Dunstable when matters of business were concerned on

which it seemed almost impossible to make any impression. It was not

that she had evinced any determination to refuse the tender of Mr.

Sowerby's hand; but she was so painfully resolute not to have dust

thrown in her eyes! Mrs. Harold Smith had commenced with a mind fixed

upon avoiding what she called humbug; but this sort of humbug had

become so prominent a part of her usual rhetoric, that she found it

very hard to abandon it. "And that's what I wish," said she. "Of

course my chief object is to secure my brother's happiness."

"That's very unkind to poor Mr. Harold Smith."

"Well, well, well--you know what I mean."

"Yes, I think I do know what you mean. Your brother is a gentleman of

good family, but of no means."

"Not quite so bad as that."

"Of embarrassed means, then, or anything that you will; whereas I am

a lady of no family, but of sufficient wealth. You think that if you

brought us together and made a match of it, it would be a very good

thing for--for whom?" said Miss Dunstable.

"Yes, exactly," said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"For which of us? Remember the bishop now and his nice little bit of

Latin."

"For Nathaniel then," said Mrs. Harold Smith, boldly. "It would be a

very good thing for him." And a slight smile came across her face as

she said it. "Now that's honest, or the mischief is in it."

"Yes, that's honest enough. And did he send you here to tell me

this?"

"Well, he did that, and something else."

"And now let's have the something else. The really important part, I

have no doubt, has been spoken."

"No, by no means, by no means all of it. But you are so hard on one,

my dear, with your running after honesty, that one is not able to

tell the real facts as they are. You make one speak in such a bald,

naked way."

"Ah, you think that anything naked must be indecent; even truth."

"I think it is more proper-looking, and better suited, too, for the

world's work, when it goes about with some sort of a garment on

it. We are so used to a leaven of falsehood in all we hear and say,

nowadays, that nothing is more likely to deceive us than the absolute

truth. If a shopkeeper told me that his wares were simply middling,

of course, I should think that they were not worth a farthing. But

all that has nothing to do with my poor brother. Well, what was I

saying?"

"You were going to tell me how well he would use me, no doubt."

"Something of that kind."

"That he wouldn't beat me; or spend all my money if I managed to have

it tied up out of his power; or look down on me with contempt because

my father was an apothecary! Was not that what you were going to

say?"

"I was going to tell you that you might be more happy as Mrs. Sowerby

of Chaldicotes than you can be as Miss Dunstable--"

"Of Mount Lebanon. And had Mr. Sowerby no other message to

send?--nothing about love, or anything of that sort? I should like,

you know, to understand what his feelings are before I take such a

leap."

"I do believe he has as true a regard for you as any man of his age

ever does have--"

"For any woman of mine. That is not putting it in a very devoted

way certainly; but I am glad to see that you remember the bishop's

maxim."

"What would you have me say? If I told you that he was dying for

love, you would say, I was trying to cheat you; and now because I

don't tell you so, you say that he is wanting in devotion. I must say

you are hard to please."

"Perhaps I am, and very unreasonable into the bargain. I ought to ask

no questions of the kind when your brother proposes to do me so much

honour. As for my expecting the love of a man who condescends to wish

to be my husband, that, of course, would be monstrous. What right can

I have to think that any man should love me? It ought to be enough

for me to know that as I am rich, I can get a husband. What business

can such as I have to inquire whether the gentleman who would so

honour me really would like my company, or would only deign to put up

with my presence in his household?"

"Now, my dear Miss Dunstable--"

"Of course I am not such an ass as to expect that any gentleman

should love me; and I feel that I ought to be obliged to your brother

for sparing me the string of complimentary declarations which are

usual on such occasions. He, at any rate, is not tedious--or rather

you on his behalf; for no doubt his own time is so occupied with his

parliamentary duties that he cannot attend to this little matter

himself. I do feel grateful to him; and perhaps nothing more will be

necessary than to give him a schedule of the property, and name an

early day for putting him in possession." Mrs. Smith did feel that

she was rather badly used. This Miss Dunstable, in their mutual

confidences, had so often ridiculed the love-making grimaces of

her mercenary suitors--had spoken so fiercely against those who

had persecuted her, not because they had desired her money, but on

account of their ill-judgement in thinking her to be a fool--that

Mrs. Smith had a right to expect that the method she had adopted for

opening the negotiation would be taken in a better spirit. Could it

be possible, after all, thought Mrs. Smith to herself, that Miss

Dunstable was like other women, and that she did like to have men

kneeling at her feet? Could it be the case that she had advised her

brother badly, and that it would have been better for him to have

gone about his work in the old-fashioned way? "They are very hard to

manage," said Mrs. Harold Smith to herself, thinking of her own sex.

"He was coming here himself," said she, "but I advised him not to do

so."

"That was so kind of you."

"I thought that I could explain to you more openly and more freely,

what his intentions really are."

"Oh! I have no doubt that they are honourable," said Miss Dunstable.

"He does not want to deceive me in that way, I am quite sure." It was

impossible to help laughing, and Mrs. Harold Smith did laugh. "Upon

my word you would provoke a saint," said she.

"I am not likely to get into any such company by the alliance that

you are now suggesting to me. There are not many saints usually at

Chaldicotes, I believe;--always excepting my dear bishop and his

wife."

"But, my dear, what am I to say to Nathaniel?"

"Tell him, of course, how much obliged to him I am."

"Do listen to me one moment. I dare say that I have done wrong to

speak to you in such a bold, unromantic way."

"Not at all. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

That's what we agreed upon. But one's first efforts in any line are

always apt to be a little uncouth."

"I will send Nathaniel to you himself."

"No, do not do so. Why torment either him or me? I do like

your brother; in a certain way I like him much. But no earthly

consideration would induce me to marry him. Is it not so glaringly

plain that he would marry me for my money only, that you have not

even dared to suggest any other reason?"

"Of course it would have been nonsense to say that he had no regard

whatever towards your money."

"Of course it would--absolute nonsense. He is a poor man with a good

position, and he wants to marry me because I have got that which

he wants. But, my dear, I do not want that which he has got, and

therefore the bargain would not be a fair one."

"But he would do his very best to make you happy."

"I am so much obliged to him; but you see, I am very happy as I am.

What should I gain?"

"A companion whom you confess that you like."

"Ah! but I don't know that I should like too much even of such a

companion as your brother. No, my dear--it won't do. Believe me when

I tell you, once for all, that it won't do."

"Do you mean, then, Miss Dunstable, that you'll never marry?"

"To-morrow--if I met any one that I fancied, and he would have me.

But I rather think that any that I may fancy won't have me. In the

first place, if I marry any one, the man must be quite indifferent

to money."

"Then you'll not find him in this world, my dear."

"Very possibly not," said Miss Dunstable. All that was further said

upon the subject need not be here repeated. Mrs. Harold Smith did not

give up her cause quite at once, although Miss Dunstable had spoken

so plainly. She tried to explain how eligible would be her friend's

situation as mistress of Chaldicotes, when Chaldicotes should owe

no penny to any man; and went so far as to hint that the master of

Chaldicotes, if relieved of his embarrassments and known as a rich

man, might in all probability be found worthy of a peerage when

the gods should return to Olympus. Mr. Harold Smith, as a Cabinet

minister, would, of course, do his best. But it was all of no use.

"It's not my destiny," said Miss Dunstable, "and therefore do not

press it any longer."

"But we shall not quarrel," said Mrs. Harold Smith, almost tenderly.

"Oh, no--why should we quarrel?"

"And you won't look glum at my brother?"

"Why should I look glum at him? But, Mrs. Smith, I'll do more than

not looking glum at him. I do like you, and I do like your brother,

and if I can in any moderate way assist him in his difficulties, let

him tell me so." Soon after this, Mrs. Harold Smith went her way.

Of course, she declared in a very strong manner that her brother

could not think of accepting from Miss Dunstable any such pecuniary

assistance as that offered--and, to give her her due, such was the

feeling of her mind at the moment; but as she went to meet her

brother and gave him an account of this interview, it did occur to

her that possibly Miss Dunstable might be a better creditor than the

Duke of Omnium for the Chaldicotes property.

CHAPTER XXV

Non-Impulsive

It cannot be held as astonishing, that that last decision on the

part of the giants in the matter of the two bishoprics should

have disgusted Archdeacon Grantly. He was a politician, but not a

politician as they were. As is the case with all exoteric men, his

political eyes saw a short way only, and his political aspirations

were as limited. When his friends came into office, that bishop bill,

which as the original product of his enemies had been regarded by

him as being so pernicious--for was it not about to be made law in

order that other Proudies and such like might be hoisted up into

high places and large incomes, to the terrible detriment of the

Church?--that bishop bill, I say, in the hands of his friends, had

appeared to him to be a means of almost national salvation. And then,

how great had been the good fortune of the giants in this matter! Had

they been the originators of such a measure they would not have had

a chance of success; but now--now that the two bishops were falling

into their mouths out of the weak hands of the gods, was not their

success ensured? So Dr. Grantly had girded up his loins and marched

up to the fight, almost regretting that the triumph would be so easy.

The subsequent failure was very trying to his temper as a party man.

It always strikes me that the supporters of the Titans are in this

respect much to be pitied. The giants themselves, those who are

actually handling Pelion and breaking their shins over the lower

rocks of Ossa, are always advancing in some sort towards the councils

of Olympus. Their highest policy is to snatch some ray from heaven.

Why else put Pelion on Ossa, unless it be that a furtive hand, making

its way through Jove's windows, may pluck forth a thunderbolt or two,

or some article less destructive, but of manufacture equally divine?

And in this consists the wisdom of the higher giants--that, in spite

of their mundane antecedents, theories, and predilections, they can

see that articles of divine manufacture are necessary. But then they

never carry their supporters with them. Their whole army is an army

of martyrs. "For twenty years I have stuck to them, and see how

they have treated me!" Is not that always the plaint of an old

giant-slave? "I have been true to my party all my life, and where am

I now?" he says. Where, indeed, my friend? Looking about you, you

begin to learn that you cannot describe your whereabouts. I do not

marvel at that. No one finds himself planted at last in so terribly

foul a morass, as he would fain stand still for ever on dry ground.

Dr. Grantly was disgusted; and although he was himself too true and

thorough in all his feelings, to be able to say aloud that any giant

was wrong, still he had a sad feeling within his heart that the world

was sinking from under him. He was still sufficiently exoteric to

think that a good stand-up fight in a good cause was a good thing.

No doubt he did wish to be Bishop of Westminster, and was anxious to

compass that preferment by any means that might appear to him to be

fair. And why not? But this was not the end of his aspirations. He

wished that the giants might prevail in everything, in bishoprics as

in all other matters; and he could not understand that they should

give way on the very first appearance of a skirmish. In his open talk

he was loud against many a god; but in his heart of hearts he was

bitter enough against both Porphyrion and Orion.

"My dear doctor, it would not do;--not in this session; it would not

indeed." So had spoken to him a half-fledged but especially esoteric

young monster-cub at the Treasury, who considered himself as up to

all the dodges of his party, and regarded the army of martyrs who

supported it as a rather heavy, but very useful collection of fogies.

Dr. Grantly had not cared to discuss the matter with the half-fledged

monster-cub. The best licked of all the monsters, the giant most like

a god of them all, had said a word or two to him; and he also had

said a word or two to that giant. Porphyrion had told him that the

bishop bill would not do; and he, in return, speaking with warm face,

and blood in his cheeks, had told Porphyrion that he saw no reason

why the bill should not do. The courteous giant had smiled as he

shook his ponderous head, and then the archdeacon had left him,

unconsciously shaking some dust from his shoes, as he paced the

passages of the Treasury chambers for the last time. As he walked

back to his lodgings in Mount Street, many thoughts, not altogether

bad in their nature, passed through his mind. Why should he trouble

himself about a bishopric? Was he not well as he was, in his rectory

down at Plumstead? Might it not be ill for him at his age to

transplant himself into new soil, to engage in new duties, and live

among new people? Was he not useful at Barchester, and respected

also; and might it not be possible, that up there at Westminster, he

might be regarded merely as a tool with which other men could work?

He had not quite liked the tone of that specially esoteric young

monster-cub, who had clearly regarded him as a distinguished fogy

from the army of martyrs. He would take his wife back to Barsetshire,

and there live contented with the good things which Providence had

given him.

Those high political grapes had become sour, my sneering friends will

say. Well? Is it not a good thing that grapes should become sour

which hang out of reach? Is he not wise who can regard all grapes as

sour which are manifestly too high for his hand? Those grapes of the

Treasury bench, for which gods and giants fight, suffering so much

when they are forced to abstain from eating, and so much more when

they do eat,--those grapes are very sour to me. I am sure that they

are indigestible, and that those who eat them undergo all the ills

which the Revallenta Arabica is prepared to cure. And so it was now

with the archdeacon. He thought of the strain which would have been

put on his conscience had he come up there to sit in London as Bishop

of Westminster; and in this frame of mind he walked home to his

wife. During the first few moments of his interview with her all his

regrets had come back upon him. Indeed, it would have hardly suited

for him then to have preached this new doctrine of rural contentment.

The wife of his bosom, whom he so fully trusted--had so fully

loved--wished for grapes that hung high upon the wall, and he knew

that it was past his power to teach her at the moment to drop her

ambition. Any teaching that he might effect in that way, must come

by degrees. But before many minutes were over he had told her of

her fate and of his own decision. "So we had better go back to

Plumstead," he said; and she had not dissented.

"I am sorry for poor Griselda's sake," Mrs. Grantly had remarked

later in the evening, when they were again together.

"But I thought she was to remain with Lady Lufton?"

"Well; so she will, for a little time. There is no one with whom I

would so soon trust her out of my own care as with Lady Lufton. She

is all that one can desire."

"Exactly; and as far as Griselda is concerned, I cannot say that I

think she is to be pitied."

"Not to be pitied, perhaps," said Mrs. Grantly. "But, you see,

archdeacon, Lady Lufton, of course, has her own views."

"Her own views?"

"It is hardly any secret that she is very anxious to make a match

between Lord Lufton and Griselda. And though that might be a very

proper arrangement if it were fixed--"

"Lord Lufton marry Griselda!" said the archdeacon, speaking quick and

raising his eyebrows. His mind had as yet been troubled by but few

thoughts respecting his child's future establishment. "I had never

dreamt of such a thing."

"But other people have done more than dream of it, archdeacon. As

regards the match itself, it would, I think, be unobjectionable. Lord

Lufton will not be a very rich man, but his property is respectable,

and as far as I can learn his character is on the whole good. If they

like each other, I should be contented with such a marriage. But, I

must own, I am not quite satisfied at the idea of leaving her all

alone with Lady Lufton. People will look on it as a settled thing,

when it is not settled--and very probably may not be settled; and

that will do the poor girl harm. She is very much admired; there can

be no doubt of that; and Lord Dumbello--"

The archdeacon opened his eyes still wider. He had had no idea that

such a choice of sons-in-law was being prepared for him; and, to

tell the truth, was almost bewildered by the height of his wife's

ambition. Lord Lufton, with his barony and twenty thousand a year,

might be accepted as just good enough; but failing him there was an

embryo marquis, whose fortune would be more than ten times as great,

all ready to accept his child! And then he thought, as husbands

sometimes will think, of Susan Harding as she was when he had gone

a-courting to her under the elms before the house in the warden's

garden at Barchester, and of dear old Mr. Harding, his wife's father,

who still lived in humble lodgings in that city; and as he thought,

he wondered at and admired the greatness of that lady's mind. "I

never can forgive Lord De Terrier," said the lady, connecting various

points together in her own mind.

"That's nonsense," said the archdeacon. "You must forgive him."

"And I must confess that it annoys me to leave London at present."

"It can't be helped," said the archdeacon, somewhat gruffly; for he

was a man who, on certain points, chose to have his own way--and had

it.

"Oh, no: I know it can't be helped," said Mrs. Grantly, in a tone

which implied a deep injury. "I know it can't be helped. Poor

Griselda!" And then they went to bed. On the next morning Griselda

came to her, and in an interview that was strictly private, her

mother said more to her than she had ever yet spoken, as to the

prospects of her future life. Hitherto, on this subject, Mrs. Grantly

had said little or nothing. She would have been well pleased that her

daughter should have received the incense of Lord Lufton's vows--or,

perhaps, as well pleased had it been the incense of Lord Dumbello's

vows--without any interference on her part. In such case her child,

she knew, would have told her with quite sufficient eagerness, and

the matter in either case would have been arranged as a very pretty

love match. She had no fear of any impropriety or of any rashness

on Griselda's part. She had thoroughly known her daughter when she

boasted that Griselda would never indulge in an unauthorized passion.

But as matters now stood, with those two strings to her bow, and

with that Lufton-Grantly alliance treaty in existence--of which she,

Griselda herself, knew nothing--might it not be possible that the

poor child should stumble through want of adequate direction? Guided

by these thoughts, Mrs. Grantly had resolved to say a few words

before she left London. So she wrote a line to her daughter, and

Griselda reached Mount Street at two o'clock in Lady Lufton's

carriage, which, during the interview, waited for her at the

beer-shop round the corner.

"And papa won't be Bishop of Westminster?" said the young lady, when

the doings of the giants had been sufficiently explained to make her

understand that all those hopes were over.

"No, my dear; at any rate not now."

"What a shame! I thought it was all settled. What's the good, mamma,

of Lord De Terrier being Prime Minister, if he can't make whom he

likes a bishop?"

"I don't think that Lord De Terrier has behaved at all well to your

father. However, that's a long question, and we can't go into it

now."

"How glad those Proudies will be!" Griselda would have talked by the

hour on this subject had her mother allowed her, but it was necessary

that Mrs. Grantly should go to other matters. She began about Lady

Lufton, saying what a dear woman her ladyship was; and then went on

to say that Griselda was to remain in London as long as it suited her

friend and hostess to stay there with her; but added, that this might

probably not be very long, as it was notorious that Lady Lufton, when

in London, was always in a hurry to get back to Framley.

"But I don't think she is in such a hurry this year, mamma," said

Griselda, who in the month of May preferred Bruton Street to

Plumstead, and had no objection whatever to the coronet on the

panels of Lady Lufton's coach. And then Mrs. Grantly commenced her

explanation--very cautiously. "No, my dear, I dare say she is not in

such a hurry this year,--that is, as long as you remain with her."

"I am sure she is very kind."

"She is very kind, and you ought to love her very much. I know I do.

I have no friend in the world for whom I have a greater regard than

for Lady Lufton. It is that which makes me so happy to leave you with

her."

"All the same, I wish that you and papa had remained up; that is, if

they had made papa a bishop."

"It's no good thinking of that now, my dear. What I particularly

wanted to say to you was this: I think you should know what are the

ideas which Lady Lufton entertains."

"Her ideas!" said Griselda, who had never troubled herself much in

thinking about other people's thoughts.

"Yes, Griselda. While you were staying down at Framley Court, and

also, I suppose, since you have been up here in Bruton Street, you

must have seen a good deal of--Lord Lufton."

"He doesn't come very often to Bruton Street,--that is to say, not

\_very\_ often."

"H-m," ejaculated Mrs. Grantly, very gently. She would willingly have

repressed the sound altogether, but it had been too much for her. If

she found reason to think that Lady Lufton was playing her false, she

would immediately take her daughter away, break up the treaty, and

prepare for the Hartletop alliance. Such were the thoughts that ran

through her mind. But she knew all the while that Lady Lufton was not

false. The fault was not with Lady Lufton; nor, perhaps, altogether

with Lord Lufton. Mrs. Grantly had understood the full force of the

complaint which Lady Lufton had made against her daughter; and though

she had of course defended her child, and on the whole had defended

her successfully, yet she confessed to herself that Griselda's chance

of a first-rate establishment would be better if she were a little

more impulsive. A man does not wish to marry a statue, let the

statue be ever so statuesque. She could not teach her daughter to be

impulsive, any more than she could teach her to be six feet high; but

might it not be possible to teach her to seem so? The task was a very

delicate one, even for a mother's hand. "Of course he cannot be at

home now as much as he was down in the country, when he was living

in the same house," said Mrs. Grantly, whose business it was to take

Lord Lufton's part at the present moment. "He must be at his club,

and at the House of Lords, and in twenty places."

"He is very fond of going to parties, and he dances beautifully."

"I am sure he does. I have seen as much as that myself, and I think I

know some one with whom he likes to dance." And the mother gave the

daughter a loving little squeeze.

"Do you mean me, mamma?"

"Yes, I do mean you, my dear. And is it not true? Lady Lufton says

that he likes dancing with you better than with any one else in

London."

"I don't know," said Griselda, looking down upon the ground. Mrs.

Grantly thought that this upon the whole was rather a good opening.

It might have been better. Some point of interest more serious in its

nature than that of a waltz might have been found on which to connect

her daughter's sympathies with those of her future husband. But

any point of interest was better than none; and it is so difficult

to find points of interest in persons who by their nature are not

impulsive.

"Lady Lufton says so, at any rate," continued Mrs. Grantly, ever so

cautiously. "She thinks that Lord Lufton likes no partner better.

What do you think yourself, Griselda?"

"I don't know, mamma."

"But young ladies must think of such things, must they not?"

"Must they, mamma?"

"I suppose they do, don't they? The truth is, Griselda, that Lady

Lufton thinks that if-- Can you guess what it is she thinks?"

"No, mamma." But that was a fib on Griselda's part.

"She thinks that my Griselda would make the best possible wife in the

world for her son: and I think so too. I think that her son will be

a very fortunate man if he can get such a wife. And now what do you

think, Griselda?"

"I don't think anything, mamma." But that would not do. It was

absolutely necessary that she should think, and absolutely necessary

that her mother should tell her so. Such a degree of unimpulsiveness

as this would lead to--Heaven knows what results! Lufton-Grantly

treaties and Hartletop interests would be all thrown away upon a

young lady who would not think anything of a noble suitor sighing

for her smiles. Besides, it was not natural. Griselda, as her mother

knew, had never been a girl of headlong feeling; but still she had

had her likes and her dislikes. In that matter of the bishopric she

was keen enough; and no one could evince a deeper interest in the

subject of a well-made new dress than Griselda Grantly. It was not

possible that she should be indifferent as to her future prospects,

and she must know that those prospects depended mainly on her

marriage. Her mother was almost angry with her, but nevertheless she

went on very gently:

"You don't think anything! But, my darling, you must think. You must

make up your mind what would be your answer if Lord Lufton were to

propose to you. That is what Lady Lufton wishes him to do."

"But he never will, mamma."

"And if he did?"

"But I'm sure he never will. He doesn't think of such a thing at

all--and--and--"

"And what, my dear?"

"I don't know, mamma."

"Surely you can speak out to me, dearest! All I care about is your

happiness. Both Lady Lufton and I think that it would be a happy

marriage if you both cared for each other enough. She thinks that

he is fond of you. But if he were ten times Lord Lufton I would not

tease you about it if I thought that you could not learn to care

about him. What was it you were going to say, my dear?"

"Lord Lufton thinks a great deal more of Lucy Robarts than he does

of--of--of any one else, I believe," said Griselda, showing now some

little animation by her manner, "dumpy little black thing that she

is."

"Lucy Robarts!" said Mrs. Grantly, taken by surprise at finding that

her daughter was moved by such a passion as jealousy, and feeling

also perfectly assured that there could not be any possible ground

for jealousy in such a direction as that. "Lucy Robarts, my dear! I

don't suppose Lord Lufton ever thought of speaking to her, except in

the way of civility."

"Yes, he did, mamma! Don't you remember at Framley?" Mrs. Grantly

began to look back in her mind, and she thought she did remember

having once observed Lord Lufton talking in rather a confidential

manner with the parson's sister. But she was sure that there was

nothing in it. If that was the reason why Griselda was so cold to her

proposed lover, it would be a thousand pities that it should not be

removed. "Now you mention her, I do remember the young lady," said

Mrs. Grantly, "a dark girl, very low, and without much figure. She

seemed to me to keep very much in the background."

"I don't know much about that, mamma."

"As far as I saw her, she did. But, my dear Griselda, you should not

allow yourself to think of such a thing. Lord Lufton, of course, is

bound to be civil to any young lady in his mother's house, and I am

quite sure that he has no other idea whatever with regard to Miss

Robarts. I certainly cannot speak as to her intellect, for I do not

think she opened her mouth in my presence; but--"

"Oh! she has plenty to say for herself, when she pleases. She's a sly

little thing."

"But, at any rate, my dear, she has no personal attractions whatever,

and I do not at all think that Lord Lufton is a man to be taken

by--by--by anything that Miss Robarts might do or say." As those

words "personal attractions" were uttered, Griselda managed so to

turn her neck as to catch a side view of herself in one of the

mirrors on the wall, and then she bridled herself up, and made a

little play with her eyes, and looked, as her mother thought, very

well. "It is all nothing to me, mamma, of course," she said.

"Well, my dear, perhaps not. I don't say that it is. I do not wish to

put the slightest constraint upon your feelings. If I did not have

the most thorough dependence on your good sense and high principles,

I should not speak to you in this way. But as I have, I thought it

best to tell you that both Lady Lufton and I should be well pleased

if we thought that you and Lord Lufton were fond of each other."

"I am sure he never thinks of such a thing, mamma."

"And as for Lucy Robarts, pray get that idea out of your head; if not

for your sake, then for his. You should give him credit for better

taste." But it was not so easy to take anything out of Griselda's

head that she had once taken into it. "As for tastes, mamma, there

is no accounting for them," she said; and then the colloquy on that

subject was over. The result of it on Mrs. Grantly's mind was a

feeling amounting almost to a conviction in favour of the Dumbello

interest.

CHAPTER XXVI

Impulsive

I trust my readers will all remember how Puck the pony was beaten

during that drive to Hogglestock. It may be presumed that Puck

himself on that occasion did not suffer much. His skin was not so

soft as Mrs. Robarts's heart. The little beast was full of oats and

all the good things of this world, and therefore, when the whip

touched him, he would dance about and shake his little ears, and run

on at a tremendous pace for twenty yards, making his mistress think

that he had endured terrible things. But, in truth, during those

whippings Puck was not the chief sufferer. Lucy had been forced to

declare--forced by the strength of her own feelings, and by the

impossibility of assenting to the propriety of a marriage between

Lord Lufton and Miss Grantly--, she had been forced to declare that

she did care about Lord Lufton as much as though he were her brother.

She had said all this to herself--nay, much more than this--very

often. But now she had said it out loud to her sister-in-law; and she

knew that what she had said was remembered, considered, and had, to a

certain extent, become the cause of altered conduct. Fanny alluded

very seldom to the Luftons in casual conversation, and never spoke

about Lord Lufton, unless when her husband made it impossible that

she should not speak of him. Lucy had attempted on more than one

occasion to remedy this, by talking about the young lord in a

laughing and, perhaps, half-jeering way; she had been sarcastic as to

his hunting and shooting, and had boldly attempted to say a word in

joke about his love for Griselda. But she felt that she had failed;

that she had failed altogether as regarded Fanny; and that as to her

brother, she would more probably be the means of opening his eyes,

than have any effect in keeping them closed. So she gave up her

efforts and spoke no further word about Lord Lufton. Her secret had

been told, and she knew that it had been told. At this time the two

ladies were left a great deal alone together in the drawing-room at

the parsonage; more, perhaps, than had ever yet been the case since

Lucy had been there. Lady Lufton was away, and therefore the almost

daily visit to Framley Court was not made; and Mark in these days was

a great deal at Barchester, having, no doubt, very onerous duties to

perform before he could be admitted as one of that chapter. He went

into, what he was pleased to call residence, almost at once. That is,

he took his month of preaching, aiding also, in some slight and very

dignified way, in the general Sunday morning services. He did not

exactly live at Barchester, because the house was not ready. That at

least was the assumed reason. The chattels of Dr. Stanhope, the late

prebendary, had not been as yet removed, and there was likely to be

some little delay, creditors asserting their right to them. This

might have been very inconvenient to a gentleman anxiously expecting

the excellent house which the liberality of past ages had provided

for his use; but it was not so felt by Mr. Robarts. If Dr. Stanhope's

family or creditors would keep the house for the next twelve months,

he would be well pleased. And by this arrangement he was enabled to

get through his first month of absence from the church of Framley

without any notice from Lady Lufton, seeing that Lady Lufton was in

London all the time. This also was convenient, and taught our young

prebendary to look on his new preferment more favourably than he had

hitherto done.

Fanny and Lucy were thus left much alone: and as out of the full

head the mouth speaks, so is the full heart more prone to speak at

such periods of confidence as these. Lucy, when she first thought

of her own state, determined to endow herself with a powerful gift

of reticence. She would never tell her love, certainly; but neither

would she let concealment feed on her damask cheek, nor would she

ever be found for a moment sitting like Patience on a monument. She

would fight her own fight bravely within her own bosom, and conquer

her enemy altogether. She would either preach, or starve, or weary

her love into subjection, and no one should be a bit the wiser. She

would teach herself to shake hands with Lord Lufton without a quiver,

and would be prepared to like his wife amazingly--unless indeed that

wife should be Griselda Grantly. Such were her resolutions; but at

the end of the first week they were broken into shivers and scattered

to the winds. They had been sitting in the house together the whole

of one wet day; and as Mark was to dine in Barchester with the dean,

they had had dinner early, eating with the children almost in their

laps. It is so that ladies do, when their husbands leave them to

themselves. It was getting dusk towards evening, and they were still

sitting in the drawing-room, the children now having retired, when

Mrs. Robarts for the fifth time since her visit to Hogglestock began

to express her wish that she could do some good to the Crawleys,--to

Grace Crawley in particular, who, standing up there at her father's

elbow, learning Greek irregular verbs, had appeared to Mrs. Robarts

to be an especial object of pity.

"I don't know how to set about it," said Mrs. Robarts. Now any

allusion to that visit to Hogglestock always drove Lucy's mind back

to the consideration of the subject which had most occupied it at the

time. She at such moments remembered how she had beaten Puck, and how

in her half-bantering but still too serious manner she had apologized

for doing so, and had explained the reason. And therefore she could

not interest herself about Grace Crawley as vividly as she should

have done. "No; one never does," she said.

"I was thinking about it all that day as I drove home," said Fanny.

"The difficulty is this: What can we do with her?"

"Exactly," said Lucy, remembering the very point of the road at which

she had declared that she did like Lord Lufton very much.

"If we could have her here for a month or so and then send her to

school;--but I know Mr. Crawley would not allow us to pay for her

schooling."

"I don't think he would," said Lucy, with her thoughts far removed

from Mr. Crawley and his daughter Grace.

"And then we should not know what to do with her; should we?"

"No; you would not."

"It would never do to have the poor girl about the house here with no

one to teach her anything. Mark would not teach her Greek verbs, you

know."

"I suppose not."

"Lucy, you are not attending to a word I say to you, and I don't

think you have for the last hour. I don't believe you know what I am

talking about."

"Oh, yes, I do--Grace Crawley; I'll try and teach her if you like,

only I don't know anything myself."

"That's not what I mean at all, and you know I would not ask you to

take such a task as that on yourself. But I do think you might talk

it over with me."

"Might I? very well; I will. What is it? Oh, Grace Crawley--you want

to know who is to teach her the irregular Greek verbs. Oh, dear,

Fanny, my head does ache so: pray don't be angry with me." And then

Lucy, throwing herself back on the sofa, put one hand up painfully to

her forehead, and altogether gave up the battle. Mrs. Robarts was by

her side in a moment.

"Dearest Lucy, what is it makes your head ache so often now? you used

not to have those headaches."

"It's because I'm growing stupid: never mind. We will go on about

poor Grace. It would not do to have a governess, would it?"

"I can see that you are not well, Lucy," said Mrs. Robarts, with a

look of deep concern. "What is it, dearest? I can see that something

is the matter."

"Something the matter! No, there's not; nothing worth talking of.

Sometimes I think I'll go back to Devonshire and live there. I could

stay with Blanche for a time, and then get a lodging in Exeter."

"Go back to Devonshire!" and Mrs. Robarts looked as though she

thought that her sister-in-law was going mad. "Why do you want to go

away from us? This is to be your own, own home, always now."

"Is it? Then I am in a bad way. Oh dear, oh dear, what a fool I am!

What an idiot I've been! Fanny, I don't think I can stay here; and I

do so wish I'd never come. I do--I do--I do, though you look at me so

horribly," and jumping up she threw herself into her sister-in-law's

arms and began kissing her violently. "Don't pretend to be wounded,

for you know that I love you. You know that I could live with you all

my life, and think you were perfect--as you are; but--"

"Has Mark said anything?"

"Not a word,--not a ghost of a syllable. It is not Mark; oh, Fanny!"

"I am afraid I know what you mean," said Mrs. Robarts in a low

tremulous voice, and with deep sorrow painted on her face.

"Of course you do; of course you know; you have known it all along;

since that day in the pony carriage. I knew that you knew it. You do

not dare to mention his name; would not that tell me that you know

it? And I, I am hypocrite enough for Mark; but my hypocrisy won't

pass muster before you. And, now, had I not better go to Devonshire?"

"Dearest, dearest Lucy."

"Was I not right about that labelling? O heavens! what idiots we

girls are! That a dozen soft words should have bowled me over like a

ninepin, and left me without an inch of ground to call my own. And

I was so proud of my own strength; so sure that I should never be

missish, and spoony, and sentimental! I was so determined to like him

as Mark does, or you--"

"I shall not like him at all if he has spoken words to you that he

should not have spoken."

"But he has not." And then she stopped a moment to consider. "No, he

has not. He never said a word to me that would make you angry with

him if you knew of it. Except, perhaps, that he called me Lucy; and

that was my fault, not his."

"Because you talked of soft words."

"Fanny, you have no idea what an absolute fool I am, what an

unutterable ass. The soft words of which I tell you were of the kind

which he speaks to you when he asks you how the cow gets on which he

sent you from Ireland, or to Mark about Ponto's shoulder. He told me

that he knew papa, and that he was at school with Mark, and that as

he was such good friends with you here at the parsonage, he must be

good friends with me too. No; it has not been his fault. The soft

words which did the mischief were such as those. But how well his

mother understood the world! In order to have been safe, I should not

have dared to look at him."

"But, dearest Lucy--"

"I know what you are going to say, and I admit it all. He is no hero.

There is nothing on earth wonderful about him. I never heard him say

a single word of wisdom, or utter a thought that was akin to poetry.

He devotes all his energies to riding after a fox or killing poor

birds, and I never heard of his doing a single great action in my

life. And yet--" Fanny was so astounded by the way her sister-in-law

went on, that she hardly knew how to speak. "He is an excellent son,

I believe," at last she said.

"Except when he goes to Gatherum Castle. I'll tell you what he has:

he has fine straight legs, and a smooth forehead, and a good-humoured

eye, and white teeth. Was it possible to see such a catalogue of

perfections, and not fall down, stricken to the very bone? But it was

not that that did it all, Fanny. I could have stood against that. I

think I could at least. It was his title that killed me. I had never

spoken to a lord before. Oh, me! what a fool, what a beast I have

been!" And then she burst out into tears. Mrs. Robarts, to tell the

truth, could hardly understand poor Lucy's ailment. It was evident

enough that her misery was real; but yet she spoke of herself and her

sufferings with so much irony, with so near an approach to joking,

that it was very hard to tell how far she was in earnest. Lucy, too,

was so much given to a species of badinage which Mrs. Robarts did

not always quite understand, that the latter was afraid sometimes to

speak out what came uppermost to her tongue. But now that Lucy was

absolutely in tears, and was almost breathless with excitement, she

could not remain silent any longer. "Dearest Lucy, pray do not speak

in that way; it will all come right. Things always do come right when

no one has acted wrongly."

"Yes, when nobody has done wrongly. That's what papa used to call

begging the question. But I'll tell you what, Fanny; I will not be

beaten. I will either kill myself or get through it. I am so heartily

self-ashamed that I owe it to myself to fight the battle out."

"To fight what battle, dearest?"

"This battle. Here, now, at the present moment I could not meet Lord

Lufton. I should have to run like a scared fowl if he were to show

himself within the gate; and I should not dare to go out of the

house, if I knew that he was in the parish."

"I don't see that, for I am sure you have not betrayed yourself."

"Well, no; as for myself, I believe I have done the lying and the

hypocrisy pretty well. But, dearest Fanny, you don't know half; and

you cannot and must not know."

"But I thought you said there had been nothing whatever between you."

"Did I? Well, to you I have not said a word that was not true. I said

that he had spoken nothing that it was wrong for him to say. It could

not be wrong-- But never mind. I'll tell you what I mean to do. I

have been thinking of it for the last week--only I shall have to tell

Mark."

"If I were you I would tell him all."

"What, Mark! If you do, Fanny, I'll never, never, never speak to you

again. Would you--when I have given you all my heart in true sisterly

love?" Mrs. Robarts had to explain that she had not proposed to

tell anything to Mark herself, and was persuaded, moreover, to give

a solemn promise that she would not tell anything to him unless

specially authorized to do so.

"I'll go into a home, I think," continued Lucy. "You know what these

homes are?" Mrs. Robarts assured her that she knew very well, and

then Lucy went on: "A year ago I should have said that I was the last

girl in England to think of such a life, but I do believe now that it

would be the best thing for me. And then I'll starve myself, and flog

myself, and in that way I'll get back my own mind and my own soul."

"Your own soul, Lucy!" said Mrs. Robarts, in a tone of horror.

"Well, my own heart, if you like it better; but I hate to hear myself

talking about hearts. I don't care for my heart. I'd let it go--with

this young popinjay lord or any one else, so that I could read, and

talk, and walk, and sleep, and eat, without always feeling that I was

wrong here--here--here--" and she pressed her hand vehemently against

her side. "What is it that I feel, Fanny? Why am I so weak in body

that I cannot take exercise? Why cannot I keep my mind on a book for

one moment? Why can I not write two sentences together? Why should

every mouthful that I eat stick in my throat? Oh, Fanny, is it his

legs, think you, or is it his title?" Through all her sorrow--and she

was very sorrowful--Mrs. Robarts could not help smiling. And, indeed,

there was every now and then something even in Lucy's look that was

almost comic. She acted the irony so well with which she strove to

throw ridicule on herself! "Do laugh at me," she said. "Nothing

on earth will do me so much good as that; nothing, unless it be

starvation and a whip. If you would only tell me that I must be a

sneak and an idiot to care for a man because he is good-looking and

a lord!"

"But that has not been the reason. There is a great deal more in Lord

Lufton than that; and since I must speak, dear Lucy, I cannot but say

that I should not wonder at your being in love with him, only--only

that--"

"Only what? Come, out with it. Do not mince matters, or think that I

shall be angry with you because you scold me."

"Only that I should have thought that you would have been too guarded

to have--have cared for any gentleman till--till he had shown that he

cared for you."

"Guarded! Yes, that's it; that's just the word. But it's he that

should have been guarded. He should have had a fire-guard hung before

him, or a love-guard, if you will. Guarded! Was I not guarded, till

you all would drag me out? Did I want to go there? And when I was

there, did I not make a fool of myself, sitting in a corner, and

thinking how much better placed I should have been down in the

servants' hall. Lady Lufton--she dragged me out, and then cautioned

me, and then, then-- Why is Lady Lufton to have it all her own way?

Why am I to be sacrificed for her? I did not want to know Lady

Lufton, or any one belonging to her."

"I cannot think that you have any cause to blame Lady Lufton, nor,

perhaps, to blame anybody very much."

"Well, no, it has been all my own fault; though, for the life of me,

Fanny, going back and back, I cannot see where I took the first false

step. I do not know where I went wrong. One wrong thing I did, and it

is the only thing that I do not regret."

"What was that, Lucy?"

"I told him a lie."

Mrs. Robarts was altogether in the dark, and feeling that she was

so, she knew that she could not give counsel as a friend or a sister.

Lucy had begun by declaring--so Mrs. Robarts thought--that nothing

had passed between her and Lord Lufton but words of most trivial

import, and yet she now accused herself of falsehood, and declared

that that falsehood was the only thing which she did not regret!

"I hope not," said Mrs. Robarts. "If you did, you were very unlike

yourself."

"But I did, and were he here again, speaking to me in the same way, I

should repeat it. I know I should. If I did not, I should have all

the world on me. You would frown on me, and be cold. My darling

Fanny, how would you look if I really displeasured you?"

"I don't think you will do that, Lucy."

"But if I told him the truth I should, should I not? Speak now. But

no, Fanny, you need not speak. It was not the fear of you; no, nor

even of her: though Heaven knows that her terrible glumness would be

quite unendurable."

"I cannot understand you, Lucy. What truth or what untruth can you

have told him, if, as you say, there has been nothing between you but

ordinary conversation?"

Lucy then got up from the sofa, and walked twice the length of the

room before she spoke. Mrs. Robarts had all the ordinary curiosity--I

was going to say, of a woman, but I mean to say, of humanity; and she

had, moreover, all the love of a sister. She was both curious and

anxious, and remained sitting where she was, silent, and with her

eyes fixed on her companion. "Did I say so?" Lucy said at last. "No,

Fanny, you have mistaken me--I did not say that. Ah, yes, about the

cow and the dog. All that was true. I was telling you of what his

soft words had been while I was becoming such a fool. Since that he

has said more."

"What more has he said, Lucy?"

"I yearn to tell you, if only I can trust you;" and Lucy knelt down

at the feet of Mrs. Robarts, looking up into her face and smiling

through the remaining drops of her tears. "I would fain tell you,

but I do not know you yet--whether you are quite true. I could be

true--true against all the world, if my friend told me. I will

tell you, Fanny, if you say that you can be true. But if you doubt

yourself, if you must whisper all to Mark--then let us be silent."

There was something almost awful in this to Mrs. Robarts. Hitherto,

since their marriage, hardly a thought had passed through her mind

which she had not shared with her husband. But now all this had come

upon her so suddenly, that she was unable to think whether it would

be well that she should become the depositary of such a secret--not

to be mentioned to Lucy's brother, not to be mentioned to her own

husband. But who ever yet was offered a secret and declined it? Who

at least ever declined a love secret? What sister could do so? Mrs.

Robarts, therefore, gave the promise, smoothing Lucy's hair as she

did so, and kissing her forehead and looking into her eyes, which,

like a rainbow, were the brighter for her tears. "And what has he

said to you, Lucy?"

"What? Only this, that he asked me to be his wife."

"Lord Lufton proposed to you?"

"Yes; proposed to me. It is not credible, is it? You cannot bring

yourself to believe that such a thing happened, can you?" And Lucy

rose again to her feet, as the idea of the scorn with which she

felt that others would treat her--with which she herself treated

herself--made the blood rise to her cheek. "And yet it is not a

dream--I think that it is not a dream. I think that he really did."

"Think, Lucy!"

"Well, I may say that I am sure."

"A gentleman would not make you a formal proposal, and leave you in

doubt as to what he meant."

"Oh dear, no. There was no doubt at all of that kind--none in the

least. Mr. Smith, in asking Miss Jones to do him the honour of

becoming Mrs. Smith, never spoke more plainly. I was alluding to the

possibility of having dreamt it all."

"Lucy!"

"Well, it was not a dream. Here, standing here, on this very spot--on

that flower of the carpet--he begged me a dozen times to be his wife.

I wonder whether you and Mark would let me cut it out and keep it."

"And what answer did you make to him?"

"I lied to him, and told him that I did not love him."

"You refused him?"

"Yes; I refused a live lord. There is some satisfaction in having

that to think of, is there not? Fanny, was I wicked to tell that

falsehood?"

"And why did you refuse him?"

"Why? Can you ask? Think what it would have been to go down

to Framley Court, and to tell her ladyship, in the course of

conversation, that I was engaged to her son. Think of Lady Lufton.

But yet it was not that, Fanny. Had I thought that it was good

for him, that he would not have repented, I would have braved

anything--for his sake. Even your frown, for you would have frowned.

You would have thought it sacrilege for me to marry Lord Lufton! You

know you would."

Mrs. Robarts hardly knew how to say what she thought, or indeed what

she ought to think. It was a matter on which much meditation would be

required before she could give advice, and there was Lucy expecting

counsel from her at that very moment. If Lord Lufton really loved

Lucy Robarts, and was loved by Lucy Robarts, why should not they two

become man and wife? And yet she did feel that it would be--perhaps

not sacrilege, as Lucy had said, but something almost as troublesome.

What would Lady Lufton say, or think, or feel? What would she say,

and think, and feel as to that parsonage from which so deadly a blow

would fall upon her? Would she not accuse the vicar and the vicar's

wife of the blackest ingratitude? Would life be endurable at Framley

under such circumstances as those?

"What you tell me so surprises me, that I hardly as yet know how to

speak about it," said Mrs. Robarts.

"It was amazing, was it not? He must have been insane at the time;

there can be no other excuse made for him. I wonder whether there is

anything of that sort in the family?"

"What; madness?" said Mrs. Robarts, quite in earnest.

"Well, don't you think he must have been mad when such an idea as

that came into his head? But you don't believe it; I can see that.

And yet it is as true as heaven. Standing exactly here, on this spot,

he said that he would persevere till I accepted his love. I wonder

what made me specially observe that both his feet were within the

lines of that division."

"And you would not accept his love?"

"No; I would have nothing to say to it. Look you, I stood here, and

putting my hand upon my heart--for he bade me to do that--I said that

I could not love him."

"And what then?"

"He went away--with a look as though he were heartbroken. He crept

away slowly, saying that he was the most wretched soul alive. For a

minute I believed him, and could almost have called him back; but

no, Fanny, do not think that I am over proud, or conceited about my

conquest. He had not reached the gate before he was thanking God for

his escape."

"That I do not believe."

"But I do; and I thought of Lady Lufton too. How could I bear that

she should scorn me, and accuse me of stealing her son's heart? I

know that it is better as it is; but tell me--is a falsehood always

wrong, or can it be possible that the end should justify the means?

Ought I to have told him the truth, and to have let him know that I

could almost kiss the ground on which he stood?"

This was a question for the doctors which Mrs. Robarts would not take

upon herself to answer. She would not make that falsehood matter of

accusation, but neither would she pronounce for it any absolution. In

that matter Lucy must regulate her own conscience.

"And what shall I do next?" said Lucy, still speaking in a tone that

was half tragic and half jeering.

"Do?" said Mrs. Robarts.

"Yes, something must be done. If I were a man I should go to

Switzerland, of course; or, as the case is a bad one, perhaps as far

as Hungary. What is it that girls do? they don't die nowadays, I

believe."

"Lucy, I do not believe that you care for him one jot. If you were in

love you would not speak of it like that."

"There, there. That's my only hope. If I could laugh at myself till

it had become incredible to you, I also, by degrees, should cease to

believe that I had cared for him. But, Fanny, it is very hard. If I

were to starve, and rise before daybreak, and pinch myself, or do

some nasty work,--clean the pots and pans and the candlesticks; that

I think would do the most good. I have got a piece of sack-cloth, and

I mean to wear that, when I have made it up."

"You are joking now, Lucy, I know."

"No, by my word; not in the spirit of what I am saying. How shall

I act upon my heart, if I do not do it through the blood and the

flesh?"

"Do you not pray that God will give you strength to bear these

troubles?"

"But how is one to word one's prayer, or how even to word one's

wishes? I do not know what is the wrong that I have done. I say it

boldly; in this matter I cannot see my own fault. I have simply found

that I have been a fool."

It was now quite dark in the room, or would have been so to any one

entering it afresh. They had remained there talking till their eyes

had become accustomed to the gloom, and would still have remained,

had they not suddenly been disturbed by the sound of a horse's feet.

"There is Mark," said Fanny, jumping up and running to the bell, that

lights might be ready when he should enter.

"I thought he remained in Barchester to-night."

"And so did I; but he said it might be doubtful. What shall we do if

he has not dined?" That, I believe, is always the first thought in

the mind of a good wife when her husband returns home. Has he had his

dinner? What can I give him for dinner? Will he like his dinner? Oh

dear, oh dear! there is nothing in the house but cold mutton. But

on this occasion the lord of the mansion had dined, and came home

radiant with good-humour, and owing, perhaps, a little of his

radiance to the dean's claret. "I have told them," said he, "that

they may keep possession of the house for the next two months, and

they have agreed to that arrangement."

"That is very pleasant," said Mrs. Robarts.

"And I don't think we shall have so much trouble about the

dilapidations after all."

"I am very glad of that," said Mrs. Robarts. But nevertheless she was

thinking much more of Lucy than of the house in Barchester Close.

"You won't betray me," said Lucy, as she gave her sister-in-law a

parting kiss at night.

"No; not unless you give me permission."

"Ah; I shall never do that."

CHAPTER XXVII

South Audley Street

The Duke of Omnium had notified to Mr. Fothergill his wish that some

arrangement should be made about the Chaldicotes mortgages, and Mr.

Fothergill had understood what the duke meant as well as though his

instructions had been written down with all a lawyer's verbosity.

The duke's meaning was this, that Chaldicotes was to be swept up and

garnered, and made part and parcel of the Gatherum property. It had

seemed to the duke that that affair between his friend and Miss

Dunstable was hanging fire, and, therefore, it would be well that

Chaldicotes should be swept up and garnered. And, moreover, tidings

had come into the western division of the county that young Frank

Gresham of Boxall Hill was in treaty with the Government for the

purchase of all that Crown property called the Chace of Chaldicotes.

It had been offered to the duke, but the duke had given no definite

answer. Had he got his money back from Mr. Sowerby he could have

forestalled Mr. Gresham; but now that did not seem to be probable,

and his grace was resolved that either the one property or the other

should be duly garnered. Therefore Mr. Fothergill went up to town,

and therefore Mr. Sowerby was, most unwillingly, compelled to have a

business interview with Mr. Fothergill. In the meantime, since last

we saw him, Mr. Sowerby had learned from his sister the answer which

Miss Dunstable had given to his proposition, and knew that he had no

further hope in that direction. There was no further hope thence of

absolute deliverance, but there had been a tender of money services.

To give Mr. Sowerby his due, he had at once declared that it would be

quite out of the question that he should now receive any assistance

of that sort from Miss Dunstable; but his sister had explained to him

that it would be a mere business transaction; that Miss Dunstable

would receive her interest; and that, if she would be content with

four per cent., whereas the duke received five, and other creditors

six, seven, eight, ten, and Heaven only knows how much more, it

might be well for all parties. He, himself, understood, as well as

Fothergill had done, what was the meaning of the duke's message.

Chaldicotes was to be gathered up and garnered, as had been done with

so many another fair property lying in those regions. It was to be

swallowed whole, and the master was to walk out from his old family

hall, to leave the old woods that he loved, to give up utterly to

another the parks and paddocks and pleasant places which he had known

from his earliest infancy, and owned from his earliest manhood.

There can be nothing more bitter to a man than such a surrender.

What, compared to this, can be the loss of wealth to one who has

himself made it, and brought it together, but has never actually seen

it with his bodily eyes? Such wealth has come by one chance, and

goes by another: the loss of it is part of the game which the man is

playing; and if he cannot lose as well as win, he is a poor, weak,

cowardly creature. Such men, as a rule, do know how to bear a mind

fairly equal to adversity. But to have squandered the acres which

have descended from generation to generation; to be the member of

one's family that has ruined that family; to have swallowed up in

one's own maw all that should have graced one's children, and one's

grandchildren! It seems to me that the misfortunes of this world can

hardly go beyond that! Mr. Sowerby, in spite of his recklessness

and that dare-devil gaiety which he knew so well how to wear and

use, felt all this as keenly as any man could feel it. It had been

absolutely his own fault. The acres had come to him all his own, and

now, before his death, every one of them would have gone bodily into

that greedy maw. The duke had bought up nearly all the debts which

had been secured upon the property, and now could make a clean sweep

of it. Sowerby, when he received that message from Mr. Fothergill,

knew well that this was intended; and he knew well also, that when

once he should cease to be Mr. Sowerby of Chaldicotes, he need never

again hope to be returned as member for West Barsetshire. This

world would for him be all over. And what must such a man feel when

he reflects that this world is for him all over? On the morning

in question he went to his appointment, still bearing a cheerful

countenance. Mr. Fothergill, when in town on such business as this,

always had a room at his service in the house of Messrs. Gumption &

Gazebee, the duke's London law agents, and it was thither that Mr.

Sowerby had been summoned. The house of business of Messrs. Gumption

& Gazebee was in South Audley Street; and it may be said that there

was no spot on the whole earth which Mr. Sowerby so hated as he did

the gloomy, dingy back sitting-room upstairs in that house. He had

been there very often, but had never been there without annoyance. It

was a horrid torture-chamber, kept for such dread purposes as these,

and no doubt had been furnished, and papered, and curtained with the

express object of finally breaking down the spirits of such poor

country gentlemen as chanced to be involved. Everything was of a

brown crimson,--of a crimson that had become brown. Sunlight, real

genial light of the sun, never made its way there, and no amount of

candles could illumine the gloom of that brownness. The windows were

never washed; the ceiling was of a dark brown; the old Turkey carpet

was thick with dust, and brown withal. The ungainly office-table, in

the middle of the room, had been covered with black leather, but that

was now brown. There was a bookcase full of dingy brown law books in

a recess on one side of the fireplace, but no one had touched them

for years, and over the chimney-piece hung some old legal pedigree

table, black with soot. Such was the room which Mr. Fothergill always

used in the business house of Messrs. Gumption & Gazebee, in South

Audley Street, near to Park Lane.

I once heard this room spoken of by an old friend of mine, one

Mr. Gresham of Greshamsbury, the father of Frank Gresham, who was

now about to purchase that part of the Chace of Chaldicotes which

belonged to the Crown. He also had had evil days, though now happily

they were past and gone; and he, too, had sat in that room, and

listened to the voice of men who were powerful over his property,

and intended to use that power. The idea which he left on my mind

was much the same as that which I had entertained, when a boy, of

a certain room in the castle of Udolpho. There was a chair in that

Udolpho room in which those who sat were dragged out limb by limb,

the head one way and the legs another; the fingers were dragged off

from the hands, and the teeth out from the jaws, and the hair off

the head, and the flesh from the bones, and the joints from their

sockets, till there was nothing left but a lifeless trunk seated in

the chair. Mr. Gresham, as he told me, always sat in the same seat,

and the tortures he suffered when so seated, the dislocations of his

property which he was forced to discuss, the operations on his very

self which he was forced to witness, made me regard that room as

worse than the chamber of Udolpho. He, luckily--a rare instance of

good fortune--had lived to see all his bones and joints put together

again, and flourishing soundly; but he never could speak of the room

without horror. "No consideration on earth," he once said to me, very

solemnly,--"I say none, should make me again enter that room." And

indeed this feeling was so strong with him, that from the day when

his affairs took a turn he would never even walk down South Audley

Street. On the morning in question into this torture-chamber Mr.

Sowerby went, and there, after some two or three minutes, he was

joined by Mr. Fothergill.

Mr. Fothergill was, in one respect, like to his friend Sowerby. He

enacted two altogether different persons on occasions which were

altogether different. Generally speaking, with the world at large,

he was a jolly, rollicking, popular man, fond of eating and drinking,

known to be devoted to the duke's interests, and supposed to be

somewhat unscrupulous, or at any rate hard, when they were concerned;

but in other respects a good-natured fellow: and there was a report

about that he had once lent somebody money, without charging him

interest or taking security. On the present occasion Sowerby saw

at a glance that he had come thither with all the aptitudes and

appurtenances of his business about him. He walked into the room with

a short, quick step; there was no smile on his face as he shook hands

with his old friend; he brought with him a box laden with papers and

parchments, and he had not been a minute in the room before he was

seated in one of the old dingy chairs. "How long have you been in

town, Fothergill?" said Sowerby, still standing with his back against

the chimney. He had resolved on only one thing--that nothing should

induce him to touch, look at, or listen to any of those papers. He

knew well enough that no good would come of that. He also had his own

lawyer, to see that he was pilfered according to rule.

"How long? Since the day before yesterday. I never was so busy in my

life. The duke, as usual, wants to have everything done at once."

"If he wants to have all that I owe him paid at once, he is like to

be out in his reckoning."

"Ah, well; I'm glad you are ready to come quickly to business,

because it's always best. Won't you come and sit down here?"

"No, thank you; I'll stand."

"But we shall have to go through these figures, you know."

"Not a figure, Fothergill. What good would it do? None to me, and

none to you either, as I take it. If there is anything wrong,

Potter's fellows will find it out. What is it the duke wants?"

"Well; to tell the truth, he wants his money."

"In one sense, and that the main sense, he has got it. He gets his

interest regularly, does not he?"

"Pretty well for that, seeing how times are. But, Sowerby, that's

nonsense. You understand the duke as well as I do, and you know very

well what he wants. He has given you time, and if you had taken any

steps towards getting the money, you might have saved the property."

"A hundred and eighty thousand pounds! What steps could I take to

get that? Fly a bill, and let Tozer have it to get cash on it in the

City!"

"We hoped you were going to marry."

"That's all off."

"Then I don't think you can blame the duke for looking for his own.

It does not suit him to have so large a sum standing out any longer.

You see, he wants land, and will have it. Had you paid off what you

owed him, he would have purchased the Crown property; and now, it

seems young Gresham has bid against him, and is to have it. This has

riled him, and I may as well tell you fairly, that he is determined

to have either money or marbles."

"You mean that I am to be dispossessed."

"Well, yes; if you choose to call it so. My instructions are to

foreclose at once."

"Then I must say the duke is treating me most uncommonly ill."

"Well, Sowerby, I can't see it."

"I can, though. He has his money like clock-work; and he has bought

up these debts from persons who would have never disturbed me as long

as they got their interest."

"Haven't you had the seat?"

"The seat! and is it expected that I am to pay for that?"

"I don't see that any one is asking you to pay for it. You are like

a great many other people that I know. You want to eat your cake and

have it. You have been eating it for the last twenty years, and now

you think yourself very ill-used because the duke wants to have his

turn."

"I shall think myself very ill-used if he sells me out--worse than

ill-used. I do not want to use strong language, but it will be more

than ill-usage. I can hardly believe that he really means to treat me

in that way."

"It is very hard that he should want his own money!"

"It is not his money that he wants. It is my property."

"And has he not paid for it? Have you not had the price of your

property? Now, Sowerby, it is of no use for you to be angry; you have

known for the last three years what was coming on you as well as I

did. Why should the duke lend you money without an object? Of course

he has his own views. But I do say this; he has not hurried you; and

had you been able to do anything to save the place you might have

done it. You have had time enough to look about you." Sowerby still

stood in the place in which he had first fixed himself, and now for

awhile he remained silent. His face was very stern, and there was

in his countenance none of those winning looks which often told so

powerfully with his young friends,--which had caught Lord Lufton and

had charmed Mark Robarts. The world was going against him, and things

around him were coming to an end. He was beginning to perceive that

he had in truth eaten his cake, and that there was now little left

for him to do,--unless he chose to blow out his brains. He had said

to Lord Lufton that a man's back should be broad enough for any

burden with which he himself might load it. Could he now boast that

his back was broad enough and strong enough for this burden? But he

had even then, at that bitter moment, a strong remembrance that it

behoved him still to be a man. His final ruin was coming on him, and

he would soon be swept away out of the knowledge and memory of those

with whom he had lived. But, nevertheless, he would bear himself

well to the last. It was true that he had made his own bed, and he

understood the justice which required him to lie upon it.

During all this time Fothergill occupied himself with the papers. He

continued to turn over one sheet after another, as though he were

deeply engaged in money considerations and calculations. But, in

truth, during all that time he did not read a word, There was

nothing there for him to read. The reading and the writing, and the

arithmetic in such matters, are done by underlings--not by such big

men as Mr. Fothergill. His business was to tell Sowerby that he was

to go. All those records there were of very little use. The duke had

the power; Sowerby knew that the duke had the power; and Fothergill's

business was to explain that the duke meant to exercise his power.

He was used to the work, and went on turning over the papers and

pretending to read them, as though his doing so were of the greatest

moment. "I shall see the duke myself," Mr. Sowerby said at last, and

there was something almost dreadful in the sound of his voice.

"You know that the duke won't see you on a matter of this kind. He

never speaks to any one about money; you know that as well as I do."

"By ----, but he shall speak to me. Never speak to any one about

money! Why is he ashamed to speak of it when he loves it so dearly?

He shall see me."

"I have nothing further to say, Sowerby. Of course I shan't ask his

grace to see you; and if you force your way in on him you know what

will happen. It won't be my doing if he is set against you. Nothing

that you say to me in that way,--nothing that anybody ever

says,--goes beyond myself."

"I shall manage the matter through my own lawyer," said Sowerby; and

then he took his hat, and, without uttering another word, left the

room.

We know not what may be the nature of that eternal punishment to

which those will be doomed who shall be judged to have been evil at

the last; but methinks that no more terrible torment can be devised

than the memory of self-imposed ruin. What wretchedness can exceed

that of remembering from day to day that the race has been all run,

and has been altogether lost; that the last chance has gone, and has

gone in vain; that the end has come, and with it disgrace, contempt,

and self-scorn--disgrace that never can be redeemed, contempt that

never can be removed, and self-scorn that will eat into one's vitals

for ever? Mr. Sowerby was now fifty; he had enjoyed his chances in

life; and as he walked back, up South Audley Street, he could not

but think of the uses he had made of them. He had fallen into the

possession of a fine property on the attainment of his manhood;

he had been endowed with more than average gifts of intellect;

never-failing health had been given to him, and a vision fairly clear

in discerning good from evil; and now to what a pass had he brought

himself! And that man Fothergill had put all this before him in so

terribly clear a light! Now that the day for his final demolishment

had arrived, the necessity that he should be demolished--finished

away at once, out of sight and out of mind--had not been softened,

or, as it were, half hidden, by any ambiguous phrase. "You have had

your cake, and eaten it--eaten it greedily. Is not that sufficient

for you? Would you eat your cake twice? Would you have a succession

of cakes? No, my friend; there is no succession of these cakes for

those who eat them greedily. Your proposition is not a fair one,

and we who have the whip-hand of you will not listen to it. Be good

enough to vanish. Permit yourself to be swept quietly into the

dunghill. All that there was about you of value has departed from

you; and allow me to say that you are now--rubbish." And then the

ruthless besom comes with irresistible rush, and the rubbish is swept

into the pit, there to be hidden for ever from the sight. And the

pity of it is this--that a man, if he will only restrain his greed,

may eat his cake and yet have it; aye, and in so doing will have

twice more the flavour of the cake than he who with gormandizing maw

will devour his dainty all at once. Cakes in this world will grow by

being fed on, if only the feeder be not too insatiate. On all which

wisdom Mr. Sowerby pondered with sad heart and very melancholy mind

as he walked away from the premises of Messrs. Gumption & Gazebee.

His intention had been to go down to the House after leaving Mr.

Fothergill, but the prospect of immediate ruin had been too much for

him, and he knew that he was not fit to be seen at once among the

haunts of men. And he had intended also to go down to Barchester

early on the following morning--only for a few hours, that he might

make further arrangements respecting that bill which Robarts had

accepted for him. That bill--the second one--had now become due, and

Mr. Tozer had been with him.

"Now it ain't no use in life, Mr. Sowerby," Tozer had said. "I ain't

got the paper myself, nor didn't 'old it, not two hours. It went away

through Tom Tozer; you knows that, Mr. Sowerby, as well as I do."

Now, whenever Tozer, Mr. Sowerby's Tozer, spoke of Tom Tozer, Mr.

Sowerby knew that seven devils were being evoked, each worse than

the first devil. Mr. Sowerby did feel something like sincere regard,

or rather love, for that poor parson whom he had inveigled into

mischief, and would fain save him, if it were possible, from the

Tozer fang. Mr. Forrest, of the Barchester bank, would probably take

up that last five hundred pound bill, on behalf of Mr. Robarts,--only

it would be needful that he, Sowerby, should run down and see that

this was properly done. As to the other bill--the former and lesser

one--as to that, Mr. Tozer would probably be quiet for a while.

Such had been Sowerby's programme for these two days; but now--what

further possibility was there now that he should care for Robarts,

or any other human being; he that was to be swept at once into

the dung-heap? In this frame of mind he walked up South Audley

Street, and crossed one side of Grosvenor Square, and went almost

mechanically into Green Street. At the farther end of Green Street,

near to Park Lane, lived Mr. and Mrs. Harold Smith.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Dr. Thorne

When Miss Dunstable met her friends the Greshams--young Frank Gresham

and his wife--at Gatherum Castle, she immediately asked after one Dr.

Thorne, who was Mrs. Gresham's uncle. Dr. Thorne was an old bachelor,

in whom both as a man and a doctor Miss Dunstable was inclined to

place much confidence. Not that she had ever entrusted the cure of

her bodily ailments to Dr. Thorne--for she kept a doctor of her own,

Dr. Easyman, for this purpose--and it may moreover be said that she

rarely had bodily ailments requiring the care of any doctor. But she

always spoke of Dr. Thorne among her friends as a man of wonderful

erudition and judgement; and had once or twice asked and acted on his

advice in matters of much moment. Dr. Thorne was not a man accustomed

to the London world; he kept no house there, and seldom even visited

the metropolis; but Miss Dunstable had known him at Greshamsbury,

where he lived, and there had for some months past grown up a

considerable intimacy between them. He was now staying at the house

of his niece, Mrs. Gresham; but the chief reason of his coming up had

been a desire expressed by Miss Dunstable, that he should do so. She

had wished for his advice; and at the instigation of his niece he

had visited London and given it. The special piece of business as

to which Dr. Thorne had thus been summoned from the bedsides of his

country patients, and especially from the bedside of Lady Arabella

Gresham, to whose son his niece was married, related to certain

large money interests, as to which one might have imagined that Dr.

Thorne's advice would not be peculiarly valuable. He had never been

much versed in such matters on his own account, and was knowing

neither in the ways of the share market, nor in the prices of land.

But Miss Dunstable was a lady accustomed to have her own way, and

to be indulged in her own wishes without being called on to give

adequate reasons for them. "My dear," she had said to young Mrs.

Gresham, "if your uncle don't come up to London now, when I make such

a point of it, I shall think that he is a bear and a savage; and I

certainly will never speak to him again,--or to Frank--or to you;

so you had better see to it." Mrs. Gresham had not probably taken

her friend's threat as meaning quite all that it threatened. Miss

Dunstable habitually used strong language; and those who knew her

well, generally understood when she was to be taken as expressing her

thoughts by figures of speech. In this instance she had not meant

it all; but, nevertheless, Mrs. Gresham had used violent influence

in bringing the poor doctor up to London. "Besides," said Miss

Dunstable, "I have resolved on having the doctor at my conversazione,

and if he won't come of himself, I shall go down and fetch him. I

have set my heart on trumping my dear friend Mrs. Proudie's best

card; so I mean to get everybody!"

The upshot of all this was, that the doctor did come up to town, and

remained the best part of a week at his niece's house in Portman

Square--to the great disgust of the Lady Arabella, who conceived

that she must die if neglected for three days. As to the matter

of business, I have no doubt but that he was of great use. He was

possessed of common sense and an honest purpose; and I am inclined to

think that they are often a sufficient counterpoise to a considerable

amount of worldly experience. If one could have the worldly

experience also--! True! but then it is so difficult to get

everything. But with that special matter of business we need not

have any further concern. We will presume it to have been discussed

and completed, and will now dress ourselves for Miss Dunstable's

conversazione. But it must not be supposed that she was so poor in

genius as to call her party openly by a name borrowed for the nonce

from Mrs. Proudie. It was only among her specially intimate friends,

Mrs. Harold Smith and some few dozen others, that she indulged in

this little joke. There had been nothing in the least pretentious

about the card with which she summoned her friends to her house on

this occasion. She had merely signified in some ordinary way, that

she would be glad to see them as soon after nine o'clock on Thursday

evening, the ---- instant, as might be convenient. But all the world

understood that all the world was to be gathered together at Miss

Dunstable's house on the night in question--that an effort was to be

made to bring together people of all classes, gods and giants, saints

and sinners, those rabid through the strength of their morality,

such as our dear friend Lady Lufton, and those who were rabid in the

opposite direction, such as Lady Hartletop, the Duke of Omnium, and

Mr. Sowerby. An orthodox martyr had been caught from the East, and an

oily latter-day St. Paul, from the other side of the water--to the

horror and amazement of Archdeacon Grantly, who had come up all the

way from Plumstead to be present on the occasion. Mrs. Grantly also

had hankered to be there; but when she heard of the presence of the

latter-day St. Paul, she triumphed loudly over her husband, who had

made no offer to take her. That Lords Brock and De Terrier were to be

at the gathering was nothing. The pleasant king of the gods and the

courtly chief of the giants could shake hands with each other in

any house with the greatest pleasure; but men were to meet who, in

reference to each other, could shake nothing but their heads or

their fists. Supplehouse was to be there, and Harold Smith, who now

hated his enemy with a hatred surpassing that of women--or even

of politicians. The minor gods, it was thought, would congregate

together in one room, very bitter in their present state of

banishment; and the minor giants in another, terribly loud in their

triumph. That is the fault of the giants, who, otherwise, are not

bad fellows; they are unable to endure the weight of any temporary

success. When attempting Olympus--and this work of attempting is

doubtless their natural condition--they scratch and scramble,

diligently using both toes and fingers, with a mixture of

good-humoured virulence and self-satisfied industry that is

gratifying to all parties. But whenever their efforts are

unexpectedly, and for themselves unfortunately successful, they are

so taken aback that they lose the power of behaving themselves with

even gigantesque propriety.

Such, so great and so various, was to be the intended gathering

at Miss Dunstable's house. She herself laughed, and quizzed

herself--speaking of the affair to Mrs. Harold Smith as though it

were an excellent joke, and to Mrs. Proudie as though she were simply

emulous of rivalling those world-famous assemblies in Gloucester

Place; but the town at large knew that an effort was being made,

and it was supposed that even Miss Dunstable was somewhat nervous.

In spite of her excellent joking it was presumed that she would be

unhappy if she failed. To Mrs. Frank Gresham she did speak with some

little seriousness. "But why on earth should you give yourself all

this trouble?" that lady had said, when Miss Dunstable owned that she

was doubtful, and unhappy in her doubts, as to the coming of one of

the great colleagues of Mr. Supplehouse. "When such hundreds are

coming, big wigs and little wigs of all shades, what can it matter

whether Mr. Towers be there or not?" But Miss Dunstable had answered

almost with a screech,--

"My dear, it will be nothing without him. You don't understand; but

the fact is that Tom Towers is everybody and everything at present."

And then, by no means for the first time, Mrs. Gresham began to

lecture her friend as to her vanity; in answer to which lecture Miss

Dunstable mysteriously hinted, that if she were only allowed her full

swing on this occasion,--if all the world would now indulge her, she

would-- She did not quite say what she would do, but the inference

drawn by Mrs. Gresham was this: that if the incense now offered on

the altar of Fashion were accepted, Miss Dunstable would at once

abandon the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the

sinful lusts of the flesh.

"But the doctor will stay, my dear? I hope I may look on that as

fixed." Miss Dunstable, in making this demand on the doctor's time,

showed an energy quite equal to that with which she invoked the gods

that Tom Towers might not be absent. Now, to tell the truth, Dr.

Thorne had at first thought it very unreasonable that he should be

asked to remain up in London in order that he might be present at an

evening party, and had for a while pertinaciously refused; but when

he learned that three or four prime ministers were expected, and that

it was possible that even Tom Towers might be there in the flesh, his

philosophy also had become weak, and he had written to Lady Arabella

to say that his prolonged absence for two days further must be

endured, and that the mild tonics, morning and evening, might be

continued. But why should Miss Dunstable be so anxious that Dr.

Thorne should be present on this grand occasion? Why, indeed, should

she be so frequently inclined to summon him away from his country

practice, his compounding board, and his useful ministrations to

rural ailments? The doctor was connected with her by no ties of

blood. Their friendship, intimate as it was, had as yet been but of

short date. She was a very rich woman, capable of purchasing all

manner of advice and good counsel, whereas he was so far from being

rich, that any continued disturbance to his practice might be

inconvenient to him. Nevertheless, Miss Dunstable seemed to have no

more compunction in making calls upon his time, than she might have

felt had he been her brother. No ideas on this matter suggested

themselves to the doctor himself. He was a simple-minded man, taking

things as they came, and especially so taking things that came

pleasantly. He liked Miss Dunstable, and was gratified by her

friendship, and did not think of asking himself whether she had a

right to put him to trouble and inconvenience. But such ideas did

occur to Mrs. Gresham, the doctor's niece. Had Miss Dunstable any

object, and if so, what object? Was it simply veneration for the

doctor, or was it caprice? Was it eccentricity--or could it possibly

be love? In speaking of the ages of these two friends it may be

said in round terms that the lady was well past forty, and that the

gentleman was well past fifty. Under such circumstances could it

be love? The lady, too, was one who had had offers almost by the

dozen,--offers from men of rank, from men of fashion, and from men

of power; from men endowed with personal attractions, with pleasant

manners, with cultivated tastes, and with eloquent tongues. Not only

had she loved none such, but by none such had she been cajoled into

an idea that it was possible that she could love them. That Dr.

Thorne's tastes were cultivated, and his manners pleasant, might

probably be admitted by three or four old friends in the country

who valued him; but the world in London, that world to which Miss

Dunstable was accustomed, and which was apparently becoming dearer to

her day by day, would not have regarded the doctor as a man likely to

become the object of a lady's passion. But nevertheless the idea did

occur to Mrs. Gresham. She had been brought up at the elbow of this

country practitioner; she had lived with him as though she had been

his daughter; she had been for years the ministering angel of his

household; and, till her heart had opened to the natural love of

womanhood, all her closest sympathies had been with him. In her eyes

the doctor was all but perfect; and it did not seem to her to be out

of the question that Miss Dunstable should have fallen in love with

her uncle.

Miss Dunstable once said to Mrs. Harold Smith that it was possible

that she might marry, the only condition then expressed being this,

that the man elected should be one who was quite indifferent as to

money. Mrs. Harold Smith, who, by her friends, was presumed to know

the world with tolerable accuracy, had replied that such a man Miss

Dunstable would never find in this world. All this had passed in that

half-comic vein of banter which Miss Dunstable so commonly used when

conversing with such friends as Mrs. Harold Smith; but she had spoken

words of the same import more than once to Mrs. Gresham; and Mrs.

Gresham, putting two and two together as women do, had made four

of the little sum; and as the final result of the calculation,

determined that Miss Dunstable would marry Dr. Thorne if Dr. Thorne

would ask her. And then Mrs. Gresham began to bethink herself of two

other questions. Would it be well that her uncle should marry Miss

Dunstable? and if so, would it be possible to induce him to make such

a proposition? After the consideration of many pros and cons, and the

balancing of very various arguments, Mrs. Gresham thought that the

arrangement on the whole might not be a bad one. For Miss Dunstable

she herself had a sincere affection, which was shared by her husband.

She had often grieved at the sacrifices Miss Dunstable made to

the world, thinking that her friend was falling into vanity,

indifference, and an ill mode of life; but such a marriage as this

would probably cure all that. And then as to Dr. Thorne himself, to

whose benefit were of course applied Mrs. Gresham's most earnest

thoughts in this matter, she could not but think that he would be

happier married than he was single. In point of temper, no woman

could stand higher than Miss Dunstable; no one had ever heard of her

being in an ill-humour; and then though Mrs. Gresham was gifted with

a mind which was far removed from being mercenary, it was impossible

not to feel that some benefit must accrue from the bride's wealth.

Mary Thorne, the present Mrs. Frank Gresham, had herself been a

great heiress. Circumstances had weighted her hand with enormous

possessions, and hitherto she had not realized the truth of that

lesson which would teach us to believe that happiness and riches

are incompatible. Therefore she resolved that it might be well if

the doctor and Miss Dunstable were brought together. But could the

doctor be induced to make such an offer? Mrs. Gresham acknowledged a

terrible difficulty in looking at the matter from that point of view.

Her uncle was fond of Miss Dunstable; but she was sure that an idea

of such a marriage had never entered his head; that it would be very

difficult--almost impossible--to create such an idea; and that if the

idea were there, the doctor could hardly be instigated to make the

proposition. Looking at the matter as a whole, she feared that the

match was not practicable.

On the day of Miss Dunstable's party, Mrs. Gresham and her uncle

dined together alone in Portman Square. Mr. Gresham was not yet in

Parliament, but an almost immediate vacancy was expected in his

division of the county, and it was known that no one could stand

against him with any chance of success. This threw him much among the

politicians of his party--those giants, namely, whom it would be his

business to support--and on this account he was a good deal away from

his own house at the present moment. "Politics make a terrible demand

on a man's time," he said to his wife; and then went down to dine at

his club in Pall Mall, with sundry other young philogeants. On men of

that class politics do make a great demand--at the hour of dinner and

thereabouts.

"What do you think of Miss Dunstable?" said Mrs. Gresham to her

uncle, as they sat together over their coffee. She added nothing to

the question, but asked it in all its baldness.

"Think about her!" said the doctor; "well, Mary, what do you think

about her? I dare say we think the same."

"But that's not the question. What do you think about her? Do you

think she's honest?"

"Honest? Oh, yes, certainly--very honest, I should say."

"And good-tempered?"

"Uncommonly good-tempered."

"And affectionate?"

"Well, yes; and affectionate. I should certainly say that she is

affectionate."

"I'm sure she's clever."

"Yes, I think she's clever."

"And, and--and womanly in her feelings." Mrs. Gresham felt that she

could not quite say lady-like, though she would fain have done so had

she dared.

"Oh, certainly," said the doctor. "But, Mary, why are you dissecting

Miss Dunstable's character with so much ingenuity?"

"Well, uncle, I will tell you why; because--" and Mrs. Gresham, while

she was speaking, got up from her chair, and going round the table to

her uncle's side, put her arm round his neck till her face was close

to his, and then continued speaking as she stood behind him out of

his sight--"because--I think that Miss Dunstable is--is very fond of

you; and that it would make her happy if you would--ask her to be

your wife."

"Mary!" said the doctor, turning round with an endeavour to look his

niece in the face.

"I am quite in earnest, uncle--quite in earnest. From little things

that she has said, and little things that I have seen, I do believe

what I now tell you."

"And you want me to--"

"Dear uncle; my own one darling uncle, I want you only to do that

which will make you--make you happy. What is Miss Dunstable to me

compared to you?" And then she stooped down and kissed him. The

doctor was apparently too much astounded by the intimation given him

to make any further immediate reply. His niece, seeing this, left him

that she might go and dress; and when they met again in the

drawing-room Frank Gresham was with them.

CHAPTER XXIX

Miss Dunstable at Home

Miss Dunstable did not look like a love-lorn maiden, as she stood in

a small ante-chamber at the top of her drawing-room stairs, receiving

her guests. Her house was one of those abnormal mansions, which are

to be seen here and there in London, built in compliance rather with

the rules of rural architecture, than with those which usually govern

the erection of city streets and town terraces. It stood back from

its brethren, and alone, so that its owner could walk round it. It

was approached by a short carriage-way; the chief door was in the

back of the building; and the front of the house looked on to one

of the parks. Miss Dunstable in procuring it had had her usual

luck. It had been built by an eccentric millionaire at an enormous

cost; and the eccentric millionaire, after living in it for twelve

months, had declared that it did not possess a single comfort, and

that it was deficient in most of those details which, in point of

house accommodation, are necessary to the very existence of man.

Consequently the mansion was sold, and Miss Dunstable was the

purchaser. Cranbourn House it had been named, and its present owner

had made no change in this respect; but the world at large very

generally called it Ointment Hall, and Miss Dunstable herself as

frequently used that name for it as any other. It was impossible to

quiz Miss Dunstable with any success, because she always joined in

the joke herself. Not a word further had passed between Mrs. Gresham

and Dr. Thorne on the subject of their last conversation; but the

doctor as he entered the lady's portals amongst a tribe of servants

and in a glare of light, and saw the crowd before him and the crowd

behind him, felt that it was quite impossible that he should ever be

at home there. It might be all right that a Miss Dunstable should

live in this way, but it could not be right that the wife of Dr.

Thorne should so live. But all this was a matter of the merest

speculation, for he was well aware--as he said to himself a dozen

times--that his niece had blundered strangely in her reading of Miss

Dunstable's character.

When the Gresham party entered the ante-room into which the staircase

opened, they found Miss Dunstable standing there surrounded by a few

of her most intimate allies. Mrs. Harold Smith was sitting quite

close to her; Dr. Easyman was reclining on a sofa against the wall,

and the lady who habitually lived with Miss Dunstable was by his

side. One or two others were there also, so that a little running

conversation was kept up in order to relieve Miss Dunstable of the

tedium which might otherwise be engendered by the work she had in

hand. As Mrs. Gresham, leaning on her husband's arm, entered the

room, she saw the back of Mrs. Proudie, as that lady made her way

through the opposite door, leaning on the arm of the bishop. Mrs.

Harold Smith had apparently recovered from the annoyance which she

must no doubt have felt when Miss Dunstable so utterly rejected her

suit on behalf of her brother. If any feeling had existed, even for a

day, calculated to put a stop to the intimacy between the two ladies,

that feeling had altogether died away, for Mrs. Harold Smith was

conversing with her friend, quite in the old way. She made some

remark on each of the guests as they passed by, and apparently did

so in a manner satisfactory to the owner of the house, for Miss

Dunstable answered with her kindest smiles, and in that genial, happy

tone of voice which gave its peculiar character to her good humour:

"She is quite convinced that you are a mere plagiarist in what you

are doing," said Mrs. Harold Smith, speaking of Mrs. Proudie.

"And so I am. I don't suppose there can be anything very original

nowadays about an evening party."

"But she thinks you are copying her."

"And why not? I copy everybody that I see, more or less. You did not

at first begin to wear big petticoats out of your own head? If Mrs.

Proudie has any such pride as that, pray don't rob her of it. Here's

the doctor and the Greshams. Mary, my darling, how are you?" and in

spite of all her grandeur of apparel, Miss Dunstable took hold of

Mrs. Gresham and kissed her--to the disgust of the dozen and a half

of the distinguished fashionable world who were passing up the stairs

behind. The doctor was somewhat repressed in his mode of address

by the communication which had so lately been made to him. Miss

Dunstable was now standing on the very top of the pinnacle of wealth,

and seemed to him to be not only so much above his reach, but also so

far removed from his track in life, that he could not in any way put

himself on a level with her. He could neither aspire so high nor

descend so low; and thinking of this he spoke to Miss Dunstable as

though there were some great distance between them,--as though there

had been no hours of intimate friendship down at Greshamsbury. There

had been such hours, during which Miss Dunstable and Dr. Thorne had

lived as though they belonged to the same world: and this at any rate

may be said of Miss Dunstable, that she had no idea of forgetting

them.

Dr. Thorne merely gave her his hand, and then prepared to pass on.

"Don't go, doctor," she said; "for heaven's sake, don't go yet. I

don't know when I may catch you if you get in there. I shan't be able

to follow you for the next two hours. Lady Meredith, I am so much

obliged to you for coming--your mother will be here, I hope. Oh, I am

so glad! From her you know that is quite a favour. You, Sir George,

are half a sinner yourself, so I don't think so much about it."

"Oh, quite so," said Sir George; "perhaps rather the largest half."

"The men divide the world into gods and giants," said Miss Dunstable.

"We women have our divisions also. We are saints or sinners according

to our party. The worst of it is, that we rat almost as often as you

do." Whereupon Sir George laughed and passed on.

"I know, doctor, you don't like this kind of thing," she continued,

"but there is no reason why you should indulge yourself altogether in

your own way, more than another--is there, Frank?"

"I am not so sure but he does like it," said Mr. Gresham. "There are

some of your reputed friends whom he owns that he is anxious to see."

"Are there? Then there is some hope of his ratting too. But he'll

never make a good staunch sinner; will he, Mary? You're too old to

learn new tricks; eh, doctor?"

"I am afraid I am," said the doctor, with a faint laugh.

"Does Doctor Thorne rank himself among the army of saints?" asked

Mrs. Harold Smith.

"Decidedly," said Miss Dunstable. "But you must always remember that

there are saints of different orders; are there not, Mary? and nobody

supposes that the Franciscans and the Dominicans agree very well

together. Dr. Thorne does not belong to the school of St. Proudie,

of Barchester; he would prefer the priestess whom I see coming round

the corner of the staircase, with a very famous young novice at her

elbow."

"From all that I can hear, you will have to reckon Miss Grantly among

the sinners," said Mrs. Harold Smith--seeing that Lady Lufton with

her young friend was approaching--"unless, indeed, you can make a

saint of Lady Hartletop." And then Lady Lufton entered the room, and

Miss Dunstable came forward to meet her with more quiet respect in

her manner than she had as yet shown to many of her guests. "I am

much obliged to you for coming, Lady Lufton," she said, "and the more

so, for bringing Miss Grantly with you." Lady Lufton uttered some

pretty little speech, during which Dr. Thorne came up and shook hands

with her; as did also Frank Gresham and his wife. There was a county

acquaintance between the Framley people and the Greshamsbury people,

and therefore there was a little general conversation before Lady

Lufton passed out of the small room into what Mrs. Proudie would have

called the noble suite of apartments. "Papa will be here," said Miss

Grantly; "at least so I understand. I have not seen him yet myself."

"Oh, yes, he has promised me," said Miss Dunstable; "and the

archdeacon, I know, will keep his word. I should by no means have the

proper ecclesiastical balance without him."

"Papa always does keep his word," said Miss Grantly, in a tone that

was almost severe. She had not at all understood poor Miss

Dunstable's little joke, or at any rate she was too dignified to

respond to it.

"I understand that old Sir John is to accept the Chiltern Hundreds at

once," said Lady Lufton, in a half whisper to Frank Gresham.

Lady Lufton had always taken a keen interest in the politics of East

Barsetshire, and was now desirous of expressing her satisfaction that

a Gresham should again sit for the county. The Greshams had been old

county members in Barsetshire, time out of mind.

"Oh, yes; I believe so," said Frank, blushing. He was still young

enough to feel almost ashamed of putting himself forward for such

high honours.

"There will be no contest, of course," said Lady Lufton,

confidentially. "There seldom is in East Barsetshire, I am happy to

say. But if there were, every tenant at Framley would vote on the

right side; I can assure you of that. Lord Lufton was saying so to

me only this morning." Frank Gresham made a pretty little speech in

reply, such as young sucking politicians are expected to make; and

this, with sundry other small courteous murmurings, detained the

Lufton party for a minute or two in the ante-chamber. In the meantime

the world was pressing on and passing through to the four or five

large reception-rooms--the noble suite which was already piercing

poor Mrs. Proudie's heart with envy to the very core. "These are the

sort of rooms," she said to herself unconsciously, "which ought to be

provided by the country for the use of its bishops."

"But the people are not brought enough together," she said to her

lord.

"No, no; I don't think they are," said the bishop.

"And that is so essential for a conversazione," continued Mrs.

Proudie. "Now in Gloucester Place--" But we will not record all

her adverse criticisms, as Lady Lufton is waiting for us in the

ante-room. And now another arrival of moment had taken place;--an

arrival indeed of very great moment. To tell the truth, Miss

Dunstable's heart had been set upon having two special persons; and

though no stone had been left unturned,--no stone which could be

turned with discretion,--she was still left in doubt as to both

these two wondrous potentates. At the very moment of which we are

now speaking, light and airy as she appeared to be--for it was her

character to be light and airy--her mind was torn with doubts. If

the wished-for two would come, her evening would be thoroughly

successful; but if not, all her trouble would have been thrown away,

and the thing would have been a failure; and there were circumstances

connected with the present assembly which made Miss Dunstable very

anxious that she should not fail. That the two great ones of the

earth were Tom Towers of the \_Jupiter\_, and the Duke of Omnium, need

hardly be expressed in words. And now, at this very moment, as Lady

Lufton was making her civil speeches to young Gresham, apparently in

no hurry to move on, and while Miss Dunstable was endeavouring to

whisper something into the doctor's ear, which would make him feel

himself at home in this new world, a sound was heard which made that

lady know that half her wish had at any rate been granted to her. A

sound was heard--but only by her own and one other attentive pair of

ears. Mrs. Harold Smith had also caught the name, and knew that the

duke was approaching. There was great glory and triumph in this; but

why had his grace come at so unchancy a moment? Miss Dunstable had

been fully aware of the impropriety of bringing Lady Lufton and the

Duke of Omnium into the same house at the same time; but when she had

asked Lady Lufton, she had been led to believe that there was no hope

of obtaining the duke; and then, when that hope had dawned upon her,

she had comforted herself with the reflection that the two suns,

though they might for some few minutes be in the same hemisphere,

could hardly be expected to clash, or come across each other's

orbits. Her rooms were large and would be crowded; the duke would

probably do little more than walk through them once, and Lady Lufton

would certainly be surrounded by persons of her own class. Thus Miss

Dunstable had comforted herself. But now all things were going wrong,

and Lady Lufton would find herself in close contiguity to the nearest

representative of Satanic agency, which, according to her ideas, was

allowed to walk this nether English world of ours. Would she scream?

or indignantly retreat out of the house?--or would she proudly raise

her head, and with outstretched hand and audible voice, boldly defy

the devil and all his works? In thinking of these things as the duke

approached Miss Dunstable almost lost her presence of mind. But Mrs.

Harold Smith did not lose hers. "So here at last is the duke," she

said, in a tone intended to catch the express attention of Lady

Lufton.

Mrs. Smith had calculated that there might still be time for her

ladyship to pass on and avoid the interview. But Lady Lufton, if she

heard the words, did not completely understand them. At any rate

they did not convey to her mind at the moment the meaning they were

intended to convey. She paused to whisper a last little speech to

Frank Gresham, and then looking round, found that the gentleman who

was pressing against her dress was--the Duke of Omnium! On this

great occasion, when the misfortune could no longer be avoided, Miss

Dunstable was by no means beneath herself or her character. She

deplored the calamity, but she now saw that it was only left to her

to make the best of it. The duke had honoured her by coming to her

house, and she was bound to welcome him, though in doing so she

should bring Lady Lufton to her last gasp. "Duke," she said, "I am

greatly honoured by this kindness on the part of your grace. I hardly

expected that you would be so good to me."

"The goodness is all on the other side," said the duke, bowing over

her hand. And then in the usual course of things this would have been

all. The duke would have walked on and shown himself, would have said

a word or two to Lady Hartletop, to the bishop, to Mr. Gresham, and

such like, and would then have left the rooms by another way, and

quietly escaped. This was the duty expected from him, and this he

would have done, and the value of the party would have been increased

thirty per cent. by such doing; but now, as it was, the news-mongers

of the West End were likely to get much more out of him.

Circumstances had so turned out that he had absolutely been pressed

close against Lady Lufton, and she, when she heard the voice, and was

made positively acquainted with the fact of the great man's presence

by Miss Dunstable's words, turned round quickly, but still with much

feminine dignity, removing her dress from the contact. In doing this

she was brought absolutely face to face with the duke, so that each

could not but look full at the other. "I beg your pardon," said the

duke. They were the only words that had ever passed between them,

nor have they spoken to each other since; but simple as they were,

accompanied by the little by-play of the speakers, they gave rise

to a considerable amount of ferment in the fashionable world. Lady

Lufton, as she retreated back on to Dr. Easyman, curtsied low; she

curtsied low and slowly, and with a haughty arrangement of her

drapery that was all her own; but the curtsy, though it was eloquent,

did not say half so much,--did not reprobate the habitual iniquities

of the duke with a voice nearly as potent as that which was expressed

in the gradual fall of her eye and the gradual pressure of her lips.

When she commenced her curtsy she was looking full in her foe's face.

By the time that she had completed it her eyes were turned upon the

ground, but there was an ineffable amount of scorn expressed in the

lines of her month. She spoke no word, and retreated, as modest

virtue and feminine weakness must ever retreat, before barefaced vice

and virile power; but nevertheless she was held by all the world

to have had the best of the encounter. The duke, as he begged her

pardon, wore in his countenance that expression of modified sorrow

which is common to any gentleman who is supposed by himself to

have incommoded a lady. But over and above this,--or rather under

it,--there was a slight smile of derision, as though it were

impossible for him to look upon the bearing of Lady Lufton without

some amount of ridicule. All this was legible to eyes so keen as

those of Miss Dunstable and Mrs. Harold Smith, and the duke was known

to be a master of this silent inward sarcasm; but even by them,--by

Miss Dunstable and Mrs. Harold Smith,--it was admitted that Lady

Lufton had conquered. When her ladyship again looked up, the duke

had passed on; she then resumed the care of Miss Grantly's hand, and

followed in among the company.

"That is what I call unfortunate," said Miss Dunstable, as soon as

both belligerents had departed from the field of battle, "The Fates

sometimes will be against one."

"But they have not been at all against you here," said Mrs. Harold

Smith. "If you could arrive at her ladyship's private thoughts

to-morrow morning, you would find her to be quite happy in having

met the duke. It will be years before she has done boasting of her

triumph, and it will be talked of by the young ladies of Framley for

the next three generations."

The Gresham party, including Dr. Thorne, had remained in the

ante-chamber during the battle. The whole combat did not occupy above

two minutes, and the three of them were hemmed off from escape by

Lady Lufton's retreat into Dr. Easyman's lap; but now they, too,

essayed to pass on.

"What, you will desert me," said Miss Dunstable. "Very well; but I

shall find you out by and by. Frank, there is to be some dancing in

one of the rooms,--just to distinguish the affair from Mrs. Proudie's

conversazione. It would be stupid, you know, if all conversaziones

were alike; wouldn't it? So I hope you will go and dance."

"There will, I presume, be another variation at feeding time," said

Mrs. Harold Smith.

"Oh yes, certainly; I am the most vulgar of all wretches in

that respect. I do love to set people eating and drinking--Mr.

Supplehouse, I am delighted to see you; but do tell me--" and then

she whispered with great energy into the ear of Mr. Supplehouse, and

Mr. Supplehouse again whispered into her ear. "You think he will,

then?" said Miss Dunstable. Mr. Supplehouse assented; he did think

so; but he had no warrant for stating the circumstance as a fact. And

then he passed on, hardly looking at Mrs. Harold Smith as he passed.

"What a hang-dog countenance he has," said that lady.

"Ah, you're prejudiced, my dear, and no wonder; as for myself I

always liked Supplehouse. He means mischief; but then mischief is his

trade, and he does not conceal it. If I were a politician I should as

soon think of being angry with Mr. Supplehouse for turning against me

as I am now with a pin for pricking me. It's my own awkwardness, and

I ought to have known how to use the pin more craftily."

"But you must detest a man who professes to stand by his party, and

then does his best to ruin it."

"So many have done that, my dear; and with much more success than Mr.

Supplehouse! All is fair in love and war,--why not add politics to

the list? If we could only agree to do that, it would save us from

such a deal of heartburning, and would make none of us a bit the

worse."

Miss Dunstable's rooms, large as they were--"a noble suite of rooms

certainly, though perhaps a little too--too--too scattered, we

will say, eh, bishop?"--were now nearly full, and would have been

inconveniently crowded, were it not that many who came only remained

for half an hour or so. Space, however, had been kept for the

dancers--much to Mrs. Proudie's consternation. Not that she

disapproved of dancing in London, as a rule; but she was indignant

that the laws of a conversazione, as re-established by herself in the

fashionable world, should be so violently infringed.

"Conversaziones will come to mean nothing," she said to the bishop,

putting great stress on the latter word, "nothing at all, if they are

to be treated in this way."

"No, they won't; nothing in the least," said the bishop.

"Dancing may be very well in its place," said Mrs. Proudie.

"I have never objected to it myself; that is, for the laity," said

the bishop.

"But when people profess to assemble for higher objects," said Mrs.

Proudie, "they ought to act up to their professions."

"Otherwise they are no better than hypocrites," said the bishop.

"A spade should be called a spade," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Decidedly," said the bishop, assenting.

"And when I undertook the trouble and expense of introducing

conversaziones," continued Mrs. Proudie, with an evident feeling that

she had been ill-used, "I had no idea of seeing the word so--so--so

misinterpreted;" and then observing certain desirable acquaintances

at the other side of the room, she went across, leaving the bishop to

fend for himself.

Lady Lufton, having achieved her success, passed on to the dancing,

whither it was not probable that her enemy would follow her, and she

had not been there very long before she was joined by her son. Her

heart at the present moment was not quite satisfied at the state of

affairs with reference to Griselda. She had gone so far as to tell

her young friend what were her own wishes; she had declared her

desire that Griselda should become her daughter-in-law; but in answer

to this Griselda herself had declared nothing. It was, to be sure,

no more than natural that a young lady so well brought up as Miss

Grantly should show no signs of a passion till she was warranted in

showing them by the proceedings of the gentleman; but notwithstanding

this, fully aware as she was of the propriety of such reticence--Lady

Lufton did think that to her Griselda might have spoken some word

evincing that the alliance would be satisfactory to her. Griselda,

however, had spoken no such word, nor had she uttered a syllable to

show that she would accept Lord Lufton if he did offer. Then again

she had uttered no syllable to show that she would not accept him;

but, nevertheless, although she knew that the world had been talking

about her and Lord Dumbello, she stood up to dance with the future

marquess on every possible occasion. All this did give annoyance

to Lady Lufton, who began to bethink herself that if she could not

quickly bring her little plan to a favourable issue, it might be well

for her to wash her hands of it. She was still anxious for the match

on her son's account. Griselda would, she did not doubt, make a good

wife; but Lady Lufton was not so sure as she once had been that

she herself would be able to keep up so strong a feeling for her

daughter-in-law as she had hitherto hoped to do. "Ludovic, have you

been here long?" she said, smiling as she always did smile when her

eyes fell upon her son's face.

"This instant arrived; and I hurried on after you, as Miss Dunstable

told me that you were here. What a crowd she has! Did you see Lord

Brock?"

"I did not observe him."

"Or Lord De Terrier? I saw them both in the centre room."

"Lord De Terrier did me the honour of shaking hands with me as I

passed through."

"I never saw such a mixture of people. There is Mrs. Proudie going

out of her mind because you are all going to dance."

"The Miss Proudies dance," said Griselda Grantly.

"But not at conversaziones. You don't see the difference. And I saw

Spermoil there, looking as pleased as Punch. He had quite a circle of

his own round him, and was chattering away as though he were quite

accustomed to the wickedness of the world."

"There certainly are people here whom one would not have wished to

meet, had one thought of it," said Lady Lufton, mindful of her late

engagement.

"But it must be all right, for I walked up the stairs with the

archdeacon. That is an absolute proof, is it not, Miss Grantly?"

"I have no fears. When I am with your mother I know I must be safe."

"I am not so sure of that," said Lord Lufton, laughing. "Mother, you

hardly know the worst of it yet. Who is here, do you think?"

"I know whom you mean; I have seen him," said Lady Lufton, very

quietly.

"We came across him just at the top of the stairs," said Griselda,

with more animation in her face than ever Lord Lufton had seen there

before.

"What; the duke?"

"Yes, the duke," said Lady Lufton. "I certainly should not have come

had I expected to be brought in contact with that man. But it was an

accident, and on such an occasion as this it could not be helped."

Lord Lufton at once perceived, by the tone of his mother's voice and

by the shades of her countenance that she had absolutely endured some

personal encounter with the duke, and also that she was by no means

so indignant at the occurrence as might have been expected. There she

was, still in Miss Dunstable's house, and expressing no anger as to

Miss Dunstable's conduct. Lord Lufton could hardly have been more

surprised had he seen the duke handing his mother down to supper; he

said, however, nothing further on the subject.

"Are you going to dance, Ludovic?" said Lady Lufton.

"Well, I am not sure that I do not agree with Mrs. Proudie in

thinking that dancing would contaminate a conversazione. What are

your ideas, Miss Grantly?" Griselda was never very good at a joke,

and imagined that Lord Lufton wanted to escape the trouble of dancing

with her. This angered her. For the only species of love-making,

or flirtation, or sociability between herself as a young lady, and

any other self as a young gentleman, which recommended itself to

her taste, was to be found in the amusement of dancing. She was

altogether at variance with Mrs. Proudie on this matter, and gave

Miss Dunstable great credit for her innovation. In society Griselda's

toes were more serviceable to her than her tongue, and she was to

be won by a rapid twirl much more probably than by a soft word. The

offer of which she would approve would be conveyed by two all but

breathless words during a spasmodic pause in a waltz; and then as she

lifted up her arm to receive the accustomed support at her back, she

might just find power enough to say, "You--must ask--papa." After

that she would not care to have the affair mentioned till everything

was properly settled.

"I have not thought about it," said Griselda, turning her face away

from Lord Lufton.

It must not, however, be supposed that Miss Grantly had not thought

about Lord Lufton, or that she had not considered how great might be

the advantage of having Lady Lufton on her side if she made up her

mind that she did wish to become Lord Lufton's wife. She knew well

that now was her time for a triumph, now in this very first season of

her acknowledged beauty; and she knew also that young, good-looking

bachelor lords do not grow on hedges like blackberries. Had Lord

Lufton offered to her, she would have accepted him at once without

any remorse as to the greater glories which might appertain to a

future Marchioness of Hartletop. In that direction she was not

without sufficient wisdom. But then Lord Lufton had not offered to

her, nor given any signs that he intended to do so; and to give

Griselda Grantly her due, she was not a girl to make a first

overture. Neither had Lord Dumbello offered; but he had given

signs,--dumb signs, such as birds give to each other, quite as

intelligible as verbal signs to a girl who preferred the use of her

toes to that of her tongue. "I have not thought about it," said

Griselda, very coldly, and at that moment a gentleman stood before

her and asked her hand for the next dance. It was Lord Dumbello; and

Griselda, making no reply except by a slight bow, got up and put her

hand within her partner's arm.

"Shall I find you here, Lady Lufton, when we have done?" she said;

and then started off among the dancers. When the work before one is

dancing the proper thing for a gentleman to do is, at any rate, to

ask a lady; this proper thing Lord Lufton had omitted, and now the

prize was taken away from under his very nose.

There was clearly an air of triumph about Lord Dumbello as he walked

away with the beauty. The world had been saying that Lord Lufton was

to marry her, and the world had also been saying that Lord Dumbello

admired her. Now this had angered Lord Dumbello, and made him feel as

though he walked about, a mark of scorn, as a disappointed suitor.

Had it not been for Lord Lufton, perhaps he would not have cared so

much for Griselda Grantly; but circumstances had so turned out that

he did care for her, and felt it to be encumbent upon him, as the

heir to a marquisate, to obtain what he wanted, let who would have a

hankering after the same article. It is in this way that pictures are

so well sold at auctions; and Lord Dumbello regarded Miss Grantly

as being now subject to the auctioneer's hammer, and conceived that

Lord Lufton was bidding against him. There was, therefore, an air

of triumph about him as he put his arm round Griselda's waist and

whirled her up and down the room in obedience to the music. Lady

Lufton and her son were left together looking at each other. Of

course, he had intended to ask Griselda to dance, but it cannot

be said that he very much regretted his disappointment. Of course

also Lady Lufton had expected that her son and Griselda would stand

up together, and she was a little inclined to be angry with her

protÃ©gÃ©e. "I think she might have waited a minute," said Lady Lufton.

"But why, mother? There are certain things for which no one ever

waits: to give a friend, for instance, the first passage through a

gate out hunting, and such like. Miss Grantly was quite right to take

the first that offered." Lady Lufton had determined to learn what was

to be the end of this scheme of hers. She could not have Griselda

always with her, and if anything were to be arranged it must be

arranged now, while both of them were in London. At the close of the

season Griselda would return to Plumstead, and Lord Lufton would

go--nobody as yet knew where. It would be useless to look forward to

further opportunities. If they did not contrive to love each other

now, they would never do so. Lady Lufton was beginning to fear that

her plan would not work, but she made up her mind that she would

learn the truth then and there--at least as far as her son was

concerned.

"Oh, yes; quite so;--if it is equal to her with which she dances,"

said Lady Lufton.

"Quite equal, I should think--unless it be that Dumbello is

longer-winded than I am."

"I am sorry to hear you speak of her in that way, Ludovic."

"Why sorry, mother?"

"Because I had hoped--that you and she would have liked each other."

This she said in a serious tone of voice, tender and sad, looking up

into his face with a plaintive gaze, as though she knew that she were

asking of him some great favour.

"Yes, mother, I have known that you have wished that."

"You have known it, Ludovic!"

"Oh, dear, yes; you are not at all sharp at keeping your secrets

from me. And, mother, at one time, for a day or so, I thought that I

could oblige you. You have been so good to me, that I would almost do

anything for you."

"Oh, no, no, no," she said, deprecating his praise, and the sacrifice

which he seemed to offer of his own hopes and aspirations. "I would

not for worlds have you do so for my sake. No mother ever had a

better son, and my only ambition is for your happiness."

"But, mother, she would not make me happy. I was mad enough for a

moment to think that she could do so--for a moment I did think so.

There was one occasion on which I would have asked her to take me,

but--"

"But what, Ludovic?"

"Never mind; it passed away; and now I shall never ask her. Indeed

I do not think she would have me. She is ambitious, and flying at

higher game than I am. And I must say this for her, that she knows

well what she is doing, and plays her cards as though she had been

born with them in her hand."

"You will never ask her?"

"No, mother; had I done so, it would have been for love of you--only

for love of you."

"I would not for worlds that you should do that."

"Let her have Dumbello; she will make an excellent wife for him, just

the wife that he will want. And you, you will have been so good to

her in assisting her to such a matter."

"But, Ludovic, I am so anxious to see you settled."

"All in good time, mother!"

"Ah, but the good time is passing away. Years run so very quickly. I

hope you think about marrying, Ludovic."

"But, mother, what if I brought you a wife that you did not approve?"

"I will approve of anyone that you love; that is--"

"That is, if you love her also; eh, mother?"

"But I rely with such confidence on your taste. I know that you can

like no one that is not ladylike and good."

"Ladylike and good; will that suffice?" said he, thinking of Lucy

Robarts.

"Yes; it will suffice, if you love her. I don't want you to care for

money. Griselda will have a fortune that would have been convenient;

but I do not wish you to care for that." And thus, as they stood

together in Miss Dunstable's crowded room, the mother and son settled

between themselves that the Lufton-Grantly alliance treaty was not

to be ratified. "I suppose I must let Mrs. Grantly know," said Lady

Lufton to herself, as Griselda returned to her side. There had

not been above a dozen words spoken between Lord Dumbello and his

partner, but that young lady also had now fully made up her mind that

the treaty above mentioned should never be brought into operation.

We must go back to our hostess, whom we should not have left for so

long a time, seeing that this chapter is written to show how well

she could conduct herself in great emergencies. She had declared

that after awhile she would be able to leave her position near the

entrance door, and find out her own peculiar friends among the crowd;

but the opportunity for doing so did not come till very late in the

evening. There was a continuation of arrivals; she was wearied to

death with making little speeches, and had more than once declared

that she must depute Mrs. Harold Smith to take her place. That lady

stuck to her through all her labours with admirable constancy, and

made the work bearable. Without some such constancy on a friend's

part, it would have been unbearable; and it must be acknowledged that

this was much to the credit of Mrs. Harold Smith. Her own hopes with

reference to the great heiress had all been shattered, and her answer

had been given to her in very plain language. But, nevertheless,

she was true to her friendship, and was almost as willing to endure

fatigue on the occasion as though she had a sister-in-law's right

in the house. At about one o'clock her brother came. He had not yet

seen Miss Dunstable since the offer had been made, and had now with

difficulty been persuaded by his sister to show himself.

"What can be the use?" said he. "The game is up with me now;"

--meaning, poor ruined ne'er-do-well, not only that that game

with Miss Dunstable was up, but that the great game of his whole life

was being brought to an uncomfortable termination.

"Nonsense," said his sister; "do you mean to despair because a man

like the Duke of Omnium wants his money? What has been good security

for him will be good security for another;" and then Mrs. Harold

Smith made herself more agreeable than ever to Miss Dunstable.

When Miss Dunstable was nearly worn out, but was still endeavouring

to buoy herself up by a hope of the still-expected great arrival--for

she knew that the hero would show himself only at a very late hour

if it were to be her good fortune that he showed himself at all--Mr.

Sowerby walked up the stairs. He had schooled himself to go through

this ordeal with all the cool effrontery which was at his command;

but it was clearly to be seen that all his effrontery did not stand

him in sufficient stead, and that the interview would have been

embarrassing had it not been for the genuine good-humour of the

lady. "Here is my brother," said Mrs. Harold Smith, showing by the

tremulousness of the whisper that she looked forward to the meeting

with some amount of apprehension.

"How do you do, Mr. Sowerby?" said Miss Dunstable, walking almost

into the doorway to welcome him. "Better late than never."

"I have only just got away from the House," said he, as he gave her

his hand.

"Oh, I know well that you are \_sans reproche\_ among senators--as Mr.

Harold Smith is \_sans peur\_;--eh, my dear?"

"I must confess that you have contrived to be uncommonly severe upon

them both," said Mrs. Harold, laughing; "and as regards poor Harold,

most undeservedly so: Nathaniel is here, and may defend himself."

"And no one is better able to do so on all occasions. But, my dear

Mr. Sowerby, I am dying of despair. Do you think he'll come?"

"He? who?"

"You stupid man--as if there were more than one he! There were two,

but the other has been."

"Upon my word, I don't understand," said Mr. Sowerby, now again at

his ease. "But can I do anything? shall I go and fetch anyone? Oh,

Tom Towers; I fear I can't help you. But here he is at the foot of

the stairs!" And then Mr. Sowerby stood back with his sister to make

way for the great representative man of the age.

"Angels and ministers of grace assist me!" said Miss Dunstable. "How

on earth am I to behave myself? Mr. Sowerby, do you think that I

ought to kneel down? My dear, will he have a reporter at his back

in the royal livery?" And then Miss Dunstable advanced two or three

steps--not into the doorway, as she had done for Mr. Sowerby--put out

her hand, and smiled her sweetest on Mr. Towers, of the \_Jupiter\_.

"Mr. Towers," she said, "I am delighted to have this opportunity of

seeing you in my own house."

"Miss Dunstable, I am immensely honoured by the privilege of being

here," said he.

"The honour done is all conferred on me," and she bowed and curtsied

with very stately grace. Each thoroughly understood the badinage of

the other; and then, in a few moments, they were engaged in very easy

conversation.

"By the by, Sowerby, what do you think of this threatened

dissolution?" said Tom Towers.

"We are all in the hands of Providence," said Mr. Sowerby, striving

to take the matter without any outward show of emotion. But the

question was one of terrible import to him, and up to this time he

had heard of no such threat. Nor had Mrs. Harold Smith, nor Miss

Dunstable, nor had a hundred others who now either listened to the

vaticinations of Mr. Towers, or to the immediate report made of

them. But it is given to some men to originate such tidings, and the

performance of the prophecy is often brought about by the authority

of the prophet. On the following morning the rumour that there would

be a dissolution was current in all high circles. "They have no

conscience in such matters; no conscience whatever," said a small

god, speaking of the giants--a small god, whose constituency was

expensive. Mr. Towers stood there chatting for about twenty minutes,

and then took his departure without making his way into the room. He

had answered the purpose for which he had been invited, and left Miss

Dunstable in a happy frame of mind.

"I am very glad that he came," said Mrs. Harold Smith, with an air of

triumph.

"Yes, I am glad," said Miss Dunstable, "though I am thoroughly

ashamed that I should be so. After all, what good has he done to me

or to anyone?" And having uttered this moral reflection, she made

her way into the rooms, and soon discovered Dr. Thorne standing by

himself against the wall.

"Well, doctor," she said, "where are Mary and Frank? You do not look

at all comfortable, standing here by yourself."

"I am quite as comfortable as I expected, thank you," said he. "They

are in the room somewhere, and, as I believe, equally happy."

"That's spiteful in you, doctor, to speak in that way. What would you

say if you were called on to endure all that I have gone through this

evening?"

"There is no accounting for tastes, but I presume you like it."

"I am not so sure of that. Give me your arm and let me get some

supper. One always likes the idea of having done hard work, and one

always likes to have been successful."

"We all know that virtue is its own reward," said the doctor.

"Well, that is something hard upon me," said Miss Dunstable, as she

sat down to table. "And you really think that no good of any sort can

come from my giving such a party as this?"

"Oh, yes; some people, no doubt, have been amused."

"It is all vanity in your estimation," said Miss Dunstable; "vanity

and vexation of spirit. Well; there is a good deal of the latter,

certainly. Sherry, if you please. I would give anything for a glass

of beer, but that is out of the question. Vanity and vexation of

spirit! And yet I meant to do good."

"Pray, do not suppose that I am condemning you, Miss Dunstable."

"Ah, but I do suppose it. Not only you, but another also, whose

judgement I care for, perhaps, more than yours; and that, let me tell

you, is saying a great deal. You do condemn me, Dr. Thorne, and I

also condemn myself. It is not that I have done wrong, but the game

is not worth the candle."

"Ah; that's the question."

"The game is not worth the candle. And yet it was a triumph to have

both the duke and Tom Towers. You must confess that I have not

managed badly." Soon after that the Greshams went away, and in an

hour's time or so, Miss Dunstable was allowed to drag herself to her

own bed.

That is the great question to be asked on all such occasions, "Is the

game worth the candle?"

CHAPTER XXX

The Grantly Triumph

It has been mentioned cursorily--the reader, no doubt, will have

forgotten it--that Mrs. Grantly was not specially invited by her

husband to go up to town with a view of being present at Miss

Dunstable's party. Mrs. Grantly said nothing on the subject, but she

was somewhat chagrined; not on account of the loss she sustained with

reference to that celebrated assembly, but because she felt that her

daughter's affairs required the supervision of a mother's eye. She

also doubted the final ratification of that Lufton-Grantly treaty,

and, doubting it, she did not feel quite satisfied that her daughter

should be left in Lady Lufton's hands. She had said a word or two to

the archdeacon before he went up, but only a word or two, for she

hesitated to trust him in so delicate a matter. She was, therefore,

not a little surprised at receiving, on the second morning after

her husband's departure, a letter from him desiring her immediate

presence in London. She was surprised; but her heart was filled

rather with hope than dismay, for she had full confidence in her

daughter's discretion. On the morning after the party, Lady Lufton

and Griselda had breakfasted together as usual, but each felt that

the manner of the other was altered. Lady Lufton thought that her

young friend was somewhat less attentive, and perhaps less meek in

her demeanour than usual; and Griselda felt that Lady Lufton was less

affectionate. Very little, however, was said between them, and Lady

Lufton expressed no surprise when Griselda begged to be left alone at

home, instead of accompanying her ladyship when the carriage came to

the door. Nobody called in Bruton Street that afternoon--no one, at

least, was let in--except the archdeacon. He came there late in the

day, and remained with his daughter till Lady Lufton returned. Then

he took his leave, with more abruptness than was usual with him, and

without saying anything special to account for the duration of his

visit. Neither did Griselda say anything special; and so the evening

wore away, each feeling in some unconscious manner that she was on

less intimate terms with the other than had previously been the case.

On the next day also Griselda would not go out, but at four o'clock

a servant brought a letter to her from Mount Street. Her mother had

arrived in London and wished to see her at once. Mrs. Grantly sent

her love to Lady Lufton, and would call at half-past five, or at

any later hour at which it might be convenient for Lady Lufton to

see her. Griselda was to stay and dine in Mount Street; so said the

letter. Lady Lufton declared that she would be very happy to see

Mrs. Grantly at the hour named; and then, armed with this message,

Griselda started for her mother's lodgings. "I'll send the carriage

for you," said Lady Lufton. "I suppose about ten will do."

"Thank you," said Griselda, "that will do very nicely;" and then she

went. Exactly at half-past five Mrs. Grantly was shown into Lady

Lufton's drawing-room. Her daughter did not come with her, and Lady

Lufton could see by the expression of her friend's face that business

was to be discussed. Indeed, it was necessary that she herself should

discuss business, for Mrs. Grantly must now be told that the family

treaty could not be ratified. The gentleman declined the alliance,

and poor Lady Lufton was uneasy in her mind at the nature of the task

before her.

"Your coming up has been rather unexpected," said Lady Lufton, as

soon as her friend was seated on the sofa.

"Yes, indeed; I got a letter from the archdeacon only this morning,

which made it absolutely necessary that I should come."

"No bad news, I hope?" said Lady Lufton.

"No; I can't call it bad news. But, dear Lady Lufton, things won't

always turn out exactly as one would have them."

"No, indeed," said her ladyship, remembering that it was incumbent

on her to explain to Mrs. Grantly now at this present interview the

tidings with which her mind was fraught. She would, however, let Mrs.

Grantly first tell her own story, feeling, perhaps, that the one

might possibly bear upon the other.

"Poor dear Griselda!" said Mrs. Grantly, almost with a sigh. "I need

not tell you, Lady Lufton, what my hopes were regarding her."

"Has she told you anything--anything that--"

"She would have spoken to you at once--and it was due to you that she

should have done so--but she was timid; and not unnaturally so. And

then it was right that she should see her father and me before she

quite made up her own mind. But I may say that it is settled now."

"What is settled?" asked Lady Lufton.

"Of course it is impossible for anyone to tell beforehand how those

things will turn out," continued Mrs. Grantly, beating about the bush

rather more than was necessary. "The dearest wish of my heart was to

see her married to Lord Lufton. I should so much have wished to have

her in the same county with me, and such a match as that would have

fully satisfied my ambition."

"Well, I should rather think it might!" Lady Lufton did not say this

out loud, but she thought it. Mrs. Grantly was absolutely speaking of

a match between her daughter and Lord Lufton as though she would have

displayed some amount of Christian moderation in putting up with it!

Griselda Grantly might be a very nice girl; but even she--so thought

Lady Lufton at the moment--might possibly be priced too highly.

"Dear Mrs. Grantly," she said, "I have foreseen for the last few days

that our mutual hopes in this respect would not be gratified. Lord

Lufton, I think;--but perhaps it is not necessary to explain-- Had

you not come up to town I should have written to you,--probably

to-day. Whatever may be dear Griselda's fate in life, I sincerely

hope that she may be happy."

"I think she will," said Mrs. Grantly, in a tone that expressed much

satisfaction.

"Has--has anything--"

"Lord Dumbello proposed to Griselda the other night, at Miss

Dunstable's party," said Mrs. Grantly, with her eyes fixed upon

the floor, and assuming on the sudden much meekness in her manner;

"and his lordship was with the archdeacon yesterday, and again this

morning. I fancy he is in Mount Street at the present moment."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Lufton. She would have given worlds to have

possessed at the moment sufficient self-command to have enabled her

to express in her tone and manner unqualified satisfaction at the

tidings. But she had not such self-command, and was painfully aware

of her own deficiency.

"Yes," said Mrs. Grantly. "And as it is all so far settled, and as

I know you are so kindly anxious about dear Griselda, I thought

it right to let you know at once. Nothing can be more upright,

honourable, and generous, than Lord Dumbello's conduct; and, on the

whole, the match is one with which I and the archdeacon cannot but be

contented."

"It is certainly a great match," said Lady Lufton. "Have you seen

Lady Hartletop yet?"

Now Lady Hartletop could not be regarded as an agreeable connexion,

but this was the only word which escaped from Lady Lufton that could

be considered in any way disparaging, and, on the whole, I think that

she behaved well.

"Lord Dumbello is so completely his own master that that has not been

necessary," said Mrs. Grantly. "The marquess has been told, and the

archdeacon will see him either to-morrow or the day after." There was

nothing left for Lady Lufton but to congratulate her friend, and this

she did in words perhaps not very sincere, but which, on the whole,

were not badly chosen.

"I am sure I hope she will be very happy," said Lady Lufton, "and

I trust that the alliance"--the word was very agreeable to Mrs.

Grantly's ear--"will give unalloyed gratification to you and to her

father. The position which she is called to fill is a very splendid

one, but I do not think that it is above her merits." This was very

generous, and so Mrs. Grantly felt it. She had expected that her news

would be received with the coldest shade of civility, and she was

quite prepared to do battle if there were occasion. But she had

no wish for war, and was almost grateful to Lady Lufton for her

cordiality.

"Dear Lady Lufton," she said, "it is so kind of you to say so. I have

told no one else, and of course would tell no one till you knew it.

No one has known her and understood her so well as you have done. And

I can assure you of this, that there is no one to whose friendship

she looks forward in her new sphere of life with half so much

pleasure as she does to yours." Lady Lufton did not say much further.

She could not declare that she expected much gratification from an

intimacy with the future Marchioness of Hartletop. The Hartletops and

Luftons must, at any rate for her generation, live in a world apart,

and she had now said all that her old friendship with Mrs. Grantly

required. Mrs. Grantly understood all this quite as well as did Lady

Lufton; but then Mrs. Grantly was much the better woman of the world.

It was arranged that Griselda should come back to Bruton Street for

the night, and that her visit should then be brought to a close.

"The archdeacon thinks that for the present I had better remain up in

town," said Mrs. Grantly, "and under the very peculiar circumstances

Griselda will be--perhaps more comfortable with me." To this Lady

Lufton entirely agreed; and so they parted, excellent friends,

embracing each other in a most affectionate manner. That evening

Griselda did return to Bruton Street, and Lady Lufton had to go

through the further task of congratulating her. This was the more

disagreeable of the two, especially so as it had to be thought over

beforehand. But the young lady's excellent good sense and sterling

qualities made the task comparatively an easy one. She neither cried,

nor was impassioned, nor went into hysterics, nor showed any emotion.

She did not even talk of her noble Dumbello,--her generous Dumbello.

She took Lady Lufton's kisses almost in silence, thanked her gently

for her kindness, and made no allusion to her own future grandeur.

"I think I should like to go to bed early," she said, "as I must see

to my packing up."

"Richards will do all that for you, my dear."

"Oh, yes, thank you, nothing can be kinder than Richards. But I'll

just see to my own dresses." And so she went to bed early.

Lady Lufton did not see her son for the next two days, but when she

did, of course she said a word or two about Griselda. "You have heard

the news, Ludovic?" she asked.

"Oh, yes; it's at all the clubs. I have been overwhelmed with

presents of willow branches."

"You, at any rate, have got nothing to regret," she said.

"Nor you either, mother. I am sure that you do not think you have.

Say that you do not regret it. Dearest mother, say so for my sake. Do

you not know in your heart of hearts that she was not suited to be

happy as my wife,--or to make me happy?"

"Perhaps not," said Lady Lufton, sighing. And then she kissed her

son, and declared to herself that no girl in England could be good

enough for him.

CHAPTER XXXI

Salmon Fishing in Norway

Lord Dumbello's engagement with Griselda Grantly was the talk of the

town for the next ten days. It formed, at least, one of two subjects

which monopolized attention, the other being that dreadful rumour,

first put in motion by Tom Towers at Miss Dunstable's party, as to a

threatened dissolution of Parliament. "Perhaps, after all, it will be

the best thing for us," said Mr. Green Walker, who felt himself to be

tolerably safe at Crewe Junction.

"I regard it as a most wicked attempt," said Harold Smith, who was

not equally secure in his own borough, and to whom the expense of

an election was disagreeable. "It is done in order that they may

get time to tide over the autumn. They won't gain ten votes by a

dissolution, and less than forty would hardly give them a majority.

But they have no sense of public duty--none whatever. Indeed, I don't

know who has."

"No, by Jove; that's just it. That's what my aunt Lady Hartletop

says; there is no sense of duty left in the world. By the by, what an

uncommon fool Dumbello is making himself!" And then the conversation

went off to that other topic.

Lord Lufton's joke against himself about the willow branches was all

very well, and nobody dreamed that his heart was sore in that matter.

The world was laughing at Lord Dumbello for what it chose to call

a foolish match, and Lord Lufton's friends talked to him about it

as though they had never suspected that he could have made an ass

of himself in the same direction; but, nevertheless, he was not

altogether contented. He by no means wished to marry Griselda; he

had declared to himself a dozen times since he had first suspected

his mother's manoeuvres that no consideration on earth should

induce him to do so; he had pronounced her to be cold, insipid, and

unattractive in spite of her beauty: and yet he felt almost angry

that Lord Dumbello should have been successful. And this, too,

was the more inexcusable, seeing that he had never forgotten Lucy

Robarts, had never ceased to love her, and that, in holding those

various conversations within his own bosom, he was as loud in Lucy's

favour as he was in dispraise of Griselda.

"Your hero, then," I hear some well-balanced critic say, "is not

worth very much." In the first place Lord Lufton is not my hero; and

in the next place, a man may be very imperfect and yet worth a great

deal. A man may be as imperfect as Lord Lufton, and yet worthy of a

good mother and a good wife. If not, how many of us are unworthy of

the mothers and wives we have! It is my belief that few young men

settle themselves down to the work of the world, to the begetting of

children, and carving and paying and struggling and fretting for the

same, without having first been in love with four or five possible

mothers for them, and probably with two or three at the same time.

And yet these men are, as a rule, worthy of the excellent wives that

ultimately fall to their lot. In this way Lord Lufton had, to a

certain extent, been in love with Griselda. There had been one moment

in his life in which he would have offered her his hand, had not her

discretion been so excellent; and though that moment never returned,

still he suffered from some feeling akin to disappointment when he

learned that Griselda had been won and was to be worn. He was, then,

a dog in the manger, you will say. Well; and are we not all dogs in

the manger more or less actively? Is not that manger-doggishness one

of the most common phases of the human heart? But not the less was

Lord Lufton truly in love with Lucy Robarts. Had he fancied that any

Dumbello was carrying on a siege before that fortress, his vexation

would have manifested itself in a very different manner. He could

joke about Griselda Grantly with a frank face and a happy tone of

voice; but had he heard of any tidings of a similar import with

reference to Lucy, he would have been past all joking, and I much

doubt whether it would not even have affected his appetite. "Mother,"

he said to Lady Lufton, a day or two after the declaration of

Griselda's engagement, "I am going to Norway to fish."

"To Norway,--to fish!"

"Yes. We've got rather a nice party. Clontarf is going, and

Culpepper--"

"What--that horrid man!"

"He's an excellent hand at fishing; and Haddington Peebles,

and--and--there'll be six of us altogether; and we start this day

week."

"That's rather sudden, Ludovic."

"Yes, it is sudden; but we're sick of London. I should not care to

go so soon myself, but Clontarf and Culpepper say that the season

is early this year. I must go down to Framley before I start--about

my horses: and therefore I came to tell you that I shall be there

to-morrow."

"At Framley to-morrow! If you could put it off for three days I

should be going myself." But Lord Lufton could not put it off for

three days. It may be that on this occasion he did not wish for his

mother's presence at Framley while he was there; that he conceived

that he should be more at his ease in giving orders about his stable

if he were alone while so employed. At any rate he declined her

company, and on the following morning did go down to Framley by

himself.

"Mark," said Mrs. Robarts, hurrying into her husband's book-room

about the middle of the day, "Lord Lufton is at home. Have you heard

it?"

"What! here at Framley?"

"He is over at Framley Court; so the servants say. Carson saw him in

the paddock with some of the horses. Won't you go and see him?"

"Of course I will," said Mark, shutting up his papers. "Lady Lufton

can't be here, and if he is alone he will probably come and dine."

"I don't know about that," said Mrs. Robarts, thinking of poor Lucy.

"He is not in the least particular. What does for us will do for

him. I shall ask him, at any rate." And without further parley the

clergyman took up his hat and went off in search of his friend. Lucy

Robarts had been present when the gardener brought in tidings of Lord

Lufton's arrival at Framley, and was aware that Fanny had gone to

tell her husband.

"He won't come here, will he?" she said, as soon as Mrs. Robarts

returned.

"I can't say," said Fanny. "I hope not. He ought not to do so, and I

don't think he will. But Mark says that he will ask him to dinner."

"Then, Fanny, I must be taken ill. There is nothing else for it."

"I don't think he will come. I don't think he can be so cruel.

Indeed, I feel sure that he won't; but I thought it right to tell

you." Lucy also conceived that it was improbable that Lord Lufton

should come to the parsonage under the present circumstances; and she

declared to herself that it would not be possible that she should

appear at table if he did do so; but, nevertheless, the idea of his

being at Framley was, perhaps, not altogether painful to her. She did

not recognize any pleasure as coming to her from his arrival, but

still there was something in his presence which was, unconsciously

to herself, soothing to her feelings. But that terrible question

remained;--How was she to act if it should turn out that he was

coming to dinner?

"If he does come, Fanny," she said, solemnly, after a pause, "I must

keep to my own room, and leave Mark to think what he pleases. It will

be better for me to make a fool of myself there, than in his presence

in the drawing-room."

Mark Robarts took his hat and stick and went over at once to the

home paddock, in which he knew that Lord Lufton was engaged with the

horses and grooms. He also was in no supremely happy frame of mind,

for his correspondence with Mr. Tozer was on the increase. He had

received notice from that indefatigable gentleman that certain

"overdue bills" were now lying at the bank in Barchester, and were

very desirous of his, Mr. Robarts's, notice. A concatenation of

certain peculiarly unfortunate circumstances made it indispensably

necessary that Mr. Tozer should be repaid, without further loss of

time, the various sums of money which he had advanced on the credit

of Mr. Robarts's name, &c. &c. &c. No absolute threat was put forth,

and, singular to say, no actual amount was named. Mr. Roberts,

however, could not but observe, with a most painfully accurate

attention, that mention was made, not of an overdue bill, but of

overdue bills. What if Mr. Tozer were to demand from him the instant

repayment of nine hundred pounds? Hitherto he had merely written to

Mr. Sowerby, and he might have had an answer from that gentleman this

morning, but no such answer had as yet reached him. Consequently he

was not, at the present moment, in a very happy frame of mind.

He soon found himself with Lord Lufton and the horses. Four or five

of them were being walked slowly about the paddock in the care of as

many men or boys, and the sheets were being taken off them--off one

after another, so that their master might look at them with the more

accuracy and satisfaction. But though Lord Lufton was thus doing his

duty, and going through his work, he was not doing it with his whole

heart,--as the head groom perceived very well. He was fretful about

the nags, and seemed anxious to get them out of his sight as soon

as he had made a decent pretext of looking at them. "How are you,

Lufton?" said Robarts, coming forward. "They told me that you were

down, and so I came across at once."

"Yes; I only got here this morning, and should have been over with

you directly. I am going to Norway for six weeks or so, and it seems

that the fish are so early this year that we must start at once. I

have a matter on which I want to speak to you before I leave; and,

indeed, it was that which brought me down more than anything else."

There was something hurried and not altogether easy about his manner

as he spoke, which struck Robarts, and made him think that this

promised matter to be spoken of would not be agreeable in discussion.

He did not know whether Lord Lufton might not again be mixed up with

Tozer and the bills.

"You will dine with us to-day," he said, "if, as I suppose, you are

all alone."

"Yes, I am all alone."

"Then you'll come?"

"Well, I don't quite know. No, I don't think I can go over to dinner.

Don't look so disgusted. I'll explain it all to you just now." What

could there be in the wind; and how was it possible that Tozer's bill

should make it inexpedient for Lord Lufton to dine at the parsonage?

Robarts, however, said nothing further about it at the moment, but

turned off to look at the horses.

"They are an uncommonly nice set of animals," said he.

"Well, yes; I don't know. When a man has four or five horses to look

at, somehow or other he never has one fit to go. That chestnut mare

is a picture, now that nobody wants her; but she wasn't able to carry

me well to hounds a single day last winter. Take them in, Pounce;

that'll do."

"Won't your lordship run your eye over the old black 'oss?" said

Pounce, the head groom, in a melancholy tone; "he's as fine, sir--as

fine as a stag."

"To tell you the truth, I think they're too fine; but that'll do;

take them in. And now, Mark, if you're at leisure, we'll take a

turn round the place." Mark, of course, was at leisure, and so they

started on their walk.

"You're too difficult to please about your stable," Robarts began.

"Never mind the stable now," said Lord Lufton. "The truth is, I am

not thinking about it. Mark," he then said, very abruptly, "I want

you to be frank with me. Has your sister ever spoken to you about

me?"

"My sister; Lucy?"

"Yes; your sister Lucy."

"No, never; at least nothing especial; nothing that I can remember at

this moment."

"Nor your wife?"

"Spoken about you!--Fanny? Of course she has, in an ordinary way. It

would be impossible that she should not. But what do you mean?"

"Have either of them told you that I made an offer to your sister?"

"That you made an offer to Lucy?"

"Yes, that I made an offer to Lucy."

"No; nobody has told me so. I have never dreamed of such a thing;

nor, as far as I believe, have they. If anybody has spread such a

report, or said that either of them have hinted at such a thing, it

is a base lie. Good heavens! Lufton, for what do you take them?"

"But I did," said his lordship.

"Did what?" said the parson.

"I did make your sister an offer."

"You made Lucy an offer of marriage!"

"Yes, I did;--in as plain language as a gentleman could use to a

lady."

"And what answer did she make?

"She refused me. And now, Mark, I have come down here with the

express purpose of making that offer again. Nothing could be more

decided than your sister's answer. It struck me as being almost

uncourteously decided. But still it is possible that circumstances

may have weighed with her which ought not to weigh with her. If her

love be not given to anyone else, I may still have a chance of it.

It's the old story of faint heart, you know: at any rate, I mean to

try my luck again; and thinking over it with deliberate purpose, I

have come to the conclusion that I ought to tell you before I see

her."

Lord Lufton in love with Lucy! As these words repeated themselves

over and over again within Mark Robarts's mind, his mind added

to them notes of surprise without end. How had it possibly come

about,--and why? In his estimation his sister Lucy was a very simple

girl--not plain indeed, but by no means beautiful; certainly not

stupid, but by no means brilliant. And then, he would have said, that

of all men whom he knew, Lord Lufton would have been the last to

fall in love with such a girl as his sister. And now, what was he

to say or do? What views was he bound to hold? In what direction

should he act? There was Lady Lufton on the one side, to whom

he owed everything. How would life be possible to him in that

parsonage--within a few yards of her elbow--if he consented to

receive Lord Lufton as the acknowledged suitor of his sister? It

would be a great match for Lucy, doubtless; but-- Indeed, he could

not bring himself to believe that Lucy could in truth become the

absolute reigning queen of Framley Court.

"Do you think that Fanny knows anything of all this?" he said after

a moment or two.

"I cannot possibly tell. If she does it is not with my knowledge. I

should have thought that you could best answer that."

"I cannot answer it at all," said Mark. "I, at least, have had no

remotest idea of such a thing."

"Your ideas of it now need not be at all remote," said Lord Lufton,

with a faint smile; "and you may know it as a fact. I did make her an

offer of marriage; I was refused; I am going to repeat it; and I am

now taking you into my confidence, in order that, as her brother, and

as my friend, you may give me such assistance as you can." They then

walked on in silence for some yards, after which Lord Lufton added:

"And now I'll dine with you to-day if you wish it." Mr. Robarts did

not know what to say; he could not bethink himself what answer duty

required of him. He had no right to interfere between his sister and

such a marriage, if she herself should wish it; but still there was

something terrible in the thought of it! He had a vague conception

that it must come to evil; that the project was a dangerous one; and

that it could not finally result happily for any of them. What would

Lady Lufton say? That undoubtedly was the chief source of his dismay.

"Have you spoken to your mother about this?" he said.

"My mother? no; why speak to her till I know my fate? A man does not

like to speak much of such matters if there be a probability of his

being rejected. I tell you because I do not like to make my way into

your house under a false pretence."

"But what would Lady Lufton say?"

"I think it probable that she would be displeased on the first

hearing it; that in four-and-twenty hours she would be reconciled;

and that after a week or so Lucy would be her dearest favourite and

the Prime Minister of all her machinations. You don't know my mother

as well as I do. She would give her head off her shoulders to do me a

pleasure."

"And for that reason," said Mark Robarts, "you ought, if possible, to

do her pleasure."

"I cannot absolutely marry a wife of her choosing, if you mean that,"

said Lord Lufton. They went on walking about the garden for an hour,

but they hardly got any farther than the point to which we have now

brought them. Mark Robarts could not make up his mind on the spur of

the moment; nor, as he said more than once to Lord Lufton, could he

be at all sure that Lucy would in any way be guided by him. It was,

therefore, at last settled between them that Lord Lufton should

come to the parsonage immediately after breakfast on the following

morning. It was agreed also that the dinner had better not come off,

and Robarts promised that he would, if possible, have determined

by the morning as to what advice he would give his sister. He went

direct home to the parsonage from Framley Court, feeling that he was

altogether in the dark till he should have consulted his wife. How

would he feel if Lucy were to become Lady Lufton? and how would he

look Lady Lufton in the face in telling her that such was to be his

sister's destiny? On returning home he immediately found his wife,

and had not been closeted with her five minutes before he knew, at

any rate, all that she knew. "And you mean to say that she does love

him?" said Mark.

"Indeed she does; and is it not natural that she should? When I saw

them so much together I feared that she would. But I never thought

that he would care for her." Even Fanny did not as yet give Lucy

credit for half her attractiveness. After an hour's talking the

interview between the husband and wife ended in a message to Lucy,

begging her to join them both in the book-room.

"Aunt Lucy," said a chubby little darling, who was taken up into his

aunt's arms as he spoke, "papa and mamma 'ant 'oo in te tuddy, and I

musn't go wis 'oo." Lucy, as she kissed the boy and pressed his face

against her own, felt that her blood was running quick to her heart.

"Musn't 'oo go wis me, my own one?" she said as she put her

playfellow down; but she played with the child only because she did

not wish to betray, even to him, that she was hardly mistress of

herself. She knew that Lord Lufton was at Framley; she knew that her

brother had been to him; she knew that a proposal had been made that

he should come there that day to dinner. Must it not, therefore, be

the case that this call to a meeting in the study had arisen out of

Lord Lufton's arrival at Framley? and yet, how could it have done so?

Had Fanny betrayed her in order to prevent the dinner invitation? It

could not be possible that Lord Lufton himself should have spoken on

the subject! And then she again stooped to kiss the child, rubbed

her hands across her forehead to smooth her hair, and erase, if

that might be possible, the look of care which she wore, and then

descended slowly to her brother's sitting-room. Her hand paused for a

second on the door ere she opened it, but she had resolved that, come

what might, she would be brave. She pushed it open and walked in with

a bold front, with eyes wide open, and a slow step. "Frank says that

you want me," she said. Mr. Robarts and Fanny were both standing up

by the fireplace, and each waited a second for the other to speak,

when Lucy entered the room, and then Fanny began,--

"Lord Lufton is here, Lucy."

"Here! Where? At the parsonage?"

"No, not at the parsonage; but over at Framley Court," said Mark.

"And he promises to call here after breakfast to-morrow," said Fanny.

And then again there was a pause. Mrs. Robarts hardly dared to look

Lucy in the face. She had not betrayed her trust, seeing that the

secret had been told to Mark, not by her, but by Lord Lufton; but she

could not but feel that Lucy would think that she had betrayed it.

"Very well," said Lucy, trying to smile; "I have no objection in

life."

"But, Lucy, dear,"--and now Mrs. Roberts put her arm round her

sister-in-law's waist--"he is coming here especially to see you."

"Oh; that makes a difference. I am afraid that I shall be--engaged."

"He has told everything to Mark," said Mrs. Roberts. Lucy now felt

that her bravery was almost deserting her. She hardly knew which way

to look or how to stand. Had Fanny told everything also? There was so

much that Fanny knew that Lord Lufton could not have known. But, in

truth, Fanny had told all--the whole story of Lucy's love, and had

described the reasons which had induced her to reject her suitor; and

had done so in words which, had Lord Lufton heard them, would have

made him twice as passionate in his love. And then it certainly did

occur to Lucy to think why Lord Lufton should have come to Framley

and told all this history to her brother. She attempted for a moment

to make herself believe that she was angry with him for doing so. But

she was not angry. She had not time to argue much about it, but there

came upon her a gratified sensation of having been remembered, and

thought of, and--loved. Must it not be so? Could it be possible that

he himself would have told this tale to her brother, if he did not

still love her? Fifty times she had said to herself that his offer

had been an affair of the moment, and fifty times she had been

unhappy in so saying. But this new coming of his could not be an

affair of the moment. She had been the dupe, she had thought, of an

absurd passion on her own part; but now--how was it now? She did not

bring herself to think that she should ever be Lady Lufton. She had

still, in some perversely obstinate manner, made up her mind against

that result. But yet, nevertheless, it did in some unaccountable

manner satisfy her to feel that Lord Lufton had himself come down

to Framley and himself told this story. "He has told everything to

Mark," said Mrs. Roberts; and then again there was a pause for a

moment, during which these thoughts passed through Lucy's mind.

"Yes," said Mark, "he has told me all, and he is coming here

to-morrow morning that he may receive an answer from yourself."

"What answer?" said Lucy, trembling.

"Nay, dearest; who can say that but yourself?" and her sister-in-law,

as she spoke, pressed close against her. "You must say that

yourself." Mrs. Robarts, in her long conversation with her husband,

had pleaded strongly on Lucy's behalf, taking as it were a part

against Lady Lufton. She had said that if Lord Lufton persevered in

his suit, they at the parsonage could not be justified in robbing

Lucy of all that she had won for herself, in order to do Lady

Lufton's pleasure.

"But she will think," said Mark, "that we have plotted and intrigued

for this. She will call us ungrateful, and will make Lucy's life

wretched." To which the wife had answered, that all that must be

left in God's hands. They had not plotted or intrigued. Lucy, though

loving the man in her heart of hearts, had already once refused him,

because she would not be thought to have snatched at so great a

prize. But if Lord Lufton loved her so warmly that he had come down

there in this manner, on purpose, as he himself had put it, that he

might learn his fate, then--so argued Mrs. Robarts--they two, let

their loyalty to Lady Lufton be ever so strong, could not justify it

to their consciences to stand between Lucy and her lover. Mark had

still somewhat demurred to this, suggesting how terrible would be

their plight if they should now encourage Lord Lufton, and if he,

after such encouragement, when they should have quarrelled with Lady

Lufton, should allow himself to be led away from his engagement by

his mother. To which Fanny had answered that justice was justice, and

that right was right. Everything must be told to Lucy, and she must

judge for herself.

"But I do not know what Lord Lufton wants," said Lucy, with her eyes

fixed upon the ground, and now trembling more than ever. "He did come

to me, and I did give him an answer."

"And is that answer to be final?" said Mark--somewhat cruelly, for

Lucy had not yet been told that her lover had made any repetition of

his proposal. Fanny, however, determined that no injustice should be

done, and therefore she at last continued the story.

"We know that you did give him an answer, dearest; but gentlemen

sometimes will not put up with one answer on such a subject. Lord

Lufton has declared to Mark that he means to ask again. He has come

down here on purpose to do so."

"And Lady Lufton--" said Lucy, speaking hardly above a whisper, and

still hiding her face as she leaned against her sister's shoulder.

"Lord Lufton has not spoken to his mother about it," said Mark; and

it immediately became clear to Lucy, from the tone of her brother's

voice, that he, at least, would not be pleased, should she accept her

lover's vow.

"You must decide out of your own heart, dear," said Fanny,

generously. "Mark and I know how well you have behaved, for I have

told him everything." Lucy shuddered and leaned closer against her

sister as this was said to her. "I had no alternative, dearest, but

to tell him. It was best so; was it not? But nothing has been told

to Lord Lufton. Mark would not let him come here to-day, because it

would have flurried you, and he wished to give you time to think. But

you can see him to-morrow morning--can you not? and then answer him."

Lucy now stood perfectly silent, feeling that she dearly loved her

sister-in-law for her sisterly kindness--for that sisterly wish to

promote a sister's love; but still there was in her mind a strong

resolve not to allow Lord Lufton to come there under the idea that

he would be received as a favoured lover. Her love was powerful, but

so also was her pride; and she could not bring herself to bear the

scorn which would lay in Lady Lufton's eyes. "His mother will despise

me, and then he will despise me too," she said to herself; and with

a strong gulp of disappointed love and ambition she determined

to persist. "Shall we leave you now, dear; and speak of it again

to-morrow morning before he comes?" said Fanny.

"That will be the best," said Mark. "Turn it in your mind every way

to-night. Think of it when you have said your prayers--and, Lucy,

come here to me;"--then, taking her in his arms, he kissed her with a

tenderness that was not customary with him towards her. "It is fair,"

said he, "that I should tell you this: that I have perfect confidence

in your judgement and feeling; and that I will stand by you as your

brother in whatever decision you may come to. Fanny and I both think

that you have behaved excellently, and are both of us sure that you

will do what is best. Whatever you do I will stick to you;--and so

will Fanny."

"Dearest, dearest Mark!"

"And now we will say nothing more about it till to-morrow morning,"

said Fanny. But Lucy felt that this saying nothing more about it till

to-morrow morning would be tantamount to an acceptance on her part

of Lord Lufton's offer. Mrs. Robarts knew, and Mr. Robarts also now

knew, the secret of her heart; and if, such being the case, she

allowed Lord Lufton to come there with the acknowledged purpose of

pleading his own suit, it would be impossible for her not to yield.

If she were resolved that she would not yield, now was the time for

her to stand her ground and make her fight. "Do not go, Fanny; at

least not quite yet," she said.

"Well, dear?"

"I want you to stay while I tell Mark. He must not let Lord Lufton

come here to-morrow."

"Not let him!" said Mrs. Robarts. Mr. Robarts said nothing, but he

felt that his sister was rising in his esteem from minute to minute.

"No; Mark must bid him not come. He will not wish to pain me when it

can do no good. Look here, Mark;" and she walked over to her brother,

and put both her hands upon his arm. "I do love Lord Lufton. I had no

such meaning or thought when I first knew him. But I do love him--I

love him dearly;--almost as well as Fanny loves you, I suppose. You

may tell him so if you think proper--nay, you must tell him so, or he

will not understand me. But tell him this, as coming from me: that I

will never marry him, unless his mother asks me."

"She will not do that, I fear," said Mark, sorrowfully.

"No; I suppose not," said Lucy, now regaining all her courage.

"If I thought it probable that she should wish me to be her

daughter-in-law, it would not be necessary that I should make such a

stipulation. It is because she will not wish it; because she would

regard me as unfit to--to--to mate with her son. She would hate me,

and scorn me; and then he would begin to scorn me, and perhaps would

cease to love me. I could not bear her eye upon me, if she thought

that I had injured her son. Mark, you will go to him now; will you

not? and explain this to him;--as much of it as is necessary. Tell

him, that if his mother asks me I will--consent. But that as I know

that she never will, he is to look upon all that he has said as

forgotten. With me it shall be the same as though it were forgotten."

Such was her verdict, and so confident were they both of her

firmness--of her obstinacy Mark would have called it on any other

occasion,--that they neither of them sought to make her alter it.

"You will go to him now--this afternoon; will you not?" she said; and

Mark promised that he would. He could not but feel that he himself

was greatly relieved. Lady Lufton might, probably, hear that her son

had been fool enough to fall in love with the parson's sister; but

under existing circumstances she could not consider herself aggrieved

either by the parson or by his sister. Lucy was behaving well, and

Mark was proud of her. Lucy was behaving with fierce spirit, and

Fanny was grieving for her.

"I'd rather be by myself till dinner-time," said Lucy, as Mrs.

Robarts prepared to go with her out of the room. "Dear Fanny, don't

look unhappy; there's nothing to make us unhappy. I told you I should

want goat's milk, and that will be all." Robarts, after sitting for

an hour with his wife, did return again to Framley Court; and, after

a considerable search, found Lord Lufton returning home to a late

dinner.

"Unless my mother asks her," said he, when the story had been told

him. "That is nonsense. Surely you told her that such is not the way

of the world." Robarts endeavoured to explain to him that Lucy could

not endure to think that her husband's mother should look on her with

disfavour.

"Does she think that my mother dislikes her; her specially?" asked

Lord Lufton. No; Robarts could not suppose that that was the

case; but Lady Lufton might probably think that a marriage with a

clergyman's sister would be a mÃ©salliance.

"That is out of the question," said Lord Lufton; "as she has

especially wanted me to marry a clergyman's daughter for some time

past. But, Mark, it is absurd talking about my mother. A man in these

days is not to marry as his mother bids him." Mark could only assure

him, in answer to all this, that Lucy was very firm in what she was

doing, that she had quite made up her mind, and that she altogether

absolved Lord Lufton from any necessity to speak to his mother, if

he did not think well of doing so. But all this was to very little

purpose. "She does love me then?" said Lord Lufton.

"Well," said Mark, "I will not say whether she does or does not. I

can only repeat her own message. She cannot accept you, unless she

does so at your mother's request." And having said that again, he

took his leave, and went back to the parsonage. Poor Lucy, having

finished her interview with so much dignity, having fully satisfied

her brother, and declined any immediate consolation from her

sister-in-law, betook herself to her own bedroom. She had to think

over what she had said and done, and it was necessary that she should

be alone to do so. It might be that, when she came to reconsider the

matter, she would not be quite so well satisfied as was her brother.

Her grandeur of demeanour and slow propriety of carriage lasted her

till she was well into her own room. There are animals who, when

they are ailing in any way, contrive to hide themselves, ashamed, as

it were, that the weakness of their suffering should be witnessed.

Indeed, I am not sure whether all dumb animals do not do so more or

less; and in this respect Lucy was like a dumb animal. Even in her

confidences with Fanny she made a joke of her own misfortunes, and

spoke of her heart ailments with self-ridicule. But now, having

walked up the staircase with no hurried step, and having deliberately

locked the door, she turned herself round to suffer in silence and

solitude--as do the beasts and birds. She sat herself down on a low

chair, which stood at the foot of her bed, and, throwing back her

head, held her handkerchief across her eyes and forehead, holding it

tight in both her hands; and then she began to think. She began to

think and also to cry, for the tears came running down from beneath

the handkerchief; and low sobs were to be heard--only that the animal

had taken itself off, to suffer in solitude. Had she not thrown from

her all her chances of happiness? Was it possible that he should

come to her yet again--a third time? No; it was not possible. The

very mode and pride of this, her second rejection of him, made it

impossible. In coming to her determination, and making her avowal,

she had been actuated by the knowledge that Lady Lufton would regard

such a marriage with abhorrence. Lady Lufton would not and could not

ask her to condescend to be her son's bride. Her chance of happiness,

of glory, of ambition, of love, was all gone. She had sacrificed

everything, not to virtue, but to pride; and she had sacrificed

not only herself, but him. When first he came there--when she had

meditated over his first visit--she had hardly given him credit for

deep love; but now--there could be no doubt that he loved her now.

After his season in London, his days and nights passed with all

that was beautiful, he had returned there, to that little country

parsonage, that he might again throw himself at her feet. And

she--she had refused to see him, though she loved him with all her

heart, she had refused to see him because she was so vile a coward

that she could not bear the sour looks of an old woman! "I will come

down directly," she said, when Fanny at last knocked at the door,

begging to be admitted. "I won't open it, love, but I will be with

you in ten minutes; I will, indeed." And so she was; not, perhaps,

without traces of tears, discernible by the experienced eye of Mrs.

Robarts, but yet with a smooth brow, and voice under her own command.

"I wonder whether she really loves him," Mark said to his wife that

night.

"Love him!" his wife had answered: "indeed she does; and, Mark, do

not be led away by the stern quiet of her demeanour. To my thinking

she is a girl who might almost die for love."

On the next day Lord Lufton left Framley; and started, according to

his arrangements, for the Norway salmon fishing.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Goat and Compasses

Harold Smith had been made unhappy by that rumour of a dissolution;

but the misfortune to him would be as nothing compared to the

severity with which it would fall on Mr. Sowerby. Harold Smith might

or might not lose his borough, but Mr. Sowerby would undoubtedly lose

his county; and, in losing that, he would lose everything. He felt

very certain now that the duke would not support him again, let who

would be master of Chaldicotes; and as he reflected on these things

he found it very hard to keep up his spirits. Tom Towers, it seems,

had known all about it, as he always does. The little remark which

had dropped from him at Miss Dunstable's, made, no doubt, after

mature deliberation, and with profound political motives, was the

forerunner, only by twelve hours, of a very general report that the

giants were going to the country. It was manifest that the giants had

not a majority in Parliament, generous as had been the promises of

support disinterestedly made to them by the gods. This indeed was

manifest, and therefore they were going to the country, although they

had been deliberately warned by a very prominent scion of Olympus

that if they did do so that disinterested support must be withdrawn.

This threat did not seem to weigh much, and by two o'clock on the day

following Miss Dunstable's party, the fiat was presumed to have gone

forth. The rumour had begun with Tom Towers, but by that time it had

reached Buggins at the Petty Bag Office. "It won't make no difference

to hus, sir; will it, Mr. Robarts?" said Buggins, as he leaned

respectfully against the wall near the door, in the room of the

private secretary at that establishment.

A good deal of conversation, miscellaneous, special, and political,

went on between young Robarts and Buggins in the course of the day;

as was natural, seeing that they were thrown in these evil times very

much upon each other. The Lord Petty Bag of the present ministry was

not such a one as Harold Smith. He was a giant indifferent to his

private notes, and careless as to the duties even of patronage; he

rarely visited the office, and as there were no other clerks in the

establishment--owing to a root and branch reform carried out in the

short reign of Harold Smith--to whom could young Robarts talk, if not

to Buggins? "No; I suppose not," said Robarts, as he completed on his

blotting-paper an elaborate picture of a Turk seated on his divan.

"'Cause, you see, sir, we're in the Upper 'Ouse, now--as I always

thinks we hought to be. I don't think it ain't constitutional for

the Petty Bag to be in the Commons, Mr. Robarts. Hany ways, it never

usen't."

"They're changing all those sort of things nowadays, Buggins," said

Robarts, giving the final touch to the Turk's smoke.

"Well; I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Robarts: I think I'll go. I

can't stand all these changes. I'm turned of sixty now, and don't

want any 'stifflicates. I think I'll take my pension and walk. The

hoffice ain't the same place at all since it come down among the

Commons." And then Buggins retired sighing, to console himself with a

pot of porter behind a large open office ledger, set up on end on a

small table in the little lobby outside the private secretary's room.

Buggins sighed again as he saw that the date made visible in the open

book was almost as old as his own appointment; for such a book as

this lasted long in the Petty Bag Office. A peer of high degree had

been Lord Petty Bag in those days; one whom a messenger's heart could

respect with infinite veneration, as he made his unaccustomed visits

to the office with much solemnity--perhaps four times during the

session. The Lord Petty Bag then was highly regarded by his staff,

and his coming among them was talked about for some hours previously

and for some days afterwards; but Harold Smith had bustled in and out

like the managing clerk in a Manchester house. "The service is going

to the dogs," said Buggins to himself, as he put down the porter pot,

and looked up over the book at a gentleman who presented himself at

the door. "Mr. Robarts in his room?" said Buggins, repeating the

gentleman's words. "Yes, Mr. Sowerby; you'll find him there--first

door to the left." And then, remembering that the visitor was a

county member--a position which Buggins regarded as next to that of a

peer--he got up, and, opening the private secretary's door, ushered

in the visitor.

Young Robarts and Mr. Sowerby had, of course, become acquainted in

the days of Harold Smith's reign. During that short time the member

for East Barset had on most days dropped in at the Petty Bag Office

for a minute or two, finding out what the energetic Cabinet minister

was doing, chatting on semi-official subjects, and teaching the

private secretary to laugh at his master. There was nothing,

therefore, in his present visit which need appear to be singular, or

which required any immediate special explanation. He sat himself down

in his ordinary way, and began to speak of the subject of the day.

"We're all to go," said Sowerby.

"So I hear," said the private secretary. "It will give me no trouble,

for, as the respectable Buggins says, we're in the Upper House now."

"What a delightful time those lucky dogs of lords do have!" said

Sowerby. "No constituents, no turning out, no fighting, no necessity

for political opinions; and, as a rule, no such opinions at all!"

"I suppose you're tolerably safe in East Barsetshire?" said Robarts.

"The duke has it pretty much his own way there."

"Yes; the duke does have it pretty much his own way. By the by, where

is your brother?"

"At home," said Robarts; "at least I presume so."

"At Framley or at Barchester? I believe he was in residence at

Barchester not long since."

"He's at Framley now, I know. I got a letter only yesterday from

his wife, with a commission. He was there, and Lord Lufton had just

left."

"Yes; Lufton was down. He started for Norway this morning. I want to

see your brother. You have not heard from him yourself, have you?"

"No; not lately. Mark is a bad correspondent. He would not do at all

for a private secretary."

"At any rate, not to Harold Smith. But you are sure I should not

catch him at Barchester?"

"Send down by telegraph, and he would meet you."

"I don't want to do that. A telegraph message makes such a fuss in

the country, frightening people's wives, and setting all the horses

about the place galloping."

"What is it about?"

"Nothing of any great consequence. I didn't know whether he might

have told you. I'll write down by to-night's post, and then he can

meet me at Barchester to-morrow. Or do you write. There's nothing

I hate so much as letter-writing; just tell him that I called, and

that I shall be much obliged if he can meet me at the Dragon of

Wantly--say at two to-morrow. I will go down by the express."

Mark Robarts, in talking over this coming money trouble with Sowerby,

had once mentioned that if it were necessary to take up the bill for

a short time he might be able to borrow the money from his brother.

So much of the father's legacy still remained in the hands of the

private secretary as would enable him to produce the amount of the

latter bill, and there could be no doubt that he would lend it if

asked. Mr. Sowerby's visit to the Petty Bag Office had been caused by

a desire to learn whether any such request had been made--and also

by a half-formed resolution to make the request himself if he should

find that the clergyman had not done so. It seemed to him to be

a pity that such a sum should be lying about, as it were, within

reach, and that he should not stoop to put his hands upon it. Such

abstinence would be so contrary to all the practice of his life that

it was as difficult to him as it is for a sportsman to let pass a

cock-pheasant. But yet something like remorse touched his heart as he

sat there balancing himself on his chair in the private secretary's

room, and looking at the young man's open face.

"Yes; I'll write to him," said John Robarts; "but he hasn't said

anything to me about anything particular."

"Hasn't he? It does not much signify. I only mentioned it because I

thought I understood him to say that he would." And then Mr. Sowerby

went on swinging himself. How was it that he felt so averse to

mention that little sum of Â£500 to a young man like John Robarts,

a fellow without wife or children or calls on him of any sort, who

would not even be injured by the loss of the money, seeing that

he had an ample salary on which to live? He wondered at his own

weakness. The want of the money was urgent on him in the extreme. He

had reasons for supposing that Mark would find it very difficult to

renew the bills, but he, Sowerby, could stop their presentation if he

could get this money at once into his own hands.

"Can I do anything for you?" said the innocent lamb, offering his

throat to the butcher. But some unwonted feeling numbed the butcher's

fingers, and blunted his knife. He sat still for half a minute after

the question, and then jumping from his seat, declined the offer.

"No, no; nothing, thank you. Only write to Mark, and say that I shall

be there to-morrow," and then, taking his hat, he hurried out of the

office. "What an ass I am," he said to himself as he went: "as if it

were of any use now to be particular!"

He then got into a cab and had himself driven half-way up Portman

Street towards the New Road, and walking from thence a few hundred

yards down a cross-street he came to a public-house. It was called

the "Goat and Compasses,"--a very meaningless name, one would say;

but the house boasted of being a place of public entertainment very

long established on that site, having been a tavern out in the

country in the days of Cromwell. At that time the pious landlord,

putting up a pious legend for the benefit of his pious customers, had

declared that--"God encompasseth us." The "Goat and Compasses" in

these days does quite as well; and, considering the present character

of the house, was perhaps less unsuitable than the old legend. "Is

Mr. Austen here?" asked Mr. Sowerby of the man at the bar.

"Which on 'em? Not Mr. John; he ain't here. Mr. Tom is in--the little

room on the left-hand side." The man whom Mr. Sowerby would have

preferred to see was the elder brother, John; but as he was not to

be found, he did go into the little room. In that room he found--Mr.

Austen, junior, according to one arrangement of nomenclature, and Mr.

Tom Tozer according to another. To gentlemen of the legal profession

he generally chose to introduce himself as belonging to the

respectable family of the Austens; but among his intimates he had

always been--Tozer. Mr. Sowerby, though he was intimate with the

family, did not love the Tozers: but he especially hated Tom Tozer.

Tom Tozer was a bull-necked, beetle-browed fellow, the expression of

whose face was eloquent with acknowledged roguery. "I am a rogue,"

it seemed to say. "I know it; all the world knows it: but you're

another. All the world don't know that, but I do. Men are all rogues,

pretty nigh. Some are soft rogues, and some are 'cute rogues. I am a

'cute one; so mind your eye." It was with such words that Tom Tozer's

face spoke out; and though a thorough liar in his heart, he was not a

liar in his face. "Well, Tozer," said Mr. Sowerby, absolutely shaking

hands with the dirty miscreant, "I wanted to see your brother."

"John ain't here, and ain't like; but it's all as one."

"Yes, yes; I suppose it is. I know you two hunt in couples."

"I don't know what you mean about hunting, Mr. Sowerby. You gents 'as

all the hunting, and we poor folk 'as all the work. I hope you're

going to make up this trifle of money we're out of so long."

"It's about that I've called. I don't know what you call long, Tozer;

but the last bill was only dated in February."

"It's overdue; ain't it?"

"Oh, yes; it's overdue. There's no doubt about that."

"Well; when a bit of paper is come round, the next thing is to take

it up. Them's my ideas. And to tell you the truth, Mr. Sowerby, we

don't think as 'ow you've been treating us just on the square lately.

In that matter of Lord Lufton's you was down on us uncommon."

"You know I couldn't help myself."

"Well; and we can't help ourselves now. That's where it is, Mr.

Sowerby. Lord love you; we know what's what, we do. And so, the fact

is we're uncommon low as to the ready just at present, and we must

have them few hundred pounds. We must have them at once, or we must

sell up that clerical gent. I'm dashed if it ain't as hard to get

money from a parson as it is to take a bone from a dog. 'E's 'ad 'is

account, no doubt, and why don't 'e pay?" Mr. Sowerby had called

with the intention of explaining that he was about to proceed to

Barchester on the following day with the express view of "making

arrangements" about this bill; and had he seen John Tozer, John would

have been compelled to accord to him some little extension of time.

Both Tom and John knew this; and, therefore, John--the soft-hearted

one--kept out of the way. There was no danger that Tom would be

weak; and, after some half-hour of parley, he was again left by Mr.

Sowerby, without having evinced any symptom of weakness.

"It's the dibs as we want, Mr. Sowerby; that's all," were the last

words which he spoke as the member of Parliament left the room. Mr.

Sowerby then got into another cab, and had himself driven to his

sister's house. It is a remarkable thing with reference to men who

are distressed for money--distressed as was now the case with Mr.

Sowerby--that they never seem at a loss for small sums, or deny

themselves those luxuries which small sums purchase. Cabs, dinners,

wine, theatres, and new gloves are always at the command of men who

are drowned in pecuniary embarrassments, whereas those who don't owe

a shilling are so frequently obliged to go without them! It would

seem that there is no gratification so costly as that of keeping out

of debt. But then it is only fair that, if a man has a hobby, he

should pay for it. Any one else would have saved his shilling, as

Mrs. Harold Smith's house was only just across Oxford Street, in the

neighbourhood of Hanover Square; but Mr. Sowerby never thought of

this. He had never saved a shilling in his life, and it did not occur

to him to begin now. He had sent word to her to remain at home for

him, and he now found her waiting. "Harriet," said he, throwing

himself back into an easy chair, "the game is pretty well up at

last."

"Nonsense," said she. "The game is not up at all if you have the

spirit to carry it on."

"I can only say that I got a formal notice this morning from the

duke's lawyer, saying that he meant to foreclose at once;--not from

Fothergill, but from those people in South Audley Street."

"You expected that," said his sister.

"I don't see how that makes it any better; besides, I am not quite

sure that I did expect it; at any rate I did not feel certain. There

is no doubt now."

"It is better that there should be no doubt. It is much better that

you should know on what ground you have to stand."

"I shall soon have no ground to stand on, none at least of my

own--not an acre," said the unhappy man, with great bitterness in his

tone.

"You can't in reality be poorer now than you were last year. You

have not spent anything to speak of. There can be no doubt that

Chaldicotes will be ample to pay all you owe the duke."

"It's as much as it will; and what am I to do then? I almost think

more of the seat than I do of Chaldicotes."

"You know what I advise," said Mrs. Smith. "Ask Miss Dunstable to

advance the money on the same security which the duke holds. She will

be as safe then as he is now. And if you can arrange that, stand for

the county against him; perhaps you may be beaten."

"I shouldn't have a chance."

"But it would show that you are not a creature in the duke's hands.

That's my advice," said Mrs. Smith, with much spirit; "and if you

wish, I'll broach it to Miss Dunstable, and ask her to get her lawyer

to look into it."

"If I had done this before I had run my head into that other

absurdity!"

"Don't fret yourself about that; she will lose nothing by such an

investment, and therefore you are not asking any favour of her.

Besides, did she not make the offer? and she is just the woman to do

this for you now, because she refused to do that other thing for you

yesterday. You understand most things, Nathaniel; but I am not sure

that you understand women; not, at any rate, such a woman as her." It

went against the grain with Mr. Sowerby, this seeking of pecuniary

assistance from the very woman whose hand he had attempted to gain

about a fortnight since; but he allowed his sister to prevail. What

could any man do in such straits that would not go against the grain?

At the present moment he felt in his mind an infinite hatred against

the duke, Mr. Fothergill, Gumption & Gazebee, and all the tribes of

Gatherum Castle and South Audley Street; they wanted to rob him of

that which had belonged to the Sowerbys before the name of Omnium

had been heard of in the county, or in England! The great leviathan

of the deep was anxious to swallow him up as a prey! He was to be

swallowed up, and made away with, and put out of sight, without a

pang of remorse. Any measure which could now present itself as the

means of staving off so evil a day would be acceptable; and therefore

he gave his sister the commission of making this second proposal

to Miss Dunstable. In cursing the duke--for he did curse the duke

lustily--it hardly occurred to him to think that, after all, the duke

only asked for his own. As for Mrs. Harold Smith, whatever may be

the view taken of her general character as a wife and a member of

society, it must be admitted that as a sister she had virtues.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Consolation

On the next day at two o'clock punctually, Mark Robarts was at the

"Dragon of Wantly," walking up and down the very room in which the

party had breakfasted after Harold Smith's lecture, and waiting for

the arrival of Mr. Sowerby. He had been very well able to divine what

was the business on which his friend wished to see him, and he had

been rather glad than otherwise to receive the summons. Judging of

his friend's character by what he had hitherto seen, he thought that

Mr. Sowerby would have kept out of the way, unless he had it in his

power to make some provision for these terrible bills. So he walked

up and down the dingy room, impatient for the expected arrival, and

thought himself wickedly ill-used in that Mr. Sowerby was not there

when the clock struck a quarter to three. But when the clock struck

three, Mr. Sowerby was there, and Mark Robarts's hopes were nearly at

an end.

"Do you mean that they will demand nine hundred pounds?" said

Robarts, standing up and glaring angrily at the member of Parliament.

"I fear that they will," said Sowerby. "I think it is best to tell

you the worst, in order that we may see what can be done."

"I can do nothing, and will do nothing," said Robarts. "They may do

what they choose--what the law allows them." And then he thought of

Fanny and his nursery, and Lucy refusing in her pride Lord Lufton's

offer, and he turned away his face that the hard man of the world

before him might not see the tear gathering in his eye.

"But, Mark, my dear fellow--" said Sowerby, trying to have recourse

to the power of his cajoling voice. Robarts, however, would not

listen.

"Mr. Sowerby," said he, with an attempt at calmness which betrayed

itself at every syllable, "it seems to me that you have robbed

me. That I have been a fool, and worse than a fool, I know well;

but--but--but I thought that your position in the world would

guarantee me from such treatment as this." Mr. Sowerby was by no

means without feeling, and the words which he now heard cut him very

deeply--the more so because it was impossible that he should answer

them with an attempt at indignation. He had robbed his friend, and,

with all his wit, knew no words at the present moment sufficiently

witty to make it seem that he had not done so. "Robarts," said he,

"you may say what you like to me now; I shall not resent it."

"Who would care for your resentment?" said the clergyman, turning on

him with ferocity. "The resentment of a gentleman is terrible to a

gentleman; and the resentment of one just man is terrible to another.

Your resentment!"--and then he walked twice the length of the room,

leaving Sowerby dumb in his seat. "I wonder whether you ever thought

of my wife and children when you were plotting this ruin for me!" And

then again he walked the room.

"I suppose you will be calm enough presently to speak of this with

some attempt to make a settlement?"

"No; I will make no such attempt. These friends of yours, you tell

me, have a claim on me for nine hundred pounds, of which they demand

immediate payment. You shall be asked in a court of law how much of

that money I have handled. You know that I have never touched--have

never wanted to touch--one shilling. I will make no attempt at any

settlement. My person is here, and there is my house. Let them do

their worst."

"But, Mark--"

"Call me by my name, sir, and drop that affectation of regard. What

an ass I have been to be so cozened by a sharper!" Sowerby had by no

means expected this. He had always known that Robarts possessed what

he, Sowerby, would have called the spirit of a gentleman. He had

regarded him as a bold, open, generous fellow, able to take his own

part when called on to do so, and by no means disinclined to speak

his own mind; but he had not expected from him such a torrent of

indignation, or thought that he was capable of such a depth of anger.

"If you use such language as that, Robarts, I can only leave you."

"You are welcome. Go. You tell me that you are the messenger of these

men who intend to work nine hundred pounds out of me. You have done

your part in the plot, and have now brought their message. It seems

to me that you had better go back to them. As for me, I want my time

to prepare my wife for the destiny before her."

"Robarts, you will be sorry some day for the cruelty of your words."

"I wonder whether you will ever be sorry for the cruelty of your

doings, or whether these things are really a joke to you."

"I am at this moment a ruined man," said Sowerby. "Everything is

going from me,--my place in the world, the estate of my family, my

father's house, my seat in Parliament, the power of living among my

countrymen, or, indeed, of living anywhere;--but all this does not

oppress me now so much as the misery which I have brought upon you."

And then Sowerby also turned away his face, and wiped from his eyes

tears which were not artificial. Robarts was still walking up and

down the room, but it was not possible for him to continue his

reproaches after this. This is always the case. Let a man endure to

heap contumely on his own head, and he will silence the contumely of

others--for the moment. Sowerby, without meditating on the matter,

had had some inkling of this, and immediately saw that there was at

last an opening for conversation. "You are unjust to me," said he,

"in supposing that I have now no wish to save you. It is solely in

the hope of doing so that I have come here."

"And what is your hope? That I should accept another brace of bills,

I suppose."

"Not a brace; but one renewed bill for--"

"Look here, Mr. Sowerby. On no earthly consideration that can be put

before me will I again sign my name to any bill in the guise of an

acceptance. I have been very weak, and am ashamed of my weakness; but

so much strength as that, I hope, is left to me. I have been very

wicked, and am ashamed of my wickedness; but so much right principle

as that, I hope, remains. I will put my name to no other bill; not

for you, not even for myself."

"But, Robarts, under your present circumstances that will be

madness."

"Then I will be mad."

"Have you seen Forrest? If you will speak to him I think you will

find that everything can be accommodated."

"I already owe Mr. Forrest a hundred and fifty pounds, which I

obtained from him when you pressed me for the price of that horse,

and I will not increase the debt. What a fool I was again there!

Perhaps you do not remember that, when I agreed to buy the horse, the

price was to be my contribution to the liquidation of these bills."

"I do remember it; but I will tell you how that was."

"It does not signify. It has been all of a piece."

"But listen to me. I think you would feel for me if you knew all

that I have gone through. I pledge you my solemn word that I

had no intention of asking you for the money when you took the

horse;--indeed I had not. But you remember that affair of Lufton's,

when he came to you at your hotel in London and was so angry about an

outstanding bill."

"I know that he was very unreasonable as far as I was concerned."

"He was so; but that makes no difference. He was resolved, in his

rage, to expose the whole affair; and I saw that, if he did so, it

would be most injurious to you, seeing that you had just accepted

your stall at Barchester." Here the poor prebendary winced terribly.

"I moved heaven and earth to get up that bill. Those vultures stuck

to their prey when they found the value which I attached to it, and I

was forced to raise above a hundred pounds at the moment to obtain

possession of it, although every shilling absolutely due on it had

long since been paid. Never in my life did I wish to get money as I

did to raise that hundred and twenty pounds: and as I hope for mercy

in my last moments, I did that for your sake. Lufton could not have

injured me in that matter."

"But you told him that you got it for twenty-five pounds."

"Yes, I told him so. I was obliged to tell him that, or I should have

apparently condemned myself by showing how anxious I was to get it.

And you know I could not have explained all this before him and you.

You would have thrown up the stall in disgust." Would that he had!

That was Mark's wish now,--his futile wish. In what a slough of

despond had he come to wallow in consequence of his folly on that

night at Gatherum Castle! He had then done a silly thing, and was he

now to rue it by almost total ruin? He was sickened also with all

these lies. His very soul was dismayed by the dirt through which he

was forced to wade. He had become unconsciously connected with the

lowest dregs of mankind, and would have to see his name mingled with

theirs in the daily newspapers. And for what had he done this? Why

had he thus filed his mind and made himself a disgrace to his cloth?

In order that he might befriend such a one as Mr. Sowerby!

"Well," continued Sowerby, "I did get the money, but you would

hardly believe the rigour of the pledge which was exacted from me

for repayment. I got it from Harold Smith, and never, in my worst

straits, will I again look to him for assistance. I borrowed it only

for a fortnight; and in order that I might repay it, I was obliged to

ask you for the price of the horse. Mark, it was on your behalf that

I did all this,--indeed it was."

"And now I am to repay you for your kindness by the loss of all that

I have in the world."

"If you will put the affair into the hands of Mr. Forrest, nothing

need be touched,--not a hair of a horse's back; no, not though you

should be obliged to pay the whole amount yourself gradually out

of your income. You must execute a series of bills, falling due

quarterly, and then--"

"I will execute no bill, I will put my name to no paper in the

matter; as to that my mind is fully made up. They may come and do

their worst." Mr. Sowerby persevered for a long time, but he was

quite unable to move the parson from this position. He would do

nothing towards making what Mr. Sowerby called an arrangement, but

persisted that he would remain at home at Framley, and that any one

who had a claim upon him might take legal steps. "I shall do nothing

myself," he said; "but if proceedings against me be taken, I shall

prove that I have never had a shilling of the money." And in this

resolution he quitted the Dragon of Wantly. Mr. Sowerby at one time

said a word as to the expediency of borrowing that sum of money from

John Robarts; but as to this Mark would say nothing. Mr. Sowerby was

not the friend with whom he now intended to hold consultation in such

matters. "I am not at present prepared," he said, "to declare what

I may do; I must first see what steps others take." And then he

took his hat and went off; and mounting his horse in the yard of the

Dragon of Wantly--that horse which he had now so many reasons to

dislike--he slowly rode back home.

Many thoughts passed through his mind during that ride, but only one

resolution obtained for itself a fixture there. He must now tell his

wife everything. He would not be so cruel as to let it remain untold

until a bailiff were at the door, ready to walk him off to the county

jail, or until the bed on which they slept was to be sold from under

them. Yes, he would tell her everything,--immediately, before his

resolution could again have faded away. He got off his horse in the

yard, and seeing his wife's maid at the kitchen door, desired her to

beg her mistress to come to him in the book-room. He would not allow

one half-hour to pass towards the waning of his purpose. If it be

ordained that a man shall drown, had he not better drown and have

done with it? Mrs. Robarts came to him in his room, reaching him in

time to touch his arm as he entered it. "Mary says you want me. I

have been gardening, and she caught me just as I came in."

"Yes, Fanny, I do want you. Sit down for a moment." And walking

across the room, he placed his whip in its proper place.

"Oh, Mark, is there anything the matter?"

"Yes, dearest; yes. Sit down, Fanny: I can talk to you better if you

will sit." But she, poor lady, did not wish to sit. He had hinted at

some misfortune, and therefore she felt a longing to stand by him and

cling to him.

"Well, there; I will if I must; but, Mark, do not frighten me. Why is

your face so very wretched?"

"Fanny, I have done very wrong," he said. "I have been very foolish.

I fear that I have brought upon you great sorrow and trouble." And

then he leaned his head upon his hand and turned his face away from

her.

"Oh, Mark, dearest Mark, my own Mark! what is it?" and then she was

quickly up from her chair, and went down on her knees before him. "Do

not turn from me. Tell me, Mark! tell me, that we may share it."

"Yes, Fanny, I must tell you now; but I hardly know what you will

think of me when you have heard it."

"I will think that you are my own husband, Mark; I will think

that--that chiefly, whatever it may be." And then she caressed his

knees, and looked up in his face, and, getting hold of one of his

hands, pressed it between her own. "Even if you have been foolish,

who should forgive you if I cannot?" And then he told it her all,

beginning from that evening when Mr. Sowerby had got him into his

bedroom, and going on gradually, now about the bills, and now about

the horses, till his poor wife was utterly lost in the complexity of

the accounts. She could by no means follow him in the details of his

story; nor could she quite sympathize with him in his indignation

against Mr. Sowerby, seeing that she did not comprehend at all the

nature of the renewing of a bill. The only part to her of importance

in the matter was the amount of money which her husband would be

called upon to pay; that, and her strong hope, which was already a

conviction, that he would never again incur such debts.

"And how much is it, dearest, altogether?"

"These men claim nine hundred pounds of me."

"Oh, dear! that is a terrible sum."

"And then there is the hundred and fifty which I have borrowed from

the bank--the price of the horse, you know; and there are some other

debts,--not a great deal, I think; but people will now look for every

shilling that is due to them. If I have to pay it all, it will be

twelve or thirteen hundred pounds."

"That will be as much as a year's income, Mark; even with the stall."

That was the only word of reproach she said--if that could be called

a reproach.

"Yes," he said; "and it is claimed by men who will have no pity in

exacting it at any sacrifice, if they have the power. And to think

that I should have incurred all this debt without having received

anything for it. Oh, Fanny, what will you think of me!" But she swore

to him that she would think nothing of it--that she would never bear

it in her mind against him--that it could have no effect in lessening

her trust in him. Was he not her husband? She was so glad she knew

it, that she might comfort him. And she did comfort him, making the

weight seem lighter and lighter on his shoulders as he talked of it.

And such weights do thus become lighter. A burden that will crush a

single pair of shoulders will, when equally divided--when shared by

two, each of whom is willing to take the heavier part--become light

as a feather. Is not that sharing of the mind's burdens one of the

chief purposes for which a man wants a wife? For there is no folly

so great as keeping one's sorrows hidden. And this wife cheerfully,

gladly, thankfully took her share. To endure with her lord all her

lord's troubles was easy to her; it was the work to which she had

pledged herself. But to have thought that her lord had troubles not

communicated to her,--that would have been to her the one thing not

to be borne. And then they discussed their plans; what mode of escape

they might have out of this terrible money difficulty. Like a true

woman, Mrs. Robarts proposed at once to abandon all superfluities.

They would sell all their horses; they would not sell their cows,

but would sell the butter that came from them; they would sell the

pony-carriage, and get rid of the groom. That the footman must go was

so much a matter of course, that it was hardly mentioned. But then,

as to that house at Barchester, the dignified prebendal mansion in

the close--might they not be allowed to leave it unoccupied for one

year longer--perhaps to let it? The world of course must know of

their misfortune; but if that misfortune was faced bravely, the world

would be less bitter in its condemnation. And then, above all things,

everything must be told to Lady Lufton.

"You may, at any rate, believe this, Fanny," said he, "that for no

consideration which can be offered to me will I ever put my name to

another bill." The kiss with which she thanked him for this was as

warm and generous as though he had brought to her that day news of

the brightest; and when he sat, as he did that evening, discussing it

all, not only with his wife, but with Lucy, he wondered how it was

that his troubles were now so light. Whether or no a man should have

his own private pleasures, I will not now say; but it never can be

worth his while to keep his sorrows private.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Lady Lufton Is Taken by Surprise

Lord Lufton, as he returned to town, found some difficulty in

resolving what step he would next take. Sometimes, for a minute or

two, he was half inclined to think--or rather to say to himself--that

Lucy was perhaps not worth the trouble which she threw in his way.

He loved her very dearly, and would willingly make her his wife, he

thought or said at such moments; but-- Such moments, however, were

only moments. A man in love seldom loves less because his love

becomes difficult. And thus, when those moments were over, he would

determine to tell his mother at once, and urge her to signify her

consent to Miss Robarts. That she would not be quite pleased he knew;

but if he were firm enough to show that he had a will of his own in

this matter, she would probably not gainsay him. He would not ask

this humbly, as a favour, but request her ladyship to go through the

ceremony as though it were one of those motherly duties which she as

a good mother could not hesitate to perform on behalf of her son.

Such was the final resolve with which he reached his chambers in the

Albany. On the next day he did not see his mother. It would be well,

he thought, to have his interview with her immediately before he

started for Norway, so that there might be no repetition of it; and

it was on the day before he did start that he made his communication,

having invited himself to breakfast in Brook Street on the occasion.

"Mother," he said, quite abruptly, throwing himself into one of the

dining-room arm-chairs, "I have a thing to tell you." His mother at

once knew that the thing was important, and with her own peculiar

motherly instinct imagined that the question to be discussed had

reference to matrimony. Had her son desired to speak to her about

money, his tone and look would have been different; as would also

have been the case--in a different way--had he entertained any

thought of a pilgrimage to Pekin, or a prolonged fishing excursion

to the Hudson Bay Territories.

"A thing, Ludovic! well, I am quite at liberty."

"I want to know what you think of Lucy Robarts?" Lady Lufton became

pale and frightened, and the blood ran cold to her heart. She had

feared more than rejoiced in conceiving that her son was about to

talk of love, but she had feared nothing so bad as this.

"What do I think of Lucy Robarts?" she said, repeating her son's

words in a tone of evident dismay.

"Yes, mother; you have said once or twice lately that you thought I

ought to marry, and I am beginning to think so too. You selected one

clergyman's daughter for me, but that lady is going to do much better

with herself--"

"Indeed she is not," said Lady Lufton sharply.

"And therefore I rather think I shall select for myself another

clergyman's sister. You don't dislike Miss Robarts, I hope?"

"Oh, Ludovic!" It was all that Lady Lufton could say at the spur of

the moment.

"Is there any harm in her! Have you any objection to her? Is there

anything about her that makes her unfit to be my wife?"

For a moment or two Lady Lufton sat silent, collecting her thoughts.

She thought that there was very great objection to Lucy Robarts,

regarding her as the possible future Lady Lufton. She could hardly

have stated all her reasons, but they were very cogent. Lucy Robarts

had, in her eyes, neither beauty, nor style, nor manner, nor even the

education which was desirable. Lady Lufton was not herself a worldly

woman. She was almost as far removed from being so as a woman could

be in her position. But, nevertheless, there were certain worldly

attributes which she regarded as essential to the character of any

young lady who might be considered fit to take the place which she

herself had so long filled. It was her desire in looking for a wife

for her son to combine these with certain moral excellences which

she regarded as equally essential. Lucy Robarts might have the moral

excellences, or she might not; but as to the other attributes Lady

Lufton regarded her as altogether deficient. She could never look

like a Lady Lufton, or carry herself in the county as a Lady Lufton

should do. She had not that quiet personal demeanour--that dignity of

repose--which Lady Lufton loved to look upon in a young married woman

of rank. Lucy, she would have said, could be nobody in a room except

by dint of her tongue, whereas Griselda Grantly would have held her

peace for a whole evening, and yet would have impressed everybody

by the majesty of her presence. Then again Lucy had no money--and,

again, Lucy was only the sister of her own parish clergyman. People

are rarely prophets in their own country, and Lucy was no prophet

at Framley; she was none, at least, in the eyes of Lady Lufton.

Once before, as may be remembered, she had had fears on this

subject--fears, not so much for her son, whom she could hardly bring

herself to suspect of such a folly, but for Lucy, who might be

foolish enough to fancy that the lord was in love with her. Alas!

alas! her son's question fell upon the poor woman at the present

moment with the weight of a terrible blow. "Is there anything about

her which makes her unfit to be my wife?" Those were her son's last

words.

"Dearest Ludovic, dearest Ludovic!" and she got up and came over to

him, "I do think so; I do, indeed."

"Think what?" said he, in a tone that was almost angry.

"I do think that she is unfit to be your wife. She is not of that

class from which I would wish to see you choose."

"She is of the same class as Griselda Grantly."

"No, dearest. I think you are in error there. The Grantlys have moved

in a different sphere of life. I think you must feel that they are--"

"Upon my word, mother, I don't. One man is Rector of Plumstead, and

the other is Vicar of Framley. But it is no good arguing that. I want

you to take to Lucy Robarts. I have come to you on purpose to ask it

of you as a favour."

"Do you mean as your wife, Ludovic?"

"Yes; as my wife."

"Am I to understand that you are--are engaged to her?"

"Well, I cannot say that I am--not actually engaged to her. But you

may take this for granted, that, as far as it lies in my power, I

intend to become so. My mind is made up, and I certainly shall not

alter it."

"And the young lady knows all this?"

"Certainly."

"Horrid, sly, detestable, underhand girl," Lady Lufton said to

herself, not being by any means brave enough to speak out such

language before her son. What hope could there be if Lord Lufton had

already committed himself by a positive offer? "And her brother, and

Mrs. Robarts; are they aware of it?"

"Yes; both of them."

"And both approve of it?"

"Well, I cannot say that. I have not seen Mrs. Robarts, and do not

know what may be her opinion. To speak my mind honestly about Mark,

I do not think he does cordially approve. He is afraid of you, and

would be desirous of knowing what you think."

"I am glad, at any rate, to hear that," said Lady Lufton, gravely.

"Had he done anything to encourage this, it would have been very

base." And then there was another short period of silence. Lord

Lufton had determined not to explain to his mother the whole state

of the case. He would not tell her that everything depended on her

word--that Lucy was ready to marry him only on condition that she,

Lady Lufton, would desire her to do so. He would not let her know

that everything depended on her--according to Lucy's present verdict.

He had a strong disinclination to ask his mother's permission to get

married; and he would have to ask it were he to tell her the whole

truth. His object was to make her think well of Lucy, and to induce

her to be kind, and generous, and affectionate down at Framley. Then

things would all turn out comfortably when he again visited that

place, as he intended to do on his return from Norway. So much he

thought it possible he might effect, relying on his mother's probable

calculation that it would be useless for her to oppose a measure

which she had no power of stopping by authority. But were he to tell

her that she was to be the final judge, that everything was to depend

on her will, then, so thought Lord Lufton, that permission would in

all probability be refused.

"Well, mother, what answer do you intend to give me?" he said. "My

mind is positively made up. I should not have come to you had not

that been the case. You will now be going down home, and I would wish

you to treat Lucy as you yourself would wish to treat any girl to

whom you knew that I was engaged."

"But you say that you are not engaged."

"No, I am not; but I have made my offer to her, and I have not been

rejected. She has confessed that she--loves me,--not to myself,

but to her brother. Under these circumstances, may I count upon

your obliging me?" There was something in his manner which almost

frightened his mother, and made her think that there was more behind

than was told to her. Generally speaking, his manner was open,

gentle, and unguarded; but now he spoke as though he had prepared his

words, and was resolved on being harsh as well as obstinate.

"I am so much taken by surprise, Ludovic, that I can hardly give you

an answer. If you ask me whether I approve of such a marriage, I must

say that I do not; I think that you would be throwing yourself away

in marrying Miss Robarts."

"That is because you do not know her."

"May it not be possible that I know her better than you do, dear

Ludovic? You have been flirting with her--"

"I hate that word; it always sounds to me to be vulgar."

"I will say making love to her, if you like it better; and gentlemen

under these circumstances will sometimes become infatuated."

"You would not have a man marry a girl without making love to her.

The fact is, mother, that your tastes and mine are not exactly the

same; you like silent beauty, whereas I like talking beauty, and

then--"

"Do you call Miss Robarts beautiful?"

"Yes, I do; very beautiful; she has the beauty that I admire.

Good-bye now, mother; I shall not see you again before I start. It

will be no use writing, as I shall be away so short a time, and I

don't quite know where we shall be. I shall come down to Framley

immediately I return, and shall learn from you how the land lies. I

have told you my wishes, and you will consider how far you think it

right to fall in with them." He then kissed her, and without waiting

for her reply he took his leave. Poor Lady Lufton, when she was left

to herself, felt that her head was going round and round. Was this

to be the end of all her ambition,--of all her love for her son? and

was this to be the result of all her kindness to the Robartses? She

almost hated Mark Robarts as she reflected that she had been the

means of bringing him and his sister to Framley. She thought over all

his sins, his absences from the parish, his visit to Gatherum Castle,

his dealings with reference to that farm which was to have been sold,

his hunting, and then his acceptance of that stall, given, as she had

been told, through the Omnium interest. How could she love him at

such a moment as this? And then she thought of his wife. Could it be

possible that Fanny Robarts, her own friend Fanny, would be so untrue

to her as to lend any assistance to such a marriage as this; as not

to use all her power in preventing it? She had spoken to Fanny on

this very subject--not fearing for her son, but with a general idea

of the impropriety of intimacies between such girls as Lucy and such

men as Lord Lufton, and then Fanny had agreed with her. Could it be

possible that even she must be regarded as an enemy? And then by

degrees Lady Lufton began to reflect what steps she had better take.

In the first place, should she give in at once, and consent to the

marriage? The only thing quite certain to her was this, that life

would be not worth having if she were forced into a permanent quarrel

with her son. Such an event would probably kill her. When she read of

quarrels in other noble families--and the accounts of such quarrels

will sometimes, unfortunately, force themselves upon the attention

of unwilling readers--she would hug herself, with a spirit that was

almost pharisaical, reflecting that her destiny was not like that of

others. Such quarrels and hatreds between fathers and daughters, and

mothers and sons, were in her eyes disreputable to all the persons

concerned. She had lived happily with her husband, comfortably with

her neighbours, respectably with the world, and, above all things,

affectionately with her children. She spoke everywhere of Lord Lufton

as though he were nearly perfect,--and in so speaking, she had not

belied her convictions. Under these circumstances, would not any

marriage be better than a quarrel? But, then, again, how much of the

pride of her daily life would be destroyed by such a match as that!

And might it not be within her power to prevent it without any

quarrel? That her son would be sick of such a chit as Lucy before he

had been married to her six months--of that Lady Lufton entertained

no doubt, and therefore her conscience would not be disquieted in

disturbing the consummation of an arrangement so pernicious. It was

evident that the matter was not considered as settled even by her

son; and also evident that he regarded the matter as being in some

way dependent on his mother's consent. On the whole, might it not be

better for her--better for them all--that she should think wholly

of her duty, and not of the disagreeable results to which that duty

might possibly lead? It could not be her duty to accede to such an

alliance? and therefore she would do her best to prevent it. Such, at

least, should be her attempt in the first instance.

Having so decided, she next resolved on her course of action.

Immediately on her arrival at Framley, she would send for Lucy

Robarts, and use all her eloquence--and perhaps also a little of that

stern dignity for which she was so remarkable--in explaining to that

young lady how very wicked it was on her part to think of forcing

herself into such a family as that of the Luftons. She would explain

to Lucy that no happiness could come of it, that people placed by

misfortune above their sphere are always miserable; and, in short,

make use of all those excellent moral lessons which are so customary

on such occasions. The morality might perhaps be thrown away; but

Lady Lufton depended much on her dignified sternness. And then,

having so resolved, she prepared for her journey home. Very little

had been said at Framley parsonage about Lord Lufton's offer after

the departure of that gentleman; very little, at least, in Lucy's

presence. That the parson and his wife should talk about it between

themselves was a matter of course; but very few words were spoken on

the matter either by or to Lucy. She was left to her own thoughts,

and possibly to her own hopes. And then other matters came up at

Framley which turned the current of interest into other tracks. In

the first place there was the visit made by Mr. Sowerby to the Dragon

of Wantly, and the consequent revelation made by Mark Robarts to his

wife. And while that latter subject was yet new, before Fanny and

Lucy had as yet made up their minds as to all the little economies

which might be practised in the household without serious detriment

to the master's comfort, news reached them that Mrs. Crawley of

Hogglestock had been stricken with fever. Nothing of the kind could

well be more dreadful than this. To those who knew the family it

seemed impossible that their most ordinary wants could be supplied

if that courageous head were even for a day laid low; and then the

poverty of poor Mr. Crawley was such that the sad necessities of a

sick bed could hardly be supplied without assistance. "I will go over

at once," said Fanny.

"My dear!" said her husband, "it is typhus, and you must first think

of the children. I will go."

"What on earth could you do, Mark?" said his wife. "Men on such

occasions are almost worse than useless; and then they are so much

more liable to infection."

"I have no children, nor am I a man," said Lucy, smiling: "for both

of which exemptions I am thankful. I will go, and when I come back I

will keep clear of the bairns."

So it was settled, and Lucy started in the pony-carriage, carrying

with her such things from the parsonage storehouse as were thought to

be suitable to the wants of the sick lady at Hogglestock. When she

arrived there, she made her way into the house, finding the door

open, and not being able to obtain the assistance of the servant

girl in ushering her in. In the parlour she found Grace Crawley,

the eldest child, sitting demurely in her mother's chair nursing an

infant. She, Grace herself, was still a young child, but not the

less, on this occasion of well-understood sorrow, did she go through

her task, not only with zeal but almost with solemnity. Her brother,

a boy of six years old, was with her, and he had the care of another

baby. There they sat in a cluster, quiet, grave, and silent,

attending on themselves, because it had been willed by fate that no

one else should attend on them. "How is your mamma, dear Grace?" said

Lucy, walking up to her, and holding out her hand.

"Poor mamma is very ill, indeed," said Grace.

"And papa is very unhappy," said Bobby, the boy.

"I can't get up because of baby," said Grace; "but Bobby can go and

call papa out."

"I will knock at the door," said Lucy; and so saying she walked up to

the bedroom door, and tapped against it lightly. She repeated this

for the third time before she was summoned in by a low hoarse voice,

and then on entering she saw Mr. Crawley standing by the bedside with

a book in his hand. He looked at her uncomfortably, in a manner which

seemed to show that he was annoyed by this intrusion, and Lucy was

aware that she had disturbed him while at prayers by the bedside of

his wife. He came across the room, however, and shook hands with her,

and answered her inquiries in his ordinary grave and solemn voice.

"Mrs. Crawley is very ill," he said--"very ill. God has stricken us

heavily, but His will be done. But you had better not go to her, Miss

Robarts. It is typhus."

The caution, however, was too late; for Lucy was already by the

bedside, and had taken the hand of the sick woman, which had been

extended on the coverlid to greet her. "Dear Miss Robarts," said a

weak voice; "this is very good of you; but it makes me unhappy to

see you here." Lucy lost no time in taking sundry matters into her

own hands, and ascertaining what was most wanted in that wretched

household. For it was wretched enough. Their only servant, a girl of

sixteen, had been taken away by her mother as soon as it became known

that Mrs. Crawley was ill with fever. The poor mother, to give her

her due, had promised to come down morning and evening herself, to do

such work as might be done in an hour or so; but she could not, she

said, leave her child to catch the fever. And now, at the period of

Lucy's visit, no step had been taken to procure a nurse, Mr. Crawley

having resolved to take upon himself the duties of that position.

In his absolute ignorance of all sanatory measures, he had thrown

himself on his knees to pray; and if prayers--true prayers--might

succour his poor wife, of such succour she might be confident. Lucy,

however, thought that other aid also was wanting to her. "If you

can do anything for us," said Mrs. Crawley, "let it be for the poor

children."

"I will have them all moved from this till you are better," said

Lucy, boldly.

"Moved!" said Mr. Crawley, who even now--even in his present

strait--felt a repugnance to the idea that any one should relieve him

of any portion of his burden.

"Yes," said Lucy; "I am sure it will be better that you should lose

them for a week or two, till Mrs. Crawley may be able to leave her

room."

"But where are they to go?" said he, very gloomily. As to this Lucy

was not as yet able to say anything. Indeed when she left Framley

parsonage there had been no time for discussion. She would go back

and talk it all over with Fanny, and find out in what way the

children might be best put out of danger. Why should they not all be

harboured at the parsonage, as soon as assurance could be felt that

they were not tainted with the poison of the fever? An English lady

of the right sort will do all things but one for a sick neighbour;

but for no neighbour will she wittingly admit contagious sickness

within the precincts of her own nursery. Lucy unloaded her jellies

and her febrifuges, Mr. Crawley frowning at her bitterly the while.

It had come to this with him, that food had been brought into his

house, as an act of charity, in his very presence, and in his heart

of hearts he disliked Lucy Robarts in that she had brought it.

He could not cause the jars and the pots to be replaced in the

pony-carriage, as he would have done had the position of his wife

been different. In her state it would have been barbarous to refuse

them, and barbarous also to have created the \_fracas\_ of a refusal;

but each parcel that was introduced was an additional weight laid on

the sore withers of his pride, till the total burden became almost

intolerable. All this his wife saw and recognized even in her

illness, and did make some slight ineffectual efforts to give him

ease; but Lucy in her new power was ruthless, and the chicken to

make the chicken-broth was taken out of the basket under his very

nose. But Lucy did not remain long. She had made up her mind what

it behoved her to do herself, and she was soon ready to return to

Framley. "I shall be back again, Mr. Crawley," she said, "probably

this evening, and I shall stay with her till she is better." "Nurses

don't want rooms," she went on to say, when Mr. Crawley muttered

something as to there being no bed-chamber. "I shall make up some

sort of a litter near her; you'll see that I shall be very snug." And

then she got into the pony-chaise, and drove herself home.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Story of King Cophetua

Lucy as she drove herself home had much as to which it was necessary

that she should arouse her thoughts. That she would go back and nurse

Mrs. Crawley through her fever she was resolved. She was free agent

enough to take so much on herself, and to feel sure that she could

carry it through. But how was she to redeem her promise about the

children? Twenty plans ran through her mind, as to farm-houses in

which they might be placed, or cottages which might be hired for

them; but all these entailed the want of money; and at the present

moment, were not all the inhabitants of the parsonage pledged to a

dire economy? This use of the pony-carriage would have been illicit

under any circumstances less pressing than the present, for it had

been decided that the carriage, and even poor Puck himself, should

be sold. She had, however, given her promise about the children, and

though her own stock of money was very low, that promise should be

redeemed.

When she reached the parsonage she was of course full of her schemes,

but she found that another subject of interest had come up in her

absence, which prevented her from obtaining the undivided attention

of her sister-in-law to her present plans. Lady Lufton had returned

that day, and immediately on her return had sent up a note addressed

to Miss Lucy Robarts, which note was in Fanny's hands when Lucy

stepped out of the pony-carriage. The servant who brought it had

asked for an answer, and a verbal answer had been sent, saying that

Miss Robarts was away from home, and would herself send a reply when

she returned. It cannot be denied that the colour came to Lucy's

face, and that her hand trembled when she took the note from Fanny in

the drawing-room. Everything in the world to her might depend on what

that note contained; and yet she did not open it at once, but stood

with it in her hand, and when Fanny pressed her on the subject, still

endeavoured to bring back the conversation to the subject of Mrs.

Crawley. But yet her mind was intent on the letter, and she had

already augured ill from the handwriting and even from the words of

the address. Had Lady Lufton intended to be propitious, she would

have directed her letter to Miss Robarts, without the Christian name;

so at least argued Lucy--quite unconsciously, as one does argue in

such matters. One forms half the conclusions of one's life without

any distinct knowledge that the premises have even passed through

one's mind. They were now alone together, as Mark was out. "Won't you

open her letter?" said Mrs. Robarts.

"Yes, immediately; but, Fanny, I must speak to you about Mrs. Crawley

first. I must go back there this evening, and stay there; I have

promised to do so, and shall certainly keep my promise. I have

promised also that the children shall be taken away, and we must

arrange about that. It is dreadful, the state she is in. There is no

one to see to her but Mr. Crawley, and the children are altogether

left to themselves."

"Do you mean that you are going back to stay?"

"Yes, certainly; I have made a distinct promise that I would do

so. And about the children; could not you manage for the children,

Fanny--not perhaps in the house; at least not at first, perhaps?"

And yet during all the time that she was thus speaking and pleading

for the Crawleys, she was endeavouring to imagine what might be the

contents of that letter which she held between her fingers.

"And is she so very ill?" asked Mrs. Robarts.

"I cannot say how ill she may be, except this, that she certainly has

typhus fever. They have had some doctor or doctor's assistant from

Silverbridge; but it seems to me that they are greatly in want of

better advice."

"But, Lucy, will you not read your letter? It is astonishing to me

that you should be so indifferent about it." Lucy was anything but

indifferent, and now did proceed to tear the envelope. The note was

very short, and ran in these words--

MY DEAR MISS ROBARTS,

I am particularly anxious to see you, and shall feel much

obliged to you if you can step over to me here, at Framley

Court. I must apologize for taking this liberty with you,

but you will probably feel that an interview here would

suit us both better than one at the parsonage.

Truly yours,

M. LUFTON.

"There: I am in for it now," said Lucy, handing the note over to Mrs.

Robarts. "I shall have to be talked to as never poor girl was talked

to before: and when one thinks of what I have done, it is hard."

"Yes; and of what you have not done."

"Exactly; and of what I have not done. But I suppose I must go," and

she proceeded to re-tie the strings of her bonnet, which she had

loosened.

"Do you mean that you are going over at once?"

"Yes; immediately. Why not? it will be better to have it over, and

then I can go to the Crawleys. But, Fanny, the pity of it is that I

know it all as well as though it had been already spoken; and what

good can there be in my having to endure it? Can't you fancy the

tone in which she will explain to me the conventional inconveniences

which arose when King Cophetua would marry the beggar's daughter? how

she will explain what Griselda went through;--not the archdeacon's

daughter, but the other Griselda?"

"But it all came right with her."

"Yes; but then I am not Griselda, and she will explain how it would

certainly all go wrong with me. But what's the good when I know it

all beforehand? Have I not desired King Cophetua to take himself and

sceptre elsewhere?" And then she started, having first said another

word or two about the Crawley children, and obtained a promise of

Puck and the pony-carriage for the afternoon. It was also almost

agreed that Puck on his return to Framley should bring back the four

children with him; but on this subject it was necessary that Mark

should be consulted. The present scheme was to prepare for them a

room outside the house, once the dairy, at present occupied by the

groom and his wife; and to bring them into the house as soon as it

was manifest that there was no danger from infection. But all this

was to be matter for deliberation. Fanny wanted her to send over a

note, in reply to Lady Lufton's, as harbinger of her coming; but Lucy

marched off, hardly answering this proposition.

"What's the use of such a deal of ceremony?" she said. "I know she's

at home; and if she is not, I shall only lose ten minutes in going."

And so she went, and on reaching the door of Framley Court house

found that her ladyship was at home. Her heart almost came to her

mouth as she was told so, and then, in two minutes' time, she found

herself in the little room upstairs. In that little room we found

ourselves once before--you and I, O my reader;--but Lucy had never

before visited that hallowed precinct. There was something in its air

calculated to inspire awe in those who first saw Lady Lufton sitting

bolt upright in the cane-bottomed arm-chair, which she always

occupied when at work at her books and papers; and this she knew when

she determined to receive Lucy in that apartment. But there was there

another arm-chair, an easy, cosy chair, which stood by the fireside;

and for those who had caught Lady Lufton napping in that chair of

an afternoon, some of this awe had perhaps been dissipated. "Miss

Robarts," she said, not rising from her chair, but holding out her

hand to her visitor, "I am much obliged to you for having come over

to me here. You, no doubt, are aware of the subject on which I wish

to speak to you, and will agree with me that it is better that we

should meet here than over at the parsonage." In answer to which Lucy

merely bowed her head, and took her seat on the chair which had been

prepared for her. "My son," continued her ladyship, "has spoken to me

on the subject of-- I think I understand, Miss Robarts, that there

has been no engagement between you and him?"

"None whatever," said Lucy. "He made me an offer and I refused

him." This she said very sharply;--more so undoubtedly than the

circumstances required; and with a brusqueness that was injudicious

as well as uncourteous. But at the moment, she was thinking of her

own position with reference to Lady Lufton--not to Lord Lufton; and

of her feelings with reference to the lady--not to the gentleman.

"Oh," said Lady Lufton, a little startled by the manner of the

communication. "Then I am to understand that there is nothing now

going on between you and my son; that the whole affair is over?"

"That depends entirely upon you."

"On me; does it?"

"I do not know what your son may have told you, Lady Lufton. For

myself, I do not care to have any secrets from you in this matter;

and as he has spoken to you about it, I suppose that such is his

wish also. Am I right in presuming that he has spoken to you on the

subject?"

"Yes, he has; and it is for that reason that I have taken the liberty

of sending for you."

"And may I ask what he has told you? I mean, of course, as regards

myself," said Lucy. Lady Lufton, before she answered this question,

began to reflect that the young lady was taking too much of the

initiative in this conversation, and was, in fact, playing the game

in her own fashion, which was not at all in accordance with those

motives which had induced Lady Lufton to send for her. "He has told

me that he made you an offer of marriage," replied Lady Lufton: "a

matter which, of course, is very serious to me, as his mother; and

I have thought, therefore, that I had better see you, and appeal to

your own good sense and judgement and high feeling. Of course you are

aware--"

Now was coming the lecture to be illustrated by King Cophetua and

Griselda, as Lucy had suggested to Mrs. Robarts; but she succeeded

in stopping it for awhile. "And did Lord Lufton tell you what was my

answer?"

"Not in words. But you yourself now say that you refused him; and I

must express my admiration for your good--"

"Wait half a moment, Lady Lufton. Your son did make me an offer. He

made it to me in person, up at the parsonage, and I then refused

him;--foolishly, as I now believe, for I dearly love him. But I did

so from a mixture of feelings which I need not, perhaps, explain;

that most prominent, no doubt, was a fear of your displeasure. And

then he came again, not to me, but to my brother, and urged his suit

to him. Nothing can have been kinder to me, more noble, more loving,

more generous, than his conduct. At first I thought, when he was

speaking to myself, that he was led on thoughtlessly to say all that

he did say. I did not trust his love, though I saw that he did trust

it himself. But I could not but trust it when he came again--to my

brother, and made his proposal to him. I don't know whether you will

understand me, Lady Lufton; but a girl placed as I am feels ten times

more assurance in such a tender of affection as that, than in one

made to herself, at the spur of the moment, perhaps. And then you

must remember that I--I myself--I loved him from the first. I was

foolish enough to think that I could know him and not love him."

"I saw all that going on," said Lady Lufton, with a certain

assumption of wisdom about her; "and took steps which I hoped would

have put a stop to it in time."

"Everybody saw it. It was a matter of course," said Lucy, destroying

her ladyship's wisdom at a blow. "Well; I did learn to love him, not

meaning to do so; and I do love him with all my heart. It is no use

my striving to think that I do not; and I could stand with him at

the altar to-morrow and give him my hand, feeling that I was doing

my duty by him, as a woman should do. And now he has told you of

his love, and I believe in that as I do in my own--" And then for a

moment she paused.

"But, my dear Miss Robarts--" began Lady Lufton. Lucy, however, had

now worked herself up into a condition of power, and would not allow

her ladyship to interrupt her in her speech. "I beg your pardon, Lady

Lufton; I shall have done directly, and then I will hear you. And so

my brother came to me, not urging this suit, expressing no wish for

such a marriage, but allowing me to judge for myself, and proposing

that I should see your son again on the following morning. Had I done

so, I could not but have accepted him. Think of it, Lady Lufton. How

could I have done other than accept him, seeing that in my heart I

had accepted his love already?"

"Well?" said Lady Lufton, not wishing now to put in any speech of her

own.

"I did not see him--I refused to do so--because I was a coward. I

could not endure to come into this house as your son's wife, and be

coldly looked on by your son's mother. Much as I loved him, much as I

do love him, dearly as I prize the generous offer which he came down

here to repeat to me, I could not live with him to be made the object

of your scorn. I sent him word, therefore, that I would have him when

you would ask me, and not before." And, then, having thus pleaded her

cause--and pleaded, as she believed, the cause of her lover also--she

ceased from speaking, and prepared herself to listen to the story

of King Cophetua. But Lady Lufton felt considerable difficulty in

commencing her speech. In the first place she was by no means a

hard-hearted or a selfish woman; and were it not that her own son was

concerned, and all the glory which was reflected upon her from her

son, her sympathies would have been given to Lucy Robarts. As it was,

she did sympathize with her, and admire her, and to a certain extent

like her. She began also to understand what it was that had brought

about her son's love, and to feel that but for certain unfortunate

concomitant circumstances the girl before her might have made

a fitting Lady Lufton. Lucy had grown bigger in her eyes while

sitting there and talking, and had lost much of that missish want

of importance--that lack of social weight--which Lady Lufton in her

own opinion had always imputed to her. A girl that could thus speak

up and explain her own position now, would be able to speak up and

explain her own, and perhaps some other positions at any future time.

But not for all or any of these reasons did Lady Lufton think of

giving way. The power of making or marring this marriage was placed

in her hands, as was very fitting, and that power it behoved her

to use, as best she might use it, to her son's advantage. Much as

she might admire Lucy, she could not sacrifice her son to that

admiration. The unfortunate concomitant circumstances still remained,

and were of sufficient force, as she thought, to make such a marriage

inexpedient. Lucy was the sister of a gentleman who by his peculiar

position as parish clergyman of Framley was unfitted to be the

brother-in-law of the owner of Framley. Nobody liked clergymen better

than Lady Lufton or was more willing to live with them on terms of

affectionate intimacy, but she could not get over the feeling that

the clergyman of her own parish,--or of her son's,--was a part of

her own establishment, of her own appanage,--or of his,--and that

it could not be well that Lord Lufton should marry among his own

dependants. Lady Lufton would not have used the word, but she did

think it. And then, too, Lucy's education had been so deficient. She

had had no one about her in early life accustomed to the ways of,--of

what shall I say without making Lady Lufton appear more worldly than

she was? Lucy's wants in this respect, not to be defined in words,

had been exemplified by the very way in which she had just now stated

her case. She had shown talent, good temper, and sound judgement; but

there had been no quiet, no repose about her. The species of power

in young ladies which Lady Lufton most admired was the \_vis inertiÃ¦\_

belonging to beautiful and dignified reticence; of this poor Lucy had

none. Then, too, she had no fortune, which, though a minor evil, was

an evil; and she had no birth, in the high-life sense of the word,

which was a greater evil. And then, though her eyes had sparkled

when she confessed her love, Lady Lufton was not prepared to admit

that she was possessed of positive beauty. Such were the unfortunate

concomitant circumstances which still induced Lady Lufton to resolve

that the match must be marred.

But the performance of her part in this play was much more difficult

than she had imagined, and she found herself obliged to sit silent

for a minute or two, during which, however, Miss Robarts made no

attempt at further speech. "I am greatly struck," Lady Lufton said at

last, "by the excellent sense you have displayed in the whole of this

affair; and you must allow me to say, Miss Robarts, that I now regard

you with very different feelings from those which I entertained when

I left London." Upon this Lucy bowed her head, slightly but very

stiffly; acknowledging rather the former censure implied than the

present eulogium expressed.

"But my feelings," continued Lady Lufton, "my strongest feelings in

this matter, must be those of a mother. What might be my conduct if

such a marriage did take place, I need not now consider. But I must

confess that I should think such a marriage very--very ill-judged.

A better-hearted young man than Lord Lufton does not exist, nor one

with better principles, or a deeper regard for his word; but he is

exactly the man to be mistaken in any hurried outlook as to his

future life. Were you and he to become man and wife, such a marriage

would tend to the happiness neither of him nor of you." It was

clear that the whole lecture was now coming; and as Lucy had openly

declared her own weakness, and thrown all the power of decision into

the hands of Lady Lufton, she did not see why she should endure this.

"We need not argue about that, Lady Lufton," she said. "I have told

you the only circumstances under which I would marry your son; and

you, at any rate, are safe."

"No; I was not wishing to argue," answered Lady Lufton, almost

humbly; "but I was desirous of excusing myself to you, so that you

should not think me cruel in withholding my consent. I wished to make

you believe that I was doing the best for my son."

"I am sure that you think you are, and therefore no excuse is

necessary."

"No, exactly; of course it is a matter of opinion, and I do think so.

I cannot believe that this marriage would make either of you happy,

and therefore I should be very wrong to express my consent."

"Then, Lady Lufton," said Lucy, rising from her chair, "I suppose we

have both now said what is necessary, and I will therefore wish you

good-bye."

"Good-bye, Miss Robarts. I wish I could make you understand how very

highly I regard your conduct in this matter. It has been above all

praise, and so I shall not hesitate to say when speaking of it to

your relatives." This was disagreeable enough to Lucy, who cared

but little for any praise which Lady Lufton might express to her

relatives in this matter. "And pray," continued Lady Lufton, "give

my best love to Mrs. Robarts, and tell her that I shall hope to see

her over here very soon, and Mr. Robarts also. I would name a day for

you all to dine; but perhaps it will be better that I should have a

little talk with Fanny first."

Lucy muttered something, which was intended to signify that any

such dinner party had better not be made up with the intention of

including her, and then took her leave. She had decidedly had the

best of the interview, and there was a consciousness of this in her

heart as she allowed Lady Lufton to shake hands with her. She had

stopped her antagonist short on each occasion on which an attempt had

been made to produce the homily which had been prepared, and during

the interview had spoken probably three words for every one which

her ladyship had been able to utter. But, nevertheless, there was

a bitter feeling of disappointment about her heart as she walked

back home; and a feeling, also, that she herself had caused her own

unhappiness. Why should she have been so romantic and chivalrous and

self-sacrificing, seeing that her romance and chivalry had all been

to his detriment as well as to hers,--seeing that she sacrificed

him as well as herself? Why should she have been so anxious to play

into Lady Lufton's hands? It was not because she thought it right,

as a general social rule, that a lady should refuse a gentleman's

hand, unless the gentleman's mother were a consenting party to the

marriage. She would have held any such doctrine as absurd. The lady,

she would have said, would have had to look to her own family and no

further. It was not virtue but cowardice which had influenced her,

and she had none of that solace which may come to us in misfortune

from a consciousness that our own conduct has been blameless. Lady

Lufton had inspired her with awe, and any such feeling on her part

was mean, ignoble, and unbecoming the spirit with which she wished to

think that she was endowed. That was the accusation which she brought

against herself, and it forbade her to feel any triumph as to the

result of her interview. When she reached the parsonage, Mark was

there, and they were of course expecting her. "Well," said she, in

her short, hurried manner, "is Puck ready again? I have no time to

lose, and I must go and pack up a few things. Have you settled about

the children, Fanny?"

"Yes; I will tell you directly; but you have seen Lady Lufton?"

"Seen her! Oh, yes, of course I have seen her. Did she not send for

me? and in that case it was not on the cards that I should disobey

her."

"And what did she say?"

"How green you are, Mark; and not only green, but impolite also, to

make me repeat the story of my own disgrace. Of course she told me

that she did not intend that I should marry my lord, her son; and of

course I said that under those circumstances I should not think of

doing such a thing."

"Lucy, I cannot understand you," said Fanny, very gravely. "I am

sometimes inclined to doubt whether you have any deep feeling in the

matter or not. If you have, how can you bring yourself to joke about

it?"

"Well, it is singular; and sometimes I doubt myself whether I have.

I ought to be pale, ought I not? and very thin, and to go mad by

degrees? I have not the least intention of doing anything of the

kind, and, therefore, the matter is not worth any further notice."

"But was she civil to you, Lucy?" asked Mark: "civil In her manner,

you know?"

"Oh, uncommonly so. You will hardly believe it, but she actually

asked me to dine. She always does, you know, when she wants to

show her good humour. If you'd broken your leg, and she wished to

commiserate you, she'd ask you to dinner."

"I suppose she meant to be kind," said Fanny, who was not disposed to

give up her old friend, though she was quite ready to fight Lucy's

battle, if there were any occasion for a battle to be fought.

"Lucy is so perverse," said Mark, "that it is impossible to learn

from her what really has taken place."

"Upon my word, then, you know it all as well as I can tell you. She

asked me if Lord Lufton had made me an offer. I said, yes. She asked

next, if I meant to accept it. Not without her approval, I said. And

then she asked us all to dinner. That is exactly what took place, and

I cannot see that I have been perverse at all." After that she threw

herself into a chair, and Mark and Fanny stood looking at each other.

"Mark," she said, after a while, "don't be unkind to me. I make as

little of it as I can, for all our sakes. It is better so, Fanny,

than that I should go about moaning, like a sick cow;" and then they

looked at her, and saw that the tears were already brimming over from

her eyes.

"Dearest, dearest Lucy," said Fanny, immediately going down on her

knees before her, "I won't be unkind to you again." And then they had

a great cry together.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Kidnapping at Hogglestock

The great cry, however, did not take long, and Lucy was soon in the

pony-carriage again. On this occasion her brother volunteered to

drive her, and it was now understood that he was to bring back with

him all the Crawley children. The whole thing had been arranged;

the groom and his wife were to be taken into the house, and the

big bedroom across the yard, usually occupied by them, was to be

converted into a quarantine hospital until such time as it might be

safe to pull down the yellow flag. They were about half-way on their

road to Hogglestock when they were overtaken by a man on horseback,

whom, when he came up beside them, Mr. Robarts recognized as Dr.

Arabin, Dean of Barchester, and head of the chapter to which he

himself belonged. It immediately appeared that the dean also was

going to Hogglestock, having heard of the misfortune that had

befallen his friends there; he had, he said, started as soon as the

news reached him, in order that he might ascertain how best he might

render assistance. To effect this he had undertaken a ride of nearly

forty miles, and explained that he did not expect to reach home again

much before midnight. "You pass by Framley?" said Robarts.

"Yes, I do," said the dean.

"Then of course you will dine with us as you go home; you and your

horse also, which will be quite as important." This having been duly

settled, and the proper ceremony of introduction having taken place

between the dean and Lucy, they proceeded to discuss the character of

Mr. Crawley.

"I have known him all my life," said the dean, "having been at school

and college with him, and for years since that I was on terms of the

closest intimacy with him; but in spite of that, I do not know how to

help him in his need. A prouder-hearted man I never met, or one less

willing to share his sorrows with his friends."

"I have often heard him speak of you," said Mark.

"One of the bitterest feelings I have is that a man so dear to me

should live so near to me, and that I should see so little of him.

But what can I do? He will not come to my house; and when I go to

his he is angry with me because I wear a shovel hat and ride on

horseback."

"I should leave my hat and my horse at the borders of the last

parish," said Lucy, timidly.

"Well; yes, certainly; one ought not to give offence even in such

matters as that; but my coat and waistcoat would then be equally

objectionable. I have changed,--in outward matters I mean,--and he

has not. That irritates him, and unless I could be what I was in the

old days, he will not look at me with the same eyes;" and then he

rode on, in order, as he said, that the first pang of the interview

might be over before Robarts and his sister came upon the scene. Mr.

Crawley was standing before his door, leaning over the little wooden

railing, when the dean trotted up on his horse. He had come out after

hours of close watching to get a few mouthfuls of the sweet summer

air, and as he stood there he held the youngest of his children in

his arms. The poor little baby sat there, quiet indeed, but hardly

happy. This father, though he loved his offspring with an affection

as intense as that which human nature can supply, was not gifted with

the knack of making children fond of him; for it is hardly more than

a knack, that aptitude which some men have of gaining the good graces

of the young. Such men are not always the best fathers or the safest

guardians; but they carry about with them a certain \_duc ad me\_

which children recognize, and which in three minutes upsets all the

barriers between five and five-and-forty. But Mr. Crawley was a

stern man, thinking ever of the souls and minds of his bairns--as

a father should do; and thinking also that every season was fitted

for operating on these souls and minds--as, perhaps, he should not

have done either as a father or as a teacher. And consequently his

children avoided him when the choice was given them, thereby adding

fresh wounds to his torn heart, but by no means quenching any of the

great love with which he regarded them.

He was standing there thus with a placid little baby in his arms--a

baby placid enough, but one that would not kiss him eagerly, and

stroke his face with her soft little hands, as he would have had her

do--when he saw the dean coming towards him. He was sharp-sighted

as a lynx out in the open air, though now obliged to pore over his

well-fingered books with spectacles on his nose; and thus he knew his

friend from a long distance, and had time to meditate the mode of his

greeting. He too doubtless had come, if not with jelly and chicken,

then with money and advice;--with money and advice such as a thriving

dean might offer to a poor brother clergyman; and Mr. Crawley, though

no husband could possibly be more anxious for a wife's safety than

he was, immediately put his back up and began to bethink himself how

these tenders might be rejected.

"How is she?" were the first words which the dean spoke as he pulled

up his horse close to the little gate, and put out his hand to take

that of his friend.

"How are you, Arabin?" said he. "It is very kind of you to come so

far, seeing how much there is to keep you at Barchester. I cannot

say that she is any better, but I do not know that she is worse.

Sometimes I fancy that she is delirious, though I hardly know. At any

rate her mind wanders, and then after that she sleeps."

"But is the fever less?"

"Sometimes less and sometimes more, I imagine."

"And the children?"

"Poor things; they are well as yet."

"They must be taken from this, Crawley, as a matter of course."

Mr. Crawley fancied that there was a tone of authority in the dean's

advice, and immediately put himself into opposition.

"I do not know how that may be; I have not yet made up my mind."

"But, my dear Crawley--"

"Providence does not admit of such removals in all cases," said he.

"Among the poorer classes the children must endure such perils."

"In many cases it is so," said the dean, by no means inclined to make

an argument of it at the present moment; "but in this case they need

not. You must allow me to make arrangements for sending for them,

as of course your time is occupied here." Miss Robarts, though she

had mentioned her intention of staying with Mrs. Crawley, had said

nothing of the Framley plan with reference to the children.

"What you mean is that you intend to take the burden off my

shoulders--in fact, to pay for them. I cannot allow that, Arabin.

They must take the lot of their father and their mother, as it is

proper that they should do." Again the dean had no inclination for

arguing, and thought it might be well to let the question of the

children drop for a little while.

"And is there no nurse with her?" said he.

"No, no; I am seeing to her myself at the present moment. A woman

will be here just now."

"What woman?"

"Well; her name is Mrs. Stubbs; she lives in the parish. She will put

the younger children to bed, and--and--but it's no use troubling you

with all that. There was a young lady talked of coming, but no doubt

she has found it too inconvenient. It will be better as it is."

"You mean Miss Robarts; she will be here directly; I passed her as

I came here;" and as Dr. Arabin was yet speaking, the noise of the

carriage wheels was heard upon the road.

"I will go in now," said Mr. Crawley, "and see if she still sleeps;"

and then he entered the house, leaving the dean at the door still

seated upon his horse. "He will be afraid of the infection, and I

will not ask him to come in," said Mr. Crawley to himself.

"I shall seem to be prying into his poverty, if I enter unasked,"

said the dean to himself. And so he remained there till Puck, now

acquainted with the locality, stopped at the door.

"Have you not been in?" said Robarts.

"No; Crawley has been at the door talking to me; he will be here

directly, I suppose;" and then Mark Robarts also prepared himself to

wait till the master of the house should reappear. But Lucy had no

such punctilious misgivings; she did not much care now whether she

offended Mr. Crawley or no. Her idea was to place herself by the sick

woman's bedside, and to send the four children away;--with their

father's consent if it might be; but certainly without it if that

consent were withheld. So she got down from the carriage, and taking

certain packages in her hand made her way direct into the house.

"There's a big bundle under the seat, Mark," she said; "I'll come and

fetch it directly, if you'll drag it out." For some five minutes the

two dignitaries of the Church remained at the door, one on his cob

and the other in his low carriage, saying a few words to each other

and waiting till some one should again appear from the house. "It is

all arranged, indeed it is," were the first words which reached their

ears, and these came from Lucy. "There will be no trouble at all, and

no expense, and they shall all come back as soon as Mrs. Crawley is

able to get out of bed."

"But, Miss Robarts, I can assure--" That was Mr. Crawley's voice,

heard from him as he followed Miss Robarts to the door; but one of

the elder children had then called him into the sick room, and Lucy

was left to do her worst.

"Are you going to take the children back with you?" said the dean.

"Yes; Mrs. Robarts has prepared for them."

"You can take greater liberties with my friend here than I can."

"It is all my sister's doing," said Robarts. "Women are always bolder

in such matters than men." And then Lucy reappeared, bringing Bobby

with her, and one of the younger children.

"Do not mind what he says," said she, "but drive away when you have

got them all. Tell Fanny I have put into the basket what things I

could find, but they are very few. She must borrow things for Grace

from Mrs. Granger's little girl"--(Mrs. Granger was the wife of a

Framley farmer);--"and, Mark, turn Puck's head round, so that you may

be off in a moment. I'll have Grace and the other one here directly."

And then, leaving her brother to pack Bobby and his little sister on

the back part of the vehicle, she returned to her business in the

house. She had just looked in at Mrs. Crawley's bed, and finding her

awake, had smiled on her, and deposited her bundle in token of her

intended stay, and then, without speaking a word, had gone on her

errand about the children. She had called to Grace to show her where

she might find such things as were to be taken to Framley, and having

explained to the bairns, as well as she might, the destiny which

immediately awaited them, prepared them for their departure without

saying a word to Mr. Crawley on the subject. Bobby and the elder

of the two infants were stowed away safely in the back part of the

carriage, where they allowed themselves to be placed without saying

a word. They opened their eyes and stared at the dean, who sat by on

his horse, and assented to such orders as Mr. Robarts gave them,--no

doubt with much surprise, but nevertheless in absolute silence.

"Now, Grace, be quick, there's a dear," said Lucy, returning with

the infant in her arms. "And, Grace, mind you are very careful about

baby; and bring the basket; I'll give it you when you are in." Grace

and the other child were then packed on to the other seat, and a

basket with children's clothes put in on the top of them. "That'll

do, Mark; good-bye; tell Fanny to be sure and send the day after

to-morrow, and not to forget--" and then she whispered into her

brother's ear an injunction about certain dairy comforts which might

not be spoken of in the hearing of Mr. Crawley. "Good-bye, dears;

mind you are good children; you shall hear about mamma the day after

to-morrow," said Lucy; and Puck, admonished by a sound from his

master's voice, began to move just as Mr. Crawley reappeared at the

house door.

"Oh, oh, stop!" he said. "Miss Robarts, you really had better not--"

"Go on, Mark," said Lucy, in a whisper, which, whether audible or not

by Mr Crawley, was heard very plainly by the dean. And Mark, who had

slightly arrested Puck by the reins on the appearance of Mr. Crawley,

now touched the impatient little beast with his whip; and the vehicle

with its freight darted off rapidly, Puck shaking his head and going

away with a tremendously quick short trot, which soon separated Mr.

Crawley from his family.

"Miss Robarts," he began, "this step has been taken altogether

without--"

"Yes," said she, interrupting him. "My brother was obliged to return

at once. The children, you know, will remain all together at the

parsonage; and that, I think, is what Mrs. Crawley will best like. In

a day or two they will be under Mrs. Robarts's own charge."

"But, my dear Miss Robarts, I had no intention whatever of putting

the burden of my family on the shoulders of another person. They must

return to their own home immediately--that is, as soon as they can be

brought back."

"I really think Miss Robarts has managed very well," said the dean.

"Mrs. Crawley must be so much more comfortable to think that they are

out of danger."

"And they will be quite comfortable at the parsonage," said Lucy.

"I do not at all doubt that," said Mr. Crawley; "but too much of such

comforts will unfit them for their home; and--and I could have wished

that I had been consulted more at leisure before the proceeding had

been taken."

"It was arranged, Mr. Crawley, when I was here before, that the

children had better go away," pleaded Lucy.

"I do not remember agreeing to such a measure, Miss Robarts;

however-- I suppose they cannot be had back to-night?"

"No, not to-night," said Lucy. "And now I will go in to your wife."

And then she returned to the house, leaving the two gentlemen at the

door. At this moment a labourer's boy came sauntering by, and the

dean, obtaining possession of his services for the custody of his

horse, was able to dismount and put himself on a more equal footing

for conversation with his friend.

"Crawley," said he, putting his hand affectionately on his friend's

shoulder, as they both stood leaning on the little rail before the

door; "that is a good girl--a very good girl."

"Yes," said he slowly; "she means well."

"Nay, but she does well; she does excellently. What can be better

than her conduct now? While I was meditating how I might possibly

assist your wife in this strait--"

"I want no assistance; none, at least, from man," said Crawley,

bitterly.

"Oh, my friend, think of what you are saying! Think of the wickedness

which must accompany such a state of mind! Have you ever known any

man able to walk alone, without assistance from his brother men?"

Mr. Crawley did not make any immediate answer, but putting his arms

behind his back and closing his hands, as was his wont when he walked

alone thinking of the general bitterness of his lot in life, began to

move slowly along the road in front of his house. He did not invite

the other to walk with him, but neither was there anything in his

manner which seemed to indicate that he had intended to be left to

himself. It was a beautiful summer afternoon, at that delicious

period of the year when summer has just burst forth from the growth

of spring; when the summer is yet but three days old, and all the

various shades of green which nature can put forth are still in their

unsoiled purity of freshness. The apple blossoms were on the trees,

and the hedges were sweet with May. The cuckoo at five o'clock was

still sounding his soft summer call with unabated energy, and even

the common grasses of the hedgerows were sweet with the fragrance of

their new growth. The foliage of the oaks was complete, so that every

bough and twig was clothed; but the leaves did not yet hang heavy in

masses, and the bend of every bough and the tapering curve of every

twig were visible through their light green covering. There is no

time of the year equal in beauty to the first week in summer: and

no colour which nature gives, not even the gorgeous hues of autumn,

which can equal the verdure produced by the first warm suns of May.

Hogglestock, as has been explained, has little to offer in the way

of landskip beauty, and the clergyman's house at Hogglestock was not

placed on a green slopy bank of land, retired from the road, with its

windows opening on to a lawn, surrounded by shrubs, with a view of

the small church tower seen through them; it had none of that beauty

which is so common to the cosy houses of our spiritual pastors in

the agricultural parts of England. Hogglestock parsonage stood bleak

beside the road, with no pretty paling lined inside by hollies and

laburnum, Portugal laurels and rose-trees. But, nevertheless, even

Hogglestock was pretty now. There were apple-trees there covered with

blossom, and the hedgerows were in full flower. There were thrushes

singing, and here and there an oak-tree stood in the roadside,

perfect in its solitary beauty.

"Let us walk on a little," said the dean. "Miss Robarts is with her

now, and you will be better for leaving the room for a few minutes."

"No," said he; "I must go back; I cannot leave that young lady to do

my work."

"Stop, Crawley!" And the dean, putting his hand upon him, stayed him

in the road. "She is doing her own work, and if you were speaking of

her with reference to any other household than your own, you would

say so. Is it not a comfort to you to know that your wife has a woman

near her at such a time as this; and a woman, too, who can speak to

her as one lady does to another?"

"These are comforts which we have no right to expect. I could not

have done much for poor Mary; but what a man could have done should

not have been wanting."

"I am sure of it; I know it well. What any man could do by himself

you would do--excepting one thing." And the dean as he spoke looked

full into the other's face.

"And what is there I would not do?" said Crawley.

"Sacrifice your own pride."

"My pride?"

"Yes; your own pride."

"I have had but little pride this many a day. Arabin, you do not know

what my life has been. How is a man to be proud who--" And then he

stopped himself, not wishing to go through the catalogue of those

grievances, which, as he thought, had killed the very germs of pride

within him, or to insist by spoken words on his poverty, his wants,

and the injustice of his position. "No; I wish I could be proud; but

the world has been too heavy to me, and I have forgotten all that."

"How long have I known you, Crawley?"

"How long? Ah dear! a lifetime nearly, now."

"And we were like brothers once."

"Yes; we were equal as brothers then--in our fortunes, our tastes,

and our modes of life."

"And yet you would begrudge me the pleasure of putting my hand in my

pocket, and relieving the inconveniences which have been thrown on

you, and those you love better than yourself, by the chances of your

fate in life."

"I will live on no man's charity," said Crawley, with an abruptness

which amounted almost to an expression of anger.

"And is not that pride?"

"No--yes;--it is a species of pride, but not that pride of which

you spoke. A man cannot be honest if he have not some pride. You

yourself; would you not rather starve than become a beggar?"

"I would rather beg than see my wife starve," said Arabin.

Crawley when he heard these words turned sharply round, and stood

with his back to the dean, with his hands still behind him, and with

his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"But in this case there is no question of begging," continued the

dean. "I, out of those superfluities which it has pleased God to put

at my disposal, am anxious to assist the needs of those whom I love."

"She is not starving," said Crawley, in a voice very bitter, but

still intended to be exculpatory of himself.

"No, my dear friend; I know she is not, and do not you be angry

with me because I have endeavoured to put the matter to you in the

strongest language I could use."

"You look at it, Arabin, from one side only; I can only look at it

from the other. It is very sweet to give; I do not doubt that. But

the taking of what is given is very bitter. Gift bread chokes in a

man's throat and poisons his blood, and sits like lead upon the

heart. You have never tried it."

"But that is the very fault for which I blame you. That is the pride

which I say you ought to sacrifice."

"And why should I be called on to do so? Is not the labourer worthy

of his hire? Am I not able to work, and willing? Have I not always

had my shoulder to the collar, and is it right that I should now be

contented with the scraps from a rich man's kitchen? Arabin, you

and I were equal once and we were then friends, understanding each

other's thoughts and sympathizing with each other's sorrows. But it

cannot be so now."

"If there be such inability, it is all with you."

"It is all with me,--because in our connexion the pain would all be

on my side. It would not hurt you to see me at your table with worn

shoes and a ragged shirt. I do not think so meanly of you as that.

You would give me your feast to eat though I were not clad a tithe as

well as the menial behind your chair. But it would hurt me to know

that there were those looking at me who thought me unfit to sit in

your rooms."

"That is the pride of which I speak;--false pride."

"Call it so if you will; but, Arabin, no preaching of yours can alter

it. It is all that is left to me of my manliness. That poor broken

reed who is lying there sick,--who has sacrificed all the world to

her love for me,--who is the mother of my children, and the partner

of my sorrows and the wife of my bosom,--even she cannot change me in

this, though she pleads with the eloquence of all her wants. Not even

for her can I hold out my hand for a dole." They had now come back to

the door of the house, and Mr. Crawley, hardly conscious of what he

was doing, was preparing to enter.

"Will Mrs. Crawley be able to see me if I come in?" said the dean.

"Oh, stop; no; you had better not do so," said Mr. Crawley. "You, no

doubt, might be subject to infection, and then Mrs. Arabin would be

frightened."

"I do not care about it in the least," said the dean.

"But it is of no use; you had better not. Her room, I fear, is

quite unfit for you to see; and the whole house, you know, may be

infected." Dr. Arabin by this time was in the sitting-room; but

seeing that his friend was really anxious that he should not go

farther, he did not persist.

"It will be a comfort to us, at any rate, to know that Miss Robarts

is with her."

"The young lady is very good--very good indeed," said Crawley; "but

I trust she will return to her home to-morrow. It is impossible that

she should remain in so poor a house as mine. There will be nothing

here of all the things that she will want." The dean thought that

Lucy Robarts's wants during her present occupation of nursing would

not be so numerous as to make her continued sojourn in Mrs. Crawley's

sick room impossible, and therefore took his leave with a satisfied

conviction that the poor lady would not be left wholly to the

somewhat unskilful nursing of her husband.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Mr. Sowerby without Company

And now there were going to be wondrous doings in West Barsetshire,

and men's minds were much disturbed. The fiat had gone forth from the

high places, and the Queen had dissolved her faithful Commons. The

giants, finding that they could effect little or nothing with the old

House, had resolved to try what a new venture would do for them, and

the hubbub of a general election was to pervade the country. This

produced no inconsiderable irritation and annoyance, for the House

was not as yet quite three years old; and members of Parliament,

though they naturally feel a constitutional pleasure in meeting

their friends and in pressing the hands of their constituents, are,

nevertheless, so far akin to the lower order of humanity that they

appreciate the danger of losing their seats; and the certainty of

a considerable outlay in their endeavours to retain them is not

agreeable to the legislative mind. Never did the old family fury

between the gods and giants rage higher than at the present moment.

The giants declared that every turn which they attempted to take in

their country's service had been thwarted by faction, in spite of

those benign promises of assistance made to them only a few weeks

since by their opponents; and the gods answered by asserting that

they were driven to this opposition by the Boeotian fatuity of the

giants. They had no doubt promised their aid, and were ready to give

it to measures that were decently prudent; but not to a bill enabling

Government at its will to pension aged bishops! No; there must be

some limit to their tolerance, and when such attempts as these were

made that limit had been clearly passed. All this had taken place

openly only a day or two after that casual whisper dropped by Tom

Towers at Miss Dunstable's party--by Tom Towers, that most pleasant

of all pleasant fellows. And how should he have known it,--he who

flutters from one sweetest flower of the garden to another,

"Adding sugar to the pink, and honey to the rose,

So loved for what he gives, but taking nothing as he goes"?

But the whisper had grown into a rumour, and the rumour into a

fact, and the political world was in a ferment. The giants, furious

about their bishops' pension bill, threatened the House--most

injudiciously; and then it was beautiful to see how indignant members

got up, glowing with honesty, and declared that it was base to

conceive that any gentleman in that House could be actuated in his

vote by any hopes or fears with reference to his seat. And so matters

grew from bad to worse, and these contending parties never hit at

each other with such envenomed wrath as they did now;--having entered

the ring together so lately with such manifold promises of good-will,

respect, and forbearance!

But going from the general to the particular, we may say that nowhere

was a deeper consternation spread than in the electoral division

of West Barsetshire. No sooner had the tidings of the dissolution

reached the county than it was known that the duke intended to change

his nominee. Mr. Sowerby had now sat for the division since the

Reform Bill! He had become one of the county institutions, and by the

dint of custom and long establishment had been borne with and even

liked by the county gentlemen, in spite of his well-known pecuniary

irregularities. Now all this was to be changed. No reason had as yet

been publicly given, but it was understood that Lord Dumbello was to

be returned, although he did not own an acre of land in the county.

It is true that rumour went on to say that Lord Dumbello was about to

form close connexions with Barsetshire. He was on the eve of marrying

a young lady, from the other division indeed, and was now engaged,

so it was said, in completing arrangements with the Government for

the purchase of that noble Crown property usually known as the

Chace of Chaldicotes. It was also stated--this statement, however,

had hitherto been only announced in confidential whispers--that

Chaldicotes House itself would soon become the residence of the

marquis. The duke was claiming it as his own--would very shortly

have completed his claims and taken possession:--and then, by some

arrangement between them, it was to be made over to Lord Dumbello.

But very contrary rumours to these got abroad also. Men said--such

as dared to oppose the duke, and some few also who did not dare

to oppose him when the day of battle came--that it was beyond his

grace's power to turn Lord Dumbello into a Barsetshire magnate. The

Crown property--such men said--was to fall into the hands of young

Mr. Gresham, of Boxall Hill, in the other division, and that the

terms of purchase had been already settled. And as to Mr. Sowerby's

property and the house of Chaldicotes--these opponents of the Omnium

interest went on to explain--it was by no means as yet so certain

that the duke would be able to enter it and take possession. The

place was not to be given up to him quietly. A great fight would be

made, and it was beginning to be believed that the enormous mortgages

would be paid off by a lady of immense wealth. And then a dash of

romance was not wanting to make these stories palatable. This lady of

immense wealth had been courted by Mr. Sowerby, had acknowledged her

love,--but had refused to marry him on account of his character. In

testimony of her love, however, she was about to pay all his debts.

It was soon put beyond a rumour, and became manifest enough, that Mr.

Sowerby did not intend to retire from the county in obedience to the

duke's behests. A placard was posted through the whole division in

which no allusion was made by name to the duke, but in which Mr.

Sowerby warned his friends not to be led away by any report that he

intended to retire from the representation of West Barsetshire. "He

had sat," the placard said, "for the same county during the full

period of a quarter of a century, and he would not lightly give up an

honour that had been extended to him so often and which he prized so

dearly. There were but few men now in the House whose connexion with

the same body of constituents had remained unbroken so long as had

that which bound him to West Barsetshire; and he confidently hoped

that that connexion might be continued through another period of

coming years till he might find himself in the glorious position of

being the father of the county members of the House of Commons." The

placard said much more than this, and hinted at sundry and various

questions, all of great interest to the county; but it did not say

one word of the Duke of Omnium, though every one knew what the

duke was supposed to be doing in the matter. He was, as it were, a

great Llama, shut up in a holy of holies, inscrutable, invisible,

inexorable,--not to be seen by men's eyes or heard by their ears,

hardly to be mentioned by ordinary men at such periods as these

without an inward quaking. But, nevertheless, it was he who was

supposed to rule them. Euphemism required that his name should

be mentioned at no public meetings in connexion with the coming

election; but, nevertheless, most men in the county believed that

he could send his dog up to the House of Commons as member for West

Barsetshire if it so pleased him.

It was supposed, therefore, that our friend Sowerby would have no

chance; but he was lucky in finding assistance in a quarter from

which he certainly had not deserved it. He had been a staunch friend

of the gods during the whole of his political life,--as, indeed, was

to be expected, seeing that he had been the duke's nominee; but,

nevertheless, on the present occasion, all the giants connected with

the county came forward to his rescue. They did not do this with the

acknowledged purpose of opposing the duke; they declared that they

were actuated by a generous disinclination to see an old county

member put from his seat; but the world knew that the battle was to

be waged against the great Llama. It was to be a contest between the

powers of aristocracy and the powers of oligarchy, as those powers

existed in West Barsetshire,--and, it may be added, that democracy

would have very little to say to it, on one side or on the other.

The lower order of voters, the small farmers and tradesmen, would no

doubt range themselves on the side of the duke, and would endeavour

to flatter themselves that they were thereby furthering the views of

the Liberal side; but they would in fact be led to the poll by an

old-fashioned, time-honoured adherence to the will of their great

Llama; and by an apprehension of evil if that Llama should arise and

shake himself in his wrath. What might not come to the county if the

Llama were to walk himself off, he with his satellites and armies and

courtiers? There he was, a great Llama; and though he came among them

but seldom, and was scarcely seen when he did come, nevertheless--and

not the less but rather the more--was obedience to him considered as

salutary and opposition regarded as dangerous. A great rural Llama

is still sufficiently mighty in rural England. But the priest of

the temple, Mr. Fothergill, was frequent enough in men's eyes, and

it was beautiful to hear with how varied a voice he alluded to the

things around him and to the changes which were coming. To the small

farmers, not only on the Gatherum property, but on others also, he

spoke of the duke as a beneficent influence shedding prosperity on

all around him, keeping up prices by his presence, and forbidding

the poor rates to rise above one and fourpence in the pound by the

general employment which he occasioned. Men must be mad, he thought,

who would willingly fly in the duke's face. To the squires from a

distance he declared that no one had a right to charge the duke

with any interference; as far, at least, as he knew the duke's mind.

People would talk of things of which they understood nothing. Could

any one say that he had traced a single request for a vote home to

the duke? All this did not alter the settled conviction on men's

minds; but it had its effect, and tended to increase the mystery in

which the duke's doings were enveloped. But to his own familiars, to

the gentry immediately around him, Mr. Fothergill merely winked his

eye. They knew what was what, and so did he. The duke had never been

bit yet in such matters, and Mr. Fothergill did not think that he

would now submit himself to any such operation.

I never heard in what manner and at what rate Mr. Fothergill received

remuneration for the various services performed by him with reference

to the duke's property in Barsetshire; but I am very sure that,

whatever might be the amount, he earned it thoroughly. Never was

there a more faithful partisan, or one who, in his partisanship, was

more discreet. In this matter of the coming election he declared that

he himself--personally, on his own hook--did intend to bestir himself

actively on behalf of Lord Dumbello. Mr. Sowerby was an old friend of

his, and a very good fellow. That was true. But all the world must

admit that Sowerby was not in the position which a county member

ought to occupy. He was a ruined man, and it would not be for his own

advantage that he should be maintained in a position which was fit

only for a man of property. He knew--he, Fothergill--that Mr. Sowerby

must abandon all right and claim to Chaldicotes; and if so, what

would be more absurd than to acknowledge that he had a right and

claim to the seat in Parliament? As to Lord Dumbello, it was probable

that he would soon become one of the largest landowners in the

county; and, as such, who could be more fit for the representation?

Beyond this, Mr. Fothergill was not ashamed to confess--so he

said--that he hoped to hold Lord Dumbello's agency. It would be

compatible with his other duties, and therefore, as a matter of

course, he intended to support Lord Dumbello; he himself, that is. As

to the duke's mind in the matter--! But I have already explained how

Mr. Fothergill disposed of that.

In these days, Mr. Sowerby came down to his own house--for ostensibly

it was still his own house--but he came very quietly, and his arrival

was hardly known in his own village. Though his placard was stuck

up so widely, he himself took no electioneering steps; none, at

least, as yet. The protection against arrest which he derived from

Parliament would soon be over, and those who were most bitter against

the duke averred that steps would be taken to arrest him, should he

give sufficient opportunity to the myrmidons of the law. That he

would, in such case, be arrested was very likely; but it was not

likely that this would be done in any way at the duke's instance. Mr.

Fothergill declared indignantly that this insinuation made him very

angry; but he was too prudent a man to be very angry at anything, and

he knew how to make capital on his own side of charges such as these

which overshot their own mark. Mr. Sowerby came down very quietly to

Chaldicotes, and there he remained for a couple of days, quite alone.

The place bore a very different aspect now to that which we noticed

when Mark Robarts drove up to it, in the early pages of this little

narrative. There were no lights in the windows now, and no voices

came from the stables; no dogs barked, and all was dead and silent

as the grave. During the greater portion of those two days he sat

alone within the house, almost unoccupied. He did not even open his

letters, which lay piled on a crowded table in the small breakfast

parlour in which he sat; for the letters of such men come in piles,

and there are few of them which are pleasant in the reading. There

he sat, troubled with thoughts which were sad enough, now and then

moving to and fro the house, but for the most part occupied in

thinking over the position to which he had brought himself. What

would he be in the world's eye, if he ceased to be the owner of

Chaldicotes, and ceased also to be the member for his county? He

had lived ever before the world, and, though always harassed by

encumbrances, had been sustained and comforted by the excitement of

a prominent position. His debts and difficulties had hitherto been

bearable, and he had borne them with ease so long that he had almost

taught himself to think that they would never be unendurable. But

now--

The order for foreclosing had gone forth, and the harpies of the law,

by their present speed in sticking their claws into the carcass of

his property, were atoning to themselves for the delay with which

they had hitherto been compelled to approach their prey. And the

order as to his seat had gone forth also. That placard had been drawn

up by the combined efforts of his sister, Miss Dunstable, and a

certain well-known electioneering agent, named Closerstill, presumed

to be in the interest of the giants. But poor Sowerby had but little

confidence in the placard. No one knew better than he how great was

the duke's power. He was hopeless, therefore, as he walked about

through those empty rooms, thinking of his past life and of that life

which was to come. Would it not be well for him that he were dead,

now that he was dying to all that had made the world pleasant? We see

and hear of such men as Mr. Sowerby, and are apt to think that they

enjoy all that the world can give, and that they enjoy that all

without payment either in care or labour; but I doubt that, with

even the most callous of them, their periods of wretchedness must

be frequent, and that wretchedness very intense. Salmon and lamb in

February, and green pease and new potatoes in March, can hardly make

a man happy, even though nobody pays for them; and the feeling that

one is an \_antecedentem scelestum\_ after whom a sure, though lame,

Nemesis is hobbling, must sometimes disturb one's slumbers. On the

present occasion Scelestus felt that his Nemesis had overtaken him.

Lame as she had been, and swift as he had run, she had mouthed him at

last, and there was nothing left for him but to listen to the "whoop"

set up at the sight of his own death-throes.

It was a melancholy, dreary place now, that big house of Chaldicotes;

and though the woods were all green with their early leaves, and the

garden thick with flowers, they also were melancholy and dreary.

The lawns were untrimmed and weeds were growing through the gravel,

and here and there a cracked Dryad, tumbled from her pedestal and

sprawling in the grass, gave a look of disorder to the whole place.

The wooden trellis-work was shattered here and bending there, the

standard rose-trees were stooping to the ground, and the leaves of

the winter still encumbered the borders. Late in the evening of the

second day Mr. Sowerby strolled out, and went through the gardens

into the wood. Of all the inanimate things of the world this wood of

Chaldicotes was the dearest to him. He was not a man to whom his

companions gave much credit for feelings or thoughts akin to poetry,

but here, out in the Chace, his mind would be almost poetical. While

wandering among the forest trees, he became susceptible of the

tenderness of human nature: he would listen to the birds singing,

and pick here and there a wild flower on his path. He would watch

the decay of the old trees and the progress of the young, and make

pictures in his eyes of every turn in the wood. He would mark the

colour of a bit of road as it dipped into a dell, and then, passing

through a water-course, rose brown, rough, irregular, and beautiful

against the bank on the other side. And then he would sit and think

of his old family: how they had roamed there time out of mind in

those Chaldicotes woods, father and son and grandson in regular

succession, each giving them over, without blemish or decrease, to

his successor. So he would sit; and so he did sit even now, and,

thinking of these things, wished that he had never been born.

It was dark night when he returned to the house, and as he did so he

resolved that he would quit the place altogether, and give up the

battle as lost. The duke should take it and do as he pleased with

it; and as for the seat in Parliament, Lord Dumbello, or any other

equally gifted young patrician, might hold it for him. He would

vanish from the scene and betake himself to some land from whence he

would be neither heard nor seen, and there--starve. Such were now his

future outlooks into the world; and yet, as regards health and all

physical capacities, he knew that he was still in the prime of his

life. Yes; in the prime of his life! But what could he do with what

remained to him of such prime? How could he turn either his mind or

his strength to such account as might now be serviceable? How could

he, in his sore need, earn for himself even the barest bread? Would

it not be better for him that he should die? Let not any one covet

the lot of a spendthrift, even though the days of his early pease and

champagne seem to be unnumbered; for that lame Nemesis will surely be

up before the game has been all played out. When Mr. Sowerby reached

his house he found that a message by telegraph had arrived for him

in his absence. It was from his sister, and it informed him that she

would be with him that night. She was coming down by the mail train,

had telegraphed to Barchester for post-horses, and would be at

Chaldicotes about two hours after midnight. It was therefore manifest

enough that her business was of importance. Exactly at two the

Barchester post-chaise did arrive, and Mrs. Harold Smith, before she

retired to her bed, was closeted for about an hour with her brother.

"Well," she said, the following morning, as they sat together at the

breakfast table, "what do you say to it now? If you accept her offer

you should be with her lawyer this afternoon."

"I suppose I must accept it," said he.

"Certainly, I think so. No doubt it will take the property out of

your own hands as completely as though the duke had it, but it will

leave you the house, at any rate, for your life."

"What good will the house be, when I can't keep it up?"

"But I am not so sure of that. She will not want more than her fair

interest; and as it will be thoroughly well managed, I should think

that there would be something over--something enough to keep up the

house. And then, you know, we must have some place in the country."

"I tell you fairly, Harriet, that I will have nothing further to do

with Harold in the way of money."

"Ah! that was because you would go to him. Why did you not come to

me? And then, Nathaniel, it is the only way in which you can have a

chance of keeping the seat. She is the queerest woman I ever met, but

she seems resolved on beating the duke."

"I do not quite understand it, but I have not the slightest

objection."

"She thinks that he is interfering with young Gresham about the Crown

property. I had no idea that she had so much business at her fingers'

ends. When I first proposed the matter she took it up quite as a

lawyer might, and seemed to have forgotten altogether what occurred

about that other matter."

"I wish I could forget it also," said Mr. Sowerby.

"I really think that she does. When I was obliged to make some

allusion to it--at least I felt myself obliged, and was very sorry

afterwards that I did--she merely laughed--a great loud laugh as she

always does, and then went on about the business. However, she was

clear about this, that all the expenses of the election should be

added to the sum to be advanced by her, and that the house should be

left to you without any rent. If you choose to take the land round

the house you must pay for it, by the acre, as the tenants do. She

was as clear about it all as though she had passed her life in a

lawyer's office."

My readers will now pretty well understand what last step that

excellent sister, Mrs. Harold Smith, had taken on her brother's

behalf, nor will they be surprised to learn that in the course

of the day Mr. Sowerby hurried back to town and put himself into

communication with Miss Dunstable's lawyer.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Is There Cause or Just Impediment?

I now purpose to visit another country house in Barsetshire, but on

this occasion our sojourn shall be in the eastern division, in which,

as in every other county in England, electioneering matters are

paramount at the present moment. It has been mentioned that Mr.

Gresham, junior, young Frank Gresham as he was always called, lived

at a place called Boxall Hill. This property had come to his wife by

will, and he was now settled there,--seeing that his father still

held the family seat of the Greshams at Greshamsbury. At the present

moment Miss Dunstable was staying at Boxall Hill with Mrs. Frank

Gresham. They had left London, as, indeed, all the world had done,

to the terrible dismay of the London tradesmen. This dissolution of

Parliament was ruining everybody except the country publicans, and

had of course destroyed the London season among other things.

Mrs. Harold Smith had only just managed to catch Miss Dunstable

before she left London; but she did do so, and the great heiress

had at once seen her lawyers, and instructed them how to act with

reference to the mortgages on the Chaldicotes property. Miss

Dunstable was in the habit of speaking of herself and her own

pecuniary concerns as though she herself were rarely allowed to

meddle in their management; but this was one of those small jokes

which she ordinarily perpetrated; for in truth few ladies, and

perhaps not many gentlemen, have a more thorough knowledge of their

own concerns or a more potent voice in their own affairs, than was

possessed by Miss Dunstable. Circumstances had lately brought her

much into Barsetshire, and she had there contracted very intimate

friendships. She was now disposed to become, if possible, a

Barsetshire proprietor, and with this view had lately agreed with

young Mr. Gresham that she would become the purchaser of the Crown

property. As, however, the purchase had been commenced in his name,

it was so to be continued; but now, as we are aware, it was rumoured

that, after all, the duke, or, if not the duke, then the Marquis of

Dumbello, was to be the future owner of the Chace. Miss Dunstable,

however, was not a person to give up her object if she could attain

it, nor, under the circumstances, was she at all displeased at

finding herself endowed with the power of rescuing the Sowerby

portion of the Chaldicotes property from the duke's clutches. Why

had the duke meddled with her or with her friend, as to the other

property? Therefore it was arranged that the full amount due to the

duke on mortgage should be ready for immediate payment; but it was

arranged also that the security as held by Miss Dunstable should be

very valid.

Miss Dunstable, at Boxall Hill or at Greshamsbury, was a very

different person from Miss Dunstable in London; and it was this

difference which so much vexed Mrs. Gresham; not that her friend

omitted to bring with her into the country her London wit and

aptitude for fun, but that she did not take with her up to town the

genuine goodness and love of honesty which made her lovable in the

country. She was, as it were, two persons, and Mrs. Gresham could not

understand that any lady should permit herself to be more worldly at

one time of the year than at another--or in one place than in any

other. "Well, my dear, I am heartily glad we've done with that," Miss

Dunstable said to her, as she sat herself down to her desk in the

drawing-room on the first morning after her arrival at Boxall Hill.

"What does 'that' mean?" said Mrs. Gresham.

"Why, London and smoke and late hours, and standing on one's legs

for four hours at a stretch on the top of one's own staircase, to be

bowed at by any one who chooses to come. That's all done--for one

year, at any rate."

"You know you like it."

"No, Mary; that's just what I don't know. I don't know whether I like

it or not. Sometimes, when the spirit of that dearest of all women,

Mrs. Harold Smith, is upon me, I think that I do like it; but then,

again, when other spirits are on me, I think that I don't."

"And who are the owners of the other spirits?"

"Oh, you are one, of course. But you are a weak little thing, by no

means able to contend with such a Samson as Mrs. Harold. And then you

are a little given to wickedness yourself, you know. You've learned

to like London well enough since you sat down to the table of Dives.

Your uncle--he's the real, impracticable, unapproachable Lazarus who

declares that he can't come down because of the big gulf. I wonder

how he'd behave, if somebody left him ten thousand a year?"

"Uncommonly well, I am sure."

"Oh, yes; he is a Lazarus now, so of course we are bound to speak

well of him; but I should like to see him tried. I don't doubt but

what he'd have a house in Belgrave Square, and become noted for his

little dinners before the first year of his trial was over."

"Well, and why not? You would not wish him to be an anchorite?"

"I am told that he is going to try his luck--not with ten thousand a

year, but with one or two."

"What do you mean?"

"Jane tells me that they all say at Greshamsbury that he is going to

marry Lady Scatcherd." Now Lady Scatcherd was a widow living in those

parts; an excellent woman, but one not formed by nature to grace

society of the highest order.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Gresham, rising up from her chair, while her

eyes flashed with anger at such a rumour.

"Well, my dear, don't eat me. I don't say it is so; I only say that

Jane said so."

"Then you ought to send Jane out of the house."

"You may be sure of this, my dear: Jane would not have told me if

somebody had not told her."

"And you believed it?"

"I have said nothing about that."

"But you look as if you had believed it."

"Do I? Let us see what sort of a look it is, this look of faith."

And Miss Dunstable got up and went to the glass over the fireplace.

"But, Mary, my dear, ain't you old enough to know that you should not

credit people's looks? You should believe nothing nowadays; and I did

not believe the story about poor Lady Scatcherd. I know the doctor

well enough to be sure that he is not a marrying man."

"What a nasty, hackneyed, false phrase that is--that of a marrying

man! It sounds as though some men were in the habit of getting

married three or four times a month."

"It means a great deal all the same. One can tell very soon whether a

man is likely to marry or no."

"And can one tell the same of a woman?"

"The thing is so different. All unmarried women are necessarily in

the market; but if they behave themselves properly they make no

signs. Now there was Griselda Grantly; of course she intended to get

herself a husband, and a very grand one she has got: but she always

looked as though butter would not melt in her mouth. It would have

been very wrong to call her a marrying girl."

"Oh, of course she was," says Mrs. Gresham, with that sort of

acrimony which one pretty young woman so frequently expresses with

reference to another. "But if one could always tell of a woman, as

you say you can of a man, I should be able to tell of you. Now, I

wonder whether you are a marrying woman? I have never been able to

make up my mind yet."

Miss Dunstable remained silent for a few moments, as though she were

at first minded to take the question as being, in some sort, one made

in earnest; but then she attempted to laugh it off. "Well, I wonder

at that," said she, "as it was only the other day I told you how many

offers I had refused."

"Yes; but you did not tell me whether any had been made that you

meant to accept."

"None such was ever made to me. Talking of that, I shall never forget

your cousin, the Honourable George."

"He is not my cousin."

"Well, your husband's. It would not be fair to show a man's letters;

but I should like to show you his."

"You are determined, then, to remain single?"

"I didn't say that. But why do you cross-question me so?"

"Because I think so much about you. I am afraid that you will become

so afraid of men's motives as to doubt that any one can be honest.

And yet sometimes I think you would be a happier woman and a better

woman, if you were married."

"To such an one as the Honourable George, for instance?"

"No, not to such an one as him; you have probably picked out the

worst."

"Or to Mr. Sowerby?"

"Well, no; not to Mr. Sowerby, either. I would not have you marry any

man that looked to you for your money principally."

"And how is it possible that I should expect any one to look to me

principally for anything else? You don't see my difficulty, my dear?

If I had only five hundred a year, I might come across some decent

middle-aged personage, like myself, who would like me, myself, pretty

well, and would like my little income--pretty well also. He would not

tell me any violent lie, and perhaps no lie at all. I should take to

him in the same sort of way, and we might do very well. But, as it

is, how is it possible that any disinterested person should learn

to like me? How could such a man set about it? If a sheep have two

heads, is not the fact of the two heads the first and, indeed, only

thing which the world regards in that sheep? Must it not be so as a

matter of course? I am a sheep with two heads. All this money which

my father put together, and which has been growing since like grass

under May showers, has turned me into an abortion. I am not the

giantess eight feet high, or the dwarf that stands in the man's

hand--"

"Or the two-headed sheep--"

"But I am the unmarried woman with--half a dozen millions of

money--as I believe some people think. Under such circumstances have

I a fair chance of getting my own sweet bit of grass to nibble, like

any ordinary animal with one head? I never was very beautiful, and I

am not more so now than I was fifteen years ago."

"I am quite sure it is not that which hinders it. You would not call

yourself plain; and even plain women are married every day, and are

loved too, as well as pretty women."

"Are they? Well, we won't say more about that; but I don't expect a

great many lovers on account of my beauty. If ever you hear of such

an one, mind you tell me." It was almost on Mrs. Gresham's tongue to

say that she did know of one such--meaning her uncle. But in truth,

she did not know any such thing; nor could she boast to herself that

she had good grounds for feeling that it was so--certainly none

sufficient to justify her in speaking of it. Her uncle had said no

word to her on the matter, and had been confused and embarrassed when

the idea of such a marriage was hinted to him. But, nevertheless,

Mrs. Gresham did think that each of these two was well inclined to

love the other, and that they would be happier together than they

would be single. The difficulty, however, was very great, for the

doctor would be terribly afraid of being thought covetous in regard

to Miss Dunstable's money; and it would hardly be expected that she

should be induced to make the first overture to the doctor.

"My uncle would be the only man that I can think of that would be at

all fit for you," said Mrs. Gresham, boldly.

"What, and rob poor Lady Scatcherd!" said Miss Dunstable.

"Oh, very well. If you choose to make a joke of his name in that way

I have done."

"Why, God bless the girl, what does she want me to say? And as for

joking, surely that is innocent enough. You're as tender about the

doctor as though he were a girl of seventeen."

"It's not about him; but it's such a shame to laugh at poor dear Lady

Scatcherd. If she were to hear it she'd lose all comfort in having my

uncle near her."

"And I'm to marry him, so that she may be safe with her friend!"

"Very well; I have done." And Mrs. Gresham, who had already got

up from her seat, employed herself very sedulously in arranging

flowers which had been brought in for the drawing-room tables. Thus

they remained silent for a minute or two, during which she began to

reflect that, after all, it might probably be thought that she also

was endeavouring to catch the great heiress for her uncle.

"And now you are angry with me," said Miss Dunstable.

"No, I am not."

"Oh, but you are. Do you think I'm such a fool as not to see when a

person's vexed? You wouldn't have twitched that geranium's head off

if you'd been in a proper frame of mind."

"I don't like that joke about Lady Scatcherd."

"And is that all, Mary? Now do try and be true, it you can. You

remember the bishop? \_Magna est veritas.\_"

"The fact is you've got into such a way of being sharp, and saying

sharp things among your friends up in London, that you can hardly

answer a person without it."

"Can't I! Dear, dear, what a Mentor you are, Mary! No poor lad that

ever ran up from Oxford for a spree in town got so lectured for his

dissipation and iniquities as I do. Well, I beg Dr. Thorne's pardon,

and Lady Scatcherd's, and I won't be sharp any more; and I will--let

me see, what was it I was to do? Marry him myself, I believe; was not

that it?"

"No; you're not half good enough for him."

"I know that. I'm quite sure of that. Though I am so sharp, I'm very

humble. You can't accuse me of putting any very great value on

myself."

"Perhaps not as much as you ought to do--on yourself."

"Now what do you mean, Mary? I won't be bullied and teased, and have

innuendoes thrown out at me, because you've got something on your

mind, and don't quite dare to speak it out. If you have got anything

to say, say it." But Mrs. Gresham did not choose to say it at that

moment. She held her peace, and went on arranging her flowers--now

with a more satisfied air, and without destruction to the geraniums.

And when she had grouped her bunches properly she carried the jar

from one part of the room to another, backwards and forwards, trying

the effect of the colours, as though her mind was quite intent upon

her flowers, and was for the moment wholly unoccupied with any other

subject. But Miss Dunstable was not the woman to put up with this.

She sat silent in her place, while her friend made one or two turns

about the room; and then she got up from her seat also.

"Mary," she said, "give over about those wretched bits of green

branches, and leave the jars where they are. You're trying to fidget

me into a passion."

"Am I?" said Mrs. Gresham, standing opposite to a big bowl, and

putting her head a little on one side, as though she could better

look at her handiwork in that position.

"You know you are; and it's all because you lack courage to speak

out. You didn't begin at me in this way for nothing."

"I do lack courage. That's just it," said Mrs. Gresham, still giving

a twist here and a set there to some of the small sprigs which

constituted the background of her bouquet. "I do lack courage--to

have ill motives imputed to me. I was thinking of saying something,

and I am afraid, and therefore I will not say it. And now, if you

like, I will be ready to take you out in ten minutes." But Miss

Dunstable was not going to be put off in this way. And to tell the

truth, I must admit that her friend Mrs. Gresham was not using her

altogether well. She should either have held her peace on the matter

altogether--which would probably have been her wiser course--or she

should have declared her own ideas boldly, feeling secure in her own

conscience as to her own motives. "I shall not stir from this room,"

said Miss Dunstable, "till I have had this matter out with you. And

as for imputations--my imputing bad motives to you--I don't know how

far you may be joking, and saying what you call sharp things to me;

but you have no right to think that I should think evil of you. If

you really do think so, it is treason to the love I have for you. If

I thought that you thought so, I could not remain in the house with

you. What, you are not able to know the difference which one makes

between one's real friends and one's mock friends! I don't believe

it of you, and I know you are only striving to bully me." And Miss

Dunstable now took her turn of walking up and down the room.

"Well, she shan't be bullied," said Mis. Gresham, leaving her

flowers, and putting her arm round her friend's waist;--"at least,

not here, in this house, although she is sometimes such a bully

herself."

"Mary, you have gone too far about this to go back. Tell me what

it was that was on your mind, and as far as it concerns me, I will

answer you honestly." Mrs. Gresham now began to repent that she had

made her little attempt. That uttering of hints in a half-joking

way was all very well, and might possibly bring about the desired

results, without the necessity of any formal suggestion on her part;

but now she was so brought to book that she must say something

formal. She must commit herself to the expression of her own wishes,

and to an expression also of an opinion as to what had been the

wishes of her friend; and this she must do without being able to say

anything as to the wishes of that third person. "Well," she said, "I

suppose you know what I meant."

"I suppose I did," said Miss Dunstable; "but it is not at all the

less necessary that you should say it out. I am not to commit myself

by my interpretation of your thoughts, while you remain perfectly

secure in having only hinted your own. I hate hints, as I do--the

mischief. I go in for the bishop's doctrine. \_Magna est veritas.\_"

"Well, I don't know," said Mrs. Gresham.

"Ah! but I do," said Miss Dunstable. "And therefore go on, or for

ever hold your peace."

"That's just it," said Mrs. Gresham.

"What's just it?" said Miss Dunstable.

"The quotation out of the Prayer Book which you finished just now.

'If any of you know cause or just impediment why these two persons

should not be joined together in holy matrimony, ye are to declare

it. This is the first time of asking.' Do you know any cause, Miss

Dunstable?"

"Do you know any, Mrs. Gresham?"

"None, on my honour!" said the younger lady, putting her hand upon

her breast.

"Ah! but do you not?" and Miss Dunstable caught hold of her arm, and

spoke almost abruptly in her energy.

"No, certainly not. What impediment? If I did, I should not have

broached the subject. I declare I think you would both be very happy

together. Of course, there is one impediment; we all know that. That

must be your look out."

"What do you mean? What impediment?"

"Your own money."

"Psha! Did you find that an impediment in marrying Frank Gresham?"

"Ah! the matter was so different there. He had much more to give than

I had, when all was counted. And I had no money when we--when we were

first engaged." And the tears came into her eyes as she thought of

the circumstances of her early love;--all of which have been narrated

in the county chronicles of Barsetshire, and may now be read by men

and women interested therein.

"Yes; yours was a love match. I declare, Mary, I often think that you

are the happiest woman of whom I ever heard; to have it all to give,

when you were so sure that you were loved while you yet had nothing."

"Yes; I was sure," and she wiped the sweet tears from her eyes, as

she remembered a certain day when a certain youth had come to her,

claiming all kinds of privileges in a very determined manner. She had

been no heiress then. "Yes; I was sure. But now with you, dear, you

can't make yourself poor again. If you can trust no one--"

"I can. I can trust him. As regards that I do trust him altogether.

But how can I tell that he would care for me?"

"Do you not know that he likes you?"

"Ah, yes; and so he does Lady Scatcherd."

"Miss Dunstable!"

"And why not Lady Scatcherd, as well as me? We are of the same

kind--come from the same class."

"Not quite that, I think."

"Yes, from the same class; only I have managed to poke myself up

among dukes and duchesses, whereas she has been content to remain

where God placed her. Where I beat her in art, she beats me in

nature."

"You know you are talking nonsense."

"I think that we are both doing that--absolute nonsense; such as

schoolgirls of eighteen talk to each other. But there is a relief in

it; is there not? It would be a terrible curse to have to talk sense

always. Well, that's done; and now let us go out." Mrs. Gresham was

sure after this that Miss Dunstable would be a consenting party to

the little arrangement which she contemplated. But of that she had

felt but little doubt for some considerable time past. The difficulty

lay on the other side, and all that she had as yet done was to

convince herself that she would be safe in assuring her uncle of

success if he could be induced to take the enterprise in hand. He was

to come to Boxall Hill that evening, and to remain there for a day or

two. If anything could be done in the matter, now would be the time

for doing it. So at least thought Mrs. Gresham.

The doctor did come, and did remain for the allotted time at Boxall

Hill; but when he left, Mrs. Gresham had not been successful. Indeed,

he did not seem to enjoy his visit as was usual with him; and there

was very little of that pleasant friendly intercourse which for some

time past had been customary between him and Miss Dunstable. There

were no passages of arms between them; no abuse from the doctor

against the lady's London gaiety; no raillery from the lady as to the

doctor's country habits. They were very courteous to each other, and,

as Mrs. Gresham thought, too civil by half; nor, as far as she could

see, did they ever remain alone in each other's company for five

minutes at a time during the whole period of the doctor's visit.

What, thought Mrs. Gresham to herself,--what if she had set these two

friends at variance with each other, instead of binding them together

in the closest and most durable friendship! But still she had an idea

that, as she had begun to play this game, she must play it out. She

felt conscious that what she had done must do evil, unless she could

so carry it on as to make it result in good. Indeed, unless she could

so manage, she would have done a manifest injury to Miss Dunstable

in forcing her to declare her thoughts and feelings. She had already

spoken to her uncle in London, and though he had said nothing to show

that he approved of her plan, neither had he said anything to show

that he disapproved it. Therefore she had hoped through the whole of

those three days that he would make some sign,--at any rate to her;

that he would in some way declare what were his own thoughts on this

matter. But the morning of his departure came, and he had declared

nothing. "Uncle," she said, in the last five minutes of his sojourn

there, after he had already taken leave of Miss Dunstable and shaken

hands with Mrs. Gresham, "have you ever thought of what I said to you

up in London?"

"Yes, Mary; of course I have thought about it. Such an idea as that,

when put into a man's head, will make itself thought about."

"Well; and what next? Do talk to me about it. Do not be so hard and

unlike yourself."

"I have very little to say about it."

"I can tell you this for certain, you may if you like."

"Mary! Mary!"

"I would not say so if I were not sure that I should not lead you

into trouble."

"You are foolish in wishing this, my dear; foolish in trying to tempt

an old man into a folly."

"Not foolish if I know that it will make you both happier." He made

her no further reply, but stooping down that she might kiss him,

as was his wont, went his way, leaving her almost miserable in

the thought that she had troubled all these waters to no purpose.

What would Miss Dunstable think of her? But on that afternoon Miss

Dunstable seemed to be as happy and even-tempered as ever.

CHAPTER XXXIX

How to Write a Love Letter

Dr. Thorne, in the few words which he spoke to his niece before he

left Boxall Hill, had called himself an old man; but he was as yet on

the right side of sixty by five good years, and bore about with him

less of the marks of age than most men of fifty-five do bear. One

would have said, in looking at him, that there was no reason why he

should not marry if he found that such a step seemed good to him;

and, looking at the age of the proposed bride, there was nothing

unsuitable in that respect. But nevertheless he felt almost ashamed

of himself, in that he allowed himself even to think of the

proposition which his niece had made. He mounted his horse that day

at Boxall Hill--for he made all his journeys about the county on

horseback--and rode slowly home to Greshamsbury, thinking not so much

of the suggested marriage as of his own folly in thinking of it. How

could he be such an ass at his time of life as to allow the even

course of his way to be disturbed by any such idea? Of course he

could not propose to himself such a wife as Miss Dunstable without

having some thoughts as to her wealth; and it had been the pride of

his life so to live that the world might know that he was indifferent

about money. His profession was all in all to him; the air which he

breathed as well as the bread which he ate; and how could he follow

his profession if he made such a marriage as this? She would expect

him to go to London with her; and what would he become, dangling

at her heels there, known only to the world as the husband of the

richest woman in the town? The kind of life was one which would be

unsuitable to him; and yet, as he rode home, he could not resolve to

rid himself of the idea. He went on thinking of it, though he still

continued to condemn himself for keeping it in his thoughts. That

night at home he would make up his mind, so he declared to himself;

and would then write to his niece begging her to drop the subject.

Having so far come to a resolution he went on meditating what course

of life it might be well for him to pursue if he and Miss Dunstable

should after all become man and wife.

There were two ladies whom it behoved him to see on the day of

his arrival--whom, indeed, he generally saw every day except when

absent from Greshamsbury. The first of these--first in the general

consideration of the people of the place--was the wife of the squire,

Lady Arabella Gresham, a very old patient of the doctor's. Her it was

his custom to visit early in the afternoon; and then, if he were able

to escape the squire's daily invitation to dinner, he customarily

went to the other, Lady Scatcherd, when the rapid meal in his own

house was over. Such, at least, was his summer practice. "Well,

doctor, how are they at Boxall Hill?" said the squire, way-laying him

on the gravel sweep before the door. The squire was very hard set for

occupation in these summer months.

"Quite well, I believe."

"I don't know what's come to Frank. I think he hates this place now.

He's full of the election, I suppose."

"Oh, yes; he told me to say he should be over here soon. Of course

there'll be no contest, so he need not trouble himself."

"Happy dog, isn't he, doctor? to have it all before him instead of

behind him. Well, well; he's as good a lad as ever lived--as ever

lived. And let me see; Mary's time--" And then there were a few very

important words spoken on that subject.

"I'll just step up to Lady Arabella now," said the doctor.

"She's as fretful as possible," said the squire. "I've just left

her."

"Nothing special the matter, I hope?"

"No, I think not; nothing in your way, that is; only specially

cross, which always comes in my way. You'll stop and dine to-day,

of course?"

"Not to-day, squire."

"Nonsense; you will. I have been quite counting on you. I have a

particular reason for wanting to have you to-day--a most particular

reason." But the squire always had his particular reasons.

"I'm very sorry, but it is impossible to-day. I shall have a letter

to write that I must sit down to seriously. Shall I see you when I

come down from her ladyship?" The squire turned away sulkily, almost

without answering him, for he now had no prospect of any alleviation

to the tedium of the evening; and the doctor went upstairs to his

patient. For Lady Arabella, though it cannot be said that she was

ill, was always a patient. It must not be supposed that she kept her

bed and swallowed daily doses, or was prevented from taking her share

in such prosy gaieties as came from time to time in the way of her

prosy life; but it suited her turn of mind to be an invalid and to

have a doctor; and as the doctor whom her good fates had placed at

her elbow thoroughly understood her case, no great harm was done.

"It frets me dreadfully that I cannot get to see Mary," Lady Arabella

said, as soon as the first ordinary question as to her ailments had

been asked and answered.

"She's quite well, and will be over to see you before long."

"Now I beg that she won't. She never thinks of coming when there can

be no possible objection, and travelling, at the present moment,

would be--" Whereupon the Lady Arabella shook her head very gravely.

"Only think of the importance of it, doctor," she said. "Remember the

enormous stake there is to be considered."

"It would not do her a ha'porth of harm if the stake were twice as

large."

"Nonsense, doctor, don't tell me; as if I didn't know myself. I was

very much against her going to London this spring, but of course what

I said was overruled. It always is. I do believe Mr. Gresham went

over to Boxall Hill, on purpose to induce her to go. But what does he

care? He's fond of Frank; but he never thinks of looking beyond the

present day. He never did, as you know well enough, doctor."

"The trip did her all the good in the world," said Dr. Thorne,

preferring anything to a conversation respecting the squire's sins.

"I very well remember that when I was in that way it wasn't thought

that such trips would do me any good. But, perhaps, things are

altered since then."

"Yes, they are," said the doctor. "We don't interfere so much

nowadays."

"I know I never asked for such amusements when so much depended on

quietness. I remember before Frank was born--and, indeed, when all of

them were born-- But, as you say, things were different then; and I

can easily believe that Mary is a person quite determined to have her

own way."

"Why, Lady Arabella, she would have stayed at home without wishing to

stir if Frank had done so much as hold up his little finger."

"So did I always. If Mr. Gresham made the slightest hint I gave way.

But I really don't see what one gets in return for such implicit

obedience. Now this year, doctor, of course I should have liked

to have been up in London for a week or two. You seemed to think

yourself that I might as well see Sir Omicron."

"There could be no possible objection, I said."

"Well; no; exactly; and as Mr. Gresham knew I wished it, I think he

might as well have offered it. I suppose there can be no reason now

about money."

"But I understood that Mary specially asked you and Augusta?"

"Yes; Mary was very good. She did ask me. But I know very well that

Mary wants all the room she has got in London. The house is not at

all too large for herself, And, for the matter of that, my sister,

the countess, was very anxious that I should be with her. But one

does like to be independent if one can, and for one fortnight I do

think that Mr. Gresham might have managed it. When I knew that he was

so dreadfully out at elbows I never troubled him about it,--though,

goodness knows, all that was never my fault."

"The squire hates London. A fortnight there in warm weather would

nearly be the death of him."

"He might at any rate have paid me the compliment of asking me.

The chances are ten to one I should not have gone. It is that

indifference that cuts me so. He was here just now, and would you

believe it?--"

But the doctor was determined to avoid further complaint for the

present day. "I wonder what you would feel, Lady Arabella, if the

squire were to take it into his head to go away and amuse himself,

leaving you at home. There are worse men than Mr. Gresham, if you

will believe me." All this was an allusion to Earl de Courcy, her

ladyship's brother, as Lady Arabella very well understood; and the

argument was one which was very often used to silence her.

"Upon my word, then, I should like it better than his hanging about

here doing nothing but attend to those nasty dogs. I really sometimes

think that he has no spirit left."

"You are mistaken there, Lady Arabella," said the doctor, rising with

his hat in his hand, and making his escape without further parley. As

he went home he could not but think that that phase of married life

was not a very pleasant one. Mr. Gresham and his wife were supposed

by the world to live on the best of terms. They always inhabited the

same house, went out together when they did go out, always sat in

their respective corners in the family pew, and in their wildest

dreams after the happiness of novelty never thought of Sir Cresswell

Cresswell. In some respects--with regard, for instance, to the

continued duration of their joint domesticity at the family mansion

of Greshamsbury--they might have been taken for a pattern couple. But

yet, as far as the doctor could see, they did not seem to add much to

the happiness of each other. They loved each other, doubtless, and

had either of them been in real danger, that danger would have made

the other miserable; but yet it might well be a question whether

either would not be more comfortable without the other.

The doctor, as was his custom, dined at five, and at seven he went

up to the cottage of his old friend Lady Scatcherd. Lady Scatcherd

was not a refined woman, having in her early days been a labourer's

daughter, and having then married a labourer. But her husband had

risen in the world--as has been told in those chronicles before

mentioned,--and his widow was now Lady Scatcherd with a pretty

cottage and a good jointure. She was in all things the very opposite

to Lady Arabella Gresham; nevertheless, under the doctor's auspices,

the two ladies were in some measure acquainted with each other. Of

her married life, also, Dr. Thorne had seen something, and it may

be questioned whether the memory of that was more alluring than the

reality now existing at Greshamsbury. Of the two women Dr. Thorne

much preferred his humbler friend, and to her he made his visits not

in the guise of a doctor, but as a neighbour. "Well, my lady," he

said, as he sat down by her on a broad garden seat--all the world

called Lady Scatcherd "my lady,"--"and how do these long summer days

agree with you? Your roses are twice better out than any I see up at

the big house."

"You may well call them long, doctor. They're long enough surely."

"But not too long. Come, now, I won't have you complaining. You don't

mean to tell me that you have anything to make you wretched? You had

better not, for I won't believe you."

"Eh; well; wretched! I don't know as I'm wretched. It'd be wicked to

say that, and I with such comforts about me."

"I think it would, almost." The doctor did not say this harshly, but

in a soft, friendly tone, and pressing her hand gently as he spoke.

"And I didn't mean to be wicked. I'm very thankful for

everything--leastways, I always try to be. But, doctor, it is so

lonely like."

"Lonely! not more lonely than I am."

"Oh, yes; you're different. You can go everywheres. But what can a

lone woman do? I'll tell you what, doctor; I'd give it all up to have

Roger back with his apron on and his pick in his hand. How well I

mind his look when he'd come home o' nights!"

"And yet it was a hard life you had then, eh, old woman? It would be

better for you to be thankful for what you've got."

"I am thankful. Didn't I tell you so before?" said she, somewhat

crossly. "But it's a sad life, this living alone. I declares I envy

Hannah, 'cause she's got Jemima to sit in the kitchen with her. I

want her to sit with me sometimes, but she won't."

"Ah! but you shouldn't ask her. It's letting yourself down."

"What do I care about down or up? It makes no difference, as he's

gone. If he had lived one might have cared about being up, as you

call it. Eh, deary; I'll be going after him before long, and it will

be no matter then."

"We shall all be going after him, sooner or later; that's sure

enough."

"Eh, dear, that's true surely. It's only a span long, as Parson Oriel

tells us, when he gets romantic in his sermons. But it's a hard

thing, doctor, when two is married, as they can't have their span,

as he calls it, out together. Well I must only put up with it, I

suppose, as others does. Now, you're not going, doctor? You'll stop

and have a dish of tea with me. You never see such cream as Hannah

has from the Alderney cow. Do'ey now, doctor." But the doctor had

his letter to write, and would not allow himself to be tempted even

by the promise of Hannah's cream. So he went his way, angering Lady

Scatcherd by his departure as he had before angered the squire, and

thinking as he went which was most unreasonable in her wretchedness,

his friend Lady Arabella or his friend Lady Scatcherd. The former

was always complaining of an existing husband who never refused her

any moderate request; and the other passed her days in murmuring at

the loss of a dead husband, who in his life had ever been to her

imperious and harsh, and had sometimes been cruel and unjust.

The doctor had his letter to write, but even yet he had not quite

made up his mind what he would put into it; indeed, he had not

hitherto resolved to whom it should be written. Looking at the matter

as he had endeavoured to look at it, his niece, Mrs. Gresham, would

be his correspondent; but if he brought himself to take this jump

in the dark, in that case he would address himself direct to Miss

Dunstable. He walked home, not by the straightest road, but taking

a considerable curve, round by narrow lanes, and through thick

flower-laden hedges,--very thoughtful. He was told that she wished to

marry him; and was he to think only of himself? And as to that pride

of his about money, was it in truth a hearty, manly feeling; or was

it a false pride, of which it behoved him to be ashamed as it did of

many cognate feelings? If he acted rightly in this matter, why should

he be afraid of the thoughts of any one? A life of solitude was

bitter enough, as poor Lady Scatcherd had complained. But then,

looking at Lady Scatcherd, and looking also at his other near

neighbour, his friend the squire, there was little thereabouts to

lead him on to matrimony. So he walked home slowly through the lanes,

very meditative, with his hands behind his back. Nor when he got home

was he much more inclined to any resolute line of action. He might

have drunk his tea with Lady Scatcherd, as well as have sat there in

his own drawing-room, drinking it alone; for he got no pen and paper,

and he dawdled over his teacup with the utmost dilatoriness, putting

off, as it were, the evil day. To only one thing was he fixed--to

this, namely, that that letter should be written before he went to

bed.

Having finished his tea, which did not take place till near eleven,

he went downstairs to an untidy little room which lay behind his

dÃ©pÃ´t of medicines, and in which he was wont to do his writing; and

herein he did at last set himself down to his work. Even at that

moment he was in doubt. But he would write his letter to Miss

Dunstable and see how it looked. He was almost determined not to send

it; so, at least, he said to himself: but he could do no harm by

writing it. So he did write it, as follows:--"Greshamsbury, June,

185--. My dear Miss Dunstable--" When he had got so far, he leaned

back in his chair and looked at the paper. How on earth was he to

find words to say that which he now wished to have said? He had never

written such a letter in his life, or anything approaching to it, and

now found himself overwhelmed with a difficulty of which he had not

previously thought. He spent another half-hour in looking at the

paper, and was at last nearly deterred by this new difficulty. He

would use the simplest, plainest language, he said to himself over

and over again; but it is not always easy to use simple, plain

language,--by no means so easy as to mount on stilts, and to march

along with sesquipodalian words, with pathos, spasms, and notes of

interjection. But the letter did at last get itself written, and

there was not a note of interjection in it.

MY DEAR MISS DUNSTABLE,

I think it right to confess that I should not now be

writing this letter to you, had I not been led to believe

by other judgement than my own that the proposition which

I am going to make would be regarded by you with favour.

Without such other judgement I should, I own, have feared

that the great disparity between you and me in regard to

money would have given to such a proposition an appearance

of being false and mercenary. All I ask of you now, with

confidence, is to acquit me of such fault as that.

When you have read so far you will understand what I mean.

We have known each other now somewhat intimately, though

indeed not very long, and I have sometimes fancied that

you were almost as well pleased to be with me as I have

been to be with you. If I have been wrong in this, tell me

so simply, and I will endeavour to let our friendship run

on as though this letter had not been written. But if I

have been right, and if it be possible that you can think

that a union between us will make us both happier than we

are single, I will plight you a word and troth with good

faith, and will do what an old man may do to make the

burden of the world lie light on your shoulders. Looking

at my age I can hardly keep myself from thinking that I

am an old fool: but I try to reconcile myself to that by

remembering that you yourself are no longer a girl. You

see that I pay you no compliments, and that you need

expect none from me.

I do not know that I could add anything to the truth of

this, if I were to write three times as much. All that is

necessary is, that you should know what I mean. If you do

not believe me to be true and honest already, nothing that

I can write will make you believe it.

God bless you. I know you will not keep me long in

suspense for an answer.

Affectionately your friend,

THOMAS THORNE.

When he had finished he meditated again for another half-hour whether

it would not be right that he should add something about her money.

Would it not be well for him to tell her--it might be said in a

postscript--that with regard to all her wealth she would be free to

do what she chose? At any rate he owed no debts for her to pay, and

would still have his own income, sufficient for his own purposes. But

about one o'clock he came to the conclusion that it would be better

to leave the matter alone. If she cared for him, and could trust him,

and was worthy also that he should trust her, no omission of such a

statement would deter her from coming to him: and if there were no

such trust, it would not be created by any such assurance on his

part. So he read the letter over twice, sealed it, and took it up,

together with his bed candle, into his bedroom. Now that the letter

was written it seemed to be a thing fixed by fate that it must go. He

had written it that he might see how it looked when written; but now

that it was written, there remained no doubt that it must be sent. So

he went to bed, with the letter on the toilette-table beside him; and

early in the morning--so early as to make it seem that the importance

of the letter had disturbed his rest--he sent it off by a special

messenger to Boxall Hill. "I'se wait for an answer?" said the boy.

"No," said the doctor: "leave the letter, and come away."

The breakfast hour was not very early at Boxall Hill in these summer

months. Frank Gresham, no doubt, went round his farm before he came

in for prayers, and his wife was probably looking to the butter

in the dairy. At any rate, they did not meet till near ten, and

therefore, though the ride from Greshamsbury to Boxall Hill was

nearly two hours' work, Miss Dunstable had her letter in her own room

before she came down. She read it in silence as she was dressing,

while the maid was with her in the room; but she made no sign which

could induce her Abigail to think that the epistle was more than

ordinarily important. She read it, and then quietly refolding it and

placing it in the envelope, she put it down on the table at which she

was sitting. It was full fifteen minutes afterwards that she begged

her servant to see if Mrs. Gresham were still in her own room.

"Because I want to see her for five minutes, alone, before

breakfast," said Miss Dunstable.

"You traitor; you false, black traitor!" were the first words which

Miss Dunstable spoke when she found herself alone with her friend.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"I did not think there was so much mischief in you, nor so keen and

commonplace a desire for match-making. Look here. Read the first four

lines; not more, if you please; the rest is private. Whose is the

other judgement of whom your uncle speaks in his letter?"

"Oh, Miss Dunstable! I must read it all."

"Indeed you'll do no such thing. You think it's a love-letter, I dare

say; but indeed there's not a word about love in it."

"I know he has offered. I shall be so glad, for I know you like him."

"He tells me that I am an old woman, and insinuates that I may

probably be an old fool."

"I am sure he does not say that."

"Ah! but I'm sure that he does. The former is true enough, and I

never complain of the truth. But as to the latter, I am by no means

so certain that it is true--not in the sense that he means it."

"Dear, dearest woman, don't go on in that way now. Do speak out to

me, and speak without jesting."

"Whose was the other judgement to whom he trusts so implicitly? Tell

me that."

"Mine, mine, of course. No one else can have spoken to him about it.

Of course I talked to him."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I told him--"

"Well, out with it. Let me have the real facts. Mind, I tell you

fairly that you had no right to tell him anything. What passed

between us, passed in confidence. But let us hear what you did say."

"I told him that you would have him if he offered." And Mrs. Gresham,

as she spoke, looked into her friend's face doubtingly, not knowing

whether in very truth Miss Dunstable were pleased with her or

displeased. If she were displeased, then how had her uncle been

deceived!

"You told him that as a fact?"

"I told him that I thought so."

"Then I suppose I am bound to have him," said Miss Dunstable,

dropping the letter on to the floor in mock despair.

"My dear, dear, dearest woman!" said Mrs. Gresham, bursting into

tears, and throwing herself on to her friend's neck.

"Mind you are a dutiful niece," said Miss Dunstable. "And now let me

go and finish dressing." In the course of the afternoon, an answer

was sent back to Greshamsbury, in these words:--

DEAR DR. THORNE,

I do and will trust you in everything; and it shall be as

you would have it. Mary writes to you; but do not believe

a word she says. I never will again, for she has behaved

so bad in this matter.

Yours affectionately and very truly,

MARTHA DUNSTABLE.

"And so I am going to marry the richest woman in England," said Dr.

Thorne to himself, as he sat down that day to his mutton-chop.

CHAPTER XL

Internecine

It must be conceived that there was some feeling of triumph at

Plumstead Episcopi, when the wife of the rector returned home with

her daughter, the bride elect of the Lord Dumbello. The heir of the

Marquess of Hartletop was, in wealth, the most considerable unmarried

young nobleman of the day; he was noted, too, as a man difficult to

be pleased, as one who was very fine and who gave himself airs; and

to have been selected as the wife of such a man as this was a great

thing for the daughter of a parish clergyman. We have seen in what

manner the happy girl's mother communicated the fact to Lady Lufton,

hiding, as it were, her pride under a veil; and we have seen also how

meekly the happy girl bore her own great fortune, applying herself

humbly to the packing of her clothes, as though she ignored her own

glory. But nevertheless there was triumph at Plumstead Episcopi.

The mother, when she returned home, began to feel that she had been

thoroughly successful in the great object of her life. While she was

yet in London she had hardly realized her satisfaction, and there

were doubts then whether the cup might not be dashed from her lips

before it was tasted. It might be that even the son of the Marquess

of Hartletop was subject to parental authority, and that barriers

should spring up between Griselda and her coronet; but there had

been nothing of the kind. The archdeacon had been closeted with the

marquess, and Mrs. Grantly had been closeted with the marchioness;

and though neither of those noble persons had expressed themselves

gratified by their son's proposed marriage, so also neither of them

had made any attempt to prevent it. Lord Dumbello was a man who had

a will of his own--as the Grantlys boasted amongst themselves. Poor

Griselda! the day may perhaps come when this fact of her lord's

masterful will may not to her be matter of much boasting. But in

London, as I was saying, there had been no time for an appreciation

of the family joy. The work to be done was nervous in its nature,

and self-glorification might have been fatal; but now, when they were

safe at Plumstead, the great truth, burst upon them in all its

splendour.

Mrs. Grantly had but one daughter, and the formation of that child's

character and her establishment in the world had been the one main

object of the mother's life. Of Griselda's great beauty the Plumstead

household had long been conscious; of her discretion also, of her

conduct, and of her demeanour there had been no doubt. But the father

had sometimes hinted to the mother that he did not think that Grizzy

was quite so clever as her brothers. "I don't agree with you at all,"

Mrs. Grantly had answered. "Besides, what you call cleverness is not

at all necessary in a girl; she is perfectly lady-like; even you

won't deny that." The archdeacon had never wished to deny it, and

was now fain to admit that what he had called cleverness was not

necessary in a young lady. At this period of the family glory the

archdeacon himself was kept a little in abeyance, and was hardly

allowed free intercourse with his own magnificent child. Indeed, to

give him his due, it must be said of him that he would not consent

to walk in the triumphal procession which moved with stately step,

to and fro, through the Barchester regions. He kissed his daughter

and blessed her, and bade her love her husband and be a good wife;

but such injunctions as these, seeing how splendidly she had done

her duty in securing to herself a marquess, seemed out of place and

almost vulgar. Girls about to marry curates or sucking barristers

should be told to do their duty in that station of life to which God

might be calling them; but it seemed to be almost an impertinence in

a father to give such an injunction to a future marchioness.

"I do not think that you have any ground for fear on her behalf,"

said Mrs. Grantly, "seeing in what way she has hitherto conducted

herself."

"She has been a good girl," said the archdeacon, "but she is about

to be placed in a position of great temptation."

"She has a strength of mind suited for any position," replied Mrs.

Grantly, vaingloriously. But nevertheless even the archdeacon moved

about through the close at Barchester with a somewhat prouder step

since the tidings of this alliance had become known there. The time

had been--in the latter days of his father's lifetime--when he was

the greatest man of the close. The dean had been old and infirm, and

Dr. Grantly had wielded the bishop's authority. But since that things

had altered. A new bishop had come there, absolutely hostile to

him. A new dean had also come, who was not only his friend, but the

brother-in-law of his wife; but even this advent had lessened the

authority of the archdeacon. The vicars choral did not hang upon

his words as they had been wont to do, and the minor canons smiled

in return to his smile less obsequiously when they met him in

the clerical circles of Barchester. But now it seemed that his

old supremacy was restored to him. In the minds of many men an

archdeacon, who was the father-in-law of a marquess, was himself

as good as any bishop. He did not say much of his new connexion

to others beside the dean, but he was conscious of the fact, and

conscious also of the reflected glory which shone around his own

head.

But as regards Mrs. Grantly it may be said that she moved in an

unending procession of stately ovation. It must not be supposed that

she continually talked to her friends and neighbours of Lord Dumbello

and the marchioness. She was by far too wise for such folly as that.

The coming alliance having been once announced, the name of Hartletop

was hardly mentioned by her out of her own domestic circle. But she

assumed, with an ease that was surprising even to herself, the airs

and graces of a mighty woman. She went through her work of morning

calls as though it were her business to be affable to the country

gentry. She astonished her sister, the dean's wife, by the simplicity

of her grandeur; and condescended to Mrs. Proudie in a manner which

nearly broke that lady's heart. "I shall be even with her yet," said

Mrs. Proudie to herself, who had contrived to learn various very

deleterious circumstances respecting the Hartletop family since

the news about Lord Dumbello and Griselda had become known to her.

Griselda herself was carried about in the procession, taking but

little part in it of her own, like an Eastern god. She suffered her

mother's caresses and smiled in her mother's face as she listened to

her own praises, but her triumph was apparently within. To no one did

she say much on the subject, and greatly disgusted the old family

housekeeper by declining altogether to discuss the future Dumbello

\_mÃ©nage\_. To her aunt, Mrs. Arabin, who strove hard to lead her

into some open-hearted speech as to her future aspirations, she was

perfectly impassive. "Oh, yes, aunt, of course," and "I'll think

about it, Aunt Eleanor," or "Of course I shall do that if Lord

Dumbello wishes it." Nothing beyond this could be got from her; and

so, after half a dozen ineffectual attempts, Mrs. Arabin abandoned

the matter.

But then there arose the subject of clothes--of the wedding

\_trousseau\_! Sarcastic people are wont to say that the tailor makes

the man. Were I such a one, I might certainly assert that the

milliner makes the bride. As regarding her bridehood, in distinction

either to her girlhood or her wifehood--as being a line of plain

demarcation between those two periods of a woman's life--the milliner

does do much to make her. She would be hardly a bride if the

\_trousseau\_ were not there. A girl married without some such

appendage would seem to pass into the condition of a wife without any

such line of demarcation. In that moment in which she finds herself

in the first fruition of her marriage finery she becomes a bride; and

in that other moment when she begins to act upon the finest of these

things as clothes to be packed up, she becomes a wife. When this

subject was discussed Griselda displayed no lack of a becoming

interest. She went to work steadily, slowly, and almost with

solemnity, as though the business in hand were one which it would be

wicked to treat with impatience. She even struck her mother with awe

by the grandeur of her ideas and the depth of her theories. Nor let

it be supposed that she rushed away at once to the consideration of

the great fabric which was to be the ultimate sign and mark of her

status, the quintessence of her briding, the outer veil, as it were,

of the tabernacle--namely, her wedding-dress. As a great poet works

himself up by degrees to that inspiration which is necessary for

the grand turning-point of his epic, so did she slowly approach the

hallowed ground on which she would sit, with her ministers around

her, when about to discuss the nature, the extent, the design, the

colouring, the structure, and the ornamentation of that momentous

piece of apparel. No; there was much indeed to be done before she

came to this; and as the poet, to whom I have already alluded, first

invokes his muse, and then brings his smaller events gradually out

upon his stage, so did Miss Grantly with sacred fervour ask her

mother's aid, and then prepare her list of all those articles

of underclothing which must be the substratum for the visible

magnificence of her \_trousseau\_. Money was no object. We all know

what that means; and frequently understand, when the words are used,

that a blaze of splendour is to be attained at the cheapest possible

price. But, in this instance, money was no object;--such an amount

of money, at least, as could by any possibility be spent on a lady's

clothes, independently of her jewels. With reference to diamonds and

such like, the archdeacon at once declared his intention of taking

the matter into his own hands--except in so far as Lord Dumbello,

or the Hartletop interest, might be pleased to participate in the

selection. Nor was Mrs. Grantly sorry for such a decision. She was

not an imprudent woman, and would have dreaded the responsibility of

trusting herself on such an occasion among the dangerous temptations

of a jeweller's shop. But as far as silks and satins went--in the

matter of French bonnets, muslims, velvets, hats, riding-habits,

artificial flowers, head-gilding, curious nettings, enamelled

buckles, golden tagged bobbins, and mechanical petticoats--as

regarded shoes, and gloves, and corsets, and stockings, and linen,

and flannel, and calico--money, I may conscientiously assert, was no

object. And, under these circumstances, Griselda Grantly went to work

with a solemn industry and a steady perseverance that was beyond all

praise. "I hope she will be happy," Mrs. Arabin said to her sister,

as the two were sitting together in the dean's drawing-room.

"Oh, yes; I think she will. Why should she not?" said the mother.

"Oh, no: I know of no reason. But she is going up into a station so

much above her own in the eyes of the world that one cannot but feel

anxious for her."

"I should feel much more anxious if she were going to marry a poor

man," said Mrs. Grantly. "It has always seemed to me that Griselda

was fitted for a high position; that nature intended her for rank and

state. You see that she is not a bit elated. She takes it all as if

it were her own by right. I do not think that there is any danger

that her head will be turned, if you mean that."

"I was thinking rather of her heart," said Mrs. Arabin.

"She never would have taken Lord Dumbello without loving him," said

Mrs. Grantly, speaking rather quickly.

"That is not quite what I mean either, Susan. I am sure she would

not have accepted him had she not loved him. But it is so hard to

keep the heart fresh among all the grandeurs of high rank; and it is

harder for a girl to do so who has not been born to it, than for one

who has enjoyed it as her birthright."

"I don't quite understand about fresh hearts," said Mrs. Grantly,

pettishly. "If she does her duty, and loves her husband, and fills

the position in which God has placed her with propriety, I don't know

that we need look for anything more. I don't at all approve of the

plan of frightening a young girl when she is making her first outset

into the world."

"No; I would not frighten her. I think it would be almost difficult

to frighten Griselda."

"I hope it would. The great matter with a girl is whether she has

been brought up with proper notions as to a woman's duty. Of course

it is not for me to boast on this subject. Such as she is, I, of

course, am responsible. But I must own that I do not see occasion to

wish for any change." And then the subject was allowed to drop.

Among those of her relations who wondered much at the girl's fortune,

but allowed themselves to say but little, was her grandfather, Mr.

Harding. He was an old clergyman, plain and simple in his manners,

and not occupying a very prominent position, seeing that he was only

precentor to the chapter. He was loved by his daughter, Mrs. Grantly,

and was treated by the archdeacon, if not invariably with the highest

respect, at least always with consideration and regard. But, old

and plain as he was, the young people at Plumstead did not hold him

in any great reverence. He was poorer than their other relatives,

and made no attempt to hold his head high in Barsetshire circles.

Moreover, in these latter days, the home of his heart had been at the

deanery. He had, indeed, a lodging of his own in the city, but was

gradually allowing himself to be weaned away from it. He had his own

bedroom in the dean's house, his own arm-chair in the dean's library,

and his own corner on a sofa in Mrs. Dean's drawing-room. It was

not, therefore, necessary that he should interfere greatly in this

coming marriage; but still it became his duty to say a word of

congratulation to his granddaughter--and perhaps to say a word of

advice.

"Grizzy, my dear," he said to her--he always called her Grizzy, but

the endearment of the appellation had never been appreciated by the

young lady--"come and kiss me, and let me congratulate you on your

great promotion. I do so very heartily."

"Thank you, grandpapa," she said, touching his forehead with her

lips, thus being, as it were, very sparing with her kiss. But those

lips now were august and reserved for nobler foreheads than that of

an old cathedral hack. For Mr. Harding still chanted the Litany from

Sunday to Sunday, unceasingly, standing at that well-known desk in

the cathedral choir; and Griselda had a thought in her mind that

when the Hartletop people should hear of the practice they would not

be delighted. Dean and archdeacon might be very well, and if her

grandfather had even been a prebendary, she might have put up with

him; but he had, she thought, almost disgraced his family in being,

at his age, one of the working menial clergy of the cathedral. She

kissed him, therefore, sparingly, and resolved that her words with

him should be few.

"You are going to be a great lady, Grizzy," said he.

"Umph!" said she.

What was she to say when so addressed?

"And I hope you will be happy--and make others happy."

"I hope I shall," said she.

"But always think most about the latter, my dear. Think about the

happiness of those around you, and your own will come without

thinking. You understand that; do you not?"

"Oh, yes, I understand," she said. As they were speaking Mr. Harding

still held her hand, but Griselda left it with him unwillingly, and

therefore ungraciously, looking as though she were dragging it from

him.

"And Grizzy--I believe it is quite as easy for a rich countess to be

happy, as for a dairymaid--" Griselda gave her head a little chuck

which was produced by two different operations of her mind. The first

was a reflection that her grandpapa was robbing her of her rank. She

was to be a rich marchioness. And the second was a feeling of anger

at the old man for comparing her lot to that of a dairymaid.

"Quite as easy, I believe," continued he; "though others will tell

you that it is not so. But with the countess as with the dairymaid,

it must depend on the woman herself. Being a countess--that fact

alone won't make you happy."

"Lord Dumbello at present is only a viscount," said Griselda. "There

is no earl's title in the family."

"Oh! I did not know," said Mr. Harding, relinquishing his

granddaughter's hand; and, after that, he troubled her with no

further advice. Both Mrs. Proudie and the bishop had called at

Plumstead since Mrs. Grantly had come back from London, and the

ladies from Plumstead, of course, returned the visit. It was natural

that the Grantlys and Proudies should hate each other. They were

essentially Church people, and their views on all Church matters were

antagonistic. They had been compelled to fight for supremacy in the

diocese, and neither family had so conquered the other as to have

become capable of magnanimity and good-humour. They did hate each

other, and this hatred had, at one time, almost produced an absolute

disseverance of even the courtesies which are so necessary between a

bishop and his clergy. But the bitterness of this rancour had been

overcome, and the ladies of the families had continued on visiting

terms. But now this match was almost more than Mrs. Proudie could

bear. The great disappointment which, as she well knew, the Grantlys

had encountered in that matter of the proposed new bishopric had for

the moment mollified her. She had been able to talk of poor dear

Mrs. Grantly! "She is heartbroken, you know, in this matter, and the

repetition of such misfortunes is hard to bear," she had been heard

to say, with a complacency which had been quite becoming to her. But

now that complacency was at an end. Olivia Proudie had just accepted

a widowed preacher at a district church in Bethnal Green--a man with

three children, who was dependent on pew-rents; and Griselda Grantly

was engaged to the eldest son of the Marquess of Hartletop! When

women are enjoined to forgive their enemies it cannot be intended

that such wrongs as these should be included. But Mrs. Proudie's

courage was nothing daunted. It may be boasted of her that nothing

could daunt her courage. Soon after her return to Barchester, she and

Olivia--Olivia being very unwilling--had driven over to Plumstead,

and, not finding the Grantlys at home, had left their cards; and now,

at a proper interval, Mrs. Grantly and Griselda returned the visit.

It was the first time that Miss Grantly had been seen by the Proudie

ladies since the fact of her engagement had become known.

The first bevy of compliments that passed might be likened to a crowd

of flowers on a hedge rose-bush. They were beautiful to the eye, but

were so closely environed by thorns that they could not be plucked

without great danger. As long as the compliments were allowed to

remain on the hedge--while no attempt was made to garner them and

realize their fruits for enjoyment--they did no mischief; but the

first finger that was put forth for such a purpose was soon drawn

back, marked with spots of blood. "Of course it is a great match for

Griselda," said Mrs. Grantly, in a whisper the meekness of which

would have disarmed an enemy whose weapons were less firmly clutched

than those of Mrs. Proudie; "but, independently of that, the

connexion is one which is gratifying in many ways."

"Oh, no doubt," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Lord Dumbello is so completely his own master," continued Mrs.

Grantly, and a slight, unintended semi-tone of triumph mingled itself

with the meekness of that whisper.

"And is likely to remain so, from all I hear," said Mrs. Proudie, and

the scratched hand was at once drawn back.

"Of course the estab--," and then Mrs. Proudie, who was blandly

continuing her list of congratulations, whispered her sentence close

into the car of Mrs. Grantly, so that not a word of what she said

might be audible by the young people.

"I never heard a word of it," said Mrs. Grantly, gathering herself

up, "and I don't believe it."

"Oh, I may be wrong; and I'm sure I hope so. But young men will be

young men, you know;--and children will take after their parents.

I suppose you will see a great deal of the Duke of Omnium now."

But Mrs. Grantly was not a woman to be knocked down and trampled

on without resistance; and though she had been lacerated by the

rose-bush she was not as yet placed altogether \_hors de combat\_. She

said some word about the Duke of Omnium very tranquilly, speaking

of him merely as a Barsetshire proprietor, and then, smiling with

her sweetest smile, expressed a hope that she might soon have the

pleasure of becoming acquainted with Mr. Tickler; and as she spoke

she made a pretty little bow towards Olivia Proudie. Now Mr. Tickler

was the worthy clergyman attached to the district church at Bethnal

Green.

"He'll be down here in August," said Olivia, boldly, determined not

to be shamefaced about her love affairs.

"You'll be starring it about the Continent by that time, my dear,"

said Mrs. Proudie to Griselda. "Lord Dumbello is well known at

Homburg and Ems, and places of that sort; so you will find yourself

quite at home."

"We are going to Rome," said Griselda, majestically.

"I suppose Mr. Tickler will come into the diocese soon," said Mrs.

Grantly. "I remember hearing him very favourably spoken of by Mr.

Slope, who was a friend of his." Nothing short of a fixed resolve on

the part of Mrs. Grantly that the time had now come in which she must

throw away her shield and stand behind her sword, declare war to the

knife, and neither give nor take quarter, could have justified such

a speech as this. Any allusion to Mr. Slope acted on Mrs. Proudie

as a red cloth is supposed to act on a bull; but when that allusion

connected the name of Mr. Slope in a friendly bracket with that of

Mrs. Proudie's future son-in-law it might be certain that the effect

would be terrific. And there was more than this: for that very Mr.

Slope had once entertained audacious hopes--hopes not thought to be

audacious by the young lady herself--with reference to Miss Olivia

Proudie. All this Mrs. Grantly knew, and, knowing it, still dared to

mention his name.

The countenance of Mrs. Proudie became darkened with black anger,

and the polished smile of her company manners gave place before

the outraged feelings of her nature. "The man you speak of, Mrs.

Grantly," said she, "was never known as a friend by Mr. Tickler."

"Oh, indeed," said Mrs. Grantly. "Perhaps I have made a mistake. I am

sure I have heard Mr. Slope mention him."

"When Mr. Slope was running after your sister, Mrs. Grantly, and was

encouraged by her as he was, you perhaps saw more of him than I did."

"Mrs. Proudie, that was never the case."

"I have reason to know that the archdeacon conceived it to be so, and

that he was very unhappy about it." Now this, unfortunately, was a

fact which Mrs. Grantly could not deny.

"The archdeacon may have been mistaken about Mr. Slope," she said,

"as were some other people at Barchester. But it was you, I think,

Mrs. Proudie, who were responsible for bringing him here." Mrs.

Grantly, at this period of the engagement, might have inflicted a

fatal wound by referring to poor Olivia's former love affairs, but

she was not destitute of generosity. Even in the extremest heat of

the battle she knew how to spare the young and tender.

"When I came here, Mrs. Grantly, I little dreamed what a depth of

wickedness might be found in the very close of a cathedral city,"

said Mrs. Proudie.

"Then, for dear Olivia's sake, pray do not bring poor Mr. Tickler to

Barchester."

"Mr. Tickler, Mrs. Grantly, is a man of assured morals and of a

highly religious tone of thinking. I wish every one could be so safe

as regards their daughters' future prospects as I am."

"Yes, I know he has the advantage of being a family man," said Mrs.

Grantly, getting up. "Good morning, Mrs. Proudie; good day, Olivia."

"A great deal better that than--" But the blow fell upon the empty

air; for Mrs. Grantly had already escaped on to the staircase while

Olivia was ringing the bell for the servant to attend the front-door.

Mrs. Grantly, as she got into her carriage, smiled slightly, thinking

of the battle, and as she sat down she gently pressed her daughter's

hand. But Mrs Proudie's face was still dark as Acheron when her enemy

withdrew, and with angry tone she sent her daughter to her work. "Mr.

Tickler will have great reason to complain if, in your position, you

indulge such habits of idleness," she said. Therefore I conceive that

I am justified in saying that in that encounter Mrs. Grantly was the

conqueror.

CHAPTER XLI

Don Quixote

On the day on which Lucy had her interview with Lady Lufton the dean

dined at Framley parsonage. He and Robarts had known each other

since the latter had been in the diocese, and now, owing to Mark's

preferment in the chapter, had become almost intimate. The dean was

greatly pleased with the manner in which poor Mr. Crawley's children

had been conveyed away from Hogglestock, and was inclined to open his

heart to the whole Framley household. As he still had to ride home

he could only allow himself to remain half an hour after dinner, but

in that half-hour he said a great deal about Crawley, complimented

Robarts on the manner in which he was playing the part of the Good

Samaritan, and then by degrees informed him that it had come to his,

the dean's, ears, before he left Barchester, that a writ was in the

hands of certain persons in the city, enabling them to seize--he did

not know whether it was the person or the property of the vicar of

Framley.

The fact was that these tidings had been conveyed to the dean with

the express intent that he might put Robarts on his guard; but the

task of speaking on such a subject to a brother clergyman had been so

unpleasant to him that he had been unable to introduce it till the

last five minutes before his departure. "I hope you will not put it

down as an impertinent interference," said the dean, apologizing.

"No," said Mark; "no, I do not think that." He was so sad at heart

that he hardly knew how to speak of it.

"I do not understand much about such matters," said the dean; "but I

think, if I were you, I should go to a lawyer. I should imagine that

anything so terribly disagreeable as an arrest might be avoided."

"It is a hard case," said Mark, pleading his own cause. "Though these

men have this claim against me I have never received a shilling

either in money or money's worth."

"And yet your name is to the bills!" said the dean.

"Yes, my name is to the bills, certainly, but it was to oblige a

friend."

And then the dean, having given his advice, rode away. He could not

understand how a clergyman, situated as was Mr. Robarts, could find

himself called upon by friendship to attach his name to accommodation

bills which he had not the power of liquidating when due! On that

evening they were both wretched enough at the parsonage. Hitherto

Mark had hoped that perhaps, after all, no absolutely hostile steps

would be taken against him with reference to these bills. Some

unforeseen chance might occur in his favour, or the persons holding

them might consent to take small instalments of payment from time to

time; but now it seemed that the evil day was actually coming upon

him at a blow. He had no longer any secrets from his wife. Should he

go to a lawyer? and if so, to what lawyer? And when he had found his

lawyer, what should he say to him? Mrs. Robarts at one time suggested

that everything should be told to Lady Lufton. Mark, however, could

not bring himself to do that. "It would seem," he said, "as though I

wanted her to lend me the money."

On the following morning Mark did ride into Barchester, dreading,

however, lest he should be arrested on his journey, and he did see a

lawyer. During his absence two calls were made at the parsonage--one

by a very rough-looking individual, who left a suspicious document

in the hands of the servant, purporting to be an invitation--not to

dinner--from one of the Judges of the land; and the other call was

made by Lady Lufton in person.

Mrs. Robarts had determined to go down to Framley Court on that day.

In accordance with her usual custom she would have been there within

an hour or two of Lady Lufton's return from London, but things

between them were not now as they usually had been. This affair of

Lucy's must make a difference, let them both resolve to the contrary

as they might. And, indeed, Mrs. Robarts had found that the closeness

of her intimacy with Framley Court had been diminishing from day to

day since Lucy had first begun to be on friendly terms with Lord

Lufton. Since that she had been less at Framley Court than usual;

she had heard from Lady Lufton less frequently by letter during her

absence than she had done in former years, and was aware that she was

less implicitly trusted with all the affairs of the parish. This had

not made her angry, for she was in a manner conscious that it must be

so. It made her unhappy, but what could she do? She could not blame

Lucy, nor could she blame Lady Lufton. Lord Lufton she did blame,

but she did so in the hearing of no one but her husband. Her mind,

however, was made up to go over and bear the first brunt of her

ladyship's arguments, when she was stopped by her ladyship's arrival.

If it were not for this terrible matter of Lucy's love--a matter

on which they could not now be silent when they met--there would

be twenty subjects of pleasant, or, at any rate, not unpleasant

conversation. But even then there would be those terrible bills

hanging over her conscience, and almost crushing her by their weight.

At the moment in which Lady Lufton walked up to the drawing-room

window, Mrs. Robarts held in her hand that ominous invitation from

the Judge. Would it not be well that she should make a clean breast

of it all, disregarding what her husband had said? It might be well:

only this--she had never done anything in opposition to her husband's

wishes. So she hid the slip within her desk, and left the matter

open to consideration. The interview commenced with an affectionate

embrace, as was a matter of course. "Dear Fanny," and "Dear Lady

Lufton," was said between them with all the usual warmth. And then

the first inquiry was made about the children, and the second about

the school. For a minute or two Mrs. Robarts thought that, perhaps,

nothing was to be said about Lucy. If it pleased Lady Lufton to be

silent, she, at least, would not commence the subject. Then there

was a word or two spoken about Mrs. Podgens's baby, after which Lady

Lufton asked whether Fanny were alone. "Yes," said Mrs. Robarts.

"Mark has gone over to Barchester."

"I hope he will not be long before he lets me see him. Perhaps he can

call to-morrow. Would you both come and dine to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow, I think, Lady Lufton; but Mark, I am sure, will go

over and call."

"And why not come to dinner? I hope there is to be no change among

us, eh, Fanny?" and Lady Lufton as she spoke looked into the other's

face in a manner which almost made Mrs. Robarts get up and throw

herself on her old friend's neck. Where was she to find a friend

who would give her such constant love as she had received from Lady

Lufton? And who was kinder, better, more honest than she?

"Change! no, I hope not, Lady Lufton;" and as she spoke the tears

stood in her eyes.

"Ah, but I shall think there is if you will not come to me as you

used to do. You always used to come and dine with me the day I came

home, as a matter of course." What could she say, poor woman, to

this?

"We were all in confusion yesterday about poor Mrs. Crawley, and the

dean dined here; he had been over at Hogglestock to see his friend."

"I have heard of her illness, and will go over and see what ought

to be done. Don't you go, do you hear, Fanny? You with your young

children! I should never forgive you if you did." And then Mrs.

Robarts explained how Lucy had gone there, had sent the four children

back to Framley, and was herself now staying at Hogglestock with the

object of nursing Mrs. Crawley. In telling the story she abstained

from praising Lucy with all the strong language which she would have

used had not Lucy's name and character been at the present moment of

peculiar import to Lady Lufton; but nevertheless she could not tell

it without dwelling much on Lucy's kindness. It would have been

ungenerous to Lady Lufton to make much of Lucy's virtue at this

present moment, but unjust to Lucy to make nothing of it.

"And she is actually with Mrs. Crawley now?" asked Lady Lufton.

"Oh, yes; Mark left her there yesterday afternoon."

"And the four children are all here in the house?"

"Not exactly in the house--that is, not as yet. We have arranged a

sort of quarantine hospital over the coach-house."

"What, where Stubbs lives?"

"Yes; Stubbs and his wife have come into the house, and the children

are to remain up there till the doctor says that there is no danger

of infection. I have not even seen my visitors myself as yet," said

Mrs. Robarts with a slight laugh.

"Dear me!" said Lady Lufton. "I declare you have been very prompt.

And so Miss Robarts is over there! I should have thought Mr. Crawley

would have made a difficulty about the children."

"Well, he did; but they kidnapped them--that is, Lucy and Mark did.

The dean gave me such an account of it. Lucy brought them out by twos

and packed them in the pony-carriage, and then Mark drove off at a

gallop while Mr. Crawley stood calling to them in the road. The dean

was there at the time and saw it all."

"That Miss Lucy of yours seems to be a very determined young lady

when she takes a thing into her head," said Lady Lufton, now sitting

down for the first time.

"Yes, she is," said Mrs. Robarts, having laid aside all her pleasant

animation, for the discussion which she dreaded was now at hand.

"A very determined young lady," continued Lady Lufton. "Of course, my

dear Fanny, you know all this about Ludovic and your sister-in-law?"

"Yes, she has told me about it."

"It is very unfortunate--very."

"I do not think Lucy has been to blame," said Mrs. Robarts; and as

she spoke the blood was already mounting to her cheeks.

"Do not be too anxious to defend her, my dear, before any one accuses

her. Whenever a person does that it looks as though their cause were

weak."

"But my cause is not weak as far as Lucy is concerned; I feel quite

sure that she has not been to blame."

"I know how obstinate you can be, Fanny, when you think it necessary

to dub yourself any one's champion. Don Quixote was not a better

knight-errant than you are. But is it not a pity to take up your

lance and shield before an enemy is within sight or hearing? But that

was ever the way with your Don Quixotes."

"Perhaps there may be an enemy in ambush." That was Mrs. Robarts's

thought to herself, but she did not dare to express it, so she

remained silent.

"My only hope is," continued Lady Lufton, "that when my back is

turned you fight as gallantly for me."

"Ah, you are never under a cloud, like poor Lucy."

"Am I not? But, Fanny, you do not see all the clouds. The sun does

not always shine for any of us, and the down-pouring rain and the

heavy wind scatter also my fairest flowers--as they have done hers,

poor girl. Dear Fanny, I hope it may be long before any cloud comes

across the brightness of your heaven. Of all the creatures I know you

are the one most fitted for quiet continued sunshine." And then Mrs.

Robarts did get up and embrace her friend, thus hiding the tears

which were running down her face. Continued sunshine indeed! A dark

spot had already gathered on her horizon, which was likely to fall in

a very waterspout of rain. What was to come of that terrible notice

which was now lying in the desk under Lady Lufton's very arm?

"But I am not come here to croak like an old raven," continued Lady

Lufton, when she had brought this embrace to an end. "It is probable

that we all may have our sorrows; but I am quite sure of this,--that

if we endeavour to do our duties honestly, we shall all find our

consolation and all have our joys also. And now, my dear, let you

and I say a few words about this unfortunate affair. It would not be

natural if we were to hold our tongues to each other; would it?"

"I suppose not," said Mrs. Robarts.

"We should always be conceiving worse than the truth--each as to the

other's thoughts. Now, some time ago, when I spoke to you about your

sister-in-law and Ludovic--I dare say you remember--"

"Oh, yes, I remember."

"We both thought then that there would really be no danger. To tell

you the plain truth I fancied, and indeed hoped, that his affections

were engaged elsewhere; but I was altogether wrong then; wrong in

thinking it, and wrong in hoping it." Mrs. Robarts knew well that

Lady Lufton was alluding to Griselda Grantly, but she conceived

that it would be discreet to say nothing herself on that subject

at present. She remembered, however, Lucy's flashing eye when the

possibility of Lord Lufton making such a marriage was spoken of in

the pony-carriage, and could not but feel glad that Lady Lufton had

been disappointed.

"I do not at all impute any blame to Miss Robarts for what has

occurred since," continued her ladyship. "I wish you distinctly to

understand that."

"I do not see how any one could blame her. She has behaved so nobly."

"It is of no use inquiring whether any one can. It is sufficient that

I do not."

"But I think that is hardly sufficient," said Mrs. Robarts,

pertinaciously.

"Is it not?" asked her ladyship, raising her eyebrows.

"No. Only think what Lucy has done and is doing. If she had chosen to

say that she would accept your son I really do not know how you could

have justly blamed her. I do not by any means say that I would have

advised such a thing."

"I am glad of that, Fanny."

"I have not given any advice; nor is it needed. I know no one more

able than Lucy to see clearly, by her own judgement, what course she

ought to pursue. I should be afraid to advise one whose mind is so

strong, and who, of her own nature, is so self-denying as she is.

She is sacrificing herself now, because she will not be the means of

bringing trouble and dissension between you and your son. If you ask

me, Lady Lufton, I think you owe her a deep debt of gratitude. I do,

indeed. And as for blaming her--what has she done that you possibly

could blame?"

"Don Quixote on horseback!" said Lady Lufton. "Fanny, I shall always

call you Don Quixote, and some day or other I will get somebody to

write your adventures. But the truth is this, my dear; there has been

imprudence. You may call it mine, if you will--though I really hardly

see how I am to take the blame. I could not do other than ask Miss

Robarts to my house, and I could not very well turn my son out of it.

In point of fact, it has been the old story."

"Exactly; the story that is as old as the world, and which will

continue as long as people are born into it. It is a story of God's

own telling."

"But, my dear child, you do not mean that every young gentleman and

every young lady should fall in love with each other directly they

meet! Such a doctrine would be very inconvenient."

"No, I do not mean that. Lord Lufton and Miss Grantly did not fall in

love with each other, though you meant them to do so. But was it not

quite as natural that Lord Lufton and Lucy should do so instead?"

"It is generally thought, Fanny, that young ladies should not give

loose to their affections until they have been certified of their

friends' approval."

"And that young gentlemen of fortune may amuse themselves as they

please! I know that is what the world teaches, but I cannot agree to

the justice of it. The terrible suffering which Lucy has to endure

makes me cry out against it. She did not seek your son. The moment

she began to suspect that there might be danger she avoided him

scrupulously. She would not go down to Framley Court, though her not

doing so was remarked by yourself. She would hardly go out about the

place lest she should meet him. She was contented to put herself

altogether in the background till he should have pleased to leave the

place. But he--he came to her here, and insisted on seeing her. He

found her when I was out, and declared himself determined to speak to

her. What was she to do? She did try to escape, but he stopped her at

the door. Was it her fault that he made her an offer?"

"My dear, no one has said so."

"Yes, but you do say so when you tell me that young ladies should not

give play to their affections without permission. He persisted in

saying to her, here, all that it pleased him, though she implored him

to be silent. I cannot tell the words she used, but she did implore

him."

"I do not doubt that she behaved well."

"But he--he persisted, and begged her to accept his hand. She refused

him then, Lady Lufton--not as some girls do, with a mock reserve, not

intending to be taken at their words--but steadily, and, God forgive

her, untruly. Knowing what your feelings would be, and knowing what

the world would say, she declared to him that he was indifferent to

her. What more could she do in your behalf?" And then Mrs. Robarts

paused.

"I shall wait till you have done, Fanny."

"You spoke of girls giving loose to their affections. She did not do

so. She went about her work exactly as she had done before. She did

not even speak to me of what had passed--not then, at least. She

determined that it should all be as though it had never been. She

had learned to love your son; but that was her misfortune, and she

would get over it as she might. Tidings came to us here that he was

engaged, or about to engage himself, to Miss Grantly."

"Those tidings were untrue."

"Yes, we know that now; but she did not know it then. Of course she

could not but suffer; but she suffered within herself." Mrs. Robarts,

as she said this, remembered the pony-carriage and how Puck had been

beaten. "She made no complaint that he had ill-treated her--not even

to herself. She had thought it right to reject his offer; and there,

as far as he was concerned, was to be an end of it."

"That would be a matter of course, I should suppose."

"But it was not a matter of course, Lady Lufton. He returned from

London to Framley on purpose to repeat his offer. He sent for her

brother-- You talk of a young lady waiting for her friends' approval.

In this matter who would be Lucy's friends?"

"You and Mr. Robarts, of course."

"Exactly; her only friends. Well, Lord Lufton sent for Mark and

repeated his offer to him. Mind you, Mark had never heard a word of

this before, and you may guess whether or no he was surprised. Lord

Lufton repeated his offer in the most formal manner, and claimed

permission to see Lucy. She refused to see him. She has never seen

him since that day when, in opposition to all her efforts, he made

his way into this room. Mark,--as I think very properly,--would have

allowed Lord Lufton to come up here. Looking at both their ages and

position he could have had no right to forbid it. But Lucy positively

refused to see your son, and sent him a message instead, of the

purport of which you are now aware--that she would never accept him

unless she did so at your request."

"It was a very proper message."

"I say nothing about that. Had she accepted him I would not have

blamed her; and so I told her, Lady Lufton."

"I cannot understand your saying that, Fanny."

"Well; I did say so. I don't want to argue now about myself,--whether

I was right or wrong, but I did say so. Whatever sanction I could

give she would have had. But she again chose to sacrifice herself,

although I believe she regards him with as true a love as ever a girl

felt for a man. Upon my word I don't know that she is right. Those

considerations for the world may perhaps be carried too far."

"I think that she was perfectly right."

"Very well, Lady Lufton; I can understand that. But after such

sacrifice on her part--a sacrifice made entirely to you--how can you

talk of 'not blaming her'? Is that the language in which you speak

of those whose conduct from first to last has been superlatively

excellent? If she is open to blame at all, it is--it is--" But here

Mrs. Robarts stopped herself. In defending her sister she had worked

herself almost into a passion; but such a state of feeling was not

customary to her, and now that she had spoken her mind she sank

suddenly into silence.

"It seems to me, Fanny, that you almost regret Miss Robarts's

decision," said Lady Lufton.

"My wish in this matter is for her happiness, and I regret anything

that may mar it."

"You think nothing then of our welfare, and yet I do not know to

whom I might have looked for hearty friendship and for sympathy in

difficulties, if not to you?" Poor Mrs. Robarts was almost upset

by this. A few months ago, before Lucy's arrival, she would have

declared that the interests of Lady Lufton's family would have been

paramount with her, after and next to those of her own husband.

And even now, it seemed to argue so black an ingratitude on her

part--this accusation that she was indifferent to them! From her

childhood upwards she had revered and loved Lady Lufton, and for

years had taught herself to regard her as an epitome of all that was

good and gracious in woman. Lady Lufton's theories of life had been

accepted by her as the right theories, and those whom Lady Lufton had

liked she had liked. But now it seemed that all these ideas which it

had taken a life to build up were to be thrown to the ground, because

she was bound to defend a sister-in-law whom she had only known for

the last eight months. It was not that she regretted a word that she

had spoken on Lucy's behalf. Chance had thrown her and Lucy together,

and, as Lucy was her sister, she should receive from her a sister's

treatment. But she did not the less feel how terrible would be the

effect of any disseverance from Lady Lufton. "Oh, Lady Lufton," she

said, "do not say that."

"But Fanny, dear, I must speak as I find. You were talking about

clouds just now, and do you think that all this is not a cloud in my

sky? Ludovic tells me that he is attached to Miss Robarts, and you

tell me that she is attached to him; and I am called upon to decide

between them. Her very act obliges me to do so."

"Dear Lady Lufton," said Mrs. Robarts, springing from her seat. It

seemed to her at the moment as though the whole difficulty were to be

solved by an act of grace on the part of an old friend.

"And yet I cannot approve of such a marriage," said Lady Lufton. Mrs.

Robarts returned to her seat saying nothing further.

"Is not that a cloud on one's horizon?" continued her ladyship. "Do

you think that I can be basking in the sunshine while I have such a

weight upon my heart as that? Ludovic will soon be home, but instead

of looking to his return with pleasure I dread it. I would prefer

that he should remain in Norway. I would wish that he should stay

away for months. And, Fanny, it is a great addition to my misfortune

to feel that you do not sympathize with me." Having said this, in a

slow, sorrowful, and severe tone, Lady Lufton got up and took her

departure. Of course Mrs. Robarts did not let her go without assuring

her that she did sympathize with her,--did love her as she ever

had loved her. But wounds cannot be cured as easily as they may be

inflicted, and Lady Lufton went her way with much real sorrow at her

heart. She was proud and masterful, fond of her own way, and much too

careful of the worldly dignities to which her lot had called her: but

she was a woman who could cause no sorrow to those she loved without

deep sorrow to herself.

CHAPTER XLII

Touching Pitch

In these hot midsummer days, the end of June and the beginning of

July, Mr. Sowerby had but an uneasy time of it. At his sister's

instance, he had hurried up to London, and there had remained for

days in attendance on the lawyers. He had to see new lawyers, Miss

Dunstable's men of business, quiet old cautious gentlemen whose

place of business was in a dark alley behind the Bank, Messrs. Slow

& Bideawhile by name, who had no scruple in detaining him for hours

while they or their clerks talked to him about anything or about

nothing. It was of vital consequence to Mr. Sowerby that this

business of his should be settled without delay, and yet these men,

to whose care this settling was now confided, went on as though law

processes were a sunny bank on which it delighted men to bask easily.

And then, too, he had to go more than once to South Audley Street,

which was a worse infliction; for the men in South Audley Street

were less civil now than had been their wont. It was well understood

there that Mr. Sowerby was no longer a client of the duke's, but

his opponent; no longer his nominee and dependant, but his enemy in

the county. "Chaldicotes," as old Mr. Gumption remarked to young Mr.

Gazebee; "Chaldicotes, Gazebee, is a cooked goose, as far as Sowerby

is concerned. And what difference could it make to him whether the

duke is to own it or Miss Dunstable? For my part I cannot understand

how a gentleman like Sowerby can like to see his property go into the

hands of a gallipot wench whose money still smells of bad drugs. And

nothing can be more ungrateful," he said, "than Sowerby's conduct. He

has held the county for five-and-twenty years without expense; and

now that the time for payment has come, he begrudges the price." He

called it no better than cheating, he did not--he, Mr. Gumption.

According to his ideas Sowerby was attempting to cheat the duke. It

may be imagined, therefore, that Mr. Sowerby did not feel any very

great delight in attending at South Audley Street. And then rumour

was spread about among all the bill-discounting leeches that blood

was once more to be sucked from the Sowerby carcass. The rich Miss

Dunstable had taken up his affairs; so much as that became known in

the purlieus of the Goat and Compasses. Tom Tozer's brother declared

that she and Sowerby were going to make a match of it, and that any

scrap of paper with Sowerby's name on it would become worth its

weight in bank-notes; but Tom Tozer himself--Tom, who was the real

hero of the family--pooh-poohed at this, screwing up his nose, and

alluding in most contemptuous terms to his brother's softness. He

knew better--as was indeed the fact. Miss Dunstable was buying up the

squire, and by Jingo she should buy them up--them, the Tozers, as

well as others! They knew their value, the Tozers did;--whereupon

they became more than ordinarily active. From them and all their

brethren Mr. Sowerby at this time endeavoured to keep his distance,

but his endeavours were not altogether effectual. Whenever he could

escape for a day or two from the lawyers he ran down to Chaldicotes;

but Tom Tozer in his perseverance followed him there, and boldly sent

in his name by the servant at the front door.

"Mr. Sowerby is not just at home at the present moment," said the

well-trained domestic.

"I'll wait about then," said Tom, seating himself on an heraldic

stone griffin which flanked the big stone steps before the house.

And in this way Mr. Tozer gained his purpose. Sowerby was still

contesting the county, and it behoved him not to let his enemies say

that he was hiding himself. It had been a part of his bargain with

Miss Dunstable that he should contest the county. She had taken it

into her head that the duke had behaved badly, and she had resolved

that he should be made to pay for it. "The duke," she said, "had

meddled long enough;" she would now see whether the Chaldicotes

interest would not suffice of itself to return a member for the

county, even in opposition to the duke. Mr. Sowerby himself was so

harassed at the time, that he would have given way on this point if

he had had the power; but Miss Dunstable was determined, and he was

obliged to yield to her. In this manner Mr. Tom Tozer succeeded and

did make his way into Mr. Sowerby's presence--of which intrusion one

effect was the following letter from Mr. Sowerby to his friend Mark

Robarts:--

Chaldicotes, July, 185--.

MY DEAR ROBARTS,

I am so harassed at the present moment by an infinity

of troubles of my own that I am almost callous to those

of other people. They say that prosperity makes a man

selfish. I have never tried that, but I am quite sure that

adversity does so. Nevertheless I am anxious about those

bills of yours--

"Bills of mine!" said Robarts to himself, as he walked up and down

the shrubbery path at the parsonage, reading this letter. This

happened a day or two after his visit to the lawyer at Barchester.

--and would rejoice greatly if I thought that I could save

you from any further annoyance about them. That kite, Tom

Tozer, has just been with me, and insists that both of

them shall be paid. He knows--no one better--that no

consideration was given for the latter. But he knows also

that the dealing was not with him, nor even with his

brother, and he will be prepared to swear that he gave

value for both. He would swear anything for five hundred

pounds--or for half the money, for that matter. I do not

think that the father of mischief ever let loose upon the

world a greater rascal than Tom Tozer.

He declares that nothing shall induce him to take one

shilling less than the whole sum of nine hundred pounds.

He has been brought to this by hearing that my debts are

about to be paid. Heaven help me! The meaning of that is

that these wretched acres, which are now mortgaged to

one millionaire, are to change hands and be mortgaged to

another instead. By this exchange I may possibly obtain

the benefit of having a house to live in for the next

twelve months, but no other. Tozer, however, is altogether

wrong in his scent; and the worst of it is that his malice

will fall on you rather than on me.

What I want you to do is this: let us pay him one hundred

pounds between us. Though I sell the last sorry jade of a

horse I have, I will make up fifty; and I know you can, at

any rate, do as much as that. Then do you accept a bill,

conjointly with me, for eight hundred. It shall be done

in Forrest's presence, and handed to him; and you shall

receive back the two old bills into your own hands at the

same time. This new bill should be timed to run ninety

days; and I will move heaven and earth, during that time,

to have it included in the general schedule of my debts

which are to be secured on the Chaldicotes property.

The meaning of which was that Miss Dunstable was to be cozened into

paying the money under an idea that it was a part of the sum covered

by the existing mortgage.

What you said the other day at Barchester, as to never

executing another bill, is very well as regards future

transactions. Nothing can be wiser than such a resolution.

But it would be folly--worse than folly--if you were

to allow your furniture to be seized when the means of

preventing it are so ready to your hand. By leaving the

new bill in Forrest's hands you may be sure that you are

safe from the claws of such birds of prey as these Tozers.

Even if I cannot get it settled when the three months are

over, Forrest will enable you to make any arrangement that

may be most convenient.

For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, do not refuse this.

You can hardly conceive how it weighs upon me, this fear

that bailiffs should make their way into your wife's

drawing-room. I know you think ill of me, and I do not

wonder at it. But you would be less inclined to do so if

you knew how terribly I am punished. Pray let me hear that

you will do as I counsel you.

Yours always faithfully,

N. SOWERBY.

In answer to which the parson wrote a very short reply:--

Framley, July, 185--.

MY DEAR SOWERBY,

I will sign no more bills on any consideration.

Yours truly,

MARK ROBARTS.

And then having written this, and having shown it to his wife, he

returned to the shrubbery walk and paced it up and down, looking

every now and then to Sowerby's letter as he thought over all the

past circumstances of his friendship with that gentleman. That the

man who had written this letter should be his friend--that very fact

was a disgrace to him. Sowerby so well knew himself and his own

reputation, that he did not dare to suppose that his own word would

be taken for anything,--not even when the thing promised was an act

of the commonest honesty. "The old bills shall be given back into

your own hands," he had declared with energy, knowing that his friend

and correspondent would not feel himself secure against further fraud

under less stringent guarantee. This gentleman, this county member,

the owner of Chaldicotes, with whom Mark Robarts had been so anxious

to be on terms of intimacy, had now come to such a phase of life that

he had given over speaking of himself as an honest man. He had become

so used to suspicion that he argued of it as of a thing of course. He

knew that no one could trust either his spoken or his written word,

and he was content to speak and to write without attempt to hide this

conviction. And this was the man whom he had been so glad to call

his friend; for whose sake he had been willing to quarrel with Lady

Lufton, and at whose instance he had unconsciously abandoned so many

of the best resolutions of his life. He looked back now, as he walked

there slowly, still holding the letter in his hand, to the day when

he had stopped at the school-house and written his letter to Mr.

Sowerby, promising to join the party at Chaldicotes. He had been so

eager then to have his own way, that he would not permit himself to

go home and talk the matter over with his wife. He thought also of

the manner in which he had been tempted to the house of the Duke of

Omnium, and the conviction on his mind at the time that his giving

way to that temptation would surely bring him to evil. And then he

remembered the evening in Sowerby's bedroom, when the bill had been

brought out, and he had allowed himself to be persuaded to put his

name upon it--not because he was willing in this way to assist his

friend, but because he was unable to refuse. He had lacked the

courage to say, "No," though he knew at the time how gross was the

error which he was committing. He had lacked the courage to say,

"No," and hence had come upon him and on his household all this

misery and cause for bitter repentance.

I have written much of clergymen, but in doing so I have endeavoured

to portray them as they bear on our social life rather than to

describe the mode and working of their professional careers. Had I

done the latter I could hardly have steered clear of subjects on

which it has not been my intention to pronounce an opinion, and I

should either have laden my fiction with sermons or I should have

degraded my sermons into fiction. Therefore I have said but little

in my narrative of this man's feelings or doings as a clergyman. But

I must protest against its being on this account considered that Mr.

Robarts was indifferent to the duties of his clerical position. He

had been fond of pleasure and had given way to temptation,--as is

so customarily done by young men of six-and-twenty, who are placed

beyond control and who have means at command. Had he remained as a

curate till that age, subject in all his movements to the eye of

a superior, he would, we may say, have put his name to no bills,

have ridden after no hounds, have seen nothing of the iniquities of

Gatherum Castle. There are men of twenty-six as fit to stand alone

as ever they will be--fit to be prime ministers, heads of schools,

Judges on the Bench--almost fit to be bishops; but Mark Robarts had

not been one of them. He had within him many aptitudes for good, but

not the strengthened courage of a man to act up to them. The stuff of

which his manhood was to be formed had been slow of growth, as it is

with many men; and, consequently, when temptation was offered to him,

he had fallen. But he deeply grieved over his own stumbling, and from

time to time, as his periods of penitence came upon him, he resolved

that he would once more put his shoulder to the wheel as became one

who fights upon earth that battle for which he had put on the armour.

Over and over again did he think of those words of Mr. Crawley, and

now as he walked up and down the path, crumpling Mr. Sowerby's letter

in his hand, he thought of them again--"It is a terrible falling off;

terrible in the fall, but doubly terrible through that difficulty

of returning." Yes; that is a difficulty which multiplies itself

in a fearful ratio as one goes on pleasantly running down the

path--whitherward? Had it come to that with him that he could not

return--that he could never again hold up his head with a safe

conscience as the pastor of his parish? It was Sowerby who had led

him into this misery, who had brought on him this ruin? But then

had not Sowerby paid him? Had not that stall which he now held in

Barchester been Sowerby's gift? He was a poor man now--a distressed,

poverty-stricken man; but nevertheless he wished with all his

heart that he had never become a sharer in the good things of the

Barchester chapter. "I shall resign the stall," he said to his wife

that night. "I think I may say that I have made up my mind as to

that."

"But, Mark, will not people say that it is odd?"

"I cannot help it--they must say it. Fanny, I fear that we shall have

to bear the saying of harder words than that."

"Nobody can ever say that you have done anything that is unjust or

dishonourable. If there are such men as Mr. Sowerby--"

"The blackness of his fault will not excuse mine." And then again he

sat silent, hiding his eyes, while his wife, sitting by him, held his

hand.

"Don't make yourself wretched, Mark. Matters will all come right yet.

It cannot be that the loss of a few hundred pounds should ruin you."

"It is not the money--it is not the money!"

"But you have done nothing wrong, Mark."

"How am I to go into the church, and take my place before them all,

when every one will know that bailiffs are in the house?" And then,

dropping his head on to the table, he sobbed aloud.

Mark Robarts's mistake had been mainly this,--he had thought to

touch pitch and not to be defiled. He, looking out from his pleasant

parsonage into the pleasant upper ranks of the world around him, had

seen that men and things in those quarters were very engaging. His

own parsonage, with his sweet wife, were exceedingly dear to him, and

Lady Lufton's affectionate friendship had its value; but were not

these things rather dull for one who had lived in the best sets at

Harrow and Oxford;--unless, indeed, he could supplement them with

some occasional bursts of more lively life? Cakes and ale were as

pleasant to his palate as to the palates of those with whom he had

formerly lived at college. He had the same eye to look at a horse,

and the same heart to make him go across a country, as they. And

then, too, he found that men liked him,--men and women also; men and

women who were high in worldly standing. His ass's ears were tickled,

and he learned to fancy that he was intended by nature for the

society of high people. It seemed as though he were following his

appointed course in meeting men and women of the world at the houses

of the fashionable and the rich. He was not the first clergyman that

had so lived and had so prospered. Yes, clergymen had so lived, and

had done their duties in their sphere of life altogether to the

satisfaction of their countrymen--and of their sovereigns. Thus

Mark Robarts had determined that he would touch pitch, and escape

defilement if that were possible. With what result those who have

read so far will have perceived. Late on the following afternoon

who should drive up to the parsonage door but Mr. Forrest, the bank

manager from Barchester--Mr. Forrest, to whom Sowerby had always

pointed as the \_Deus ex machina\_ who, if duly invoked, could relieve

them all from their present troubles, and dismiss the whole Tozer

family--not howling into the wilderness, as one would have wished to

do with that brood of Tozers, but so gorged with prey that from them

no further annoyance need be dreaded? All this Mr. Forrest could do;

nay, more, most willingly would do! Only let Mark Robarts put himself

into the banker's hand, and blandly sign what documents the banker

might desire. "This is a very unpleasant affair," said Mr. Forrest as

soon as they were closeted together in Mark's book-room. In answer

to which observation the parson acknowledged that it was a very

unpleasant affair.

"Mr. Sowerby has managed to put you into the hands of about the worst

set of rogues now existing in their line of business in London."

"So I suppose; Curling told me the same." Curling was the Barchester

attorney whose aid he had lately invoked.

"Curling has threatened them that he will expose their whole trade;

but one of them who was down here, a man named Tozer, replied, that

you had much more to lose by exposure than he had. He went further,

and declared that he would defy any jury in England to refuse him his

money. He swore that he discounted both bills in the regular way of

business; and, though this is of course false, I fear that it will be

impossible to prove it so. He well knows that you are a clergyman,

and that, therefore, he has a stronger hold on you than on other

men."

"The disgrace shall fall on Sowerby," said Robarts, hardly actuated

at the moment by any strong feeling of Christian forgiveness.

"I fear, Mr. Robarts, that he is somewhat in the condition of the

Tozers. He will not feel it as you will do."

"I must bear it, Mr. Forrest, as best I may."

"Will you allow me, Mr. Robarts, to give you my advice? Perhaps

I ought to apologize for intruding it upon you; but as the bills

have been presented and dishonoured across my counter, I have, of

necessity, become acquainted with the circumstances."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you," said Mark.

"You must pay this money, at any rate, the most considerable portion

of it;--the whole of it, indeed, with such deduction as a lawyer

may be able to induce these hawks to make on the sight of the ready

money. Perhaps Â£750 or Â£800 may see you clear of the whole affair."

"But I have not a quarter of that sum lying by me."

"No, I suppose not; but what I would recommend is this:

that you should borrow the money from the bank, on your own

responsibility,--with the joint security of some friend who may be

willing to assist you with his name. Lord Lufton probably would do

it."

"No, Mr. Forrest--"

"Listen to me first, before you make up your mind. If you took this

step, of course you would do so with the fixed intention of paying

the money yourself,--without any further reliance on Sowerby or on

any one else."

"I shall not rely on Mr. Sowerby again; you may be sure of that."

"What I mean is that you must teach yourself to recognize the debt as

your own. If you can do that, with your income you can surely pay it,

with interest, in two years. If Lord Lufton will assist you with his

name, I will so arrange the bills that the payments shall be made

to fall equally over that period. In that way the world will know

nothing about it, and in two years' time you will once more be a free

man. Many men, Mr. Robarts, have bought their experience much dearer

than that, I can assure you."

"Mr. Forrest, it is quite out of the question."

"You mean that Lord Lufton will not give you his name."

"I certainly shall not ask him; but that is not all. In the first

place, my income will not be what you think it, for I shall probably

give up the prebend at Barchester."

"Give up the prebend! give up six hundred a year!"

"And, beyond this, I think I may say that nothing shall tempt me to

put my name to another bill. I have learned a lesson which I hope I

may never forget."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"Nothing!"

"Then those men will sell every stick of furniture about the place.

They know that your property here is enough to secure all that they

claim."

"If they have the power, they must sell it."

"And all the world will know the facts."

"So it must be. Of the faults which a man commits he must bear the

punishment. If it were only myself!"

"That's where it is, Mr. Robarts. Think what your wife will have to

suffer in going through such misery as that! You had better take my

advice. Lord Lufton, I am sure--" But the very name of Lord Lufton,

his sister's lover, again gave him courage. He thought, too, of the

accusations which Lord Lufton had brought against him on that night,

when he had come to him in the coffee-room of the hotel, and he felt

that it was impossible that he should apply to him for such aid. It

would be better to tell all to Lady Lufton! That she would relieve

him, let the cost to herself be what it might, he was very sure. Only

this;--that in looking to her for assistance he would be forced to

bite the dust in very deed.

"Thank you, Mr. Forrest, but I have made up my mind. Do not

think that I am the less obliged to you for your disinterested

kindness,--for I know that it is disinterested; but this I think I

may confidently say, that not even to avert so terrible a calamity

will I again put my name to any bill. Even if you could take my own

promise to pay without the addition of any second name, I would

not do it." There was nothing for Mr. Forrest to do under such

circumstances but simply to drive back to Barchester. He had done the

best for the young clergyman according to his lights, and perhaps,

in a worldly view, his advice had not been bad. But Mark dreaded the

very name of a bill. He was as a dog that had been terribly scorched,

and nothing should again induce him to go near the fire.

"Was not that the man from the bank?" said Fanny, coming into the

room when the sound of the wheels had died away.

"Yes; Mr. Forrest."

"Well, dearest?"

"We must prepare ourselves for the worst."

"You will not sign any more papers, eh, Mark?"

"No; I have just now positively refused to do so."

"Then I can bear anything. But, dearest, dearest Mark, will you not

let me tell Lady Lufton?"

Let them look at the matter in any way the punishment was very heavy.

CHAPTER XLIII

Is She Not Insignificant?

And now a month went by at Framley without any increase of comfort to

our friends there, and also without any absolute development of the

ruin which had been daily expected at the parsonage. Sundry letters

had reached Mr. Robarts from various personages acting in the Tozer

interest, all of which he referred to Mr. Curling, of Barchester.

Some of these letters contained prayers for the money, pointing out

how an innocent widow lady had been induced to invest her all on

the faith of Mr. Robarts's name, and was now starving in a garret,

with her three children, because Mr. Robarts would not make good

his own undertakings. But the majority of them were filled with

threats;--only two days longer would be allowed, and then the

sheriff's officers would be enjoined to do their work; then one day

of grace would be added, at the expiration of which the dogs of war

would be unloosed. These, as fast as they came, were sent to Mr.

Curling, who took no notice of them individually, but continued his

endeavour to prevent the evil day. The second bill Mr. Robarts would

take up--such was Mr. Curling's proposition; and would pay by two

instalments of Â£250 each, the first in two months, and the second

in four. If this were acceptable to the Tozer interest--well; if it

were not, the sheriff's officers must do their worst and the Tozer

interest must look for what it could get. The Tozer interest would

not declare itself satisfied with these terms, and so the matter went

on. During which the roses faded from day to day on the cheeks of

Mrs. Robarts, as under such circumstances may easily be conceived. In

the meantime Lucy still remained at Hogglestock, and had there become

absolute mistress of the house. Poor Mrs. Crawley had been at death's

door; for some days she was delirious, and afterwards remained so

weak as to be almost unconscious; but now the worst was over, and

Mr. Crawley had been informed, that as far as human judgement might

pronounce, his children would not become orphans nor would he become

a widower. During these weeks Lucy had not once been home nor had she

seen any of the Framley people. "Why should she incur the risk of

conveying infection for so small an object?" as she herself argued,

writing by letters, which were duly fumigated before they were opened

at the parsonage. So she remained at Hogglestock, and the Crawley

children, now admitted to all the honours of the nursery, were kept

at Framley. They were kept at Framley, although it was expected from

day to day that the beds on which they lay would be seized for the

payment of Mr. Sowerby's debts. Lucy, as I have said, became mistress

of the house at Hogglestock, and made herself absolutely ascendant

over Mr. Crawley. Jellies, and broth, and fruit, and even butter,

came from Lufton Court, which she displayed on the table, absolutely

on the cloth before him, and yet he bore it. I cannot say that he

partook of these delicacies with any freedom himself, but he did

drink his tea when it was given to him although it contained Framley

cream;--and, had he known it, Bohea itself from the Framley chest. In

truth, in these days, he had given himself over to the dominion of

this stranger; and he said nothing beyond, "Well, well," with two

uplifted hands, when he came upon her as she was sewing the buttons

on to his own shirts--sewing on the buttons and perhaps occasionally

applying her needle elsewhere,--not without utility. He said to her

at this period very little in the way of thanks. Some protracted

conversations they did have, now and again, during the long evenings;

but even in these he did not utter many words as to their present

state of life. It was on religion chiefly that he spoke, not

lecturing her individually, but laying down his ideas as to what the

life of a Christian should be, and especially what should be the life

of a minister. "But though I can see this, Miss Robarts," he said, "I

am bound to say that no one has fallen off so frequently as myself.

I have renounced the devil and all his works; but it is by word of

mouth only--by word of mouth only. How shall a man crucify the old

Adam that is within him, unless he throw himself prostrate in the

dust and acknowledge that all his strength is weaker than water?"

To this, often as it might be repeated, she would listen patiently,

comforting him by such words as her theology would supply; but then,

when this was over, she would again resume her command and enforce

from him a close obedience to her domestic behests.

At the end of the month Lord Lufton came back to Framley Court. His

arrival there was quite unexpected; though, as he pointed out when

his mother expressed some surprise, he had returned exactly at the

time named by him before he started.

"I need not say, Ludovic, how glad I am to have you," said she,

looking to his face and pressing his arm; "the more so, indeed,

seeing that I hardly expected it."

He said nothing to his mother about Lucy the first evening, although

there was some conversation respecting the Robarts family.

"I am afraid Mr. Robarts has embarrassed himself," said Lady Lufton,

looking very seriously. "Rumours reach me which are most distressing.

I have said nothing to anybody as yet--not even to Fanny; but I can

see in her face, and hear in the tones of her voice, that she is

suffering some great sorrow."

"I know all about it," said Lord Lufton.

"You know all about it, Ludovic?"

"Yes; it is through that precious friend of mine, Mr. Sowerby, of

Chaldicotes. He has accepted bills for Sowerby; indeed, he told me

so."

"What business had he at Chaldicotes? What had he to do with such

friends as that? I do not know how I am to forgive him."

"It was through me that he became acquainted with Sowerby. You must

remember that, mother."

"I do not see that that is any excuse. Is he to consider that

all your acquaintances must necessarily be his friends also? It

is reasonable to suppose that you in your position must live

occasionally with a great many people who are altogether unfit

companions for him as a parish clergyman. He will not remember this,

and he must be taught it. What business had he to go to Gatherum

Castle?"

"He got his stall at Barchester by going there."

"He would be much better without his stall, and Fanny has the sense

to know this. What does he want with two houses? Prebendal stalls are

for older men than he--for men who have earned them, and who at the

end of their lives want some ease. I wish with all my heart that he

had never taken it."

"Six hundred a year has its charms all the same," said Lufton,

getting up and strolling out of the room.

"If Mark really be in any difficulty," he said, later in the evening,

"we must put him on his legs."

"You mean, pay his debts?"

"Yes; he has no debts except these acceptances of Sowerby's."

"How much will it be, Ludovic?"

"A thousand pounds, perhaps, more or less. I'll find the money,

mother; only I shan't be able to pay you quite as soon as I

intended." Whereupon his mother got up, and throwing her arms round

his neck declared that she would never forgive him if he ever said

a word more about her little present to him. I suppose there is no

pleasure a mother can have more attractive than giving away her money

to an only son.

Lucy's name was first mentioned at breakfast the next morning. Lord

Lufton had made up his mind to attack his mother on the subject early

in the morning--before he went up to the parsonage; but as matters

turned out, Miss Robarts's doings were necessarily brought under

discussion without reference to Lord Lufton's special aspirations

regarding her. The fact of Mrs. Crawley's illness had been mentioned,

and Lady Lufton had stated how it had come to pass that all the

Crawleys' children were at the parsonage.

"I must say that Fanny has behaved excellently," said Lady Lufton.

"It was just what might have been expected from her. And indeed," she

added, speaking in an embarrassed tone, "so has Miss Robarts. Miss

Robarts has remained at Hogglestock and nursed Mrs. Crawley through

the whole."

"Remained at Hogglestock--through the fever!" exclaimed his lordship.

"Yes, indeed," said Lady Lufton.

"And is she there now?"

"Oh, yes; I am not aware that she thinks of leaving just yet."

"Then I say that it is a great shame--a scandalous shame!"

"But, Ludovic, it was her own doing."

"Oh, yes; I understand. But why should she be sacrificed? Were there

no nurses in the country to be hired, but that she must go and remain

there for a month at the bedside of a pestilent fever? There is no

justice in it."

"Justice, Ludovic? I don't know about justice, but there was great

Christian charity. Mrs. Crawley has probably owed her life to Miss

Robarts."

"Has she been ill? Is she ill? I insist upon knowing whether she

is ill. I shall go over to Hogglestock myself immediately after

breakfast." To this Lady Lufton made no reply. If Lord Lufton chose

to go to Hogglestock she could not prevent him. She thought, however,

that it would be much better that he should stay away. He would be

quite as open to the infection as Lucy Robarts and, moreover, Mrs.

Crawley's bedside would be as inconvenient a place as might be

selected for any interview between two lovers. Lady Lufton felt at

the present moment that she was cruelly treated by circumstances with

reference to Miss Robarts. Of course it would have been her part to

lessen, if she could do so without injustice, that high idea which

her son entertained of the beauty and worth of the young lady; but,

unfortunately, she had been compelled to praise her and to load her

name with all manner of eulogy. Lady Lufton was essentially a true

woman, and not even with the object of carrying out her own views in

so important a matter would she be guilty of such deception as she

might have practised by simply holding her tongue; but nevertheless

she could hardly reconcile herself to the necessity of singing Lucy's

praises.

After breakfast Lady Lufton got up from her chair, but hung about the

room without making any show of leaving. In accordance with her usual

custom she would have asked her son what he was going to do; but

she did not dare so to inquire now. Had he not declared, only a few

minutes since, whither he would go? "I suppose I shall see you at

lunch?" at last she said.

"At lunch? Well, I don't know. Look here, mother. What am I to say to

Miss Robarts when I see her?" and he leaned with his back against the

chimney-piece as he interrogated his mother.

"What are you to say to her, Ludovic?"

"Yes, what am I to say,--as coming from you? Am I to tell her that

you will receive her as your daughter-in-law?"

"Ludovic, I have explained all that to Miss Robarts herself."

"Explained what?"

"I have told her that I did not think that such a marriage would make

either you or her happy."

"And why have you told her so? Why have you taken upon yourself to

judge for me in such a matter, as though I were a child? Mother, you

must unsay what you have said." Lord Lufton, as he spoke, looked full

into his mother's face; and he did so, not as though he were begging

from her a favour, but issuing to her a command. She stood near him,

with one hand on the breakfast-table, gazing at him almost furtively,

not quite daring to meet the full view of his eye. There was only

one thing on earth which Lady Lufton feared, and that was her son's

displeasure. The sun of her earthly heaven shone upon her through the

medium of his existence. If she were driven to quarrel with him, as

some ladies of her acquaintance were driven to quarrel with their

sons, the world to her would be over. Not but what facts might be so

strong as to make it absolutely necessary that she should do this.

As some people resolve that, under certain circumstances, they will

commit suicide, so she could see that, under certain circumstances,

she must consent even to be separated from him. She would not do

wrong,--not that which she knew to be wrong,--even for his sake.

If it were necessary that all her happiness should collapse and be

crushed in ruin around her, she must endure it, and wait God's time

to relieve her from so dark a world. The light of the sun was very

dear to her, but even that might be purchased at too dear a cost.

"I told you before, mother, that my choice was made, and I asked you

then to give your consent; you have now had time to think about it,

and therefore I have come to ask you again. I have reason to know

that there will be no impediment to my marriage if you will frankly

hold out your hand to Lucy."

The matter was altogether in Lady Lufton's hands, but, fond as she

was of power, she absolutely wished that it were not so. Had her son

married without asking her, and then brought Lucy home as his wife,

she would undoubtedly have forgiven him; and much as she might have

disliked the match, she would, ultimately, have embraced the bride.

But now she was compelled to exercise her judgement. If he married

imprudently, it would be her doing. How was she to give her expressed

consent to that which she believed to be wrong? "Do you know anything

against her; any reason why she should not be my wife?" continued he.

"If you mean as regards her moral conduct, certainly not," said Lady

Lufton. "But I could say as much as that in favour of a great many

young ladies whom I should regard as very ill suited for such a

marriage."

"Yes; some might be vulgar, some might be ill-tempered, some might be

ugly; others might be burdened with disagreeable connexions. I can

understand that you should object to a daughter-in-law under any of

these circumstances. But none of these things can be said of Miss

Robarts. I defy you to say that she is not in all respects what a

lady should be."

But her father was a doctor of medicine, she is the sister of the

parish clergyman, she is only five feet two in height, and is so

uncommonly brown! Had Lady Lufton dared to give a catalogue of her

objections, such would have been its extent and nature. But she did

not dare to do this.

"I cannot say, Ludovic, that she is possessed of all that you should

seek in a wife." Such was her answer.

"Do you mean that she has not got money?"

"No, not that; I should be very sorry to see you making money your

chief object, or indeed any essential object. If it chanced that your

wife did have money, no doubt you would find it a convenience. But

pray understand me, Ludovic; I would not for a moment advise you to

subject your happiness to such a necessity as that. It is not because

she is without fortune--"

"Then why is it? At breakfast you were singing her praises, and

saying how excellent she is."

"If I were forced to put my objection into one word, I should say--"

and then she paused, hardly daring to encounter the frown which was

already gathering itself on her son's brow.

"You would say what?" said Lord Lufton, almost roughly.

"Don't be angry with me, Ludovic; all that I think, and all that I

say on this subject, I think and say with only one object--that of

your happiness. What other motive can I have for anything in this

world?" And then she came close to him and kissed him.

"But tell me, mother, what is this objection; what is this terrible

word that is to sum up the list of all poor Lucy's sins, and prove

that she is unfit for married life?"

"Ludovic, I did not say that. You know that I did not."

"What is the word, mother?"

And then at last Lady Lufton spoke it out. "She is--insignificant. I

believe her to be a very good girl, but she is not qualified to fill

the high position to which you would exalt her."

"Insignificant!"

"Yes, Ludovic, I think so."

"Then, mother, you do not know her. You must permit me to say that

you are talking of a girl whom you do not know. Of all the epithets

of opprobrium which the English language could give you, that would

be nearly the last which she would deserve."

"I have not intended any opprobrium."

"Insignificant!"

"Perhaps you do not quite understand me, Ludovic."

"I know what insignificant means, mother."

"I think that she would not worthily fill the position which your

wife should take in the world."

"I understand what you say."

"She would not do you honour at the head of your table."

"Ah, I understand. You want me to marry some bouncing Amazon, some

pink and white giantess of fashion who would frighten the little

people into their proprieties."

"Oh, Ludovic! you are intending to laugh at me now."

"I was never less inclined to laugh in my life--never, I can assure

you. And now I am more certain than ever that your objection to Miss

Robarts arises from your not knowing her. You will find, I think,

when you do know her, that she is as well able to hold her own as

any lady of your acquaintance--aye, and to maintain her husband's

position, too. I can assure you that I shall have no fear of her on

that score."

"I think, dearest, that perhaps you hardly--"

"I think this, mother, that in such a matter as this I must choose

for myself. I have chosen; and I now ask you, as my mother, to go to

her and bid her welcome. Dear mother, I will own this, that I should

not be happy if I thought that you did not love my wife." These last

words he said in a tone of affection that went to his mother's heart,

and then he left the room.

Poor Lady Lufton, when she was alone, waited till she heard her son's

steps retreating through the hall, and then betook herself upstairs

to her customary morning work. She sat down at last as though about

so to occupy herself; but her mind was too full to allow of her

taking up her pen. She had often said to herself, in days which to

her were not as yet long gone by, that she would choose a bride

for her son, and that then she would love the chosen one with all

her heart. She would dethrone herself in favour of this new queen,

sinking with joy into her dowager state, in order that her son's wife

might shine with the greater splendour. The fondest day-dreams of her

life had all had reference to the time when her son should bring home

a new Lady Lufton, selected by herself from the female excellence of

England, and in which she might be the first to worship her new idol.

But could she dethrone herself for Lucy Robarts? Could she give up

her chair of state in order to place thereon the little girl from

the parsonage? Could she take to her heart, and treat with absolute

loving confidence, with the confidence of an almost idolatrous

mother, that little chit who, a few months since, had sat awkwardly

in one corner of her drawing-room, afraid to speak to any one? And

yet it seemed that it must come to this--to this--or else those

day-dreams of hers would in nowise come to pass. She sat herself

down, trying to think whether it were possible that Lucy might fill

the throne; for she had begun to recognize it as probable that her

son's will would be too strong for her; but her thoughts would fly

away to Griselda Grantly. In her first and only matured attempt to

realize her day-dreams, she had chosen Griselda for her queen. She

had failed there, seeing that the Fates had destined Miss Grantly for

another throne; for another and a higher one, as far as the world

goes. She would have made Griselda the wife of a baron, but fate was

about to make that young lady the wife of a marquis. Was there cause

of grief in this? Did she really regret that Miss Grantly, with all

her virtues, should be made over to the house of Hartletop? Lady

Lufton was a woman who did not bear disappointment lightly; but

nevertheless she did almost feel herself to have been relieved from

a burden when she thought of the termination of the Lufton-Grantly

marriage treaty. What if she had been successful, and, after all, the

prize had been other than she had expected? She was sometimes prone

to think that that prize was not exactly all that she had once hoped.

Griselda looked the very thing that Lady Lufton wanted for a queen;

but how would a queen reign who trusted only to her looks? In that

respect it was perhaps well for her that destiny had interposed.

Griselda, she was driven to admit, was better suited to Lord Dumbello

than to her son. But still--such a queen as Lucy! Could it ever come

to pass that the lieges of the kingdom would bow the knee in proper

respect before so puny a sovereign? And then there was that feeling

which, in still higher quarters, prevents the marriage of princes

with the most noble of their people. Is it not a recognized rule

of these realms that none of the blood royal shall raise to royal

honours those of the subjects who are by birth un-royal? Lucy was

a subject of the house of Lufton in that she was the sister of the

parson and a resident denizen of the parsonage. Presuming that Lucy

herself might do for queen--granting that she might have some faculty

to reign, the crown having been duly placed on her brow--how, then,

about that clerical brother near the throne? Would it not come to

this, that there would no longer be a queen at Framley? And yet she

knew that she must yield. She did not say so to herself. She did not

as yet acknowledge that she must put out her hand to Lucy, calling

her by name as her daughter. She did not absolutely say as much to

her own heart--not as yet. But she did begin to bethink herself of

Lucy's high qualities, and to declare to herself that the girl, if

not fit to be a queen, was at any rate fit to be a woman. That there

was a spirit within that body, insignificant though the body might

be, Lady Lufton was prepared to admit. That she had acquired the

power--the chief of all powers in this world--of sacrificing herself

for the sake of others; that, too, was evident enough. That she was a

good girl, in the usual acceptation of the word good, Lady Lufton had

never doubted. She was ready-witted, too, prompt in action, gifted

with a certain fire. It was that gift of fire which had won for her,

so unfortunately, Lord Lufton's love. It was quite possible for her

also to love Lucy Robarts; Lady Lufton admitted that to herself; but

then who could bow the knee before her, and serve her as a queen? Was

it not a pity that she should be so insignificant?

But, nevertheless, we may say that as Lady Lufton sate that morning

in her own room for two hours without employment, the star of Lucy

Robarts was gradually rising in the firmament. After all, love was

the food chiefly necessary for the nourishment of Lady Lufton--the

only food absolutely necessary. She was not aware of this herself,

nor probably would those who knew her best have so spoken of her.

They would have declared that family pride was her daily pabulum, and

she herself would have said so too, calling it, however, by some less

offensive name. Her son's honour, and the honour of her house!--of

those she would have spoken as the things dearest to her in this

world. And this was partly true, for had her son been dishonoured,

she would have sunk with sorrow to the grave. But the one thing

necessary to her daily life was the power of loving those who were

near to her. Lord Lufton, when he left the dining-room, intended

at once to go up to the parsonage, but he first strolled round the

garden in order that he might make up his mind what he would say

there. He was angry with his mother, having not had the wit to

see that she was about to give way and yield to him, and he was

determined to make it understood that in this matter he would have

his own way. He had learned that which it was necessary that he

should know as to Lucy's heart, and such being the case he would

not conceive it possible that he should be debarred by his mother's

opposition. "There is no son in England loves his mother better than

I do," he said to himself; "but there are some things which a man

cannot stand. She would have married me to that block of stone if

I would have let her; and now, because she is disappointed there--

Insignificant! I never in my life heard anything so absurd, so

untrue, so uncharitable, so-- She'd like me to bring a dragon home, I

suppose. It would serve her right if I did--some creature that would

make the house intolerable to her." "She must do it though," he said

again, "or she and I will quarrel," and then he turned off towards

the gate, preparing to go to the parsonage.

"My lord, have you heard what has happened? said the gardener, coming

to him at the gate. The man was out of breath and almost overwhelmed

by the greatness of his own tidings.

"No; I have heard nothing. What is it?"

"The bailiffs have taken possession of everything at the parsonage."

CHAPTER XLIV

The Philistines at the Parsonage

It has been already told how things went on between the Tozers, Mr.

Curling, and Mark Robarts during that month. Mr. Forrest had drifted

out of the business altogether, as also had Mr. Sowerby, as far as

any active participation in it went. Letters came frequently from

Mr. Curling to the parsonage, and at last came a message by special

mission to say that the evil day was at hand. As far as Mr. Curling's

professional experience would enable him to anticipate or foretell

the proceedings of such a man as Tom Tozer, he thought that the

sheriff's officers would be at Framley parsonage on the following

morning. Mr. Curling's experience did not mislead him in this

respect. "And what will you do, Mark?" said Fanny, speaking through

her tears, after she had read the letter which her husband handed to

her.

"Nothing. What can I do? They must come."

"Lord Lufton came to-day. Will you not go to him?"

"No. If I were to do so it would be the same as asking him for the

money."

"Why not borrow it of him, dearest? Surely it would not be so much

for him to lend."

"I could not do it. Think of Lucy, and how she stands with him.

Besides, I have already had words with Lufton about Sowerby and his

money matters. He thinks that I am to blame, and he would tell me

so; and then there would be sharp things said between us. He would

advance me the money if I pressed for it, but he would do so in a way

that would make it impossible that I should take it."

There was nothing more, then, to be said. If she had had her own way

Mrs. Robarts would have gone at once to Lady Lufton, but she could

not induce her husband to sanction such a proceeding. The objection

to seeking assistance from her ladyship was as strong as that which

prevailed as to her son. There had already been some little beginning

of ill-feeling, and under such circumstances it was impossible to ask

for pecuniary assistance. Fanny, however, had a prophetic assurance

that assistance out of these difficulties must in the end come to

them from that quarter, or not come at all; and she would fain, had

she been allowed, make everything known at the big house. On the

following morning they breakfasted at the usual hour, but in great

sadness. A maid-servant, whom Mrs. Robarts had brought with her

when she married, told her that a rumour of what was to happen had

reached the kitchen. Stubbs, the groom, had been in Barchester on the

preceding day, and, according to his account--so said Mary--everybody

in the city was talking about it. "Never mind, Mary," said Mrs.

Robarts, and Mary replied, "Oh, no, of course not, ma'am." In these

days Mrs. Robarts was ordinarily very busy, seeing that there were

six children in the house, four of whom had come to her but ill

supplied with infantine belongings; and now, as usual, she went

about her work immediately after breakfast. But she moved about

the house very slowly, and was almost unable to give her orders

to the servants, and spoke sadly to the children who hung about

her wondering what was the matter. Her husband at the same time

took himself to his book-room, but when there did not attempt any

employment. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and, leaning

against the fire-place, fixed his eyes upon the table before him

without looking at anything that was on it; it was impossible for him

to betake himself to his work. Remember what is the ordinary labour

of a clergyman in his study, and think how fit he must have been for

such employment! What would have been the nature of a sermon composed

at such a moment, and with what satisfaction could he have used the

sacred volume in referring to it for his arguments? He, in this

respect, was worse off than his wife; she did employ herself, but he

stood there without moving, doing nothing, with fixed eyes, thinking

what men would say of him. Luckily for him this state of suspense was

not long, for within half an hour of his leaving the breakfast-table,

the footman knocked at his door--that footman with whom, at the

beginning of his difficulties, he had made up his mind to dispense,

but who had been kept on because of the Barchester prebend.

"If you please, your reverence, there are two men outside," said the

footman. Two men! Mark knew well enough what men they were, but he

could hardly take the coming of two such men to his quiet country

parsonage quite as a matter of course.

"Who are they, John?" said he, not wishing any answer, but because

the question was forced upon him.

"I'm afeard they're--bailiffs, sir."

"Very well, John; that will do; of course they must do what they

please about the place." And then, when the servant left him, he

still stood without moving, exactly as he had stood before. There

he remained for ten minutes, but the time went by very slowly. When

about noon some circumstance told him what was the hour, he was

astonished to find that the day had not nearly passed away. And

then another tap was struck on the door--a sound which he well

recognized--and his wife crept silently into the room. She came

close up to him before she spoke, and put her arm within his:

"Mark," she said, "the men are here; they are in the yard."

"I know it," he answered gruffly.

"Will it be better that you should see them, dearest?"

"See them; no; what good can I do by seeing them? But I shall see

them soon enough; they will be here, I suppose, in a few minutes."

"They are taking an inventory, cook says; they are in the stable

now."

"Very well; they must do as they please; I cannot help them."

"Cook says that if they are allowed their meals and some beer, and if

nobody takes anything away, they will be quite civil."

"Civil! But what does it matter! Let them eat and drink what they

please, as long as the food lasts. I don't suppose the butcher will

send you more."

"But, Mark, there's nothing due to the butcher,--only the regular

monthly bill."

"Very well; you'll see."

"Oh, Mark, don't look at me in that way. Do not turn away from me.

What is to comfort us if we do not cling to each other now?"

"Comfort us! God help you! I wonder, Fanny, that you can bear to stay

in the room with me."

"Mark, dearest Mark, my own dear, dearest husband! who is to be true

to you, if I am not? You shall not turn from me. How can anything

like this make a difference between you and me?" And then she threw

her arms round his neck and embraced him. It was a terrible morning

to him, and one of which every incident will dwell on his memory to

the last day of his life. He had been so proud in his position--had

assumed to himself so prominent a standing--had contrived, by some

trick which he had acquired, to carry his head so high above the

heads of neighbouring parsons. It was this that had taken him among

great people, had introduced him to the Duke of Omnium, had procured

for him the stall at Barchester. But how was he to carry his head

now? What would the Arabins and Grantlys say? How would the bishop

sneer at him, and Mrs. Proudie and her daughters tell of him in all

their quarters? How would Crawley look at him--Crawley, who had

already once had him on the hip? The stern severity of Crawley's face

loomed upon him now. Crawley, with his children half naked, and his

wife a drudge, and himself half starved, had never had a bailiff in

his house at Hogglestock. And then his own curate, Evans, whom he had

patronized, and treated almost as a dependant--how was he to look his

curate in the face and arrange with him for the sacred duties of the

next Sunday? His wife still stood by him, gazing into his face; and

as he looked at her and thought of her misery, he could not control

his heart with reference to the wrongs which Sowerby had heaped on

him. It was Sowerby's falsehood and Sowerby's fraud which had brought

upon him and his wife this terrible anguish.

"If there be justice on earth he will suffer for it yet," he said at

last, not speaking intentionally to his wife, but unable to repress

his feelings.

"Do not wish him evil, Mark; you may be sure he has his own sorrows."

"His own sorrows! No; he is callous to such misery as this. He has

become so hardened in dishonesty that all this is mirth to him. If

there be punishment in heaven for falsehood--"

"Oh, Mark, do not curse him!"

"How am I to keep myself from cursing when I see what he has brought

upon you?"

"'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord,'" answered the young wife, not

with solemn, preaching accent, as though bent on reproof, but with

the softest whisper into his ear. "Leave that to Him, Mark; and for

us, let us pray that He may soften the hearts of us all;--of him who

has caused us to suffer, and of our own." Mark was not called upon to

reply to this, for he was again disturbed by a servant at the door.

It was the cook this time herself, who had come with a message from

the men of the law. And she had come, be it remembered, not from

any necessity that she as cook should do this line of work; for the

footman, or Mrs. Robarts's maid, might have come as well as she.

But when things are out of course servants are always out of course

also. As a rule, nothing will induce a butler to go into a stable, or

persuade a house-maid to put her hand to a frying-pan. But now that

this new excitement had come upon the household--seeing that the

bailiffs were in possession, and that the chattels were being entered

in a catalogue, everybody was willing to do everything--everything

but his or her own work. The gardener was looking after the dear

children; the nurse was doing the rooms before the bailiffs should

reach them; the groom had gone into the kitchen to get their lunch

ready for them; and the cook was walking about with an inkstand,

obeying all the orders of these great potentates. As far as the

servants were concerned, it may be a question whether the coming of

the bailiffs had not hitherto been regarded as a treat.

"If you please, ma'am," said Jemima cook, "they wishes to know in

which room you'd be pleased to have the inmin-tory took fust. 'Cause,

ma'am, they wouldn't disturb you nor master more than can be avoided.

For their line of life, ma'am, they is very civil--very civil

indeed."

"I suppose they may go into the drawing-room," said Mrs. Robarts, in

a sad low voice. All nice women are proud of their drawing-rooms,

and she was very proud of hers. It had been furnished when money was

plenty with them, immediately after their marriage, and everything

in it was pretty, good, and dear to her. O ladies, who have

drawing-rooms in which the things are pretty, good, and dear to you,

think of what it would be to have two bailiffs rummaging among them

with pen and ink-horn, making a catalogue preparatory to a sheriff's

auction; and all without fault or extravagance of your own! There

were things there that had been given to her by Lady Lufton, by Lady

Meredith, and other friends, and the idea did occur to her that it

might be possible to save them from contamination; but she would not

say a word, lest by so saying she might add to Mark's misery.

"And then the dining-room," said Jemima cook, in a tone almost of

elation.

"Yes; if they please."

"And then master's book-room here; or perhaps the bedrooms, if you

and master be still here."

"Any way they please, cook; it does not much signify," said Mrs.

Robarts. But for some days after that Jemima was by no means a

favourite with her.

The cook was hardly out of the room before a quick footstep was heard

on the gravel before the window, and the hall door was immediately

opened.

"Where is your master?" said the well-known voice of Lord Lufton; and

then in half a minute he also was in the book-room.

"Mark, my dear fellow, what's all this?" said he, in a cheery tone

and with a pleasant face. "Did not you know that I was here? I came

down yesterday; landed from Hamburg only yesterday morning. How do

you do, Mrs. Robarts? This is a terrible bore, isn't it?" Robarts,

at the first moment, hardly knew how to speak to his old friend. He

was struck dumb by the disgrace of his position; the more so as his

misfortune was one which it was partly in the power of Lord Lufton to

remedy. He had never yet borrowed money since he had filled a man's

position, but he had had words about money with the young peer, in

which he knew that his friend had wronged him; and for this double

reason he was now speechless.

"Mr. Sowerby has betrayed him," said Mrs. Robarts, wiping the tears

from her eyes. Hitherto she had said no word against Sowerby, but now

it was necessary to defend her husband.

"No doubt about it. I believe he has always betrayed every one who

has ever trusted him. I told you what he was, some time since; did I

not? But, Mark, why on earth have you let it go so far as this? Would

not Forrest help you?"

"Mr. Forrest wanted him to sign more bills, and he would not do

that," said Mrs. Robarts, sobbing.

"Bills are like dram-drinking," said the discreet young lord: "when

one once begins, it is very hard to leave off. Is it true that the

men are here now, Mark?"

"Yes, they are in the next room."

"What, in the drawing-room?"

"They are making out a list of the things," said Mrs Robarts.

"We must stop that at any rate," said his lordship, walking off

towards the scene of the operations; and as he left the room Mrs.

Robarts followed him, leaving her husband by himself.

"Why did you not send down to my mother?" said he, speaking hardly

above a whisper, as they stood together in the hall.

"He would not let me."

"But why not go yourself? or why not have written to me,--considering

how intimate we are!" Mrs. Robarts could not explain to him that the

peculiar intimacy between him and Lucy must have hindered her from

doing so, even if otherwise it might have been possible; but she felt

such was the case.

"Well, my men, this is bad work you're doing here," said he, walking

into the drawing-room. Whereupon the cook curtsied low, and the

bailiffs, knowing his lordship, stopped from their business and

put their hands to their foreheads. "You must stop this, if you

please,--at once. Come, let's go out into the kitchen, or some place

outside. I don't like to see you here with your big boots and the pen

and ink among the furniture."

"We ain't a-done no harm, my lord, so please your lordship," said

Jemima cook.

"And we is only a-doing our bounden dooties," said one of the

bailiffs.

"As we is sworn to do, so please your lordship," said the other.

"And is wery sorry to be unconwenient, my lord, to any gen'leman or

lady as is a gen'leman or lady. But accidents will happen, and then

what can the likes of us do?" said the first.

"Because we is sworn, my lord," said the second. But, nevertheless,

in spite of their oaths, and in spite also of the stern necessity

which they pleaded, they ceased their operations at the instance of

the peer. For the name of a lord is still great in England.

"And now leave this, and let Mrs. Robarts go into her drawing-room."

"And, please your lordship, what is we to do? Who is we to look

to?" In satisfying them absolutely on this point Lord Lufton had

to use more than his influence as a peer. It was necessary that he

should have pen and paper. But with pen and paper he did satisfy

them;--satisfy them so far that they agreed to return to Stubbs's

room, the former hospital, due stipulation having been made for the

meals and beer, and there await the order to evacuate the premises

which would no doubt, under his lordship's influence, reach them on

the following day. The meaning of all which was that Lord Lufton

had undertaken to bear upon his own shoulder the whole debt due by

Mr. Robarts. And then he returned to the book-room where Mark was

still standing almost on the spot in which he had placed himself

immediately after breakfast. Mrs. Robarts did not return, but went up

among the children to counter-order such directions as she had given

for the preparation of the nursery for the Philistines. "Mark," he

said, "do not trouble yourself about this more than you can help.

The men have ceased doing anything, and they shall leave the place

to-morrow morning."

"And how will the money--be paid?" said the poor clergyman.

"Do not bother yourself about that at present. It shall so be managed

that the burden shall fall ultimately on yourself--not on any one

else. But I am sure it must be a comfort to you to know that your

wife need not be driven out of her drawing-room."

"But, Lufton, I cannot allow you--after what has passed--and at the

present moment--"

"My dear fellow, I know all about it, and I am coming to that just

now. You have employed Curling, and he shall settle it; and upon my

word, Mark, you shall pay the bill. But, for the present emergency,

the money is at my banker's."

"But, Lufton--"

"And to deal honestly, about Curling's bill I mean, it ought to be as

much my affair as your own. It was I that brought you into this mess

with Sowerby, and I know now how unjust about it I was to you up in

London. But the truth is that Sowerby's treachery had nearly driven

me wild. It has done the same to you since, I have no doubt."

"He has ruined me," said Robarts.

"No, he has not done that. No thanks to him though; he would not have

scrupled to do it had it come in his way. The fact is, Mark, that you

and I cannot conceive the depth of fraud in such a man as that. He

is always looking for money; I believe that in all his hours of most

friendly intercourse,--when he is sitting with you over your wine,

and riding beside you in the field,--he is still thinking how he can

make use of you to tide him over some difficulty. He has lived in

that way till he has a pleasure in cheating, and has become so clever

in his line of life that if you or I were with him again to-morrow he

would again get the better of us. He is a man that must be absolutely

avoided; I, at any rate, have learned to know so much." In the

expression of which opinion Lord Lufton was too hard upon poor

Sowerby; as indeed we are all apt to be too hard in forming an

opinion upon the rogues of the world. That Mr. Sowerby had been a

rogue, I cannot deny. It is roguish to lie, and he had been a great

liar. It is roguish to make promises which the promiser knows he

cannot perform, and such had been Mr. Sowerby's daily practice. It

is roguish to live on other men's money, and Mr. Sowerby had long

been doing so. It is roguish, at least so I would hold it, to deal

willingly with rogues; and Mr. Sowerby had been constant in such

dealings. I do not know whether he had not at times fallen even into

more palpable roguery than is proved by such practices as those

enumerated. Though I have for him some tender feeling, knowing that

there was still a touch of gentle bearing round his heart, an abiding

taste for better things within him, I cannot acquit him from the

great accusation. But, for all that, in spite of his acknowledged

roguery, Lord Lufton was too hard upon him in his judgement.

There was yet within him the means of repentance, could a \_locus

penitentiÃ¦\_ have been supplied to him. He grieved bitterly over

his own ill-doings, and knew well what changes gentlehood would

have demanded from him. Whether or no he had gone too far for

all changes--whether the \_locus penitentiÃ¦\_ was for him still a

possibility--that was between him and a higher power.

"I have no one to blame but myself," said Mark, still speaking in the

same heart-broken tone and with his face averted from his friend.

The debt would now be paid, and the bailiffs would be expelled; but

that would not set him right before the world. It would be known to

all men--to all clergymen in the diocese, that the sheriff's officers

had been in charge of Framley parsonage, and he could never again

hold up his head in the close of Barchester. "My dear fellow, if we

were all to make ourselves miserable for such a trifle as this,--"

said Lord Lufton, putting his arm affectionately on his friend's

shoulder.

"But we are not all clergymen," said Mark, and as he spoke he turned

away to the window and Lord Lufton know that the tears were on his

cheek.

Nothing was then said between them for some moments, after which Lord

Lufton again spoke,--

"Mark, my dear fellow!"

"Well," said Mark, with his face still turned towards the window.

"You must remember one thing; in helping you over this stile, which

will be really a matter of no inconvenience to me, I have a better

right than that even of an old friend; I look upon you now as my

brother-in-law." Mark turned slowly round, plainly showing the tears

upon his face.

"Do you mean," said he, "that anything more has taken place?"

"I mean to make your sister my wife; she sent me word by you to say

that she loved me, and I am not going to stand upon any nonsense

after that, If she and I are both willing no one alive has a right to

stand between us, and, by heavens, no one shall. I will do nothing

secretly, so I tell you that, exactly as I have told her ladyship."

"But what does she say?

"She says nothing; but it cannot go on like that. My mother and I

cannot live here together if she opposes me in this way. I do not

want to frighten your sister by going over to her at Hogglestock, but

I expect you to tell her so much as I now tell you, as coming from

me; otherwise she will think that I have forgotten her."

"She will not think that."

"She need not; good-bye, old fellow. I'll make it all right between

you and her ladyship about this affair of Sowerby's." And then he

took his leave and walked off to settle about the payment of the

money.

"Mother," said he to Lady Lufton that evening, "you must not bring

this affair of the bailiffs up against Robarts. It has been more my

fault than his."

Hitherto not a word had been spoken between Lady Lufton and her

son on the subject. She had heard with terrible dismay of what had

happened, and had heard also that Lord Lufton had immediately gone

to the parsonage. It was impossible, therefore, that she should now

interfere. That the necessary money would be forthcoming she was

aware, but that would not wipe out the terrible disgrace attached

to an execution in a clergyman's house. And then, too, he was her

clergyman,--her own clergyman, selected and appointed, and brought to

Framley by herself, endowed with a wife of her own choosing, filled

with good things by her own hand! It was a terrible misadventure, and

she began to repent that she had ever heard the name of Robarts. She

would not, however, have been slow to put forth the hand to lessen

the evil by giving her own money, had this been either necessary or

possible. But how could she interfere between Robarts and her son,

especially when she remembered the proposed connexion between Lucy

and Lord Lufton?

"Your fault, Ludovic?"

"Yes, mother. It was I who introduced him to Mr. Sowerby; and, to

tell the truth, I do not think he would ever have been intimate

with Sowerby if I had not given him some sort of a commission with

reference to money matters then pending between Mr. Sowerby and me.

They are all over now,--thanks to you, indeed."

"Mr. Robarts's character as a clergyman should have kept him from

such troubles, if no other feeling did so."

"At any rate, mother, oblige me by letting it pass by."

"Oh, I shall say nothing to him."

"You had better say something to her, or otherwise it will be

strange; and even to him I would say a word or two,--a word in

kindness, as you so well know how. It will be easier to him in that

way, than if you were to be altogether silent."

No further conversation took place between them at the time, but

later in the evening she brushed her hand across her son's forehead,

sweeping the long silken hairs into their place, as she was wont to

do when moved by any special feeling of love. "Ludovic," she said,

"no one, I think, has so good a heart as you. I will do exactly as

you would have me about this affair of Mr. Robarts and the money."

And then there was nothing more said about it.

CHAPTER XLV

Palace Blessings

And now, at this period, terrible rumours found their way into

Barchester, and flew about the cathedral towers and round the

cathedral door; aye, and into the canons' houses and the humbler

sitting-rooms of the vicars choral. Whether they made their way from

thence up to the bishop's palace, or whether they descended from

the palace to the close, I will not pretend to say. But they were

shocking, unnatural, and no doubt grievous to all those excellent

ecclesiastical hearts which cluster so thickly in those quarters.

The first of these had reference to the new prebendary, and to the

disgrace which he had brought on the chapter; a disgrace, as some of

them boasted, which Barchester had never known before. This, however,

like most other boasts, was hardly true; for within but a very few

years there had been an execution in the house of a late prebendary,

old Dr. Stanhope; and on that occasion the doctor himself had been

forced to fly away to Italy, starting in the night, lest he also

should fall into the hands of the Philistines, as well as his chairs

and tables. "It is a scandalous shame," said Mrs. Proudie, speaking

not of the old doctor, but of the new offender; "a scandalous shame:

and it would only serve him right if the gown were stripped from his

back."

"I suppose his living will be sequestrated," said a young minor canon

who attended much to the ecclesiastical injunctions of the lady of

the diocese, and was deservedly held in high favour. If Framley were

sequestrated, why should not he, as well as another, undertake the

duty--with such stipend as the bishop might award?

"I am told that he is over head and ears in debt," said the future

Mrs. Tickler, "and chiefly for horses which he has bought and not

paid for."

"I see him riding very splendid animals when he comes over for the

cathedral duties," said the minor canon.

"The sheriff's officers are in the house at present, I am told," said

Mrs. Proudie.

"And is not he in jail?" said Mrs. Tickler.

"If not, he ought to be," said Mrs. Tickler's mother.

"And no doubt soon will be," said the minor canon; "for I hear that

he is linked up with a most discreditable gang of persons."

This was what was said in the palace on that heading; and though,

no doubt, more spirit and poetry was displayed there than in the

houses of the less gifted clergy, this shows the manner in which the

misfortune of Mr. Robarts was generally discussed. Nor, indeed, had

he deserved any better treatment at their hands. But his name did

not run the gauntlet for the usual nine days; nor, indeed, did his

fame endure at its height for more than two. This sudden fall was

occasioned by other tidings of a still more distressing nature; by

a rumour which so affected Mrs. Proudie that it caused, as she said,

her blood to creep. And she was very careful that the blood of others

should creep also, if the blood of others was equally sensitive.

It was said that Lord Dumbello had jilted Miss Grantly. From what

adverse spot in the world these cruel tidings fell upon Barchester I

have never been able to discover. We know how quickly rumour flies,

making herself common through all the cities. That Mrs. Proudie

should have known more of the facts connected with the Hartletop

family than any one else in Barchester was not surprising, seeing

that she was so much more conversant with the great world in which

such people lived. She knew, and was therefore correct enough in

declaring, that Lord Dumbello had already jilted one other young

lady--the Lady Julia Mac Mull, to whom he had been engaged three

seasons back, and that therefore his character in such matters was

not to be trusted. That Lady Julia had been a terrible flirt and

greatly given to waltzing with a certain German count, with whom

she had since gone off--that, I suppose, Mrs. Proudie did not know,

much as she was conversant with the great world,--seeing that she

said nothing about it to any of her ecclesiastical listeners on the

present occasion.

"It will be a terrible warning, Mrs. Quiverful, to us all; a most

useful warning to us--not to trust to the things of this world. I

fear they made no inquiry about this young nobleman before they

agreed that his name should be linked with that of their daughter."

This she said to the wife of the present warden of Hiram's Hospital,

a lady who had received favours from her, and was therefore bound to

listen attentively to her voice.

"But I hope it may not be true," said Mrs. Quiverful, who, in spite

of the allegiance due by her to Mrs. Proudie, had reasons of her own

for wishing well to the Grantly family.

"I hope so, indeed," said Mrs. Proudie, with a slight tinge of anger

in her voice; "but I fear that there is no doubt. And I must confess

that it is no more than we had a right to expect. I hope that it may

be taken by all of us as a lesson, and an example, and a teaching of

the Lord's mercy. And I wish you would request your husband--from

me, Mrs. Quiverful--to dwell on this subject in morning and evening

lecture at the hospital on Sabbath next, showing how false is the

trust which we put in the good things of this world;" which behest,

to a certain extent, Mr. Quiverful did obey, feeling that a quiet

life in Barchester was of great value to him; but he did not go so

far as to caution his hearers, who consisted of the aged bedesmen of

the hospital, against matrimonial projects of an ambitious nature.

In this case, as in all others of the kind, the report was known to

all the chapter before it had been heard by the archdeacon or his

wife. The dean heard it, and disregarded it; as did also the dean's

wife--at first; and those who generally sided with the Grantlys in

the diocesan battles pooh-poohed the tidings, saying to each other

that both the archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly were very well able to take

care of their own affairs. But dripping water hollows a stone; and at

last it was admitted on all sides that there was ground for fear,--on

all sides, except at Plumstead.

"I am sure there is nothing in it; I really am sure of it," said Mrs.

Arabin, whispering to her sister; "but after turning it over in my

mind, I thought it right to tell you. And yet I don't know now but I

am wrong."

"Quite right, dearest Eleanor," said Mrs. Grantly. "And I am much

obliged to you. But we understand it, you know. It comes, of course,

like all other Christian blessings, from the palace." And then there

was nothing more said about it between Mrs. Grantly and her sister.

But on the following morning there arrived a letter by post,

addressed to Mrs. Grantly, bearing the postmark of Littlebath. The

letter ran:--

MADAM,--

It is known to the writer that Lord Dumbello has arranged

with certain friends how he may escape from his present

engagement. I think, therefore, that it is my duty as a

Christian to warn you of this.

Yours truly,

A WELLWISHER.

Now it had happened that the embryo Mrs. Tickler's most intimate

bosom friend and confidante was known at Plumstead to live at

Littlebath, and it had also happened--most unfortunately--that

the embryo Mrs. Tickler, in the warmth of her neighbourly regard,

had written a friendly line to her friend Griselda Grantly,

congratulating her with all female sincerity on her splendid nuptials

with the Lord Dumbello.

"It is not her natural hand," said Mrs. Grantly, talking the matter

over with her husband, "but you may be sure it has come from her.

It is a part of the new Christianity which we learn day by day

from the palace teaching." But these things had some effect on the

archdeacon's mind. He had learned lately the story of Lady Julia Mac

Mull, and was not sure that his son-in-law--as ought to be about to

be--had been entirely blameless in that matter. And then in these

days Lord Dumbello made no great sign. Immediately on Griselda's

return to Plumstead he had sent her a magnificent present of

emeralds, which, however, had come to her direct from the jewellers,

and might have been--and probably was--ordered by his man of

business. Since that he had neither come, nor sent, nor written.

Griselda did not seem to be in any way annoyed by this absence of

the usual sign of love, and went on steadily with her great duties.

"Nothing," as she told her mother, "had been said about writing, and,

therefore, she did not expect it." But the archdeacon was not quite

at his ease. "Keep Dumbello up to his p's and q's, you know," a

friend of his had whispered to him at his club. By heavens, yes. The

archdeacon was not a man to bear with indifference a wrong in such

a quarter. In spite of his clerical profession, few men were more

inclined to fight against personal wrongs--and few men more able.

"Can there be anything wrong, I wonder?" said he to his wife. "Is

it worth while that I should go up to London?" But Mrs. Grantly

attributed it all to the palace doctrine. What could be more natural,

looking at all the circumstances of the Tickler engagement? She

therefore gave her voice against any steps being taken by the

archdeacon. A day or two after that Mrs. Proudie met Mrs. Arabin in

the close and condoled with her openly on the termination of the

marriage treaty;--quite openly, for Mrs. Tickler--as she was to

be--was with her mother, and Mrs. Arabin was accompanied by her

sister-in-law, Mary Bold.

"It must be very grievous to Mrs. Grantly, very grievous indeed,"

said Mrs. Proudie, "and I sincerely feel for her. But, Mrs. Arabin,

all these lessons are sent to us for our eternal welfare."

"Of course," said Mrs. Arabin. "But as to this special lesson, I am

inclined to doubt that it--"

"Ah-h! I fear it is too true. I fear there is no room for doubt. Of

course you are aware that Lord Dumbello is off for the Continent."

Mrs Arabin was not aware of it, and she was obliged to admit as much.

"He started four days ago, by way of Boulogne," said Mrs. Tickler,

who seemed to be very well up in the whole affair. "I am so sorry for

poor dear Griselda. I am told she has got all her things. It is such

a pity, you know."

"But why should not Lord Dumbello come back from the Continent?" said

Miss Bold, very quietly.

"Why not, indeed? I'm sure I hope he may," said Mrs. Proudie. "And no

doubt he will, some day. But if he be such a man as they say he is,

it is really well for Griselda that she should be relieved from such

a marriage. For, after all, Mrs. Arabin, what are the things of this

world?--dust beneath our feet, ashes between our teeth, grass cut for

the oven, vanity, vexation, and nothing more!"--well pleased with

which variety of Christian metaphors Mrs. Proudie walked on, still

muttering, however, something about worms and grubs, by which she

intended to signify her own species and the Dumbello and Grantly

sects of it in particular. This now had gone so far that Mrs. Arabin

conceived herself bound in duty to see her sister, and it was then

settled in consultation at Plumstead that the archdeacon should

call officially at the palace and beg that the rumour might be

contradicted. This he did early on the next morning and was shown

into the bishop's study, in which he found both his lordship and Mrs.

Proudie. The bishop rose to greet him with special civility, smiling

his very sweetest on him, as though of all his clergy the archdeacon

were the favourite; but Mrs. Proudie wore something of a gloomy

aspect, as though she knew that such a visit at such an hour must

have reference to some special business. The morning calls made by

the archdeacon at the palace in the way of ordinary civility were not

numerous. On the present occasion he dashed at once into his subject.

"I have called this morning, Mrs. Proudie," said he, "because I wish

to ask a favour from you." Whereupon Mrs. Proudie bowed.

"Mrs. Proudie will be most happy, I am sure," said the bishop.

"I find that some foolish people have been talking in Barchester

about my daughter," said the archdeacon; "and I wish to ask Mrs.

Proudie--"

Most women under such circumstances would have felt the awkwardness

of their situation, and would have prepared to eat their past words

with wry faces. But not so Mrs. Proudie. Mrs. Grantly had had

the imprudence to throw Mr. Slope in her face--there, in her own

drawing-room, and she was resolved to be revenged. Mrs. Grantly, too,

had ridiculed the Tickler match, and no too great niceness should now

prevent Mrs. Proudie from speaking her mind about the Dumbello match.

"A great many people are talking about her, I am sorry to say," said

Mrs. Proudie; "but, poor dear, it is not her fault. It might have

happened to any girl; only, perhaps, a little more care--; you'll

excuse me, Dr. Grantly."

"I have come here to allude to a report which has been spread about

in Barchester, that the match between Lord Dumbello and my daughter

has been broken off; and--"

"Everybody in Barchester knows it, I believe," said Mrs. Proudie.

"--and", continued the archdeacon, "to request that that report may

be contradicted."

"Contradicted! Why, he has gone right away,--out of the country."

"Never mind where he has gone to, Mrs. Proudie; I beg that the report

may be contradicted."

"You'll have to go round to every house in Barchester then," said

she.

"By no means," replied the archdeacon. "And, perhaps, it may be right

that I should explain to the bishop that I came here because--"

"The bishop knows nothing about it," said Mrs. Proudie.

"Nothing in the world," said his lordship. "And I am sure I hope that

the young lady may not be disappointed."

"--because the matter was so distinctly mentioned to Mrs. Arabin by

yourself yesterday."

"Distinctly mentioned! Of course it was distinctly mentioned. There

are some things which can't be kept under a bushel, Dr. Grantly; and

this seems to be one of them. Your going about in this way won't make

Lord Dumbello marry the young lady." That was true; nor would it make

Mrs. Proudie hold her tongue. Perhaps the archdeacon was wrong in

his present errand, and so he now began to bethink himself. "At any

rate," said he, "when I tell you that there is no ground whatever for

such a report you will do me the kindness to say that, as far as you

are concerned, it shall go no further. I think, my lord, I am not

asking too much in asking that."

"The bishop knows nothing about it," said Mrs. Proudie again.

"Nothing at all," said the bishop.

"And as I must protest that I believe the information which has

reached me on this head," said Mrs. Proudie, "I do not see how it is

possible that I should contradict it. I can easily understand your

feelings, Dr. Grantly. Considering your daughter's position the match

was, as regards earthly wealth, a very great one. I do not wonder

that you should be grieved at its being broken off; but I trust that

this sorrow may eventuate in a blessing to you and to Miss Griselda.

These worldly disappointments are precious balms, and I trust you

know how to accept them as such." The fact was that Dr. Grantly had

done altogether wrong in coming to the palace. His wife might have

some chance with Mrs. Proudie, but he had none. Since she had come to

Barchester he had had only two or three encounters with her, and in

all of these he had gone to the wall. His visits to the palace always

resulted in his leaving the presence of the inhabitants in a frame

of mind by no means desirable, and he now found that he had to do so

once again. He could not compel Mrs. Proudie to say that the report

was untrue; nor could he condescend to make counter hits at her

about her own daughter, as his wife would have done. And thus having

utterly failed, he got up and took his leave. But the worst of the

matter was, that, in going home, he could not divest his mind of

the idea that there might be some truth in the report. What if Lord

Dumbello had gone to the Continent resolved to send back from thence

some reason why it was impossible that he should make Miss Grantly

his wife? Such things had been done before now by men in his rank.

Whether or no Mrs. Tickler had been the letter-writing wellwisher

from Littlebath, or had induced her friend to be so, it did seem

manifest to him, Dr. Grantly, that Mrs. Proudie absolutely believed

the report which she promulgated so diligently. The wish might be

father to the thought, no doubt; but that the thought was truly

there, Dr. Grantly could not induce himself to disbelieve. His wife

was less credulous, and to a certain degree comforted him; but that

evening he received a letter which greatly confirmed the suspicions

set on foot by Mrs. Proudie, and even shook his wife's faith in Lord

Dumbello. It was from a mere acquaintance, who in the ordinary course

of things would not have written to him. And the bulk of the letter

referred to ordinary things, as to which the gentleman in question

would hardly have thought of giving himself the trouble to write a

letter. But at the end of the note he said,--"of course you are aware

that Dumbello is off to Paris; I have not heard whether the exact day

of his return is fixed."

"It is true, then," said the archdeacon, striking the library table

with his hand, and becoming absolutely white about the mouth and

jaws.

"It cannot be," said Mrs. Grantly; but even she was now trembling.

"If it be so I'll drag him back to England by the collar of his coat,

and disgrace him before the steps of his father's hall." And the

archdeacon as he uttered the threat looked his character as an irate

British father much better than he did his other character as a

clergyman of the Church of England. The archdeacon had been greatly

worsted by Mrs. Proudie, but he was a man who knew how to fight his

battles among men--sometimes without too close a regard to his cloth.

"Had Lord Dumbello intended any such thing he would have written, or

got some friend to write by this time," said Mrs. Grantly. "It is

quite possible that he might wish to be off, but he would be too

chary of his name not to endeavour to do so with decency."

Thus the matter was discussed, and it appeared to them both to be so

serious that the archdeacon resolved to go at once to London. That

Lord Dumbello had gone to France he did not doubt; but he would find

some one in town acquainted with the young man's intentions, and

he would, no doubt, be able to hear when his return was expected.

If there were real reason for apprehension he would follow the

runagate to the Continent, but he would not do this without absolute

knowledge. According to Lord Dumbello's present engagements he was

bound to present himself in August next at Plumstead Episcopi, with

the view of then and there taking Griselda Grantly in marriage; but

if he kept his word in this respect no one had a right to quarrel

with him for going to Paris in the meantime. Most expectant

bridegrooms would, no doubt, under such circumstances, have declared

their intentions to their future brides; but if Lord Dumbello

were different from others, who had a right on that account to be

indignant with him? He was unlike other men in other things; and

especially unlike other men in being the eldest son of the Marquess

of Hartletop. It would be all very well for Tickler to proclaim his

whereabouts from week to week; but the eldest son of a marquess might

find it inconvenient to be so precise! Nevertheless the archdeacon

thought it only prudent to go up to London. "Susan," said the

archdeacon to his wife, just as he was starting;--at this moment

neither of them were in the happiest spirits--"I think I would say a

word of caution to Griselda."

"Do you feel so much doubt about it as that?" said Mrs. Grantly. But

even she did not dare to put a direct negative to this proposal, so

much had she been moved by what she had heard!

"I think I would do so, not frightening her more than I could help.

It will lesson the blow if it be that the blow is to fall."

"It will kill me," said Mrs. Grantly; "but I think that she will be

able to bear it." On the next morning Mrs. Grantly, with much cunning

preparation, went about the task which her husband had left her to

perform. It took her long to do, for she was very cunning in the

doing of it; but at last it dropped from her in words that there was

a possibility--a bare possibility--that some disappointment might

even yet be in store for them.

"Do you mean, mamma, that the marriage will be put off?"

"I don't mean to say that I think it will; God forbid! but it is just

possible. I dare say that I am very wrong to tell you this, but I

know that you have sense enough to bear it. Papa has gone to London,

and we shall hear from him soon."

"Then, mamma, I had better give them orders not to go on with the

marking."

CHAPTER XLVI

Lady Lufton's Request

The bailiffs on that day had their meals regular--and their beer,

which state of things, together with an absence of all duty in the

way of making inventories and the like, I take to be the earthly

paradise of bailiffs; and on the next morning they walked off with

civil speeches and many apologies as to their intrusion. "They was

very sorry," they said, "to have troubled a gen'leman as were a

gen'leman, but in their way of business what could they do?" To

which one of them added a remark that, "business is business." This

statement I am not prepared to contradict, but I would recommend all

men in choosing a profession to avoid any that may require an apology

at every turn; either an apology or else a somewhat violent assertion

of right. Each younger male reader may, perhaps, reply that he has no

thought of becoming a sheriff's officer; but then are there not other

cognate lines of life to which, perhaps, the attention of some such

may be attracted? On the evening of the day on which they went Mark

received a note from Lady Lufton begging him to call early on the

following morning, and immediately after breakfast he went across to

Framley Court. It may be imagined that he was not in a very happy

frame of mind, but he felt the truth of his wife's remark that the

first plunge into cold water was always the worst. Lady Lufton was

not a woman who would continually throw his disgrace into his teeth,

however terribly cold might be the first words with which she spoke

of it. He strove hard as he entered her room to carry his usual look

and bearing, and to put out his hand to greet her with his customary

freedom, but he knew that he failed. And it may be said that no good

man who has broken down in his goodness can carry the disgrace of his

fall without some look of shame. When a man is able to do that, he

ceases to be in any way good.

"This has been a distressing affair," said Lady Lufton, after her

first salutation.

"Yes, indeed," said he. "It has been very sad for poor Fanny."

"Well; we must all have our little periods of grief; and it may

perhaps be fortunate if none of us have worse than this. She will not

complain, herself, I am sure."

"She complain!"

"No, I am sure she will not. And now all I've got to say, Mr.

Robarts, is this: I hope you and Lufton have had enough to do with

black sheep to last you your lives; for I must protest that your late

friend Mr. Sowerby is a black sheep." In no possible way could Lady

Lufton have alluded to the matter with greater kindness than in

thus joining Mark's name with that of her son. It took away all the

bitterness of the rebuke, and made the subject one on which even he

might have spoken without difficulty. But now, seeing that she was so

gentle to him, he could not but lean the more hardly on himself.

"I have been very foolish," said he, "very foolish, and very wrong,

and very wicked."

"Very foolish, I believe, Mr. Robarts--to speak frankly and once for

all; but, as I also believe, nothing worse. I thought it best for

both of us that we should just have one word about it, and now I

recommend that the matter be never mentioned between us again."

"God bless you, Lady Lufton," he said, "I think no man ever had such

a friend as you are." She had been very quiet during the interview,

and almost subdued, not speaking with the animation that was usual

to her; for this affair with Mr. Robarts was not the only one she

had to complete that day, nor, perhaps, the one most difficult of

completion. But she cheered up a little under the praise now bestowed

on her, for it was the sort of praise she loved best. She did hope,

and perhaps flatter herself, that she was a good friend.

"You must be good enough, then, to gratify my friendship by coming up

to dinner this evening; and Fanny, too, of course. I cannot take any

excuse, for the matter is completely arranged. I have a particular

reason for wishing it." These last violent injunctions had been added

because Lady Lufton had seen a refusal rising in the parson's face.

Poor Lady Lufton! Her enemies--for even she had enemies--used to

declare of her, that an invitation to dinner was the only method of

showing itself of which her good-humour was cognizant. But let me ask

of her enemies whether it is not as good a method as any other known

to be extant? Under such orders as these obedience was of course a

necessity, and he promised that he, with his wife, would come across

to dinner. And then, when he went away, Lady Lufton ordered her

carriage.

During these doings at Framley, Lucy Robarts still remained at

Hogglestock, nursing Mrs. Crawley. Nothing occurred to take her back

to Framley, for the same note from Fanny which gave her the first

tidings of the arrival of the Philistines told her also of their

departure--and also of the source from whence relief had reached

them. "Don't come, therefore, for that reason," said the note, "but,

nevertheless, do come as quickly as you can, for the whole house is

sad without you." On the morning after the receipt of this note Lucy

was sitting, as was now usual with her, beside an old arm-chair to

which her patient had lately been promoted. The fever had gone, and

Mrs. Crawley was slowly regaining her strength--very slowly, and with

frequent caution from the Silverbridge doctor that any attempt at

being well too fast might again precipitate her into an abyss of

illness and domestic inefficiency.

"I really think I can get about to-morrow," said she; "and then, dear

Lucy, I need not keep you longer from your home."

"You are in a great hurry to get rid of me, I think. I suppose Mr.

Crawley has been complaining again about the cream in his tea."

Mr. Crawley had on one occasion stated his assured conviction that

surreptitious daily supplies were being brought into the house,

because he had detected the presence of cream instead of milk in his

own cup. As, however, the cream had been going for sundry days before

this, Miss Robarts had not thought much of his ingenuity in making

the discovery.

"Ah, you do not know how he speaks of you when your back is turned."

"And how does he speak of me? I know you would not have the courage

to tell me the whole."

"No, I have not; for you would think it absurd coming from one who

looks like him. He says that if he were to write a poem about

womanhood, he would make you the heroine."

"With a cream-jug in my hand, or else sewing buttons on to a

shirt-collar. But he never forgave me about the mutton broth. He told

me, in so many words, that I was a--story-teller. And for the matter

of that, my dear, so I was."

"He told me that you were an angel."

"Goodness gracious!"

"A ministering angel. And so you have been. I can almost feel it in

my heart to be glad that I have been ill, seeing that I have had you

for my friend."

"But you might have had that good fortune without the fever."

"No, I should not. In my married life I have made no friends till my

illness brought you to me; nor should I ever really have known you

but for that. How should I get to know any one?"

"You will now, Mrs. Crawley; will you not? Promise that you will. You

will come to us at Framley when you are well? You have promised

already, you know."

"You made me do so when I was too weak to refuse."

"And I shall make you keep your promise, too. He shall come, also,

if he likes; but you shall come whether he likes or no. And I won't

hear a word about your old dresses. Old dresses will wear as well at

Framley as at Hogglestock." From all which it will appear that Mrs.

Crawley and Lucy Robarts had become very intimate during this period

of the nursing; as two women always will, or, at least, should do,

when shut up for weeks together in the same sick room.

The conversation was still going on between them when the sound of

wheels was heard upon the road. It was no highway that passed before

the house, and carriages of any sort were not frequent there.

"It is Fanny, I am sure," said Lucy, rising from her chair.

"There are two horses," said Mrs. Crawley, distinguishing the noise

with the accurate sense of hearing which is always attached to

sickness; "and it is not the noise of the pony-carriage."

"It is a regular carriage," said Lucy, speaking from the window, "and

stopping here. It is somebody from Framley Court, for I know the

servant." As she spoke a blush came to her forehead. Might it not be

Lord Lufton, she thought to herself--forgetting, at the moment, that

Lord Lufton did not go about the country in a close chariot with a

fat footman. Intimate as she had become with Mrs. Crawley she had

said nothing to her new friend on the subject of her love affair. The

carriage stopped, and down came the footman, but nobody spoke to him

from the inside.

"He has probably brought something from Framley," said Lucy, having

cream and such-like matters in her mind; for cream and such-like

matters had come from Framley Court more than once during her sojourn

there. "And the carriage, probably, happened to be coming this way."

But the mystery soon elucidated itself partially, or, perhaps, became

more mysterious in another way. The red-armed little girl who had

been taken away by her frightened mother in the first burst of the

fever had now returned to her place, and at the present moment

entered the room, with awe-struck face, declaring that Miss Robarts

was to go at once to the big lady in the carriage.

"I suppose it's Lady Lufton," said Mrs. Crawley. Lucy's heart was so

absolutely in her mouth that any kind of speech was at the moment

impossible to her. Why should Lady Lufton have come thither to

Hogglestock, and why should she want to see her, Lucy Robarts, in the

carriage? Had not everything between them been settled? And yet--!

Lucy, in the moment for thought that was allowed to her, could not

determine what might be the probable upshot of such an interview. Her

chief feeling was a desire to postpone it for the present instant.

But the red-armed little girl would not allow that.

"You are to come at once," said she.

And then Lucy, without having spoken a word, got up and left the

room. She walked downstairs, along the little passage, and out

through the small garden, with firm steps, but hardly knowing whither

she went or why. Her presence of mind and self-possession had all

deserted her. She knew that she was unable to speak as she should do;

she felt that she would have to regret her present behaviour, but yet

she could not help herself. Why should Lady Lufton have come to her

there? She went on, and the big footman stood with the carriage door

open. She stepped up almost unconsciously, and, without knowing how

she got there, she found herself seated by Lady Lufton. To tell the

truth her ladyship also was a little at a loss to know how she was to

carry through her present plan of operations. The duty of beginning,

however, was clearly with her, and therefore, having taken Lucy by

the hand, she spoke. "Miss Robarts," she said, "my son has come home.

I don't know whether you are aware of it." She spoke with a low,

gentle voice, not quite like herself, but Lucy was much too confused

to notice this.

"I was not aware of it," said Lucy. She had, however, been so

informed in Fanny's letter, but all that had gone out of her head.

"Yes; he has come back. He has been in Norway, you know,--fishing."

"Yes," said Lucy.

"I am sure you will remember all that took place when you came to me,

not long ago, in my little room upstairs at Framley Court." In answer

to which, Lucy, quivering in every nerve, and wrongly thinking that

she was visibly shaking in every limb, timidly answered that she did

remember. Why was it that she had then been so bold, and now was so

poor a coward?

"Well, my dear, all that I said to you then I said to you thinking

that it was for the best. You, at any rate, will not be angry with me

for loving my own son better than I love any one else."

"Oh, no," said Lucy.

"He is the best of sons, and the best of men, and I am sure that he

will be the best of husbands."

Lucy had an idea, by instinct, however, rather than by sight, that

Lady Lufton's eyes were full of tears as she spoke. As for herself

she was altogether blinded, and did not dare to lift her face or to

turn her head. As for the utterance of any sound, that was quite out

of the question.

"And now I have come here, Lucy, to ask you to be his wife."

She was quite sure that she heard the words. They came plainly to

her ears, leaving on her brain their proper sense, but yet she could

not move or make any sign that she had understood them. It seemed

as though it would be ungenerous in her to take advantage of such

conduct and to accept an offer made with so much self-sacrifice. She

had not time at the first moment to think even of his happiness,

let alone her own, but she thought only of the magnitude of the

concession which had been made to her. When she had constituted Lady

Lufton the arbiter of her destiny she had regarded the question of

her love as decided against herself. She had found herself unable to

endure the position of being Lady Lufton's daughter-in-law while Lady

Lufton would be scorning her, and therefore she had given up the

game. She had given up the game, sacrificing herself, and, as far as

it might be a sacrifice, sacrificing him also. She had been resolute

to stand to her word in this respect, but she had never allowed

herself to think it possible that Lady Lufton should comply with the

conditions which she, Lucy, had laid upon her. And yet such was the

case, as she so plainly heard. "And now I have come here, Lucy, to

ask you to be his wife." How long they sat together silent, I cannot

say; counted by minutes the time would not probably have amounted

to many, but to each of them the duration seemed considerable. Lady

Lufton, while she was speaking, had contrived to get hold of Lucy's

hand, and she sat, still holding it, trying to look into Lucy's

face,--which, however, she could hardly see, so much was it turned

away. Neither, indeed, were Lady Lufton's eyes perfectly dry. No

answer came to her question, and therefore, after a while, it was

necessary that she should speak again.

"Must I go back to him, Lucy, and tell him that there is some other

objection--something besides a stern old mother; some hindrance,

perhaps, not so easily overcome?"

"No," said Lucy, and it was all which at the moment she could say.

"What shall I tell him then? Shall I say yes--simply yes?"

"Simply yes," said Lucy.

"And as to the stern old mother who thought her only son too precious

to be parted with at the first word--is nothing to be said to her?"

"Oh, Lady Lufton!"

"No forgiveness to be spoken, no sign of affection to be given?

Is she always to be regarded as stern and cross, vexatious and

disagreeable?" Lucy slowly turned round her head and looked up into

her companion's face. Though she had as yet no voice to speak of

affection she could fill her eyes with love, and in that way make to

her future mother all the promises that were needed. "Lucy, dearest

Lucy, you must be very dear to me now." And then they were in each

other's arms, kissing each other. Lady Lufton now desired her

coachman to drive up and down for some little space along the road

while she completed her necessary conversation with Lucy. She wanted

at first to carry her back to Framley that evening, promising to

send her again to Mrs. Crawley on the following morning--"till some

permanent arrangement could be made," by which Lady Lufton intended

the substitution of a regular nurse for her future daughter-in-law,

seeing that Lucy Robarts was now invested in her eyes with attributes

which made it unbecoming that she should sit in attendance at Mrs.

Crawley's bedside. But Lucy would not go back to Framley on that

evening; no, nor on the next morning. She would be so glad if Fanny

would come to her there, and then she would arrange about going home.

"But, Lucy, dear, what am I to say to Ludovic? Perhaps you would feel

it awkward if he were to come to see you here."

"Oh, yes, Lady Lufton; pray tell him not to do that."

"And is that all that I am to tell him?"

"Tell him--tell him--he won't want you to tell him anything;--only I

should like to be quiet for a day, Lady Lufton."

"Well, dearest, you shall be quiet; the day after to-morrow

then.--Mind, we must not spare you any longer, because it will be

right that you should be at home now. He would think it very hard if

you were to be so near, and he was not to be allowed to look at you.

And there will be some one else who will want to see you. I shall

want to have you very near to me, for I shall be wretched, Lucy, if I

cannot teach you to love me." In answer to which Lucy did find voice

enough to make sundry promises. And then she was put out of the

carriage at the little wicket gate, and Lady Lufton was driven back

to Framley. I wonder whether the servant when he held the door

for Miss Robarts was conscious that he was waiting on his future

mistress. I fancy that he was, for these sort of people always know

everything, and the peculiar courtesy of his demeanour as he let down

the carriage steps was very observable.

Lucy felt almost beside herself as she returned upstairs, not knowing

what to do or how to look, and with what words to speak. It behoved

her to go at once to Mrs. Crawley's room, and yet she longed to be

alone. She knew that she was quite unable either to conceal her

thoughts or express them; nor did she wish at the present moment to

talk to any one about her happiness,--seeing that she could not at

the present moment talk to Fanny Robarts. She went, however, without

delay into Mrs. Crawley's room, and with that little eager way of

speaking quickly which is so common with people who know that they

are confused, said that she feared she had been a very long time

away. "And was it Lady Lufton?"

"Yes; it was Lady Lufton."

"Why, Lucy; I did not know that you and her ladyship were such

friends."

"She had something particular she wanted to say," said Lucy, avoiding

the question, and avoiding also Mrs. Crawley's eyes; and then she sat

down in her usual chair.

"It was nothing unpleasant, I hope."

"No, nothing at all unpleasant; nothing of that kind.--Oh, Mrs.

Crawley, I'll tell you some other time, but pray do not ask me now."

And then she got up and escaped, for it was absolutely necessary that

she should be alone.

When she reached her own room--that in which the children usually

slept--she made a great effort to compose herself, but not altogether

successfully. She got out her paper and blotting-book, intending, as

she said to herself, to write to Fanny, knowing, however, that the

letter when written would be destroyed; but she was not able even

to form a word. Her hand was unsteady and her eyes were dim and her

thoughts were incapable of being fixed. She could only sit, and

think, and wonder and hope; occasionally wiping the tears from her

eyes, and asking herself why her present frame of mind was so painful

to her? During the last two or three months she had felt no fear

of Lord Lufton, had always carried herself before him on equal

terms, and had been signally capable of doing so when he made his

declaration to her at the parsonage; but now she looked forward with

an undefined dread to the first moment in which she should see him.

And then she thought of a certain evening she had passed at Framley

Court, and acknowledged to herself that there was some pleasure in

looking back to that. Griselda Grantly had been there, and all the

constitutional powers of the two families had been at work to render

easy a process of love-making between her and Lord Lufton. Lucy had

seen and understood it all, without knowing that she understood it,

and had, in a certain degree, suffered from beholding it. She had

placed herself apart, not complaining--painfully conscious of some

inferiority, but, at the same time, almost boasting to herself that

in her own way she was the superior. And then he had come behind

her chair, whispering to her, speaking to her his first words of

kindness and good-nature, and she had resolved that she would be his

friend--his friend, even though Griselda Grantly might be his wife.

What those resolutions were worth had soon become manifest to her.

She had soon confessed to herself the result of that friendship, and

had determined to bear her punishment with courage. But now--

She sate so for about an hour, and would fain have so sat out the

day. But as this could not be, she got up, and having washed her face

and eyes returned to Mrs. Crawley's room. There she found Mr. Crawley

also, to her great joy, for she knew that while he was there no

questions would be asked of her. He was always very gentle to her,

treating her with an old-fashioned, polished respect--except when

compelled on that one occasion by his sense of duty to accuse her of

mendacity respecting the purveying of victuals--, but he had never

become absolutely familiar with her as his wife had done; and it

was well for her now that he had not done so, for she could not

have talked about Lady Lufton. In the evening, when the three were

present, she did manage to say that she expected Mrs. Robarts would

come over on the following day. "We shall part with you, Miss

Robarts, with the deepest regret," said Mr. Crawley; "but we would

not on any account keep you longer. Mrs. Crawley can do without you

now. What she would have done, had you not come to us, I am at a loss

to think."

"I did not say that I should go," said Lucy.

"But you will," said Mrs. Crawley. "Yes, dear, you will. I know that

it is proper now that you should return. Nay, but we will not have

you any longer. And the poor dear children, too,--they may return.

How am I to thank Mrs. Robarts for what she has done for us?" It was

settled that if Mrs. Robarts came on the following day Lucy should go

back with her; and then, during the long watches of the night--for on

this last night Lucy would not leave the bedside of her new friend

till long after the dawn had broken, she did tell Mrs. Crawley what

was to be her destiny in life. To herself there seemed nothing

strange in her new position; but to Mrs. Crawley it was wonderful

that she--she, poor as she was--should have an embryo peeress at her

bedside, handing her her cup to drink, and smoothing her pillow that

she might be at rest. It was strange, and she could hardly maintain

her accustomed familiarity. Lucy felt this at the moment.

"It must make no difference, you know," said she, eagerly; "none

at all, between you and me. Promise me that it shall make no

difference." The promise was, of course, exacted; but it was not

possible that such a promise should be kept. Very early on the

following morning--so early that it woke her while still in her first

sleep--there came a letter for her from the parsonage. Mrs. Robarts

had written it, after her return home from Lady Lufton's dinner. The

letter said:--

MY OWN DARLING,--

How am I to congratulate you, and be eager enough in

wishing you joy? I do wish you joy, and am so very happy.

I write now chiefly to say that I shall be over with you

about twelve to-morrow, and that I must bring you away

with me. If I did not some one else, by no means so

trustworthy, would insist on doing it.

But this, though it was thus stated to be the chief part of the

letter, and though it might be so in matter, was by no means so in

space. It was very long, for Mrs. Robarts had sat writing it till

past midnight.

I will not say anything about him [she went on to say,

after two pages had been filled with his name], but I must

tell you how beautifully she has behaved. You will own

that she is a dear woman; will you not?

Lucy had already owned it many times since the visit of yesterday,

and had declared to herself, as she has continued to declare ever

since, that she had never doubted it.

She took us by surprise when we got into the drawing-room

before dinner, and she told us first of all that she had

been to see you at Hogglestock. Lord Lufton, of course,

could not keep the secret, but brought it out instantly. I

can't tell you now how he told it all, but I am sure you

will believe that he did it in the best possible manner.

He took my hand and pressed it half a dozen times, and I

thought he was going to do something else; but he did not,

so you need not be jealous. And she was so nice to Mark,

saying such things in praise of you, and paying all manner

of compliments to your father. But Lord Lufton scolded

her immensely for not bringing you. He said it was

lackadaisical and nonsensical; but I could see how much he

loved her for what she had done; and she could see it too,

for I know her ways, and know that she was delighted with

him. She could not keep her eyes off him all the evening,

and certainly I never did see him look so well.

And then while Lord Lufton and Mark were in the

dining-room, where they remained a terribly long time, she

would make me go through the house that she might show me

your rooms, and explain how you were to be mistress there.

She has got it all arranged to perfection, and I am sure

she has been thinking about it for years. Her great fear

at present is that you and he should go and live at

Lufton. If you have any gratitude in you, either to her or

me, you will not let him do this. I consoled her by saying

that there are not two stones upon one another at Lufton

as yet; and I believe such is the case. Besides, everybody

says that it is the ugliest spot in the world. She went

on to declare, with tears in her eyes, that if you were

content to remain at Framley, she would never interfere in

anything. I do think that she is the best woman that ever

lived.

So much as I have given of this letter formed but a small portion of

it, but it comprises all that it is necessary that we should know.

Exactly at twelve o'clock on that day Puck the pony appeared, with

Mrs. Robarts and Grace Crawley behind him, Grace having been brought

back as being capable of some service in the house. Nothing that was

confidential, and very little that was loving, could be said at the

moment, because Mr. Crawley was there, waiting to bid Miss Robarts

adieu; and he had not as yet been informed of what was to be the

future fate of his visitor. So they could only press each other's

hands and embrace, which to Lucy was almost a relief; for even to

her sister-in-law she hardly as yet knew how to speak openly on this

subject.

"May God Almighty bless you, Miss Robarts," said Mr. Crawley, as

he stood in his dingy sitting-room ready to lead her out to the

pony-carriage. "You have brought sunshine into this house, even in

the time of sickness, when there was no sunshine; and He will bless

you. You have been the Good Samaritan, binding up the wounds of the

afflicted, pouring in oil and balm. To the mother of my children you

have given life, and to me you have brought light, and comfort, and

good words,--making my spirit glad within me as it had not been

gladdened before. All this hath come of charity, which vaunteth not

itself and is not puffed up. Faith and hope are great and beautiful,

but charity exceedeth them all." And having so spoken, instead of

leading her out, he went away and hid himself. How Puck behaved

himself as Fanny drove him back to Framley, and how those two ladies

in the carriage behaved themselves--of that, perhaps, nothing further

need be said.

CHAPTER XLVII

Nemesis

But in spite of all these joyful tidings it must, alas! be remembered

that Poena, that just but Rhadamanthine goddess, whom we moderns

ordinarily call Punishment, or Nemesis when we wish to speak of her

goddess-ship, very seldom fails to catch a wicked man though she

have sometimes a lame foot of her own, and though the wicked man may

possibly get a start of her. In this instance the wicked man had been

our unfortunate friend Mark Robarts; wicked in that he had wittingly

touched pitch, gone to Gatherum Castle, ridden fast mares across the

country to Cobbold's Ashes, and fallen very imprudently among the

Tozers; and the instrument used by Nemesis was Mr. Tom Towers of the

\_Jupiter\_, than whom, in these our days, there is no deadlier scourge

in the hands of that goddess. In the first instance, however, I must

mention, though I will not relate, a little conversation which took

place between Lady Lufton and Mr. Robarts. That gentleman thought it

right to say a few words more to her ladyship respecting those money

transactions. He could not but feel, he said, that he had received

that prebendal stall from the hands of Mr. Sowerby; and under such

circumstances, considering all that had happened, he could not be

easy in his mind as long as he held it. What he was about to do

would, he was aware, delay considerably his final settlement with

Lord Lufton; but Lufton, he hoped, would pardon that, and agree with

him as to the propriety of what he was about to do.

On the first blush of the thing Lady Lufton did not quite go along

with him. Now that Lord Lufton was to marry the parson's sister it

might be well that the parson should be a dignitary of the Church;

and it might be well, also, that one so nearly connected with her son

should be comfortable in his money matters. There loomed, also, in

the future, some distant possibility of higher clerical honours for a

peer's brother-in-law; and the top rung of the ladder is always more

easily attained when a man has already ascended a step or two. But,

nevertheless, when the matter came to be fully explained to her, when

she saw clearly the circumstances under which the stall had been

conferred, she did agree that it had better be given up. And well

for both of them it was--well for them all at Framley--that this

conclusion had been reached before the scourge of Nemesis had fallen.

Nemesis, of course, declared that her scourge had produced the

resignation; but it was generally understood that this was a false

boast, for all clerical men at Barchester knew that the stall had

been restored to the chapter, or, in other words, into the hands of

the Government, before Tom Towers had twirled the fatal lash above

his head. But the manner of the twirling was as follows:--

It is with difficulty enough [said the article in the

\_Jupiter\_], that the Church of England maintains at the

present moment that ascendancy among the religious sects

of this country which it so loudly claims. And perhaps

it is rather from an old-fashioned and time-honoured

affection for its standing than from any intrinsic merits

of its own that some such general acknowledgement of its

ascendancy is still allowed to prevail. If, however, the

patrons and clerical members of this Church are bold

enough to disregard all general rules of decent behaviour,

we think we may predict that this chivalrous feeling

will be found to give way. From time to time we hear of

instances of such imprudence, and are made to wonder at

the folly of those who are supposed to hold the State

Church in the greatest reverence.

Among those positions of dignified ease to which fortunate

clergymen may be promoted are the stalls of the canons or

prebendaries in our cathedrals. Some of these, as is well

known, carry little or no emolument with them, but some

are rich in the good things of this world. Excellent

family houses are attached to them, with we hardly know

what domestic privileges, and clerical incomes, moreover,

of an amount which, if divided, would make glad the hearts

of many a hard-working clerical slave. Reform has been

busy even among these stalls, attaching some amount of

work to the pay, and paring off some superfluous wealth

from such of them as were over full; but reform has been

lenient with them, acknowledging that it was well to have

some such places of comfortable and dignified retirement

for those who have worn themselves out in the hard work of

their profession. There has of late prevailed a taste for

the appointment of young bishops, produced no doubt by a

feeling that bishops should be men fitted to get through

really hard work; but we have never heard that young

prebendaries were considered desirable. A clergyman

selected for such a position should, we have always

thought, have earned an evening of ease by a long day of

work, and should, above all things, be one whose life

has been, and therefore in human probability will be,

so decorous as to be honourable to the cathedral of his

adoption.

We were, however, the other day given to understand

that one of these luxurious benefices, belonging to the

cathedral of Barchester, had been bestowed on the Rev.

Mark Robarts, the vicar of a neighbouring parish, on the

understanding that he should hold the living and the stall

together; and on making further inquiry we were surprised

to learn that this fortunate gentleman is as yet

considerably under thirty years of age. We were desirous,

however, of believing that his learning, his piety, and

his conduct, might be of a nature to add peculiar grace to

his chapter, and therefore, though almost unwillingly, we

were silent. But now it has come to our ears, and, indeed,

to the ears of all the world, that this piety and conduct

are sadly wanting; and judging of Mr. Robarts by his

life and associates, we are inclined to doubt even the

learning. He has at this moment, or at any rate had but

a few days since, an execution in his parsonage house at

Framley, on the suit of certain most disreputable bill

discounters in London; and probably would have another

execution in his other house in Barchester close, but for

the fact that he has never thought it necessary to go into

residence.

Then followed some very stringent, and, no doubt, much needed advice

to those clerical members of the Church of England who are supposed

to be mainly responsible for the conduct of their brethren; and the

article ended as follows:--

Many of these stalls are in the gift of the respective

deans and chapters, and in such cases the dean and

chapters are bound to see that proper persons are

appointed; but in other instances the power of selection

is vested in the Crown, and then an equal responsibility

rests on the Government of the day. Mr. Robarts, we learn,

was appointed to the stall in Barchester by the late Prime

Minister, and we really think that a grave censure rests

on him for the manner in which his patronage has been

exercised. It may be impossible that he should himself in

all such cases satisfy himself by personal inquiry. But

our Government is altogether conducted on the footing of

vicarial responsibility. \_Quod facit per alium, facit per

se\_, is in a special manner true of our ministers, and

any man who rises to high position among them must abide

by the danger thereby incurred. In this peculiar case

we are informed that the recommendation was made by a

very recently admitted member of the Cabinet, to whose

appointment we alluded at the time as a great mistake. The

gentleman in question held no high individual office of

his own; but evil such as this which has now been done at

Barchester, is exactly the sort of mischief which follows

the exaltation of unfit men to high positions, even though

no great scope for executive failure may be placed within

their reach.

If Mr. Robarts will allow us to tender to him our advice

he will lose no time in going through such ceremony as may

be necessary again to place the stall at the disposal of

the Crown!

I may here observe that poor Harold Smith, when he read this,

writhing in agony, declared it to be the handiwork of his hated

enemy, Mr. Supplehouse. He knew the mark; so, at least, he said; but

I myself am inclined to believe that his animosity misled him. I

think that one greater than Mr. Supplehouse had taken upon himself

the punishment of our poor vicar. This was very dreadful to them all

at Framley, and, when first read, seemed to crush them to atoms. Poor

Mrs. Robarts, when she heard it, seemed to think that for them the

world was over. An attempt had been made to keep it from her, but

such attempts always fail, as did this. The article was copied into

all the good-natured local newspapers, and she soon discovered that

something was being hidden. At last it was shown to her by her

husband, and then for a few hours she was annihilated; for a few days

she was unwilling to show herself; and for a few weeks she was very

sad. But after that the world seemed to go on much as it had done

before; the sun shone upon them as warmly as though the article had

not been written; and not only the sun of heaven, which, as a rule,

is not limited in his shining by any display of pagan thunder, but

also the genial sun of their own sphere, the warmth and light of

which were so essentially necessary to their happiness. Neighbouring

rectors did not look glum, nor did the rectors' wives refuse to call.

The people in the shops at Barchester did not regard her as though

she were a disgraced woman, though it must be acknowledged that Mrs.

Proudie passed her in the close with the coldest nod of recognition.

On Mrs. Proudie's mind alone did the article seem to have any

enduring effect. In one respect it was, perhaps, beneficial; Lady

Lufton was at once induced by it to make common cause with her own

clergyman, and thus the remembrance of Mr. Robarts's sins passed away

the quicker from the minds of the whole Framley Court household. And,

indeed, the county at large was not able to give to the matter that

undivided attention which would have been considered its due at

periods of no more than ordinary interest. At the present moment

preparations were being made for a general election, and although no

contest was to take place in the eastern division, a very violent

fight was being carried on in the west; and the circumstances of

that fight were so exciting that Mr. Robarts and his article were

forgotten before their time. An edict had gone forth from Gatherum

Castle directing that Mr. Sowerby should be turned out, and an

answering note of defiance had been sounded from Chaldicotes,

protesting on behalf of Mr. Sowerby, that the duke's behest would

not be obeyed.

There are two classes of persons in this realm who are

constitutionally inefficient to take any part in returning members

to Parliament--peers, namely, and women; and yet it was soon known

through the whole length and breadth of the county that the present

electioneering fight was being carried on between a peer and a

woman. Miss Dunstable had been declared the purchaser of the Chace

of Chaldicotes, as it were, just in the very nick of time; which

purchase--so men in Barsetshire declared, not knowing anything of the

facts--would have gone altogether the other way, had not the giants

obtained temporary supremacy over the gods. The duke was a supporter

of the gods, and therefore, so Mr. Fothergill hinted, his money had

been refused. Miss Dunstable was prepared to beard this ducal friend

of the gods in his own county, and therefore her money had been

taken. I am inclined, however, to think that Mr. Fothergill knew

nothing about it, and to opine that Miss Dunstable, in her eagerness

for victory, offered to the Crown more money than the property was

worth in the duke's opinion, and that the Crown took advantage of her

anxiety, to the manifest profit of the public at large. And it soon

became known also that Miss Dunstable was, in fact, the proprietor

of the whole Chaldicotes estate, and that in promoting the success

of Mr. Sowerby as a candidate for the county, she was standing by

her own tenant. It also became known, in the course of the battle,

that Miss Dunstable had herself at last succumbed, and that she

was about to marry Dr. Thorne of Greshamsbury, or the "Greshamsbury

apothecary," as the adverse party now delighted to call him. "He has

been little better than a quack all his life," said Dr. Fillgrave,

the eminent physician of Barchester, "and now he is going to marry a

quack's daughter." By which, and the like to which, Dr. Thorne did

not allow himself to be much annoyed. But all this gave rise to a

very pretty series of squibs arranged between Mr. Fothergill and Mr.

Closerstill, the electioneering agent. Mr. Sowerby was named "the

lady's pet," and descriptions were given of the lady who kept

this pet, which were by no means flattering to Miss Dunstable's

appearance, or manners, or age. And then the western division of

the county was asked in a grave tone--as counties and boroughs

are asked by means of advertisements stuck up on blind walls and

barn doors--whether it was fitting and proper that it should be

represented by a woman. Upon which the county was again asked whether

it was fitting and proper that it should be represented by a duke.

And then the question became more personal as against Miss Dunstable,

and inquiry was urged whether the county would not be indelibly

disgraced if it were not only handed over to a woman, but handed over

to a woman who sold the oil of Lebanon. But little was got by this

move, for an answering placard explained to the unfortunate county

how deep would be its shame if it allowed itself to become the

appanage of any peer, but more especially of a peer who was known to

be the most immoral lord that ever disgraced the benches of the Upper

House. And so the battle went on very prettily, and, as money was

allowed to flow freely, the West Barsetshire world at large was not

ill satisfied. It is wonderful how much disgrace of that kind a

borough or county can endure without flinching; and wonderful, also,

seeing how supreme is the value attached to the Constitution by the

realm at large, how very little the principles of that Constitution

are valued by the people in detail. The duke, of course, did not show

himself. He rarely did on any occasion, and never on such occasions

as this; but Mr. Fothergill was to be seen everywhere. Miss

Dunstable, also, did not hide her light under a bushel; though I here

declare, on the faith of an historian, that the rumour spread abroad

of her having made a speech to the electors from the top of the porch

over the hotel door at Courcy was not founded on fact. No doubt she

was at Courcy, and her carriage stopped at the hotel; but neither

there nor elsewhere did she make any public exhibition. "They must

have mistaken me for Mrs. Proudie," she said, when the rumour reached

her ears. But there was, alas! one great element of failure on Miss

Dunstable's side of the battle. Mr. Sowerby himself could not be

induced to fight it as became a man. Any positive injunctions that

were laid upon him he did, in a sort, obey. It had been a part of the

bargain that he should stand the contest, and from that bargain he

could not well go back; but he had not the spirit left to him for any

true fighting on his own part. He could not go up on the hustings,

and there defy the duke. Early in the affair Mr. Fothergill

challenged him to do so, and Mr. Sowerby never took up the gauntlet.

"We have heard," said Mr. Fothergill, in that great speech which he

made at the Omnium Arms at Silverbridge--"we have heard much during

this election of the Duke of Omnium, and of the injuries which he is

supposed to have inflicted on one of the candidates. The duke's name

is very frequent in the mouths of the gentlemen--and of the lady--who

support Mr. Sowerby's claims. But I do not think that Mr. Sowerby

himself has dared to say much about the duke. I defy Mr. Sowerby to

mention the duke's name upon the hustings." And it so happened that

Mr. Sowerby never did mention the duke's name.

It is ill fighting when the spirit is gone, and Mr. Sowerby's spirit

for such things was now well nigh broken. It is true that he had

escaped from the net in which the duke, by Mr. Fothergill's aid,

had entangled him; but he had only broken out of one captivity into

another. Money is a serious thing; and when gone cannot be had back

by a shuffle in the game, or a fortunate blow with the battledore, as

may political power, or reputation, or fashion. One hundred thousand

pounds gone, must remain as gone, let the person who claims to have

had the honour of advancing it be Mrs. B. or my Lord C. No lucky

dodge can erase such a claim from the things that be--unless, indeed,

such dodge be possible as Mr. Sowerby tried with Miss Dunstable. It

was better for him, undoubtedly, to have the lady for a creditor than

the duke, seeing that it was possible for him to live as a tenant in

his own old house under the lady's reign. But this he found to be a

sad enough life, after all that was come and gone.

The election on Miss Dunstable's part was lost. She carried on the

contest nobly, fighting it to the last moment, and sparing neither

her own money nor that of her antagonist; but she carried it on

unsuccessfully. Many gentlemen did support Mr. Sowerby because

they were willing enough to emancipate their county from the

duke's thraldom; but Mr. Sowerby was felt to be a black sheep,

as Lady Lufton had called him, and at the close of the election

he found himself banished from the representation of West

Barsetshire;--banished for ever, after having held the county for

five-and-twenty years. Unfortunate Mr. Sowerby! I cannot take leave

of him here without some feeling of regret, knowing that there was

that within him which might, under better guidance, have produced

better things. There are men, even of high birth, who seem as though

they were born to be rogues; but Mr. Sowerby was, to my thinking,

born to be a gentleman. That he had not been a gentleman--that he had

bolted from his appointed course, going terribly on the wrong side

of the posts--let us all acknowledge. It is not a gentleman-like

deed, but a very blackguard action, to obtain a friend's acceptance

to a bill in an unguarded hour of social intercourse. That and

other similar doings have stamped his character too plainly. But,

nevertheless, I claim a tear for Mr. Sowerby, and lament that he has

failed to run his race discreetly, in accordance with the rules of

the Jockey Club, He attempted that plan of living as a tenant in his

old house at Chaldicotes, and of making a living out of the land

which he farmed; but he soon abandoned it. He had no aptitude for

such industry, and could not endure his altered position in the

county. He soon relinquished Chaldicotes of his own accord, and

has vanished away, as such men do vanish--not altogether without

necessary income; to which point in the final arrangement of their

joint affairs, Mrs. Thornes's man of business--if I may be allowed so

far to anticipate--paid special attention. And thus Lord Dumbello,

the duke's nominee, got in, as the duke's nominee had done for

very many years past. There was no Nemesis here--none as yet.

Nevertheless, she with the lame foot will assuredly catch him, the

duke, if it be that he deserve to be caught. With us his grace's

appearance has been so unfrequent that I think we may omit to make

any further inquiry as to his concerns.

One point, however, is worthy of notice, as showing the good sense

with which we manage our affairs here in England. In an early portion

of this story the reader was introduced to the interior of Gatherum

Castle, and there saw Miss Dunstable entertained by the duke in the

most friendly manner. Since those days the lady has become the duke's

neighbour, and has waged a war with him, which he probably felt to

be very vexatious. But, nevertheless, on the next great occasion at

Gatherum Castle, Doctor and Mrs. Thorne were among the visitors, and

to no one was the duke more personally courteous than to his opulent

neighbour, the late Miss Dunstable.

CHAPTER XLVIII

How They Were All Married, Had Two Children, and Lived Happy Ever

After

Dear, affectionate, sympathetic readers, we have four couple of

sighing lovers with whom to deal in this our last chapter, and I, as

leader of the chorus, disdain to press you further with doubts as to

the happiness of any of that quadrille. They were all made happy,

in spite of that little episode which so lately took place at

Barchester; and in telling of their happiness--shortly, as is now

necessary--we will take them chronologically, giving precedence to

those who first appeared at the hymeneal altar. In July, then, at

the cathedral, by the father of the bride, assisted by his examining

chaplain, Olivia Proudie, the eldest daughter of the Bishop of

Barchester, was joined in marriage to the Rev. Tobias Tickler,

incumbent of the Trinity district church in Bethnal Green. Of the

bridegroom in this instance, our acquaintance has been so short, that

it is not, perhaps, necessary to say much. When coming to the wedding

he proposed to bring his three darling children with him; but in this

measure he was, I think prudently, stopped by advice, rather strongly

worded, from his future valued mother-in-law. Mr. Tickler was not

an opulent man, nor had he hitherto attained any great fame in his

profession; but, at the age of forty-three he still had sufficient

opportunity before him, and now that his merit has been properly

viewed by high ecclesiastical eyes the refreshing dew of deserved

promotion will no doubt fall upon him. The marriage was very smart,

and Olivia carried herself through the trying ordeal with an

excellent propriety of conduct. Up to that time, and even for a few

days longer, there was doubt at Barchester as to that strange journey

which Lord Dumbello undoubtedly did take to France. When a man so

circumstanced will suddenly go to Paris, without notice given even to

his future bride, people must doubt; and grave were the apprehensions

expressed on this occasion by Mrs. Proudie, even at her child's

wedding breakfast. "God bless you, my dear children," she said,

standing up at the head of her table as she addressed Mr. Tickler and

his wife; "when I see your perfect happiness--perfect, that is, as

far as human happiness can be made perfect in this vale of tears--and

think of the terrible calamity which has fallen on our unfortunate

neighbours, I cannot but acknowledge His infinite mercy and goodness.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." By which she intended,

no doubt, to signify that whereas Mr. Tickler had been given to her

Olivia, Lord Dumbello had been taken away from the archdeacon's

Griselda. The happy couple then went in Mrs. Proudie's carriage

to the nearest railway station but one, and from thence proceeded

to Malvern, and there spent the honeymoon. And a great comfort it

was, I am sure, to Mrs. Proudie when authenticated tidings reached

Barchester that Lord Dumbello had returned from Paris, and that the

Hartletop-Grantly alliance was to be carried to its completion. She

still, however, held her opinion--whether correctly or not who shall

say?--that the young lord had intended to escape. "The archdeacon has

shown great firmness in the way in which he has done it," said Mrs.

Proudie; "but whether he has consulted his child's best interests

in forcing her into a marriage with an unwilling husband, I for one

must take leave to doubt. But then, unfortunately, we all know how

completely the archdeacon is devoted to worldly matters."

In this instance the archdeacon's devotion to worldly matters was

rewarded by that success which he no doubt desired. He did go up

to London, and did see one or two of Lord Dumbello's friends. This

he did, not obtrusively, as though in fear of any falsehood or

vacillation on the part of the viscount, but with that discretion

and tact for which he has been so long noted. Mrs. Proudie declares

that during the few days of his absence from Barsetshire he himself

crossed to France and hunted down Lord Dumbello at Paris. As to this

I am not prepared to say anything; but I am quite sure, as will be

all those who knew the archdeacon, that he was not a man to see his

daughter wronged as long as any measure remained by which such wrong

might be avoided. But, be that as it may--that mooted question as to

the archdeacon's journey to Paris--Lord Dumbello was forthcoming at

Plumstead on the 5th of August, and went through his work like a man.

The Hartletop family, when the alliance was found to be unavoidable,

endeavoured to arrange that the wedding should be held at Hartletop

Priory, in order that the clerical dust and dinginess of Barchester

Close might not soil the splendour of the marriage gala doings; for,

to tell the truth, the Hartletopians, as a rule, were not proud of

their new clerical connexions. But on this subject Mrs. Grantly

was very properly inexorable; nor when an attempt was made on the

bride to induce her to throw over her mamma at the last moment and

pronounce for herself that she would be married at the priory, was

it attended with any success. The Hartletopians knew nothing of the

Grantly fibre and calibre, or they would have made no such attempt.

The marriage took place at Plumstead, and on the morning of the

day Lord Dumbello posted over from Barchester to the rectory. The

ceremony was performed by the archdeacon, without assistance,

although the dean, and the precentor, and two other clergymen, were

at the ceremony. Griselda's propriety of conduct was quite equal to

that of Olivia Proudie; indeed, nothing could exceed the statuesque

grace and fine aristocratic bearing with which she carried herself

on the occasion. The three or four words which the service required

of her she said with ease and dignity; there was neither sobbing

nor crying to disturb the work or embarrass her friends, and she

signed her name in the church books as "Griselda Grantly" without a

tremor--and without a regret.

Mrs. Grantly kissed her and blessed her in the hall as she was about

to step forward to her travelling carriage leaning on her father's

arm, and the child put up her face to her mother for a last whisper.

"Mamma," she said, "I suppose Jane can put her hand at once on the

moire antique when we reach Dover?" Mrs. Grantly smiled and nodded,

and again blessed her child. There was not a tear shed--at least, not

then--nor a sign of sorrow to cloud for a moment the gay splendour

of the day. But the mother did bethink herself, in the solitude of

her own room, of those last words, and did acknowledge a lack of

something for which her heart had sighed. She had boasted to her

sister that she had nothing to regret as to her daughter's education;

but now, when she was alone after her success, did she feel that she

could still support herself with that boast? For, be it known, Mrs.

Grantly had a heart within her bosom and a faith within her heart.

The world, it is true, had pressed upon her sorely with all its

weight of accumulated clerical wealth, but it had not utterly crushed

her--not her, but only her child. For the sins of the father, are

they not visited on the third and fourth generation? But if any such

feeling of remorse did for awhile mar the fullness of Mrs. Grantly's

joy, it was soon dispelled by the perfect success of her daughter's

married life. At the end of the autumn the bride and bridegroom

returned from their tour, and it was evident to all the circle at

Hartletop Priory that Lord Dumbello was by no means dissatisfied with

his bargain. His wife had been admired everywhere to the top of his

bent. All the world at Ems, and Baden, and at Nice, had been stricken

by the stately beauty of the young viscountess. And then, too, her

manner, style, and high dignity of demeanour altogether supported

the reverential feeling which her grace and form at first inspired.

She never derogated from her husband's honour by the fictitious

liveliness of gossip, or allowed any one to forget the peeress in the

woman. Lord Dumbello soon found that his reputation for discretion

was quite safe in her hands, and that there were no lessons as to

conduct in which it was necessary that he should give instruction.

Before the winter was over she had equally won the hearts of all

the circle at Hartletop Priory. The duke was there and declared to

the marchioness that Dumbello could not possibly have done better.

"Indeed, I do not think he could," said the happy mother. "She sees

all that she ought to see, and nothing that she ought not."

And then, in London, when the season came, all men sang all manner

of praises in her favour, and Lord Dumbello was made aware that he

was reckoned among the wisest of his age. He had married a wife who

managed everything for him, who never troubled him, whom no woman

disliked, and whom every man admired. As for feast of reason and

for flow of soul, is it not a question whether any such flows and

feasts are necessary between a man and his wife? How many men can

truly assert that they ever enjoy connubial flows of soul; or that

connubial feasts of reason are in their nature enjoyable? But a

handsome woman at the head of your table, who knows how to dress, and

how to sit, and how to get in and out of her carriage--who will not

disgrace her lord by her ignorance, or fret him by her coquetry, or

disparage him by her talent--how beautiful a thing it is! For my own

part I think that Griselda Grantly was born to be the wife of a great

English peer.

"After all, then," said Miss Dunstable, speaking of Lady

Dumbello--she was Mrs. Thorne at this time--"after all, there is some

truth in what our quaint latter-day philosopher tells us--'Great are

thy powers, O Silence!'" The marriage of our old friends, Dr. Thorne

and Miss Dunstable, was the third on the list, but that did not

take place till the latter end of September. The lawyers on such

an occasion had no inconsiderable work to accomplish, and though

the lady was not coy, nor the gentleman slow, it was not found

practicable to arrange an earlier wedding. The ceremony was performed

at St. George's, Hanover Square, and was not brilliant in any special

degree. London at the time was empty, and the few persons whose

presence was actually necessary were imported from the country for

the occasion. The bride was given away by Dr. Easyman, and the

two bridesmaids ware ladies who had lived with Miss Dunstable as

companions. Young Mr. Gresham and his wife were there, as was also

Mrs. Harold Smith, who was not at all prepared to drop her old friend

in her new sphere of life. "We shall call her Mrs. Thorne instead of

Miss Dunstable, and I really think that will be all the difference,"

said Mrs. Harold Smith. To Mrs. Harold Smith that probably was all

the difference, but it was not so to the persons most concerned.

According to the plan of life arranged between the doctor and his

wife she was still to keep up her house in London, remaining there

during such period of the season as she might choose, and receiving

him when it might appear good to him to visit her; but he was to be

the master in the country. A mansion at the Chace was to be built,

and till such time as that was completed, they would keep on the old

house at Greshamsbury. Into this, small as it was, Mrs. Thorne,--in

spite of her great wealth,--did not disdain to enter. But subsequent

circumstances changed their plans. It was found that Mr. Sowerby

could not or would not live at Chaldicotes; and, therefore, in the

second year of their marriage, that place was prepared for them.

They are now well known to the whole county as Dr. and Mrs. Thorne

of Chaldicotes,--of Chaldicotes, in distinction to the well-known

Thornes of Ullathorne in the eastern division. Here they live

respected by their neighbours, and on terms of alliance both with

the Duke of Omnium and with Lady Lufton. "Of course those dear old

avenues will be very sad to me," said Mrs. Harold Smith, when at the

end of a London season she was invited down to Chaldicotes; and as

she spoke she put her handkerchief up to her eyes.

"Well, dear, what can I do?" said Mrs. Thorne. "I can't cut them

down; the doctor would not let me."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Harold Smith, sighing; and in spite of her

feeling she did visit Chaldicotes.

But it was October before Lord Lufton was made a happy man;--that

is, if the fruition of his happiness was a greater joy than the

anticipation of it. I will not say that the happiness of marriage is

like the Dead Sea fruit--an apple which, when eaten, turns to bitter

ashes in the mouth. Such pretended sarcasm would be very false.

Nevertheless, is it not the fact that the sweetest morsel of love's

feast has been eaten, that the freshest, fairest blush of the flower

has been snatched and has passed away, when the ceremony at the altar

has been performed, and legal possession has been given? There is an

aroma of love, an undefinable delicacy of flavour, which escapes and

is gone before the church portal is left, vanishing with the maiden

name, and incompatible with the solid comfort appertaining to the

rank of wife. To love one's own spouse, and to be loved by her, is

the ordinary lot of man, and is a duty exacted under penalties. But

to be allowed to love youth and beauty that is not one's own--to know

that one is loved by a soft being who still hangs cowering from the

eye of the world as though her love were all but illicit--can it be

that a man is made happy when a state of anticipation such as this is

brought to a close? No; when the husband walks back from the altar,

he has already swallowed the choicest dainties of his banquet. The

beef and pudding of married life are then in store for him;--or

perhaps only the bread and cheese. Let him take care lest hardly a

crust remain--or perhaps not a crust. But before we finish, let us go

back for one moment to the dainties--to the time before the beef and

pudding were served--while Lucy was still at the parsonage, and Lord

Lufton still staying at Framley Court. He had come up one morning, as

was now frequently his wont, and, after a few minutes' conversation,

Mrs. Robarts had left the room--as not unfrequently on such occasions

was her wont. Lucy was working and continued her work, and Lord

Lufton for a moment or two sat looking at her; then he got up

abruptly, and, standing before her, thus questioned her:--

"Lucy," said he.

"Well, what of Lucy now? Any particular fault this morning?"

"Yes, a most particular fault. When I asked you, here, in this room,

on this very spot, whether it was possible that you should love

me--why did you say that it was impossible?"

Lucy, instead of answering at the moment, looked down upon the

carpet, to see if his memory were as good as hers. Yes; he was

standing on the exact spot where he had stood before. No spot in all

the world was more frequently clear before her own eyes.

"Do you remember that day, Lucy?" he said again.

"Yes, I remember it," she said.

"Why did you say it was impossible?

"Did I say impossible?" She knew that she had said so. She remembered

how she had waited till he had gone, and that then, going to her own

room, she had reproached herself with the cowardice of the falsehood.

She had lied to him then; and now--how was she punished for it?

"Well, I suppose it was possible," she said.

"But why did you say so when you knew it would make me so miserable?"

"Miserable! nay, but you went away happy enough! I thought I had

never seen you look better satisfied."

"Lucy!"

"You had done your duty, and had had such a lucky escape! What

astonishes me is that you should have ever come back again. But the

pitcher may go to the well once too often, Lord Lufton."

"But will you tell me the truth now?"

"What truth?"

"That day, when I came to you--did you love me at all then?"

"We'll let bygones be bygones, if you please."

"But I swear you shall tell me. It was such a cruel thing to answer

me as you did, unless you meant it. And yet you never saw me again

till after my mother had been over for you to Mrs. Crawley's."

"It was absence that made me--care for you."

"Lucy, I swear I believe you loved me then."

"Ludovic, some conjurer must have told you that." She was standing

as she spoke, and, laughing at him, she held up her hands and shook

her head. But she was now in his power, and he had his revenge--his

revenge for her past falsehood and her present joke. How could he be

more happy when he was made happy by having her all his own, than

he was now? And in these days there again came up that petition as

to her riding--with very different result now than on that former

occasion. There were ever so many objections, then. There was no

habit, and Lucy was--or said that she was--afraid; and then, what

would Lady Lufton say? But now Lady Lufton thought it would be quite

right; only were they quite sure about the horse? Was Ludovic certain

that the horse had been ridden by a lady? And Lady Meredith's habits

were dragged out as a matter of course, and one of them chipped and

snipped and altered, without any compunction. And as for fear, there

could be no bolder horsewoman than Lucy Robarts. It was quite clear

to all Framley that riding was the very thing for her. "But I never

shall be happy, Ludovic, till you have got a horse properly suited

for her," said Lady Lufton. And then, also, came the affair of her

wedding garments, of her \_trousseau\_--as to which I cannot boast

that she showed capacity or steadiness at all equal to that of Lady

Dumbello. Lady Lufton, however, thought it a very serious matter; and

as, in her opinion, Mrs. Robarts did not go about it with sufficient

energy, she took the matter mainly into her own hands, striking Lucy

dumb by her frowns and nods, deciding on everything herself, down to

the very tags of the boot-ties.

"My dear, you really must allow me to know what I am about;" and

Lady Lufton patted her on the arm as she spoke. "I did it all for

Justinia, and she never had reason to regret a single thing that I

bought. If you'll ask her, she'll tell you so." Lucy did not ask

her future sister-in-law, seeing that she had no doubt whatever

as to her future mother-in-law's judgement on the articles in

question. Only the money! And what could she want with six dozen

pocket-handkerchiefs all at once? There was no question of Lord

Lufton's going out as Governor-General to India! But twelve

dozen pocket-handkerchiefs had not been too many for Griselda's

imagination. And Lucy would sit alone in the drawing-room at Framley

Court, filling her heart with thoughts of that evening when she had

first sat there. She had then resolved, painfully, with inward tears,

with groanings of her spirit, that she was wrongly placed in being

in that company. Griselda Grantly had been there, quite at her ease,

petted by Lady Lufton, admired by Lord Lufton; while she had retired

out of sight, sore at heart, because she felt herself to be no fit

companion to those around her. Then he had come to her, making

matters almost worse by talking to her, bringing the tears into

her eyes by his good-nature, but still wounding her by the feeling

that she could not speak to him at her ease. But things were at a

different pass with her now. He had chosen her--her out of all the

world, and brought her there to share with him his own home, his own

honours, and all that he had to give. She was the apple of his eye,

and the pride of his heart. And the stern mother, of whom she had

stood so much in awe, who at first had passed her by as a thing

not to be noticed, and had then sent out to her that she might be

warned to keep herself aloof, now hardly knew in what way she might

sufficiently show her love, regard, and solicitude.

I must not say that Lucy was not proud in these moments--that her

heart was not elated at these thoughts. Success does beget pride, as

failure begets shame. But her pride was of that sort which is in no

way disgraceful to either man or woman, and was accompanied by pure

true love, and a full resolution to do her duty in that state of life

to which it had pleased her God to call her. She did rejoice greatly

to think that she had been chosen, and not Griselda. Was it possible

that having loved she should not so rejoice, or that, rejoicing, she

should not be proud of her love? They spent the whole winter abroad,

leaving the dowager Lady Lufton to her plans and preparations for

their reception at Framley Court; and in the following spring they

appeared in London, and there set up their staff. Lucy had some inner

tremblings of the spirit, and quiverings about the heart, at thus

beginning her duty before the great world, but she said little or

nothing to her husband on the matter. Other women had done as much

before her time, and by courage had gone through with it. It would be

dreadful enough, that position in her own house with lords and ladies

bowing to her, and stiff members of Parliament for whom it would

be necessary to make small talk; but, nevertheless, it was to be

endured. The time came, and she did endure it. The time came, and

before the first six weeks were over she found that it was easy

enough. The lords and ladies got into their proper places and talked

to her about ordinary matters in a way that made no effort necessary,

and the members of Parliament were hardly more stiff than the

clergymen she had known in the neighbourhood of Framley. She had not

been long in town before she met Lady Dumbello. At this interview

also she had to overcome some little inward emotion. On the few

occasions on which she had met Griselda Grantly at Framley they had

not much progressed in friendship, and Lucy had felt that she had

been despised by the rich beauty. She also in her turn had disliked,

if she had not despised, her rival. But how would it be now? Lady

Dumbello could hardly despise her, and yet it did not seem possible

that they should meet as friends. They did meet, and Lucy came

forward with a pretty eagerness to give her hand to Lady Lufton's

late favourite. Lady Dumbello smiled slightly--the same old smile

which had come across her face when they two had been first

introduced in the Framley drawing-room; the same smile without the

variation of a line,--took the offered hand, muttered a word or

two, and then receded. It was exactly as she had done before. She

had never despised Lucy Robarts. She had accorded to the parson's

sister the amount of cordiality with which she usually received her

acquaintance; and now she could do no more for the peer's wife. Lady

Dumbello and Lady Lufton have known each other ever since, and have

occasionally visited at each other's houses, but the intimacy between

them has never gone beyond this.

The dowager came up to town for about a month, and while there was

contented to fill a second place. She had no desire to be the great

lady in London. But then came the trying period when they commenced

their life together at Framley Court. The elder lady formally

renounced her place at the top of the table,--formally persisted in

renouncing it though Lucy with tears implored her to resume it. She

said also, with equal formality--repeating her determination over and

over again to Mrs. Robarts with great energy,--that she would in no

respect detract by interference of her own from the authority of the

proper mistress of the house; but, nevertheless, it is well known to

every one at Framley that old Lady Lufton still reigns paramount in

the parish.

"Yes, my dear; the big room looking into the little garden to the

south was always the nursery; and if you ask my advice, it will still

remain so. But, of course, any room you please--"

And the big room looking into the little garden to the south is still

the nursery at Framley Court.