

The American Senator

Vol. I

The American Senator

Vol. I

by

Anthony Trollope

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

classic texts



The American Senator Vol. I, by Anthony Trollope

This book in its current typographical format first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The copyright in this publication is in the public domain

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-84718-666-1, ISBN (13): 9781847186669

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER I. Dillsborough | 1 |
| CHAPTER II. The Morton Family | 7 |
| CHAPTER III. The Masters Family | 12 |
| CHAPTER IV. The Dillsborough Club | 18 |
| CHAPTER V. Reginald Morton | 23 |
| CHAPTER VI. Not in Love | 29 |
| CHAPTER VII. The Walk Home | 35 |
| CHAPTER VIII. The Paragon's Party at Bragton | 40 |
| CHAPTER IX. The Old Kennels | 46 |
| CHAPTER X. Goarly's Revenge | 52 |
| CHAPTER XI. From Impington Gorse | 59 |
| CHAPTER XII. Arabella Trefoil | 65 |
| CHAPTER XIII. At Bragton | 71 |
| CHAPTER XIV. The Dillsborough Feud | 77 |
| CHAPTER XV. A Fit Companion,—for Me and my Sisters | 83 |
| CHAPTER XVI. Mr. Gotobed's Philanthropy | 88 |
| CHAPTER XVII. Lord Rufford's Invitation | 95 |
| CHAPTER XVIII. The Attorney's Family is Disturbed | 101 |
| CHAPTER XIX. "Who Valued the Geese?" | 108 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER XX. There are Convenances | 114 |
| CHAPTER XXI. The First Evening at Rufford Hall | 119 |
| CHAPTER XXII. Jemima | 125 |
| CHAPTER XXIII. Poor Caneback | 131 |
| CHAPTER XXIV. The Ball | 136 |
| CHAPTER XXV. The Last Morning at Rufford Hall | 143 |
| CHAPTER XXVI. Give Me Six Months | 150 |
| CHAPTER XXVII. "Wonderful Bird!" | 156 |

CHAPTER I. Dillsborough

I never could understand why anybody should ever have begun to live at Dillsborough, or why the population there should have been at any time recruited by new comers. That a man with a family should cling to a house in which he has once established himself is intelligible. The butcher who supplied Dillsborough, or the baker, or the ironmonger, though he might not drive what is called a roaring trade, nevertheless found himself probably able to live, and might well hesitate before he would encounter the dangers of a more energetic locality. But how it came to pass that he first got himself to Dillsborough, or his father, or his grandfather before him, has always been a mystery to me. The town has no attractions, and never had any. It does not stand on a bed of coal and has no connection with iron. It has no water peculiarly adapted for beer, or for dyeing, or for the cure of maladies. It is not surrounded by beauty of scenery strong enough to bring tourists and holiday travellers. There is no cathedral there to form, with its bishops, prebendaries, and minor canons, the nucleus of a clerical circle. It manufactures nothing specially. It has no great horse fair, or cattle fair, or even pig market of special notoriety. Every Saturday farmers and graziers and buyers of corn and sheep do congregate in a sleepy fashion about the streets, but Dillsborough has no character of its own, even as a market town. Its chief glory is its parish church, which is ancient and inconvenient, having not as yet received any of those modern improvements which have of late become common throughout England; but its parish church, though remarkable, is hardly celebrated. The town consists chiefly of one street which is over a mile long, with a square or market-place in the middle, round which a few lanes with queer old names are congregated, and a second small open space among these lanes, in which the church stands. As you pass along the street north-west, away from the railway station and from London, there is a steep hill, beginning to rise just beyond the market-place. Up to that point it is the High Street, thence it is called Bullock's Hill. Beyond that you come to Norrington Road,—Norrington being the next town, distant from Dillsborough about twelve miles. Dillsborough, however, stands in the county of Rufford, whereas at the top of Bullock's Hill you enter the county of Ufford, of which Norrington is the assize town. The Dillsborough people are therefore divided, some two thousand five hundred of them belonging to Rufford, and the remaining five hundred to the neighbouring county. This accident has given rise to not a few feuds, Ufford being a large county, with pottery, and ribbons, and watches going on in the farther confines; whereas Rufford is small and thoroughly agricultural. The men at the top of Bullock's Hill are therefore

disposed to think themselves better than their fellow-townsmen, though they are small in number and not specially thriving in their circumstances.

At every interval of ten years, when the census is taken, the population of Dillsborough is always found to have fallen off in some slight degree. For a few months after the publication of the figures a slight tinge of melancholy comes upon the town. The landlord of the "Bush Inn," who is really an enterprising man in his way and who has looked about in every direction for new sources of business, becomes taciturn for a while and forgets to smile upon comers; Mr. Ribbs, the butcher, tells his wife that it is out of the question that she and the children should take that long-talked-of journey to the sea-coast; and Mr. Gregory Masters, the well-known old-established attorney of Dillsborough, whispers to some confidential friend that he might as well take down his plate and shut up his house. But in a month or two all that is forgotten, and new hopes spring up even in Dillsborough; Mr. Runciman at the Bush is putting up new stables for hunting-horses, that being the special trade for which he now finds that there is an opening; Mrs. Ribbs is again allowed to suggest Mare-Slocumb; and Mr. Masters goes on as he has done for the last forty years, making the best he can of a decreasing business.

Dillsborough is built chiefly of brick, and is, in its own way, solid enough. The Bush, which in the time of the present landlord's father was one of the best posting inns on the road, is not only substantial, but almost handsome. A broad coach way, cut through the middle of the house, leads into a spacious, well-kept, clean yard, and on each side of the coach way there are bay windows looking into the street,—the one belonging to the commercial parlour, and the other to the so-called coffee-room. But the coffee-room has in truth fallen away from its former purposes, and is now used for a farmer's ordinary on market days, and other similar purposes. Travellers who require the use of a public sitting-room must all congregate in the commercial parlour at the Bush. So far the interior of the house has fallen from its past greatness. But the exterior is maintained with much care. The brickwork up to the eaves is well pointed, fresh, and comfortable to look at. In front of the carriage-way swings on two massive supports the old sign of the Bush, as to which it may be doubted whether even Mr. Runciman himself knows that it has swung there, or been displayed in some fashion, since it was the custom for the landlord to beat up wine to freshen it before it was given to the customers to drink. The church, too, is of brick—though the tower and chancel are of stone. The attorney's house is of brick, which shall not be more particularly described now as many of the scenes which these pages will have to describe were acted there; and almost the entire High Street in the centre of the town was brick also.

But the most remarkable house in Dillsborough was one standing in a short thoroughfare called Hobbs Gate, leading down by the side of the "Bush Inn" from

the market-place to Church Square, as it is called. As you pass down towards the church this house is on the right hand, and it occupies with its garden the whole space between the market-place and Church Square. But though the house enjoys the privilege of a large garden,—so large that the land being in the middle of a town would be of great value were it not that Dillsborough is in its decadence,—still it stands flush up to the street upon which the front door opens. It has an imposing flight of stone steps guarded by iron rails leading up to it, and on each side of the door there is a row of three windows, and on the two upper stories rows of seven windows. Over the door there is a covering, on which there are grotesquely-formed, carved wooden faces; and over the centre of each window, let into the brickwork, is a carved stone. There are also numerous underground windows, sunk below the earth and protected by iron railings. Altogether the house is one which cannot fail to attract attention; and in the brickwork is clearly marked the date, 1701,—not the very best period for English architecture as regards beauty, but one in which walls and roofs, ceilings and buttresses, were built more substantially than they are to-day. This was the only house in Dillsborough which had a name of its own, and it was called Hoppet Hall, the Dillsborough chronicles telling that it had been originally built for and inhabited by the Hoppet family. The only Hoppet now left in Dillsborough is old Joe Hoppet, the ostler at the Bush; and the house, as was well known, had belonged to some member of the Morton family for the last hundred years at least. The garden and ground it stands upon comprise three acres, all of which are surrounded by a high brick wall, which is supposed to be coeval with the house. The best Ribston pippins,—some people say the only real Ribston pippins,—in all Rufford are to be found here, and its Burgundy pears and walnuts are almost equally celebrated. There are rumours also that its roses beat everything in the way of roses for ten miles round. But in these days very few strangers are admitted to see the Hoppet Hall roses. The pears and apples do make their way out, and are distributed either by Mrs. Masters, the attorney's wife, or Mr. Runciman, the innkeeper. The present occupier of the house is a certain Mr. Reginald Morton, with whom we shall also be much concerned in these pages, but whose introduction to the reader shall be postponed for awhile.

The land around Dillsborough is chiefly owned by two landlords, of whom the greatest and richest is Lord Rufford. He, however, does not live near the town, but away at the other side of the county, and is not much seen in these parts unless when the hounds bring him here, or when, with two or three friends, he will sometimes stay for a few days at the Bush Inn for the sake of shooting the coverts. He is much liked by all sporting men, but is not otherwise very popular with the people round Dillsborough. A landlord if he wishes to be popular should be seen frequently. If he lives among his farmers they will swear by him, even though he raises his rental every ten or twelve years and never puts a new roof to a barn for them. Lord Rufford is a rich man who thinks of nothing but sport in all its various

shapes, from pigeon-shooting at Hurlingham to the slaughter of elephants in Africa; and though he is lenient in all his dealings, is not much thought of in the Dillsborough side of the county, except by those who go out with the hounds. At Rufford, where he generally has a full house for three months in the year and spends a vast amount of money, he is more highly considered.

The other extensive landlord is Mr. John Morton, a young man, who, in spite of his position as squire of Bragton, owner of Bragton Park, and landlord of the entire parishes of Bragton and Mallingham, the latter of which comes close up to the confines of Dillsborough,—was at the time at which our story begins, Secretary of Legation at Washington. As he had been an absentee since he came of age, soon after which time he inherited the property, he had been almost less liked in the neighbourhood than the lord. Indeed, no one in Dillsborough knew much about him, although Bragton Hall was but four miles from the town, and the Mortons had possessed the property and lived on it for the last three centuries. But there had been extravagance, as will hereafter have to be told, and there had been no continuous residence at Bragton since the death of old Reginald Morton, who had been the best known and the best loved of all the squires in Rufford, and had for many years been master of the Rufford hounds. He had lived to a very great age, and, though the great-grandfather of the present man, had not been dead above twenty years. He was the man of whom the older inhabitants of Dillsborough and the neighbourhood still thought and still spoke when they gave vent to their feelings in favour of gentlemen. And yet the old squire in his latter days had been able to do little or nothing for them,—being sometimes backward as to the payment of money he owed among them. But he had lived all his days at Bragton Park, and his figure had been familiar to all eyes in the High Street of Dillsborough and at the front entrance of the Bush. People still spoke of old Mr. Reginald Morton as though his death had been a sore loss to the neighbourhood.

And there were in the country round sundry yeomen, as they ought to be called,—gentlemen-farmers as they now like to style themselves,—men who owned some acres of land, and farmed these acres themselves. Of these we may specially mention Mr. Lawrence Twentyman, who was quite the gentleman-farmer. He possessed over three hundred acres of land, on which his father had built an excellent house. The present Mr. Twentyman, Lawrence Twentyman, Esquire, as he was called by everybody, was by no means unpopular in the neighbourhood. He not only rode well to hounds but paid twenty-five pounds annually to the hunt, which entitled him to feel quite at home in his red coat. He generally owned a racing colt or two, and attended meetings; but was supposed to know what he was about, and to have kept safely the five or six thousand pounds which his father had left him. And his farming was well done; for though he was, out-and-out, a gentleman-farmer, he knew how to get the full worth in work done for the fourteen

shillings a week which he paid to his labourers,—a deficiency in which knowledge is the cause why gentlemen in general find farming so expensive an amusement. He was a handsome, good-looking man of about thirty, and would have been a happy man had he not been too ambitious in his aspirations after gentry. He had been at school for three years at Cheltenham College, which, together with his money and appearance and undoubted freehold property, should, he thought, have made his position quite secure to him; but, though he sometimes called young Hampton of Hampton Wick "Hampton," and the son of the rector of Dillsborough "Mainwaring," and always called the rich young brewers from Norrington "Botsey,"—partners in the well-known firm of Billbrook & Botsey; and though they in return called him "Larry" and admitted the intimacy, still he did not get into their houses. And Lord Rufford, when he came into the neighbourhood, never asked him to dine at the Bush. And—worst of all,—some of the sporting men and others in the neighbourhood, who decidedly were not gentlemen, also called him "Larry." Mr. Runciman always did so. Twenty or twenty-five years ago Runciman had been his father's special friend, before the house had been built and before the days at Cheltenham College. Remembering this Lawrence was too good a fellow to rebuke Runciman; but to younger men of that class he would sometimes make himself objectionable. There was another keeper of hunting stables, a younger man, named Stubbings, living at Stanton Corner, a great hunting rendezvous about four miles from Dillsborough; and not long since Twentyman had threatened to lay his whip across Stubbings' shoulders if Stubbings ever called him "Larry" again. Stubbings, who was a little man and rode races, only laughed at Mr. Twentyman who was six feet high, and told the story round to all the hunt. Mr. Twentyman was more laughed at than perhaps he deserved. A man should not have his Christian name used by every Tom and Dick without his sanction. But the difficulty is one to which men in the position of Mr. Lawrence Twentyman are often subject.

Those whom I have named, together with Mr. Mainwaring the rector, and Mr. Surtees his curate, made up the very sparse aristocracy of Dillsborough. The Hamptons of Hampton Wick were Ufford men, and belonged, rather to Norrington than Dillsborough. The Botseys, also from Norrington, were members of the U.R.U., or Ufford and Rufford United Hunt Club; but they did not much affect Dillsborough as a town. Mr. Mainwaring, who has been mentioned, lived in another brick house behind the church, the old parsonage of St. John's. There was also a Mrs. Mainwaring, but she was an invalid. Their family consisted of one son, who was at Brasenose at this time. He always had a horse during the Christmas vacation, and if rumour did not belie him, kept two or three up at Oxford. Mr. Surtees, the curate, lived in lodgings in the town. He was a painstaking, clever, young man, with aspirations in church matters, which were always being checked by his rector. *Quieta non movere* was the motto by which the rector governed his

6 Anthony Trollope

life, and he certainly was not at all the man to allow his curate to drive him into activity.

Such, at the time of our story, was the little town of Dillsborough.

CHAPTER II. The Morton Family

I can hardly describe accurately the exact position of the Masters family without first telling all that I know about the Morton family; and it is absolutely essential that the reader should know all the Masters family intimately. Mr. Masters, as I have said in the last chapter, was the attorney in Dillsborough, and the Mortons had been for centuries past the squires of Bragton.

I need not take the reader back farther than old Reginald Morton. He had come to the throne of his family as a young man, and had sat upon it for more than half a century. He had been a squire of the old times, having no inclination for London seasons, never wishing to keep up a second house, quite content with his position as squire of Bragton, but with considerable pride about him as to that position. He had always liked to have his house full, and had hated petty economies. He had for many years hunted the county at his own expense, the amusement at first not having been so expensive as it afterwards became. When he began the work, it had been considered sufficient to hunt twice a week. Now the Rufford and Ufford hounds have four days, and sometimes a bye. It went much against Mr. Reginald Morton's pride when he was first driven to take a subscription.

But the temporary distress into which the family fell was caused not so much by his own extravagance as by that of two sons, and by his indulgence in regard to them. He had three children, none of whom were very fortunate in life. The eldest, John, married the daughter of a peer, stood for Parliament, had one son, and died before he was forty, owing something over 20,000 pounds. The estate was then worth 7,000 pounds a year. Certain lands not lying either in Bragton or Mallingham were sold, and that difficulty was surmounted, not without a considerable diminution of income. In process of time the grandson, who was a second John Morton, grew up and married, and became the father of a third John Morton, the young man who afterwards became owner of the property and Secretary of Legation at Washington. But the old squire outlived his son and his grandson, and when he died had three or four great-grand-children playing about the lawns of Bragton Park. The peer's daughter had lived, and had for many years drawn a dower from the Bragton property, and had been altogether a very heavy incumbrance.

But the great trial of the old man's life, as also the great romance, had arisen from the career of his second son, Reginald. Of all his children, Reginald had been the dearest to him. He went to Oxford, and had there spent much money; not as young

men now spend money, but still to an extent that had been grievous to the old squire. But everything was always paid for Reginald. It was necessary, of course, that he should have a profession, and he took a commission in the army. As a young man he went to Canada. This was in 1829, when all the world was at peace, and his only achievement in Canada was to marry a young woman who is reported to have been pretty and good, but who had no advantages either of fortune or birth. She was, indeed, the daughter of a bankrupt innkeeper in Montreal. Soon after this he sold out and brought his wife home to Bragton. It was at this period of the squire's life that the romance spoken of occurred. John Morton, the brother with the aristocratic wife, was ten or twelve years older than Reginald, and at this time lived chiefly at Bragton when he was not in town. He was, perhaps, justified in regarding Bragton as almost belonging to him, knowing as he did that it must belong to him after his father's lifetime, and to his son after him. His anger against his brother was hot, and that of his wife still hotter. He himself had squandered thousands, but then he was the heir. Reginald, who was only a younger brother, had sold his commission. And then he had done so much more than this! He had married a woman who was not a lady! John was clearly of opinion that at any rate the wife should not be admitted into Bragton House. The old squire in those days was not a happy man; he had never been very strong-minded, but now he was strong enough to declare that his house-door should not be shut against a son of his,—or a son's wife, as long as she was honest. Hereupon the Honourable Mrs. Morton took her departure, and was never seen at Bragton again in the old squire's time. Reginald Morton came to the house, and soon afterwards another little Reginald was born at Bragton Park. This happened as long ago as 1835, twenty years before the death of the old squire.

But there had been another child, a daughter, who had come between the two sons, still living in these days, who will become known to any reader who will have patience to follow these pages to the end. She married, not very early in life, a certain Sir William Ushant, who was employed by his country in India and elsewhere, but who found, soon after his marriage, that the service of his country required that he should generally leave his wife at Bragton. As her father had been for many years a widower, Lady Ushant became the mistress of the house.

But death was very busy with the Mortons. Almost every one died, except the squire himself and his daughter, and that honourable dowager, with her income and her pride who could certainly very well have been spared. When at last, in 1855, the old squire went, full of years, full of respect, but laden also with debts and money troubles, not only had his son John, and his grandson John, gone before him, but Reginald and his wife were both lying in Bragton Churchyard.

The elder branch of the family, John the great-grandson, and his little sisters, were at once taken away from Bragton by the honourable grandmother. John, who was

then about seven years old, was of course the young squire, and was the owner of the property. The dowager, therefore, did not undertake an altogether unprofitable burden. Lady Ushant was left at the house, and with Lady Ushant, or rather immediately subject to her care, young Reginald Morton, who was then nineteen years of age, and who was about to go to Oxford. But there immediately sprang up family lawsuits, instigated by the honourable lady on behalf of her grandchildren, of which Reginald Morton was the object. The old man had left certain outlying properties to his grandson Reginald, of which Hoppet Hall was a part. For eight or ten years the lawsuit was continued, and much money was expended. Reginald was at last successful, and became the undoubted owner of Hoppet Hall; but in the meantime he went to Germany for his education, instead of to Oxford, and remained abroad even after the matter was decided,— living, no one but Lady Ushant knew where, or after what fashion.

When the old squire died the children were taken away, and Bragton was nearly deserted. The young heir was brought up with every caution, and, under the auspices of his grandmother and her family, behaved himself very unlike the old Mortons. He was educated at Eton, after leaving which he was at once examined for Foreign Office employment, and commenced his career with great eclat. He had been made to understand clearly that it would be better that he should not enter in upon his squirearchy early in life. The estate when he came of age had already had some years to recover itself, and as he went from capital to capital, he was quite content to draw from it an income which enabled him to shine with peculiar brilliance among his brethren. He had visited Bragton once since the old squire's death, and had found the place very dull and uninviting. He had no ambition whatever to be master of the U.R.U.; but did look forward to a time when he might be Minister Plenipotentiary at some foreign court.

For many years after the old man's death, Lady Ushant, who was then a widow, was allowed to live at Bragton. She was herself childless, and being now robbed of her great-nephews and nieces, took a little girl to live with her, named Mary Masters. It was a very desolate house in those days, but the old lady was careful as to the education of the child, and did her best to make the home happy for her. Some two or three years before the commencement of this story there arose a difference between the manager of the property and Lady Ushant, and she was made to understand, after some half-courteous manner, that Bragton house and park would do better without her. There would be no longer any cows kept, and painters must come into the house, and there were difficulties about fuel. She was not turned out exactly; but she went and established herself in lonely lodgings at Cheltenham. Then Mary Masters, who had lived for more than a dozen years at Bragton, went back to her father's house in Dillsborough.

Any reader with an aptitude for family pedigrees will now understand that Reginald, Master of Hoppet Hall, was first cousin to the father of the Foreign Office paragon, and that he is therefore the paragon's first cousin once removed. The relationship is not very distant, but the two men, one of whom was a dozen years older than the other, had not seen each other for more than twenty years,—at a time when one of them was a big boy, and the other a very little one; and during the greater part of that time a lawsuit had been carried on between them in a very rigorous manner. It had done much to injure both, and had created such a feeling of hostility that no intercourse of any kind now existed between them.

It does not much concern us to know how far back should be dated the beginning of the connection between the Morton family and that of Mr. Masters, the attorney; but it is certain that the first attorney of that name in Dillsborough became learned in the law through the patronage of some former Morton. The father of the present Gregory Masters, and the grandfather, had been thoroughly trusted and employed by old Reginald Morton, and the former of the two had made his will. Very much of the stewardship and management of the property had been in their hands, and they had thriven as honest men, but as men with a tolerably sharp eye to their own interests. The late Mr. Masters had died a few years before the squire, and the present attorney had seemed to succeed to these family blessings. But the whole order of things became changed. Within a few weeks of the squire's death Mr. Masters found that he was to be entrusted no further with the affairs of the property, but that, in lieu of such care, was thrown upon him the task of defending the will which he had made against the owner of the estate. His father and grandfather had contrived between them to establish a fairly good business, independently of Bragton, which business, of course, was now his. As far as reading went, and knowledge, he was probably a better lawyer than either of them; but he lacked their enterprise and special genius, and the thing had dwindled with him. It seemed to him, perhaps not unnaturally, that he had been robbed of an inheritance. He had no title deeds, as had the owners of the property; but his ancestors before him, from generation to generation, had lived by managing the Bragton property. They had drawn the leases, and made the wills, and collected the rents, and had taught themselves to believe that a Morton could not live on his land without a Masters. Now there was a Morton who did not live on his land, but spent his rents elsewhere without the aid of any Masters, and it seemed to the old lawyer that all the good things of the world had passed away. He had married twice, his first wife having, before her marriage, been well known at Bragton Park. When she had died, and Mr. Masters had brought a second wife home, Lady Ushant took the only child of the mother, whom she had known as a girl, into her own keeping, till she also had been compelled to leave Bragton. Then Mary Masters had returned to her father and stepmother.

The Bragton Park residence is a large, old-fashioned, comfortable house, but by no means a magnificent mansion. The greater part of it was built one hundred and fifty years ago, and the rooms are small and low. In the palmy days of his reign, which is now more than half a century since, the old squire made alterations, and built new stables and kennels, and put up a conservatory; but what he did then has already become almost old-fashioned now. What he added he added in stone, but the old house was brick. He was much abused at the time for his want of taste, and heard a good deal about putting new cloth as patches on old rents; but, as the shrubs and ivy have grown up, a certain picturesqueness has come upon the place, which is greatly due to the difference of material. The place is somewhat sombre, as there is no garden close to the house. There is a lawn, at the back, with gravel walks round it; but it is only a small lawn; and then divided from the lawn by a ha-ha fence, is the park. The place, too, has that sad look which always comes to a house from the want of a tenant. Poor Lady Ushant, when she was there, could do little or nothing. A gardener was kept, but there should have been three or four gardeners. The man grew cabbages and onions, which he sold, but cared nothing for the walks or borders. Whatever it may have been in the old time, Bragton Park was certainly not a cheerful place when Lady Ushant lived there. In the squire's time the park itself had always been occupied by deer. Even when distress came he would not allow the deer to be sold. But after his death they went very soon, and from that day to the time of which I am writing, the park has been leased to some butchers or graziers from Dillsborough.

The ground hereabouts is nearly level, but it falls away a little and becomes broken and pretty where the river Dill runs through the park, about half a mile from the house. There is a walk called the Pleasance, passing down through shrubs to the river, and then crossing the stream by a foot-bridge, and leading across the fields towards Dillsborough. This bridge is, perhaps, the prettiest spot in Bragton, or, for that matter, anywhere in the county round; but, even here there is not much of beauty to be praised. It is here, on the side of the river away from the house, that the home meet of the hounds used to be held; and still the meet at Bragton Bridge is popular in the county.

CHAPTER III. The Masters Family

At six o'clock one November morning, Mr. Masters, the attorney, was sitting at home with his family in the large parlour of his house, his office being on the other side of the passage which cut the house in two and was formally called the hall. Upstairs, over the parlour, was a drawing-room; but this chamber, which was supposed to be elegantly furnished, was very rarely used. Mr. and Mrs. Masters did not see much company, and for family purposes the elegance of the drawing-room made it unfit. It added, however, not a little to the glory of Mrs. Masters' life. The house itself was a low brick building in the High Street, at the corner where the High Street runs into the market-place, and therefore, nearly opposite to the Bush. It had none of the elaborate grandeur of the inn nor of the simple stateliness of Hoppet Hall, but, nevertheless, it maintained the character of the town and was old, substantial, respectable, and dark.

"I think it a very spirited thing of him to do, then," said Mrs. Masters.

"I don't know, my dear. Perhaps it is only revenge."

"What have you to do with that? What can it matter to a lawyer whether it's revenge or anything else? He's got the means, I suppose?"

"I don't know, my dear."

"What does Nickem say?"

"I suppose he has the means," said Mr. Masters, who was aware that if he told his wife a fib on the matter, she would learn the truth from his senior clerk, Mr. Samuel Nickem. Among the professional gifts which Mr. Masters possessed, had not been that great gift of being able to keep his office and his family distinct from each other. His wife always knew what was going on, and was very free with her advice; generally tendering it on that side on which money was to be made, and doing so with much feminine darkness as to right or wrong. His Clerk, Nickem, who was afflicted with no such darkness, but who ridiculed the idea of scruple in an attorney, often took part against him. It was the wish of his heart to get rid of Nickem; but Nickem would have carried business with him and gone over to some enemy, or, perhaps have set up in some irregular manner on his own bottom; and his wife would have given him no peace had he done so, for she regarded Nickem as the mainstay of the house.

"What is Lord Rufford to you?" asked Mrs. Masters.

"He has always been very friendly."

"I don't see it at all. You have never had any of his money. I don't know that you are a pound richer by him."

"I have always gone with the gentry of the county."

"Fiddlesticks! Gentry! Gentry are very well as long as you can make a living out of them. You could afford to stick up for gentry till you lost the Bragton property." This was a subject that was always sore between Mr. Masters and his wife. The former Mrs. Masters had been a lady—the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman; and had been much considered by the family at Bragton. The present Mrs. Masters was the daughter of an ironmonger at Norrington, who had brought a thousand pounds with her, which had been very useful. No doubt Mr. Masters' practice had been considerably affected by the lowliness of his second marriage. People who used to know the first Mrs. Masters, such as Mrs. Mainwaring, and the doctor's wife, and old Mrs. Cooper, the wife of the vicar of Mallingham, would not call on the second Mrs. Masters. As Mrs. Masters was too high-spirited to run after people who did not want her, she took to hating gentry instead.

"We have always been on the other side," said the old attorney, "I and my father and grandfather before me."

"They lived on it and you can't. If you are going to say that you won't have any client that isn't a gentleman, you might as well put up your shutters at once."

"I haven't said so. Isn't Runciman my client?"

"He always goes with the gentry. He a'most thinks he's one of them himself."

"And old Nobbs, the greengrocer. But it's all nonsense. Any man is my client, or any woman, who can come and pay me for business that is fit for me to do."

"Why isn't this fit to be done? If the man's been damaged, why shouldn't he be paid?"

"He's had money offered him."

"If he thinks it ain't enough, who's to say that it is,—unless a jury?" said Mrs. Masters, becoming quite eloquent. "And how's a poor man to get a jury to say that, unless he comes to a lawyer? Of course, if you won't have it, he'll go to Bearside. Bearside won't turn him away." Bearside was another attorney, an interloper of about ten years' standing, whose name was odious to Mr. Masters.

"You don't know anything about it, my dear," said he, aroused at last to anger.

"I know you're letting anybody who likes take the bread out of the children's mouths." The children, so called, were sitting round the table and could not but take an interest in the matter. The eldest was that Mary Masters, the daughter of the former wife, whom Lady Ushant had befriended, a tall girl, with dark brown hair, so dark as almost to be black, and large, soft, thoughtful grey eyes. We shall have much to say of Mary Masters, and can hardly stop to give an adequate description of her here. The others were Dolly and Kate, two girls aged sixteen and fifteen. The two younger "children" were eating bread and butter and jam in a very healthy manner, but still had their ears wide open to the conversation that was being held. The two younger girls sympathised strongly with their mother. Mary, who had known much about the Mortons, and was old enough to understand the position which her grandfather had held in reference to the family, of course leaned in her heart to her father's side. But she was wiser than her father, and knew that in such discussions her mother often showed a worldly wisdom which, in their present circumstances, they could hardly afford to disregard, unpalatable though it might be.

Mr. Masters disliked these discussions altogether, but he disliked them most of all in presence of his children. He looked round upon them in a deprecatory manner, making a slight motion with his hand and bringing his head down on one side, and then he gave a long sigh. If it was his intention to convey some subtle warning to his wife, some caution that she alone should understand, he was deceived. The "children" all knew what he meant quite as well as did their mother.

"Shall we go out, mamma?" asked Dolly. "Finish your teas, my dears," said Mr. Masters, who wished to stop the discussion rather than to carry it on before a more select audience.

"You've got to make up your mind to-night," said Mrs. Masters, "and you'll be going over to the 'Bush' at eight."

"No, I needn't. He is to come on Monday. I told Nickem I wouldn't see him to-night; nor, of course, to-morrow."

"Then he'll go to Bearside."

"He may go to Bearside and be —! Oh, Lord! I do wish you'd let me drop the business for a few minutes when I am in here. You don't know anything about it. How should you?"

"I know that if I didn't speak you'd let everything slip through your fingers. There's Mr. Twentyman. Kate, open the door."

Kate, who was fond of Mr. Twentyman, rushed up, and opened the front door at once. In saying so much of Kate, I do not mean it to be understood that any

precocious ideas of love were troubling that young lady's bosom. Kate Masters was a jolly bouncing schoolgirl of fifteen, who was not too proud to eat toffy, and thought herself still a child. But she was very fond of Lawrence Twentyman, who had a pony that she could ride, and who was always good-natured to her. All the family liked Mr. Twentyman,—unless it might be Mary, who was the one that he specially liked himself. And Mary was not altogether averse to him, knowing him to be good-natured, manly, and straightforward. But Mr. Twentyman had proposed to her, and she had certainly not accepted him. This, however, had broken none of the family friendship. Every one in the house, unless it might be Mary herself, hoped that Mr. Twentyman might prevail at last. The man was worth six or seven hundred a year, and had a good house, and owed no one a shilling. He was handsome, and about the best-tempered fellow known. Of course they all desired that he should prevail with Mary. "I wish that I were old enough, Larry, that's all!" Kate had said to him once, laughing. "I wouldn't have you, if you were ever laughing." "I wouldn't have you, if you were ever so old," Larry had replied; "you'd want to be out hunting every day." That will show the sort of terms that Larry was on with his friend Kate. He called at the house every Saturday with the declared object of going over to the club that was held that evening in the parlour at the Bush, whither Mr. Masters also always went. It was understood at home that Mr. Masters should attend this club every Saturday from eight till eleven, but that he was not at any other time to give way to the fascinations of the Bush. On this occasion, and we may say on almost every Saturday night, Mr. Twentyman arrived a full hour before the appointed time. The reason of his doing so was of course well understood, and was quite approved by Mrs. Masters. She was not, at any rate as yet, a cruel stepmother; but still, if the girl could be transferred to so eligible a home as that which Mr. Twentyman could give her, it would be well for all parties.

When he took his seat he did not address himself specially to the lady of his love. I don't know how a gentleman is to do so in the presence of her father, and mother, and sisters. Saturday after Saturday he probably thought that some occasion would arise; but, if his words could have been counted, it would have been found that he addressed fewer to her than to any one in the room.

"Larry," said his special friend Kate, "am I to have the pony at the Bridge meet?"

"How very free you are, Miss!" said her mother.

"I don't know about that," said Larry. "When is there to be a meet at the Bridge? I haven't heard."

"But I have. Tony Tuppett told me that they would be there this day fortnight." Tony Tuppett was the huntsman of the U.R.U.

"That's more than Tony can know. He may have guessed it."

"Shall I have the pony if he has guessed right?"

Then the pony was promised; and Kate, trusting in Tony Tuppett's sagacity, was happy.

"Have you heard of all this about Dillsborough Wood?" asked Mrs. Masters. The attorney shrank at the question, and shook himself uneasily in his chair.

"Yes; I've heard about it," said Larry.

"And what do you think about it? I don't see why Lord Rufford is to ride over everybody because he's a lord." Mr. Twentyman scratched his head. Though a keen sportsman himself, he did not specially like Lord Rufford,—a fact which had been very well known to Mrs. Masters. But, nevertheless, this threatened action against the nobleman was distasteful to him. It was not a hunting affair, or Mr. Twentyman could not have doubted for a moment. It was a shooting difficulty, and as Mr. Twentyman had never been asked to fire a gun on the Rufford preserves, it was no great sorrow to him that there should be such a difficulty. But the thing threatened was an attack upon the country gentry and their amusements, and Mr. Twentyman was a country gentleman who followed sport. Upon the whole his sympathies were with Lord Rufford.

"The man is an utter blackguard, you know," said Larry. "Last year he threatened to shoot the foxes in Dillsborough Wood."

"No!" said Kate, quite horrified.

"I'm afraid he's a bad sort of fellow all round," said the attorney.

"I don't see why he shouldn't claim what he thinks due to him," said Mrs. Masters.

"I'm told that his lordship offered him seven-and-six an acre for the whole of the two fields," said the gentleman-farmer.

"Goarly declares," said Mrs. Masters, "that the pheasants didn't leave him four bushels of wheat to the acre."

Goarly was the man who had proposed himself as a client to Mr. Masters, and who was desirous of claiming damages to the amount of forty shillings an acre for injury, done to the crops on two fields belonging to himself which lay adjacent to Dillsborough Wood, a covert belonging to Lord Rufford, about four miles from the town, in which both pheasants and foxes were preserved with great care.

"Has Goarly been to you?" asked Twentyman.

Mr. Masters nodded his head. "That's just it," said Mrs. Masters. "I don't see why a man isn't to go to law if he pleases—that is, if he can afford to pay for it. I have

nothing to say against gentlemen's sport; but I do say that they should run the same chance as others. And I say it's a shame if they're to band themselves together and make the county too hot to hold any one as doesn't like to have his things ridden over, and his crops devoured, and his fences knocked to Jericho. I think there's a deal of selfishness in sport and a deal of tyranny."

"Oh, Mrs. Masters!" exclaimed Larry.

"Well, I do. And if a poor man,—or a man whether he's poor or no," added Mrs. Masters, correcting herself, as she thought of the money which this man ought to have in order that he might pay for his lawsuit,— "thinks himself injured, it's nonsense to tell me that nobody should take up his case. It's just as though the butcher wouldn't sell a man a leg of mutton because Lord Rufford had a spite against him. Who's Lord Rufford?"

"Everybody knows that I care very little for his lordship," said Mr. Twentyman.

"Nor I; and I don't see why Gregory should. If Goarly isn't entitled to what he wants he won't get it; that's all. But let it be tried fairly."

Hereupon Mr. Masters took up his hat and left the room, and Mr. Twentyman followed him, not having yet expressed any positive opinion on the delicate matter submitted to his judgment. Of course, Goarly was a brute. Had he not threatened to shoot foxes? But, then, an attorney must live by lawsuits, and it seemed to Mr. Twentyman that an attorney should not stop to inquire whether a new client is a brute or not.

CHAPTER IV. The Dillsborough Club

The club, so called at Dillsborough, was held every Saturday evening in a back parlour at the "Bush," and was attended generally by seven or eight members. It was a very easy club. There was no balloting, and no other expense attending it other than that of paying for the liquor which each man chose to drink. Sometimes, about ten o'clock, there was a little supper, the cost of which was defrayed by subscription among those who partook of it. It was one rule of the club, or a habit, rather, which had grown to be a rule, that Mr. Runciman might introduce into it any one he pleased. I do not know that a similar privilege was denied to any one else; but as Mr. Runciman had a direct pecuniary advantage in promoting the club, the new-comers were generally ushered in by him. When the attorney and Twentyman entered the room Mr. Runciman was seated as usual in an arm-chair at the corner of the fire nearest to the door, with the bell at his right hand. He was a hale, good-looking man about fifty, with black hair, now turning grey at the edges, and a clean-shorn chin. He had a pronounced strong face of his own, one capable of evincing anger and determination when necessary, but equally apt for smiles or, on occasion, for genuine laughter. He was a masterful but a pleasant man, very civil to customers and to his friends generally while they took him the right way; but one who could be a Tartar if he were offended, holding an opinion that his position as landlord of an inn was one requiring masterdom. And his wife was like him in everything,—except in this, that she always submitted to him. He was a temperate man in the main; but on Saturday nights he would become jovial, and sometimes a little quarrelsome. When this occurred the club would generally break itself up and go home to bed, not in the least offended. Indeed Mr. Runciman was the tyrant of the club, though it was held at his house expressly with the view of putting money into his pocket. Opposite to his seat was another arm-chair,—not so big as Mr. Runciman's, but still a soft and easy chair, which was always left for the attorney. For Mr. Masters was a man much respected through all Dillsborough, partly on his own account, but more perhaps for the sake of his father and grandfather. He was a round-faced, clean-shorn man, with straggling grey hair, who always wore black clothes and a white cravat. There was something in his appearance which recommended him among his neighbours, who were disposed to say he "looked the gentleman;" but a stranger might have thought his cheeks to be flabby and his mouth to be weak.

Making a circle, or the beginning of a circle, round the fire, were Nupper, the doctor,—a sporting old bachelor doctor who had the reputation of riding after the hounds in order that he might be ready for broken bones and minor accidents; next to him, in another arm-chair, facing the fire, was Ned Botsey, the younger of the two brewers from Norrington, who was in the habit during the hunting season of stopping from Saturday to Monday at the Bush, partly because the Rufford hounds hunted on Saturday and Monday and on those days seldom met in the Norrington direction, and partly because he liked the sporting conversation of the Dillsborough Club. He was a little man, very neat in his attire, who liked to be above his company, and fancied that he was so in Mr. Runciman's parlour. Between him and the attorney's chair was Harry Stubbings, from Stanton Corner, the man who let out hunters, and whom Twentyman had threatened to thrash. His introduction to the club had taken place lately, not without some opposition; but Runciman had set his foot upon that, saying that it was "all d— nonsense." He had prevailed, and Twentyman had consented to meet the man; but there was no great friendship between them. Seated back on the sofa was Mr. Ribbs, the butcher, who was allowed into the society as being a specially modest man. His modesty, perhaps, did not hinder him in an affair of sheep or bullocks, nor yet in the collection of his debts; but at the club he understood his position, and rarely opened his mouth to speak. When Twentyman followed the attorney into the room there was a vacant chair between Mr. Botsey and Harry Stubbings; but he would not get into it, preferring to seat himself on the table at Botsey's right hand.

"So Goarly was with you, Mr. Masters," Mr. Runciman began as soon as the attorney was seated. It was clear that they had all been talking about Goarly and his law-suit, and that Goarly and the law-suit would be talked about very generally in Dillsborough.

"He was over at my place this evening," said the attorney.

"You are not going to take his case up for him, Mr. Masters?" said young Botsey. "We expect something better from you than that."

Now Ned Botsey was rather an impudent young man, and Mr. Masters, though he was mild enough at home, did not like impudence from the world at large. "I suppose, Mr. Botsey," said he, "that if Goarly were to go to you for a barrel of beer you'd sell it to him?"

"I don't know whether I should or not. I dare say my people would. But that's a different thing."

"I don't see any difference at all. You're not very particular as to your customers, and I don't ask you any questions about them. Ring the bell, Runciman, please." The bell was rung, and the two newcomers ordered their liquor.

It was quite right that Ned Botsey should be put down. Every one in the room felt that. But there was something in the attorney's tone which made the assembled company feel that he had undertaken Goarly's case; whereas, in the opinion of the company, Goarly was a scoundrel with whom Mr. Masters should have had nothing to do. The attorney had never been a sporting man himself, but he had always been, as it were, on that side.

"Goarly is a great fool for his pains," said the doctor. "He has had a very fair offer made him, and, first or last, it'll cost him forty pounds."

"He has got it into his head," said the landlord, "that he can sue Lord Rufford for his fences. Lord Rufford is not answerable for his fences."

"It's the loss of crop he's going for," said Twentyman.

"How can there be pheasants to that amount in Dillsborough Wood," continued the landlord, "when everybody knows that foxes breed there every year? There isn't a surer find for a fox in the whole county. Everybody knows that Lord Rufford never lets his game stand in the way of foxes."

Lord Rufford was Mr. Runciman's great friend and patron and best customer, and not a word against Lord Rufford was allowed in that room, though elsewhere in Dillsborough ill-natured things were sometimes said of his lordship. Then there came on that well-worn dispute among sportsmen, whether foxes and pheasants are or are not pleasant companions to each other. Every one was agreed that, if not, then the pheasants should suffer, and that any country gentleman who allowed his gamekeeper to entrench on the privileges of foxes in order that pheasants might be more abundant, was a "brute" and a "beast," and altogether unworthy to live in England. Larry Twentyman and Ned Botsey expressed an opinion that pheasants were predominant in Dillsborough Wood, while Mr. Runciman, the doctor, and Harry Stubbings declared loudly that everything that foxes could desire was done for them in that Elysium of sport.

"We drew the wood blank last time we were there," said Larry. "Don't you remember, Mr. Runciman, about the end of last March?"

"Of course I remember," said the landlord. "Just the end of the season, when two vixens had litters in the wood! You don't suppose Bean was going to let that old butcher, Tony, find a fox in Dillsborough at that time." Bean was his lordship's head gamekeeper in that part of the country. "How many foxes had we found there during the season?"

"Two or three," suggested Botsey.

"Seven!" said the energetic landlord; "seven, including cub-hunting,—and killed four! If you kill four foxes out of an eighty-acre wood, and have two litters at the end of the season, I don't think you have much to complain of."

"If they all did as well as Lord Rufford, you'd have more foxes than you'd know what to do with," said the doctor.

Then this branch of the conversation was ended by a bet of a new hat between Botsey and the landlord as to the finding of a fox in Dillsborough Wood when it should next be drawn; as to which, when the speculation was completed, Harry Stubbings offered Mr. Runciman ten shillings down for his side of the bargain.

But all this did not divert the general attention from the important matter of Goarly's attack. "Let it be how it will," said Mr. Runciman, "a fellow like that should be put down." He did not address himself specially to Mr. Masters, but that gentleman felt that he was being talked at.

"Certainly he ought," said Dr. Nupper. "If he didn't feel satisfied with what his lordship offered him, why couldn't he ask his lordship to refer the matter to a couple of farmers who understood it?"

"It's the spirit of the thing," said Mr. Ribbs, from his place on the sofa. "It's a hodious spirit."

"That's just it, Mr. Ribbs," said Harry Stubbings. "It's all meant for opposition. Whether it's shooting or whether it's hunting, it's all one. Such a chap oughtn't to be allowed to have land. I'd take it away from him by Act of Parliament. It's such as him as is destroying the country."

"There ain't many of them hereabouts, thank God!" said the landlord.

"Now, Mr. Twentyman," said Stubbings, who was anxious to make friends with the gentleman-farmer, "you know what land can do, and what land has done, as well as any man. What would you say was the real damage done to them two wheat-fields by his lordship's game last autumn? You saw the crops as they were growing, and you know what came off the land."

"I wouldn't like to say."

"But if you were on your oath, Mr. Twentyman?"

"Was there more than seven-and-sixpence an acre lost?"

"No, nor five shillings," said Runciman.

"I think Goarly ought to take his lordship's offer—if you mean that," said Twentyman.

Then there was a pause, during which more drink was brought in, and pipes were re-lighted. Everybody wished that Mr. Masters might be got to say that he would not take the case, but there was a delicacy about asking him. "If I remember right he was in Rufford Gaol once," said Runciman.

"He was let out on bail and then the matter was hushed up somehow," said the attorney.

"It was something about a woman," continued Runciman. "I know that on that occasion he came out an awful scoundrel."

"Don't you remember," asked Botsey, "how he used to walk up and down the covert-side with a gun, two years ago, swearing he would shoot the fox if he broke over his land?"

"I heard him say it, Botsey," said Twentyman. "It wouldn't have been the first fox he's murdered," said the doctor.

"Not by many," said the landlord.

"You remember that old woman near my place?" said Stubbings. "It was he that put her up to tell all them lies about her turkeys. I ran it home to him! A blackguard like that! Nobody ought to take him up."

"I hope you won't, Mr. Masters;" said the doctor. The doctor was as old as the attorney, and had known him for many years. No one else could dare to ask the question.

"I don't suppose I shall, Nupper," said the attorney from his chair. It was the first word he had spoken since he had put down young Botsey. "It wouldn't just suit me; but a man has to judge of those things for himself."

Then there was a general rejoicing, and Mr. Runciman stood broiled bones, and ham and eggs, and bottled stout for the entire club; one unfortunate effect of which unwonted conviviality was that Mr. Masters did not get home till near twelve o'clock. That was sure to cause discomfort; and then he had pledged himself to decline Goarly's business.

CHAPTER V. Reginald Morton

We will now go back to Hoppet Hall and its inhabitants. When the old squire died he left by his will Hoppet Hall and certain other houses in Dillsborough, which was all that he could leave, to his grandson Reginald Morton. Then there arose a question whether this property also was not entailed. The former Mr. Masters, and our friend of the present day, had been quite certain of the squire's power to do what he liked with it; but others had been equally certain on the other side, and there had been a lawsuit. During that time Reginald Morton had been forced to live on a very small allowance. His aunt, Lady Ushant, had done what little she could for him, but it had been felt to be impossible that he should remain at Bragton, which was the property of the cousin who was at law with him. From the moment of his birth the Honourable Mrs. Morton, who was also his aunt by marriage, had been his bitter enemy. He was the son of an innkeeper's daughter, and according to her theory of life, should never even have been noticed by the real Mortons. And this honourable old lady was almost equally adverse to Lady Ushant, whose husband had simply been a knight, and who had left nothing behind him. Thus Reginald Morton had been friendless since his grandfather died, and had lived in Germany, nobody quite knew how. During the entire period of this law-suit Hoppet Hall had remained untenanted.

When the property was finally declared to belong to Reginald Morton, the Hall, before it could be used, required considerable repair. But there was other property. The Bush Inn belonged to Reginald Morton, as did the house in which Mr. Masters lived, and sundry other smaller tenements in the vicinity. There was an income from these of about five hundred pounds a year. Reginald, who was then nearly thirty years of age, came over to England, and stayed for a month or two at Bragton with his aunt, to the infinite chagrin of the old dowager. The management of the town property was entrusted to Mr. Masters, and Hoppet Hall was repaired. At this period Mr. Mainwaring had just come to Dillsborough, and having a wife with some money and perhaps quite as much pretension, had found the rectory too small, and had taken the Hall on a lease for seven years. When this was arranged Reginald Morton again went to Germany, and did not return till the lease had run out. By that time Mr. Mainwaring, having spent a little money, found that the rectory would be large enough for his small family. Then the Hall was again untenanted for awhile, till, quite suddenly, Reginald Morton returned to Dillsborough, and took up his permanent residence in his own house.

It soon became known that the new-comer would not add much to the gaiety of the place. The only people whom he knew in Dillsborough were his own tenants, Mr. Runciman and Mr. Masters, and the attorney's eldest daughter. During those months which he had spent with Lady Ushant at Bragton, Mary had been living there, then a child of twelve years old; and, as a child, had become his fast friend. With his aunt he had, continually corresponded, and partly at her instigation, and partly from feelings of his own, he had at once gone to the attorney's house. This was now two years since, and he had found in his old playmate a beautiful young woman, in his opinion very unlike the people with whom she lived. For the first twelve months he saw her occasionally,—though not indeed very often. Once or twice he had drunk tea at the attorney's house, on which occasions the drawing-room upstairs had been almost as grand as it was uncomfortable. Then the attentions of Larry Twentyman began to make themselves visible, infinitely to Reginald Morton's disgust. Up to that time he had no idea of falling in love with the girl himself. Since he had begun to think on such subjects at all he had made up his mind that he would not marry. He was almost the more proud of his birth by his father's side, because he had been made to hear so much of his mother's low position. He had told himself a hundred times that under no circumstances could he marry any other than a lady of good birth. But his own fortune was small, and he knew himself well enough to be sure that he would not marry for money. He was now nearly forty years of age and had never yet been thrown into the society of any one that had attracted him. He was sure that he would not marry. And yet when he saw that Mr. Twentyman was made much of and flattered by the whole Masters family, apparently because he was regarded as an eligible husband for Mary, Reginald Morton was not only disgusted, but personally offended. Being a most unreasonable man he conceived a bitter dislike to poor Larry, who, at any rate, was truly in love, and was not looking too high in desiring to marry the portionless daughter of the attorney. But Morton thought that the man ought to be kicked and horsewhipped, or, at any rate, banished into some speechless exile for his presumption.

With Mr. Runciman he had dealings, and in some sort friendship. There were two meadows attached to Hoppet Hall, fields lying close to the town, which were very suitable for the landlord's purposes. Mr. Mainwaring had held them in his own hands, taking them up from Mr. Runciman, who had occupied them while the house was untenanted, in a manner which induced Mr. Runciman to feel that it was useless to go to church to hear such sermons as those preached by the rector. But Morton had restored the fields, giving them rent free, on condition that he should be supplied with milk and butter. Mr. Runciman, no doubt, had the best of the bargain, as he generally had in all bargains; but he was a man who liked to be generous when generously treated. Consequently he almost overdid his neighbour with butter and cream, and occasionally sent in quarters of lamb and sweetbreads