

Can You Forgive Her?

Vol. II

Can You Forgive Her?

Vol. II

by

Anthony Trollope

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

classic texts



Can You Forgive Her? Vol. II, 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): 1-84718-683-1, ISBN (13): 9781847186836

Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER XLI. A Noble Lord Dies | 1 |
| CHAPTER XLII. Parliament Meets | 8 |
| CHAPTER XLIII. Mrs Marsham | 16 |
| CHAPTER XLIV. The Election for the Chelsea Districts | 29 |
| CHAPTER XLV. George Vavasor Takes his Seat | 36 |
| CHAPTER XLVI. A Love Gift | 43 |
| CHAPTER XLVII. Mr Cheesacre's Disappointment | 53 |
| CHAPTER XLVIII. Preparations for Lady Monk's Party | 64 |
| CHAPTER XLIX. How Lady Glencora Went to Lady Monk's Party | 71 |
| CHAPTER L. How Lady Glencora Came Back from Lady Monk's Party | 80 |
| CHAPTER LI. Bold Speculations on Murder | 90 |
| CHAPTER LII. What Occurred in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall | 96 |
| CHAPTER LIII. The Last Will of the Old Squire | 105 |
| CHAPTER LIV. Showing How Alice was Punished | 113 |
| CHAPTER LV. The Will | 121 |
| CHAPTER LVI. Another Walk on the Fells | 130 |
| CHAPTER LVII. Showing How the Wild Beast Got himself Back from the Mountains | 139 |
| CHAPTER LVIII. The Pallisers at Breakfast | 147 |
| CHAPTER LIX. The Duke of St Bungay in Search of a Minister | 156 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER LX. Alice Vavasor's Name Gets into the Money Market | 164 |
| CHAPTER LXI. The Bills are Made All Right | 173 |
| CHAPTER LXII. Going Abroad | 179 |
| CHAPTER LXIII. Mr John Grey in Queen Anne Street | 188 |
| CHAPTER LXIV. The Rocks and Valleys | 196 |
| CHAPTER LXV. The First Kiss | 208 |
| CHAPTER LXVI. Lady Monk's Plan | 216 |
| CHAPTER LXVII. The Last Kiss | 224 |
| CHAPTER LXVIII. From London to Baden | 234 |
| CHAPTER LXIX. From Baden to Lucerne | 243 |
| CHAPTER LXX. At Lucerne | 251 |
| CHAPTER LXXI. Showing How George Vavasor Received a Visit | 260 |
| CHAPTER LXXII. Showing How George Vavasor Paid a Visit | 269 |
| CHAPTER LXXIII. In Which Come Tidings of Great Moment to All Pallisers | 276 |
| CHAPTER LXXIV. Showing what Happened in the Churchyard | 284 |
| CHAPTER LXXV. Rouge et Noir | 292 |
| CHAPTER LXXVI. The Landlord's Bill | 302 |
| CHAPTER LXXVII. The Travellers Return Home | 310 |
| CHAPTER LXXVIII. Mr Cheesacre's Fate | 318 |
| CHAPTER LXXIX. Diamonds are Diamonds | 329 |
| CHAPTER LXXX. The Story is Finished within the Halls of the Duke of Omnium | 338 |

CHAPTER XLI. A Noble Lord Dies

George Vavasor remained about four days beneath his grandfather's roof; but he was not happy there himself, nor did he contribute to the happiness of any one else. He remained there in great discomfort so long, being unwilling to leave till an answer had been received to the request made to Aunt Greenow, in order that he might insist on Kate's performance of her promise with reference to Alice, if that answer should be unfavourable. During these five days Kate did all in her power to induce her brother to be, at any rate, kind in his manner towards his grandfather, but it was in vain. The Squire would not be the first to be gracious; and George, quite as obstinate as the old man, would take no steps in that direction till encouraged to do so by graciousness from the other side. Poor Kate entreated each of them to begin, but her entreaties were of no avail. "He is an ill-mannered cub," the old man said, "and I was a fool to let him into the house. Don't mention his name to me again." George argued the matter more at length. Kate spoke to him of his own interest in the matter, urging upon him that he might, by such conduct, drive the Squire to exclude him altogether from the property.

"He must do as he likes," George said, sulkily.

"But for Alice's sake!" Kate answered.

"Alice would be the last to expect me to submit to unreasonable ill-usage for the sake of money. As regards myself, I confess that I'm very fond of money and am not particularly squeamish. I would do anything that a man can do to secure it. But this I can't do. I never injured him, and I never asked him to injure himself. I never attempted to borrow money from him. I have never cost him a shilling. When I was in the wine business he might have enabled me to make a large fortune simply by settling on me then the reversion of property which, when he dies, ought to be my own. He was so perversely ignorant that he would make no inquiry, but chose to think that I was ruining myself, at the only time of my life when I was really doing well."

"But he had a right to act as he pleased," urged Kate.

"Certainly he had. But he had no right to resent my asking such a favour at his hands. He was an ignorant old fool not to do it; but I should never have quarrelled with him on that account. Nature made him a fool, and it wasn't his fault. But I

can't bring myself to kneel in the dirt before him simply because I asked for what was reasonable."

The two men said very little to each other. They were never alone together except during that half-hour after dinner in which they were supposed to drink their wine. The old Squire always took three glasses of port during this period, and expected that his grandson would take three with him. But George would drink none at all. "I have given up drinking wine after dinner," said he, when his grandfather pushed the bottle over to him. "I suppose you mean that you drink nothing but claret," said the Squire, in a tone of voice that was certainly not conciliatory. "I mean simply what I say," said George—"that I have given up drinking wine after dinner." The old man could not openly quarrel with his heir on such a point as that. Even Mr Vavasor could not tell his grandson that he was going to the dogs because he had become temperate. But, nevertheless, there was offence in it; and when George sat perfectly silent, looking at the fire, evidently determined to make no attempt at conversation, the offence grew, and became strong. "What the devil's the use of your sitting there if you neither drink nor talk?" said the old man. "No use in the world, that I can see," said George; "if, however, I were to leave you, you would abuse me for it." "I don't care how soon you leave me," said the Squire. From all which it may be seen that George Vavasor's visit to the hall of his ancestors was not satisfactory.

On the fourth day, about noon, came Aunt Greenow's reply. "DEAREST KATE," she said, "I am not going to do what you ask me,"—thus rushing instantly into the middle of her subject.

You see, I don't know my nephew, and have no reason for being specially anxious that he should be in Parliament. I don't care two straws about the glory of the Vavasor family. If I had never done anything for myself, the Vavasors would have done very little for me. I don't care much about what you call 'blood.' I like those who like me, and whom I know. I am very fond of you, and because you have been good to me I would give you a thousand pounds if you wanted it for yourself; but I don't see why I am to give my money to those I don't know. If it is necessary to tell my nephew of this, pray tell him that I mean no offence.

Your friend C. is still waiting—waiting—waiting, patiently; but his patience may be exhausted.

Your affectionate aunt,

ARABELLA GREENOW.

"Of course she won't," said George, as he threw back the letter to his sister. "Why should she?"

"I had hoped she would," said Kate.

"Why should she? What did I ever do for her? She is a sensible woman. Who is your friend C., and why is he waiting patiently?"

"He is a man who would be glad to marry her for her money, if she would take him."

"Then what does she mean by his patience being exhausted?"

"It is her folly. She chooses to pretend to think that the man is a lover of mine."

"Has he got any money?"

"Yes; lots of money—or money's worth."

"And what is his name?"

"His name is Cheesacre. But pray don't trouble yourself to talk about him."

"If he wants to marry you, and has plenty of money, why shouldn't you take him?"

"Good heavens, George! In the first place he does not want to marry me. In the next place all his heart is in his farmyard."

"And a very good place to have it," said George.

"Undoubtedly. But, really, you must not trouble yourself to talk about him."

"Only this,—that I should be very glad to see you well married."

"Should you?" said she, thinking of her close attachment to himself.

"And now, about the money," said George. "You must write to Alice at once."—"Oh, George!"

"Of course you must; you have promised. Indeed, it would have been much wiser if you had taken me at my word, and done it at once."—"I cannot do it."

Then the scar on his face opened itself, and his sister stood before him in fear and trembling. "Do you mean to tell me," said he, "that you will go back from your word, and deceive me;—that after having kept me here by this promise, you will not do what you have said you would do?"

"Take my money now, and pay me out of hers as soon as you are married. I will be the first to claim it from her,—and from you."

"That is nonsense."

"Why should it be nonsense? Surely you need have no scruple with me. I should have none with you if I wanted assistance."

"Look here, Kate; I won't have it, and there's an end of it. All that you have in the world would not pull me through this election, and therefore such a loan would be worse than useless."

"And am I to ask her for more than two thousand pounds?"

"You are to ask her simply for one thousand. That is what I want, and must have, at present. And she knows that I want it, and that she is to supply it, only she does not know that my need is so immediate. That you must explain to her."

"I would sooner burn my hand, George!"

"But burning your hand, unfortunately, won't do any good. Look here, Kate; I insist upon your doing this for me. If you do not, I shall do it, of course, myself; but I shall regard your refusal as an unjustifiable falsehood on your part, and shall certainly not see you afterwards. I do not wish, for reasons which you may well understand, to write to Alice myself on any subject at present. I now claim your promise to do so; and if you refuse, I shall know very well what to do."

Of course she did not persist in her refusal. With a sorrowful heart, and with fingers that could hardly form the needful letters, she did write a letter to her cousin, which explained the fact—that George Vavasor immediately wanted a thousand pounds for his electioneering purposes. It was a stiff, uncomfortable letter, unnatural in its phraseology, telling its own tale of grief and shame. Alice understood very plainly all the circumstances under which it was written, but she sent back word to Kate at once, undertaking that the money should be forthcoming; and she wrote again before the end of January, saying that the sum named had been paid to George's credit at his own bankers.

Kate had taken immense pride in the renewal of the match between her brother and her cousin, and had rejoiced in it greatly as being her own work. But all that pride and joy were now over. She could no longer write triumphant notes to Alice, speaking always of George as one who was to be their joint hero, foretelling great things of his career in Parliament, and saying little soft things of his enduring love. It was no longer possible to her now to write of George at all, and it was equally impossible to Alice. Indeed, no letters passed between them, when that monetary correspondence was over, up to the end of the winter. Kate remained down in Westmoreland, wretched and ill at ease, listening to hard words spoken by her grandfather against her brother, and feeling herself unable to take her brother's part as she had been wont to do in other times.

George returned to town at the end of those four days, and found that the thousand pounds was duly placed to his credit before the end of the month. It is hardly necessary to tell the reader that this money had come from the stores of Mr Tombe, and that Mr Tombe duly debited Mr Grey with the amount. Alice, in accordance

with her promise, had told her father that the money was needed, and her father, in accordance with his promise, had procured it without a word of remonstrance. "Surely I must sign some paper," Alice had said. But she had been contented when her father told her that the lawyers would manage all that.

It was nearly the end of February when George Vavasor made his first payment to Mr Scruby on behalf of the coming election; and when he called at Mr Scruby's office with this object, he received some intelligence which surprised him not a little. "You haven't heard the news," said Scruby. "What news?" said George.

"The Marquis is as nearly off the hooks as a man can be." Mr Scruby, as he communicated the tidings, showed clearly by his face and voice that they were supposed to be of very great importance; but Vavasor did not at first seem to be as much interested in the fate of "the Marquis" as Scruby had intended.

"I'm very sorry for him," said George. "Who is the Marquis? There'll be sure to come another, so it don't much signify."

"There will come another, and that's just it. It's the Marquis of Bunratty; and if he drops, our young Member will go into the Upper House."

"What, immediately; before the end of the Session?" George, of course, knew well enough that such would be the case, but the effect which this event would have upon himself now struck him suddenly.

"To be sure," said Scruby. "The writ would be out immediately. I should be glad enough of it, only that I know that Travers's people have heard of it before us, and that they are ready to be up with their posters directly the breath is out of the Marquis's body. We must go to work immediately; that's all."

"It will only be for part of a Session," said George.

"Just so," said Mr Scruby.

"And then there'll be the cost of another election."

"That's true," said Mr Scruby; "but in such cases we do manage to make it come a little cheaper. If you lick Travers now, it may be that you'll have a walk-over for the next."

"Have you seen Grimes?" asked George.

"Yes, I have; the blackguard! He is going to open his house on Travers's side. He came to me as bold as brass, and told me so, saying that he never liked gentlemen who kept him waiting for his odd money. What angers me is that he ever got it."

"We have not managed it very well, certainly," said Vavasor, looking nastily at the attorney.

"We can't help those little accidents, Mr Vavasor. There are worse accidents than that turn up almost daily in my business. You may think yourself almost lucky that I haven't gone over to Travers myself. He is a Liberal, you know; and it hasn't been for want of an offer, I can tell you."

Vavasor was inclined to doubt the extent of his luck in this respect, and was almost disposed to repent of his Parliamentary ambition. He would now be called upon to spend certainly not less than three thousand pounds of his cousin's money on the chance of being able to sit in Parliament for a few months. And then, after what a fashion would he be compelled to negotiate that loan! He might, to be sure, allow the remainder of this Session to run, and stand, as he had intended, at the general election; but he knew that if he now allowed a Liberal to win the seat, the holder of the seat would be almost sure of subsequent success. He must either fight now, or give up the fight altogether; and he was a man who did not love to abandon any contest in which he had been engaged.

"Well, Squire," said Scruby, "how is it to be?" And Vavasor felt that he detected in the man's voice some diminution of that respect with which he had hitherto been treated as a paying candidate for a metropolitan borough.

"This lord is not dead yet," said Vavasor.

"No; he's not dead yet, that we have heard; but it won't do for us to wait. We want every minute of time that we can get. There isn't any hope for him, I'm told. It's gout in the stomach, or dropsy at the heart, or some of those things that make a fellow safe to go."

"It won't do to wait for the next election?"

"If you ask me, I should say certainly not. Indeed, I shouldn't wish to have to conduct it under such circumstances. I hate a fight when there's no chance of success. I grudge spending a man's money in such a case; I do indeed, Mr Vavasor."

"I suppose Grimes's going over won't make much difference?"

"The blackguard! He'll take a hundred and fifty votes, I suppose; perhaps more. But that is not much in such a constituency as the Chelsea districts. You see, Travers played mean at the last election, and that will be against him."

"But the Conservatives will have a candidate."

"There's no knowing; but I don't think they will. They'll try one at the general, no doubt; but if the two sitting Members can pull together, they won't have much of a chance."

Vavator found himself compelled to say that he would stand; and Scruby undertook to give the initiatory orders at once, not waiting even till the Marquis should be dead. "We should have our houses open as soon as theirs," said he. "There's a deal in that." So George Vavator gave his orders. "If the worst comes to the worst," he said to himself, "I can always cut my throat."

As he walked from the attorney's office to his club he bethought himself that that might not unprobably be the necessary termination of his career. Everything was going wrong with him. His grandfather, who was eighty years of age, would not die,—appeared to have no symptoms of dying;—whereas this Marquis, who was not yet much over fifty, was rushing headlong out of the world, simply because he was the one man whose continued life at the present moment would be serviceable to George Vavator. As he thought of his grandfather he almost broke his umbrella by the vehemence with which he struck it against the pavement. What right could an ignorant old fool like that have to live for ever, keeping the possession of a property which he could not use, and ruining those who were to come after him? If now, at this moment, that wretched place down in Westmoreland could become his, he might yet ride triumphantly over his difficulties, and refrain from sullyng his hands with more of his cousin's money till she should become his wife.

Even that thousand pounds had not passed through his hands without giving him much bitter suffering. As is always the case in such matters, the thing done was worse than the doing of it. He had taught himself to look at it lightly whilst it was yet unaccomplished; but he could not think of it lightly now. Kate had been right. It would have been better for him to take her money. Any money would have been better than that upon which he had laid his sacrilegious hands. If he could have cut a purse, after the old fashion, the stain of the deed would hardly have been so deep. In these days,—for more than a month, indeed, after his return from Westmoreland,—he did not go near Queen Anne Street, trying to persuade himself that he stayed away because of her coldness to him. But, in truth, he was afraid of seeing her without speaking of her money, and afraid to see her if he were to speak of it.

"You have seen the *Globe*?" someone said to him as he entered the club.

"No, indeed; I have seen nothing."

"Bunratty died in Ireland this morning. I suppose you'll be up for the Chelsea districts?"

CHAPTER XLII. Parliament Meets

Parliament opened that year on the twelfth of February, and Mr Palliser was one of the first Members of the Lower House to take his seat. It had been generally asserted through the country, during the last week, that the existing Chancellor of the Exchequer had, so to say, ceased to exist as such; that though he still existed to the outer world, drawing his salary, and doing routine work,—if a man so big can have any routine work to do,—he existed no longer in the inner world of the cabinet. He had differed, men said, with his friend and chief, the Prime Minister, as to the expediency of repealing what were left of the direct taxes of the country, and was prepared to launch himself into opposition with his small bodyguard of followers, with all his energy and with all his venom.

There is something very pleasant in the close, bosom friendship, and bitter, uncompromising animosity, of these human gods,—of these human beings who would be gods were they not shorn so short of their divinity in that matter of immortality. If it were so arranged that the same persons were always friends, and the same persons were always enemies, as used to be the case among the dear old heathen gods and goddesses;—if Parliament were an Olympus in which Juno and Venus never kissed, the thing would not be nearly so interesting. But in this Olympus partners are changed, the divine bosom, now rabid with hatred against some opposing deity, suddenly becomes replete with love towards its late enemy, and exciting changes occur which give to the whole thing all the keen interest of a sensational novel. No doubt this is greatly lessened for those who come too near the scene of action. Members of Parliament, and the friends of Members of Parliament, are apt to teach themselves that it means nothing; that Lord This does not hate Mr That, or think him a traitor to his country, or wish to crucify him; and that Sir John of the Treasury is not much in earnest when he speaks of his noble friend at the "Foreign Office" as a god to whom no other god was ever comparable in honesty, discretion, patriotism, and genius. But the outside Briton who takes a delight in politics,—and this description should include ninety-nine educated Englishmen out of every hundred,—should not be desirous of peeping behind the scenes. No beholder at any theatre should do so. It is good to believe in these friendships and these enmities, and very pleasant to watch their changes. It is delightful when Oxford embraces Manchester, finding that it cannot live without support in that quarter; and very delightful when the uncompromising assailant of all men in power receives the legitimate reward of his energy by being taken in among the bosoms of the blessed.

But although the outer world was so sure that the existing Chancellor of the Exchequer had ceased to exist, when the House of Commons met that gentleman took his seat on the Treasury Bench. Mr Palliser, who had by no means given a general support to the Ministry in the last Session, took his seat on the same side of the House indeed, but low down, and near to the cross benches. Mr Bott sat close behind him, and men knew that Mr Bott was a distinguished member of Mr Palliser's party, whatever that party might be. Lord Cinquebars moved the Address, and I must confess that he did it very lamely. He was once accused by Mr Maxwell, the brewer, of making a great noise in the hunting-field. The accusation could not be repeated as to his performance on this occasion, as no one could hear a word that he said. The Address was seconded by Mr Loftus Fitzhoward, a nephew of the Duke of St Bungay, who spoke as though he were resolved to trump poor Lord Cinquebars in every sentence which he pronounced,—as we so often hear the second clergyman from the Communion Table trumping his weary predecessor, who has just finished the Litany not in the clearest or most audible voice. Every word fell from Mr Fitzhoward with the elaborate accuracy of a separate pistol-shot; and as he became pleased with himself in his progress, and warm with his work, he accented his words sharply, made rhetorical pauses, even moved his hands about in action, and quite disgusted his own party, who had been very well satisfied with Lord Cinquebars. There are many rocks which a young speaker in Parliament should avoid, but no rock which requires such careful avoiding as the rock of eloquence. Whatever may be his faults, let him at least avoid eloquence. He should not be inaccurate, which, however, is not much; he should not be long-winded, which is a good deal; he should not be ill-tempered, which is more; but none of these faults are so damnable as eloquence. All Mr Fitzhoward's friends and all his enemies knew that he had had his chance, and that he had thrown it away.

In the Queen's Speech there had been some very lukewarm allusion to remission of direct taxation. This remission, which had already been carried so far, should be carried further if such further carrying were found practicable. So had said the Queen. Those words, it was known, could not have been approved of by the energetic and still existing Chancellor of the Exchequer. On this subject the mover of the Address said never a word, and the seconder only a word or two. What they had said had, of course, been laid down for them; though, unfortunately, the manner of saying could not be so easily prescribed. Then there arose a great enemy, a man fluent of diction, apparently with deep malice at his heart, though at home,—as we used to say at school,—one of the most good-natured fellows in the world; one ambitious of that godship which a seat on the other side of the House bestowed, and greedy to grasp at the chances which this disagreement in the councils of the gods might give him. He was quite content, he said, to vote for the Address, as, he believed, would be all the gentlemen on his side of the House. No

one could suspect them or him of giving a factious opposition to Government. Had they not borne and forborne beyond all precedent known in that House? Then he touched lightly, and almost with grace to his opponents, on many subjects, promising support, and barely hinting that they were totally and manifestly wrong in all things. But—. Then the tone of his voice changed, and the well-known look of fury was assumed upon his countenance. Then great Jove on the other side pulled his hat over his eyes, and smiled blandly. Then members put away the papers they had been reading for a moment, and men in the gallery began to listen. But—. The long and the short of it was this; that the existing Government had come into power on the cry of a reduction of taxation, and now they were going to shirk the responsibility of their own measures. They were going to shirk the responsibility of their own election cry, although it was known that their own Chancellor of the Exchequer was prepared to carry it out to the full. He was willing to carry it out to the full were he not restrained by the timidity, falsehood, and treachery of his colleagues, of whom, of course, the most timid, the most false, and the most treacherous was—the great god Jove, who sat blandly smiling on the other side.

No one should ever go near the House of Commons who wishes to enjoy all this. It was so manifestly evident that neither Jove nor any of his satellites cared twopence for what the irate gentleman was saying; nay, it became so evident that, in spite of his assumed fury, the gentleman was not irate. He intended to communicate his look of anger to the newspaper reports of his speech; and he knew from experience that he could succeed in that. And men walked about the House in the most telling moments,—enemies shaking hands with enemies,—in a way that showed an entire absence of all good, honest hatred among them. But the gentleman went on and finished his speech, demanding at last, in direct terms, that the Treasury Jove should state plainly to the House who was to be, and who was not to be, the bearer of the purse among the gods.

Then Treasury Jove got up smiling, and thanked his enemy for the cordiality of his support. "He had always," he said, "done the gentleman's party justice for their clemency, and had feared no opposition from them; and he was glad to find that he was correct in his anticipations as to the course they would pursue on the present occasion." He went on saying a good deal about home matters, and foreign matters, proving that everything was right, just as easily as his enemy had proved that everything was wrong. On all these points he was very full, and very courteous; but when he came to the subject of taxation, he simply repeated the passage from the Queen's Speech, expressing a hope that his right honourable friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would be able to satisfy the judgement of the House, and the wishes of the people. That specially personal question which had been asked he did not answer at all.

But the House was still all agog, as was the crowded gallery. The energetic and still existing Chancellor of the Exchequer was then present, divided only by one little thin Secretary of State from Jove himself. Would he get up and declare his purposes? He was a man who almost always did get up when an opportunity offered itself,—or when it did not. Some second little gun was fired off from the Opposition benches, and then there was a pause. Would the purse-bearer of Olympus rise upon his wings and speak his mind, or would he sit in silence upon his cloud? There was a general call for the purse-bearer, but he floated in silence, and was inexplicable. The purse-bearer was not to be bullied into any sudden reading of the riddle. Then there came on a general debate about money matters, in which the purse-bearer did say a few words, but he said nothing as to the great question at issue. At last up got Mr Palliser, towards the close of the evening, and occupied a full hour in explaining what taxes the Government might remit with safety, and what they might not,—Mr Bott, meanwhile, prompting him with figures from behind with an assiduity that was almost too persistent. According to Mr Palliser, the words used in the Queen's Speech were not at all too cautious. The Members went out gradually, and the House became very thin during this oration; but the newspapers declared, next morning, that his speech had been the speech of the night, and that the perspicuity of Mr Palliser pointed him out as the coming man.

He returned home to his house in Park Lane quite triumphant after his success, and found Lady Glencora, at about twelve o'clock, sitting alone. She had arrived in town on that day, having come up at her own request, instead of remaining at Matching Priory till after Easter, as he had proposed. He had wished her to stay, in order, as he had said, that there might be a home for his cousins. But she had expressed herself unwilling to remain without him, explaining that the cousins might have the home in her absence, as well as they could in her presence; and he had given way. But, in truth, she had learned to hate her cousin Iphy Palliser with a hatred that was unreasonable,—seeing that she did not also hate Alice Vavasor, who had done as much to merit her hatred as had her cousin. Lady Glencora knew by what means her absence from Monkshade had been brought about. Miss Palliser had told her all that had passed in Alice's bedroom on the last night of Alice's stay at Matching, and had, by so doing, contrived to prevent the visit. Lady Glencora understood well all that Alice had said: and yet, though she hated Miss Palliser for what had been done, she entertained no anger against Alice. Of course Alice would have prevented that visit to Monkshade if it were in her power to do so. Of course she would save her friend. It is hardly too much to say that Lady Glencora looked to Alice to save her. Nevertheless she hated Iphy Palliser for engaging herself in the same business. Lady Glencora looked to Alice to save her, and yet it may be doubted whether she did, in truth, wish to be saved.

While she was at Matching, and before Mr Palliser had returned from Monkshade, a letter reached her, by what means she had never learned. "A letter has been placed within my writing-case," she said to her maid, quite openly. "Who put it there?" The maid had declared her ignorance in a manner that had satisfied Lady Glencora of her truth. "If such a thing happens again," said Lady Glencora, "I shall be obliged to have the matter investigated. I cannot allow that anything should be put into my room surreptitiously." There, then, had been an end of that, as regarded any steps taken by Lady Glencora. The letter had been from Burgo Fitzgerald, and had contained a direct proposal that she should go off with him. "I am at Matching," the letter said, "at the Inn; but I do not dare to show myself, lest I should do you an injury. I walked round the house yesterday, at night, and I know that I saw your room. If I am wrong in thinking that you love me, I would not for worlds insult you by my presence; but if you love me still, I ask you to throw aside from you that fictitious marriage, and give yourself to the man whom, if you love him, you should regard as your husband." There had been more of it, but it had been to the same effect. To Lady Glencora it had seemed to convey an assurance of devoted love,—of that love which, in former days, her friends had told her was not within the compass of Burgo's nature. He had not asked her to meet him then, but saying that he would return to Matching after Parliament was met, begged her to let him have some means of knowing whether her heart was true to him.

She told no one of the letter, but she kept it, and read it over and over again in the silence and solitude of her room. She felt that she was guilty in thus reading it,—even in keeping it from her husband's knowledge; but though conscious of this guilt, though resolute almost in its commission, still she determined not to remain at Matching after her husband's departure,—not to undergo the danger of remaining there while Burgo Fitzgerald should be in the vicinity. She could not analyse her own wishes. She often told herself, as she had told Alice, that it would be better for them all that she should go away; that in throwing herself even to the dogs, if such must be the result, she would do more of good than of harm. She declared to herself, in the most passionate words she could use, that she loved this man with all her heart. She protested that the fault would not be hers, but theirs, who had forced her to marry the man she did not love. She assured herself that her husband had no affection for her, and that their marriage was in every respect prejudicial to him. She recurred over and over again, in her thoughts, to her own childlessness, and to his extreme desire for an heir. "Though I do sacrifice myself," she would say, "I shall do more of good than harm, and I cannot be more wretched than I am now." But yet she fled to London because she feared to leave herself at Matching when Burgo Fitzgerald should be there. She sent no answer to his letter. She made no preparation for going with him. She longed to see Alice, to whom alone, since her marriage, had she ever spoken of her love, and intended to tell her the whole tale of that letter. She was as one who, in madness, was resolute to throw

herself from a precipice, but to whom some remnant of sanity remained which forced her to seek those who would save her from herself.

Mr Palliser had not seen her since her arrival in London, and, of course, he took her by the hand and kissed her. But it was the embrace of a brother rather than of a lover or a husband. Lady Glencora, with her full woman's nature, understood this thoroughly, and appreciated by instinct the true bearing of every touch from his hand. "I hope you are well?" she said.

"Oh, yes; quite well. And you? A little fatigued with your journey, I suppose?"

"No; not much."

"Well, we have had a debate on the Address. Don't you want to know how it has gone?"

"If it has concerned you particularly, I do, of course."

"Concerned me! It has concerned me certainly."

"They haven't appointed you yet; have they?"

"No; they don't appoint people during debates, in the House of Commons. But I fear I shall never make you a politician."

"I'm almost afraid you never will. But I'm not the less anxious for your success, since you wish it yourself. I don't understand why you should work so very hard; but, as you like it, I'm as anxious as anybody can be that you should triumph."

"Yes; I do like it," he said. "A man must like something, and I don't know what there is to like better. Some people can eat and drink all day; and some people can care about a horse. I can do neither."

And there were others, Lady Glencora thought, who could love to lie in the sun, and could look up into the eyes of women, and seek their happiness there. She was sure, at any rate, that she knew one such. But she said nothing of this.

"I spoke for a moment to Lord Brock," said Mr Palliser. Lord Brock was the name by which the present Jove of the Treasury was known among men.

"And what did Lord Brock say?"

"He didn't say much, but he was very cordial."

"But I thought, Plantagenet, that he could appoint you if he pleased? Doesn't he do it all?"

"Well, in one sense, he does. But I don't suppose I shall ever make you understand." He endeavoured, however, to do so on the present occasion, and gave

her a somewhat longer lecture on the working of the British Constitution, and the manner in which British politics evolved themselves, than would have been expected from most young husbands to their young wives under similar circumstances. Lady Glencora yawned, and strove lustily, but ineffectually, to hide her yawn in her handkerchief.

"But I see you don't care a bit about it," said he, peevishly.

"Don't be angry, Plantagenet. Indeed I do care about it, but I am so ignorant that I can't understand it all at once. I am rather tired, and I think I'll go to bed now. Shall you be late?"

"No, not very; that is, I shall be rather late. I've a lot of letters I want to write to-night, as I must be at work all to-morrow. By-the-by, Mr Bott is coming to dine here. There will be no one else." The next day was a Wednesday, and the House would not sit in the evening.

"Mr Bott!" said Lady Glencora, showing by her voice that she anticipated no pleasure from that gentleman's company.

"Yes, Mr Bott. Have you any objection?"

"Oh, no. Would you like to dine alone with him?"

"Why should I dine alone with him? Why shouldn't you eat your dinner with us? I hope you are not going to become fastidious, and to turn up your nose at people. Mrs Marsham is in town, and I dare say she'll come to you if you ask her."

But this was too much for Lady Glencora. She was disposed to be mild, but she could not endure to have her two duennas thus brought upon her together on the first day of her arrival in London. And Mrs Marsham would be worse than Mr Bott. Mr Bott would be engaged with Mr Palliser during the greater part of the evening. "I thought," said she, "of asking my cousin, Alice Vavasor, to spend the evening with me."

"Miss Vavasor!" said the husband. "I must say that I thought Miss Vavasor—" He was going to make some allusion to that unfortunate hour spent among the ruins, but he stopped himself.

"I hope you have nothing to say against my cousin?" said his wife. "She is my only near relative that I really care for;—the only woman, I mean."

"No; I don't mean to say anything against her. She's very well as a young lady, I dare say. I would sooner that you would ask Mrs Marsham to-morrow."

Lady Glencora was standing, waiting to go away to her own room, but it was absolutely necessary that this matter should be decided before she went. She felt

that he was hard to her, and unreasonable, and that he was treating her like a child who should not be allowed her own way in anything. She had endeavoured to please him, and, having failed, was not now disposed to give way.

"As there will be no other ladies here to-morrow evening, Plantagenet, and as I have not yet seen Alice since I have been in town, I wish you would let me have my way in this. Of course I cannot have very much to say to Mrs Marsham, who is an old woman."

"I especially want Mrs Marsham to be your friend," said he.

"Friendships will not come by ordering, Plantagenet," said she.

"Very well," said he. "Of course, you will do as you please. I am sorry that you have refused the first favour I have asked you this year." Then he left the room, and she went away to bed.

CHAPTER XLIII. Mrs Marsham

But Lady Glencora was not brought to repentance by her husband's last words. It seemed to her to be so intolerably cruel, this demand of his, that she should be made to pass the whole of her first evening in town with an old woman for whom it was impossible that she should entertain the slightest regard, that she resolved upon rebellion. Had he positively ordered Mrs Marsham, she would have sent for that lady, and have contented herself with enduring her presence in disdainful silence; but Mr Palliser had not given any order. He had made a request, and a request, from its very nature, admits of no obedience. The compliance with a request must be voluntary, and she would not send for Mrs Marsham, except upon compulsion. Had not she also made a request to him, and had not he refused it? It was his prerogative, undoubtedly, to command; but in that matter of requests she had a right to expect that her voice should be as potent as his own. She wrote a line, therefore, to Alice before she went to bed, begging her cousin to come to her early on the following day, so that they might go out together, and then afterwards dine in company with Mr Bott.

"I know that will be an inducement to you," Lady Glencora said, "because your generous heart will feel of what service you may be to me. Nobody else will be here,—unless, indeed, Mrs Marsham should be asked, unknown to myself."

Then she sat herself down to think,—to think especially about the cruelty of husbands. She had been told over and over again, in the days before her marriage, that Burgo would ill-use her if he became her husband. The Marquis of Auld Reekie had gone so far as to suggest that Burgo might probably beat her. But what hard treatment, even what beating, could be so unendurable as this total want of sympathy, as this deadness in life, which her present lot entailed upon her? As for that matter of beating, she ridiculed the idea in her very soul. She sat smiling at the absurdity of the thing as she thought of the beauty of Burgo's eyes, of the softness of his touch, of the loving, almost worshipping, tones of his voice. Would it not even be better to be beaten by him than to have politics explained to her at one o'clock at night by such a husband as Plantagenet Palliser? The British Constitution, indeed! Had she married Burgo they would have been in sunny Italy, and he would have told her some other tale than that as they sat together under the pale moonlight. She had a little water-coloured drawing called Raphael and Fornarina, and she was infantine enough to tell herself that the so-called Raphael

was like her Burgo—no, not her Burgo, but the Burgo that was not hers. At any rate, all the romance of the picture she might have enjoyed had they allowed her to dispose as she had wished of her own hand. She might have sat in marble balconies, while the vines clustered over her head, and he would have been at her knee, hardly speaking to her, but making his presence felt by the halo of its divinity. He would have called upon her for no hard replies. With him near her she would have enjoyed the soft air, and would have sat happy, without trouble, lapped in the delight of loving. It was thus that Fornarina sat. And why should not such a lot have been hers? Her Raphael would have loved her, let them say what they would about his cruelty.

Poor, wretched, overburthened child, to whom the commonest lessons of life had not yet been taught, and who had now fallen into the hands of one who was so ill-fitted to teach them! Who would not pity her? Who could say that the fault was hers? The world had laden her with wealth till she had had no limb free for its ordinary uses, and then had turned her loose to run her race!

"Have you written to your cousin?" her husband asked her the next morning. His voice, as he spoke, clearly showed that his anger was either over or suppressed.

"Yes; I have asked her to come and drive, and then to stay for dinner. I shall send the carriage for her if she can come. The man is to wait for an answer."

"Very well," said Mr Palliser, mildly. And then, after a short pause, he added, "As that is settled, perhaps you would have no objection to ask Mrs Marsham also?"

"Won't she probably be engaged?"

"No; I think not," said Mr Palliser. And then he added, being ashamed of the tinge of falsehood of which he would otherwise have been guilty, "I know she is not engaged."

"She expects to come, then?" said Lady Glencora.

"I have not asked her, if you mean that, Glencora. Had I done so, I should have said so. I told her that I did not know what your engagements were."

"I will write to her, if you please," said the wife, who felt that she could hardly refuse any longer.

"Do, my dear!" said the husband. So Lady Glencora did write to Mrs Marsham, who promised to come,—as did also Alice Vavasor.

Lady Glencora would, at any rate, have Alice to herself for some hours before dinner. At first she took comfort in that reflection; but after a while she bethought herself that she would not know what to tell Alice, or what not to tell. Did she mean to show that letter to her cousin? If she did show it, then,—so she argued

with herself,—she must bring herself to endure the wretchedness of her present lot, and must give up for ever all her dreams about Raphael and Fornarina. If she did not show it,—or, at any rate, tell of it,—then it would come to pass that she would leave her husband under the protection of another man, and she would become—what she did not dare to name even to herself. She declared that so it must be. She knew that she would go with Burgo, should he ever come to her with the means of going at his and her instant command. But should she bring herself to let Alice know that such a letter had been conveyed to her, Burgo would never have such power.

I remember the story of a case of abduction in which a man was tried for his life, and was acquitted, because the lady had acquiesced in the carrying away while it was in progress. She had, as she herself declared, armed herself with a sure and certain charm or talisman against such dangers, which she kept suspended round her neck; but whilst she was in the post-chaise she opened the window and threw the charm from her, no longer desiring, as the learned counsel for the defence efficiently alleged, to be kept under the bonds of such protection. Lady Glencora's state of mind was, in its nature, nearly the same as that of the lady in the post-chaise. Whether or no she would use her charm, she had not yet decided, but the power of doing so was still hers.

Alice came, and the greeting between the cousins was very affectionate. Lady Glencora received her as though they had been playmates from early childhood; and Alice, though such impulsive love was not natural to her as to the other, could not bring herself to be cold to one who was so warm to her. Indeed, had she not promised her love in that meeting at Matching Priory in which her cousin had told her of all her wretchedness? "I will love you!" Alice had said; and though there was much in Lady Glencora that she could not approve,—much even that she could not bring herself to like,—still she would not allow her heart to contradict her words.

They sat so long over the fire in the drawing-room that at last they agreed that the driving should be abandoned.

"What's the use of it?" said Lady Glencora. "There's nothing to see, and the wind is as cold as charity. We are much more comfortable here; are we not?" Alice quite acquiesced in this, having no great desire to be driven through the parks in the gloom of a February afternoon.

"If I had Dandy and Flirt up here, there would be some fun in it; but Mr Palliser doesn't wish me to drive in London."

"I suppose it would be dangerous?"

"Not in the least. I don't think it's that he minds; but he has an idea that it looks fast."

"So it does. If I were a man, I'm sure I shouldn't like my wife to drive horses about London."

"And why not? Just because you'd be a tyrant,—like other husbands? What's the harm of looking fast, if one doesn't do anything improper? Poor Dandy, and dear Flirt! I'm sure they'd like it."

"Perhaps Mr Palliser doesn't care for that?"

"I can tell you something else he doesn't care for. He doesn't care whether Dandy's mistress likes it."

"Don't say that, Glencora."

"Why not say it,—to you?"

"Don't teach yourself to think it. That's what I mean. I believe he would consent to anything that he didn't think wrong."

"Such as lectures about the British Constitution! But never mind about that, Alice. Of course the British Constitution is everything to him, and I wish I knew more about it;—that's all. But I haven't told you whom you are to meet at dinner."

"Yes, you have—Mr Bott."

"But there's another guest, a Mrs Marsham. I thought I'd got rid of her for to-day, when I wrote to you; but I hadn't. She's coming."

"She won't hurt me at all," said Alice.

"She will hurt me very much. She'll destroy the pleasure of our whole evening. I do believe that she hates you, and that she thinks you instigate me to all manner of iniquity. What fools they all are!"

"Who are they all, Glencora?"

"She and that man, and—. Never mind. It makes me sick when I think that they should be so blind. Alice, I hardly know how much I owe to you; I don't, indeed. Everything, I believe." Lady Glencora, as she spoke, put her hand into her pocket, and grasped the letter which lay there.

"That's nonsense," said Alice.

"No; it's not nonsense. Who do you think came to Matching when I was there?"

"What;—to the house?" said Alice, feeling almost certain that Mr Fitzgerald was the person to whom Lady Glencora was alluding.

"No; not to the house."

"If it is the person of whom I am thinking," said Alice, solemnly, "let me implore you not to speak of him."

"And why should I not speak of him? Did I not speak of him before to you, and was it not for good? How are you to be my friend, if I may not speak to you of everything?"

"But you should not think of him."

"What nonsense you talk, Alice! Not think of him! How is one to help one's thoughts? Look here."

Her hand was on the letter, and it would have been out in a moment, and thrown upon Alice's lap, had not the servant opened the door and announced Mrs Marsham.

"Oh, how I do wish we had gone to drive!" said Lady Glencora, in a voice which the servant certainly heard, and which Mrs Marsham would have heard had she not been a little hard of hearing,—in her bonnet.

"How do, my dear?" said Mrs Marsham. "I thought I'd just come across from Norfolk Street and see you, though I am coming to dinner in the evening. It's only just a step, you know. How d'ye do, Miss Vavasor?" and she made a salutation to Alice which was nearly as cold as it could be.

Mrs Marsham was a woman who had many good points. She was poor, and bore her poverty without complaint. She was connected by blood and friendship with people rich and titled; but she paid to none of them egregious respect on account of their wealth or titles. She was staunch in her friendships, and staunch in her enmities. She was no fool, and knew well what was going on in the world. She could talk about the last novel, or—if need be—about the Constitution. She had been a true wife, though sometimes too strong-minded, and a painstaking mother, whose children, however, had never loved her as most mothers like to be loved.

The catalogue of her faults must be quite as long as that of her virtues. She was one of those women who are ambitious of power, and not very scrupulous as to the manner in which they obtain it. She was hardhearted, and capable of pursuing an object without much regard to the injury she might do. She would not flatter wealth or fawn before a title, but she was not above any artifice by which she might ingratiate herself with those whom it suited her purpose to conciliate. She thought evil rather than good. She was herself untrue in action, if not absolutely in word. I

do not say that she would coin lies, but she would willingly leave false impressions. She had been the bosom friend, and in many things the guide in life, of Mr Palliser's mother; and she took a special interest in Mr Palliser's welfare. When he married, she heard the story of the loves of Burgo and Lady Glencora; and though she thought well of the money, she was not disposed to think very well of the bride. She made up her mind that the young lady would want watching, and she was of opinion that no one would be so well able to watch Lady Glencora as herself. She had not plainly opened her mind on this matter to Mr Palliser; she had not made any distinct suggestion to him that she would act as Argus to his wife. Mr Palliser would have rejected any such suggestion, and Mrs Marsham knew that he would do so; but she had let a word or two drop, hinting that Lady Glencora was very young,—hinting that Lady Glencora's manners were charming in their childlike simplicity; but hinting also that precaution was, for that reason, the more necessary. Mr Palliser, who suspected nothing as to Burgo or as to any other special peril, whose whole disposition was void of suspicion, whose dry nature realized neither the delights nor the dangers of love, acknowledged that Glencora was young. He especially wished that she should be discreet and matronly; he feared no lovers, but he feared that she might do silly things,—that she would catch cold,—and not know how to live a life becoming the wife of a Chancellor of the Exchequer. Therefore he submitted Glencora,—and, to a certain extent, himself,—into the hands of Mrs Marsham.

Lady Glencora had not been twenty-four hours in the house with this lady before she recognized in her a duenna. In all such matters no one could be quicker than Lady Glencora. She might be very ignorant about the British Constitution, and, alas! very ignorant also as to the real elements of right and wrong in a woman's conduct, but she was no fool. She had an eye that could see, and an ear that could understand, and an abundance of that feminine instinct which teaches a woman to know her friend or her enemy at a glance, at a touch, at a word. In many things Lady Glencora was much quicker, much more clever, than her husband, though he was to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, and though she did know nothing of the Constitution. She knew, too, that he was easily to be deceived,—that though his intelligence was keen, his instincts were dull,—that he was gifted with no fineness of touch, with no subtle appreciation of the characters of men and women; and, to a certain extent, she looked down upon him for his obtuseness. He should have been aware that Burgo was a danger to be avoided; and he should have been aware also that Mrs Marsham was a duenna not to be employed. When a woman knows that she is guarded by a watch-dog, she is bound to deceive her Cerberus, if it be possible, and is usually not ill-disposed to deceive also the owner of Cerberus. Lady Glencora felt that Mrs Marsham was her Cerberus, and she was heartily resolved that if she was to be kept in the proper line at all, she would not be so kept by Mrs Marsham.

Alice rose and accepted Mrs Marsham's salutation quite as coldly as it had been given, and from that time forward those two ladies were enemies. Mrs Marsham, groping quite in the dark, partly guessed that Alice had in some way interfered to prevent Lady Glencora's visit to Monkshade, and, though such prevention was, no doubt, good in that lady's eyes, she resented the interference. She had made up her mind that Alice was not the sort of friend that Lady Glencora should have about her. Alice recognized and accepted the feud.

"I thought I might find you at home," said Mrs Marsham, "as I know you are lazy about going out in the cold,—unless it be for a foolish midnight ramble," and Mrs Marsham shook her head. She was a little woman, with sharp small eyes, with a permanent colour in her face, and two short, crisp, grey curls at each side of her face; always well dressed, always in good health, and, as Lady Glencora believed, altogether incapable of fatigue.

"The ramble you speak of was very wise, I think," said Lady Glencora; "but I never could see the use of driving about in London in the middle of winter."

"One ought to go out of the house every day," said Mrs Marsham.

"I hate all those rules. Don't you, Alice?" Alice did not hate them, therefore she said nothing.

"My dear Glencora, one must live by rules in this life. You might as well say that you hated sitting down to dinner."

"So I do, very often; almost always when there's company."

"You'll get over that feeling after another season in town," said Mrs Marsham, pretending to suppose that Lady Glencora alluded to some remaining timidity in receiving her own guests.

"Upon my word I don't think I shall. It's a thing that seems always to be getting more grievous, instead of less so. Mr Bott is coming to dine here to-night."

There was no mistaking the meaning of this. There was no pretending even to mistake it. Now, Mrs Marsham had accepted the right hand of fellowship from Mr Bott,—not because she especially liked him, but in compliance with the apparent necessities of Mr Palliser's position. Mr Bott had made good his ground about Mr Palliser; and Mrs Marsham, as she was not strong enough to turn him off from it, had given him the right hand of fellowship.

"Mr Bott is a Member of Parliament, and a very serviceable friend of Mr Palliser's," said Mrs Marsham.

"All the same; we do not like Mr Bott—do we, Alice? He is Doctor Fell to us; only I think we could tell why."

"I certainly do not like him," said Alice.

"It can be but of small matter to you, Miss Vavasor," said Mrs Marsham, "as you will not probably have to see much of him."

"Of the very smallest moment," said Alice. "He did annoy me once, but will never, I dare say, have an opportunity of doing so again."

"I don't know what the annoyance may have been."

"Of course you don't, Mrs Marsham."

"But I shouldn't have thought it likely that a person so fully employed as Mr Bott, and employed, too, on matters of such vast importance, would have gone out of his way to annoy a young lady whom he chanced to meet for a day or two in a country-house."

"I don't think that Alice means that he attempted to flirt with her," said Lady Glencora, laughing. "Fancy Mr Bott's flirtation!"

"Perhaps he did not attempt," said Mrs Marsham; and the words, the tone, and the innuendo together were more than Alice was able to bear with equanimity.

"Glencora," said she, rising from her chair, "I think I'll leave you alone with Mrs Marsham. I'm not disposed to discuss Mr Bott's character, and certainly not to hear his name mentioned in disagreeable connection with my own."

But Lady Glencora would not let her go. "Nonsense, Alice," she said. "If you and I can't fight our little battles against Mr Bott and Mrs Marsham without running away, it is odd. There is a warfare in which they who run away never live to fight another day."

"I hope, Glencora, you do not count me as your enemy?" said Mrs Marsham, drawing herself up.

"But I shall,—certainly, if you attack Alice. Love me, love my dog. I beg your pardon, Alice; but what I meant was this, Mrs Marsham; Love me, love the best friend I have in the world."

"I did not mean to offend Miss Vavasor," said Mrs Marsham, looking at her very grimly. Alice merely bowed her head. She had been offended, and she would not deny it. After that, Mrs Marsham took herself off, saying that she would be back to dinner. She was angry, but not unhappy. She thought that she could put down Miss Vavasor, and she was prepared to bear a good deal from Lady Glencora—for Mr Palliser's sake, as she said to herself, with some attempt at a sentimental remembrance of her old friend.

"She's a nasty old cat," said Lady Glencora, as soon as the door was closed; and she said these words with so droll a voice, with such a childlike shaking of her head, with so much comedy in her grimace, that Alice could not but laugh. "She is," said Lady Glencora. "I know her, and you'll have to know her, too, before you've done with her. It won't at all do for you to run away when she spits at you. You must hold your ground, and show your claws,—and make her know that if she spits, you can scratch."

"But I don't want to be a cat myself."

"She'll find I'm of the genus, but of the tiger kind, if she persecutes me. Alice, there's one thing I have made up my mind about. I will not be persecuted. If my husband tells me to do anything, as long as he is my husband I'll do it; but I won't be persecuted."

"You should remember that she was a very old friend of Mr Palliser's mother."

"I do remember; and that may be a very good reason why she should come here occasionally, or go to Matching, or to any place in which we may be living. It's a bore, of course; but it's a natural bore, and one that ought to be borne."

"And that will be the beginning and the end of it."

"I'm afraid not, my dear. It may perhaps be the end of it, but I fear it won't be the beginning. I won't be persecuted. If she gives me advice, I shall tell her to her face that it's not wanted; and if she insults any friend of mine, as she did you, I shall tell her that she had better stay away. She'll go and tell him, of course; but I can't help that. I've made up my mind that I won't be persecuted."

After that, Lady Glencora felt no further inclination to show Burgo's letter to Alice on that occasion. They sat over the drawing-room fire, talking chiefly of Alice's affairs, till it was time for them to dress. But Alice, though she spoke much of Mr Grey, said no word as to her engagement with George Vavasor. How could she speak of it, inasmuch as she had already resolved,—already almost resolved,—that that engagement also should be broken?

Alice, when she came down to the drawing-room, before dinner, found Mr Bott there alone. She had dressed more quickly than her friend, and Mr Palliser had not yet made his appearance.

"I did not expect the pleasure of meeting Miss Vavasor to-day," he said, as he came up, offering his hand. She gave him her hand, and then sat down, merely muttering some word of reply.

"We spent a very pleasant month down at Matching together;—didn't you think so?"