

Louis had a happy nature, light-hearted, facile, and, and—but in short, the exact opposite of your poor uncle. *Louis le débonnaire*, I used to call him, fondly and playfully.” She sighed. “I over-indulged him, my love, for it seemed to me as though Providence had bestowed him upon us. My dear brother designed him for his heir; being himself a great invalid, and unlikely to marry. We planned that Louis should assume his mother’s name, and become one day Marney of Orsett.”

“And you cast him off because he married my mother,” said Jeanne, holding her head very high, in spite of her timidity.

“My dear Jane, I cannot discuss your father’s conduct with you,” said Miss Marney, with great dignity; “it would be neither charitable, nor seemly. When I tell you that all our hopes were centred in him, you must imagine for yourself, as well as you can, that we did not lightly decide to abandon them for ever. It pleased God,” Miss Caroline’s voice shook, but her sunken eyes gleamed brightly, “that he should atone by a gallant death for many errors of youth——”

“They have all died like that, the de Coursets—it is the family tradition,” said Jeanne, with a throb of pride; “but, oh! how frightened that made me for Louis all through the Boer War. And he was never even wounded—after all!”

“It also pleased God,” said Miss Marney, “that the last of the Marneys of Orsett should be—just an old brother and sister living together, and alone; pursued by misfortune, as you must know.”

Jeanne had heard of the great fire which had destroyed Orsett Hall, and she nodded sympathetically.

“I know you lost your home,” she said softly.

“And my brother,” said Miss Marney. “He was not an old man, but he never recovered the shock; he would not face the rebuilding of Orsett, so we came to London. I had always desired to live in London, thus sorrowfully was my wish attained—too late to give me any pleasure. We bought