

was waiting on table. I'm sorry for that girl: it isn't any fun being poor. I didn't take much interest in women after that. I put my surplus affections into stocks and shares, and bulling and bearing. . . . Well, that is the way the thing has gone till now."

"What became of your father and your brother?" she asked in a neutral tone.

"I don't know anything about my father. He disappeared after I left, and never turned up again. And Jim—poor Jim!—he was shiftless. Jim was a tanner. It was no good setting him up in business. Steady income was the cheapest way. But Jim died of too much time on his hands. His son is in Mexico somewhere. I sent him there, and I hope he'll stay. If he doesn't, his salary stops: he is shiftless too. That is not the kind of thing, and they are not the kind of people you know best, Miss Raglan."

He looked at her, eyes full-front, bravely, honestly, ready to face the worst. Her head was turned away. He nodded to himself. It was as he feared.

At that moment a boy came running along the walk towards them, and handed Mr. Vandewaters a telegram. He gave the lad a few pence, then, with an apology, opened the telegram. Presently he whistled softly, in a quick surprised way. Then he stuffed the paper into his waistcoat pocket, threw away his cigar, and turned to Gracia Raglan, whose face as yet was only half towards him. "I hope your news is good," she said very quietly.

"Pretty bad, in a way," he answered. "I have lost a couple of millions—maybe a little more."

She gasped, and turned an astonished face on him. He saw her startled look, and laughed.

"Does it not worry you?" she asked.