

her passages from 'Maud,' he declared that existence had nothing further to give than that; while she, for her part, was eager to have him tell her of the squabbles and intrigues of Parliamentary life, and expressed her settled belief that *Vanity Fair* was the cleverest book in the whole world.

On the morning of the day on which he was to leave, he brought down to the breakfast-room a newspaper. He laughed as he handed it to her.

This was a copy of the *Ballinascreen Sentinel*, which contained not only an account of the interview between Mr. Balfour, M.P., and a deputation from his constituents, but also a leading article on that event. The *Ballinascreen Sentinel* waxed eloquent over the matter. 'The Member for Ballinascreen was 'a renegade Scotchman, whose countrymen were ashamed to send him to Parliament, and who had the audacity to accept the representation of an Irish borough, which had been grossly betrayed and insulted as the reward for its mistaken generosity.' There was a good deal more of the same sort of thing; it had not much novelty for Balfour.

But it was new to Lady Sylvia. It was with flashing eyes and crimsoned cheek that she rose and carried the newspaper to her father, who was standing at the window. Lord Willowby merely looked down the column and smiled.

'Balfour is accustomed to it,' said he.

'But is it fair, is it sufferable,' she said, with that hot indignation still in her face, 'that any one should have to grow accustomed to such treatment? Is this the reward in store for a man who spends his life in the public service? The writer of that shameful attack ought to be prosecuted; he ought to be fined and imprisoned. If I were a man, I would horsewhip him, and I am sure he would run away fast enough.'

'Oh no, Lady Sylvia,' said Balfour, though his heart warmed to the girl for that generous espousal of his cause. 'You must remember that he is smarting under the wrongs of Ireland, or rather the wrongs of Ballinascreen. I dare say, if I were a leading man in a borough, I should not like to have the member representing the borough simply making a fool of it. I can see the joke of the situation, although I am a Scotchman; but you can't expect the people in the borough to see it. And if my friend the

editor uses warm language, you see that is how he earns his bread. I have no doubt, when they kick me out of Ballinascreen, and if I can get in for some other place, I shall meet him down at Westminster, and he will have no hesitation at all in asking me to help to get his son the Governorship of Timbuctoo, or some such post.'

Was not this generous? she said to herself. He might have exacted damages from this poor man. Perhaps he might have had him imprisoned and sent to the treadmill. But no. There was no malice in his nature, no anxious vanity, no sentiment of revenge. Lady Sylvia's was not the only case in which it might have been remarked that the most ordinary qualities of prudence or indifference exhibited by a young man become, in the eyes of the young man's sweetheart, proof of a forbearance, a charity, a goodness, altogether heroic and sublime.

Her mother having died when she was a mere child, Lady Sylvia had known scarcely any grief more serious than the loss of a pet canary, or the withering of a favorite flower. Her father professed an elaborate phraseological love for her, and he was undoubtedly fond of his only child; but he also dearly liked his personal liberty, and he had from her earliest years accustomed her to bid him good-by without much display of emotion on either side. But now, on this morning, a strange heaviness of heart possessed her. She looked forward to that drive to the station with a dull sense of foreboding; she thought of herself coming back alone—for her father was going up to town with Balfour—and for the first time in her life the solitude of the Hall seemed to her something she could not bear.

'Sylvia,' said her father, when they had all got into the wagonette, 'you don't look very bright this morning.'

She started, and flushed with an anxious shame. She hoped they would not think she was cast down merely because she was going to bid good-by to Mr. Balfour for a few days. Would they not meet on the following Wednesday at her uncle's?

So, as they drove over to the station, the girl was quite unusually gay and cheerful. She was no longer the serious Syllabus whom her cousin Johnny used to tease into petulance. Balfour was glad to see her looking so bright; doubtless the drive through the sweet fresh air had raised her spirits.