

thing of frost in it, and at once went on to the question, "How is Lady Honoria?"

Sir Roderick was a man whom any allusion to his wife was apt to affect like cold water dropped into a boiling saucepan. "Lady Honoria," he said drily, "is enjoying the best of health, which she wouldn't be doing if she came yachting with me.—And tell me, my dear sweet child, how is your delightful mother?"

These last words were addressed not to Mrs. Vernon, but to the lady whose figure he had just now been commending, and to whom he had by this time attached himself by taking possession of her hand, and turning her round to the light, in order to examine her necklace.

Meanwhile the room had been slowly filling. Seaton could not make out much with regard to the composition of the company; but he found, when dinner was announced, that Mrs. Vernon was assigned to him as a partner, whilst Glanville led the way with a lady of stately aspect, to whose hair, like white floss-silk slightly sprinkled with diamonds, some black lace was attached, which gave her the air of an abbess. When the dimness of the drawing-room was exchanged for the sparkling lights of the dining-room, some dozen people found themselves confronting each other at a round table; and Mrs. Vernon's attention having been engrossed by her other neighbour, Seaton had nothing to do but look about him and listen. At first everything seemed to him hardly more real than a dream. Then gradually out of the confused murmur of voices he heard certain conversations emerge which, to some degree, were intelligible. They bore a singular resemblance to those which had, at the ball in London, sent Mr. Brock to his bed with such a sense of his own superiority. Indeed, one of the subjects was the same—namely, the doings of the fair Mrs. Majendie, who was, it appeared, on the eve of achieving renown in the Divorce Court, and already was far more celebrated than most Cabinet Ministers. Another subject which seemed to be equally popular, was some one