

Camberwell—Athelstan the Smirched and Soiled—stood beside the altar, tall and gallant, and gave away the bride for all the world to see—nobody in the least ashamed of him. There was not any breath of scandal left. Here he was, returned from his travels, a tall and proper man, dressed in broadcloth, perhaps with money in purse, prosperous and successful in the sight of all. His mother gazed upon him when she should have been looking at the bride or into her Prayer Book. Her eyes were red, but then a mother is allowed a tear or two when her daughter leaves the nest. And as to those who had whispered words about family jars, quarrels and estrangements, or had spoken against the fair fame of the groom, they were now as mute as mice.

All the richer members of the House of Arundel—the City Arundels—were present. One of them—chief partner in a leading firm of accountants—afterwards computed, for the greater increase of the family glory, how many hundreds of thousands of pounds were gathered together at one moment beneath that sacred roof. He counted the members, and made that little addition, during the performance of the ceremony. Those of the Austins who were not disgracefully poor—there are some branches of the family, I believe, pretty low down—were also present. And the company went to Pembridge Square after the service, gazed admiringly at the wedding presents, and drank the health of the bride and bridegroom, and gathered with cousinly curiosity round the returned Prodigal. But they knew nothing—mind you—of his connection with Camberwell. And nothing about his supposed complicity in the Edmund Gray business. There had been, happily, no scandal.

Among the company in the church was Mr. Dering. He stood tall and erect, his coat buttoned, his face keen and hard, the family lawyer stamped by nature and long custom.

Presently, when the service was about half way through, a change came over him. His face relaxed: the lines curved just a little laterally, the austerity vanished, his eyes brightened. He took off his gloves furtively and opened his coat. He was Edmund Gray. In that capacity he afterwards drank to the bride and wished her happiness. And he walked all the way from Pembridge Square to South Square, Gray's Inn.

I see in the future an old man growing feeble: he leans