

trouble about that; for, of course, I shall be the other trustee.'

The light on Lord Willowby's worn and sunken face suddenly vanished. But he remained very polite to his future son-in-law, and he even lit another cigarette to keep him company.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISLEADING LIGHTS.

THE two or three days Balfour now spent at Willowby Hall formed a beautiful, idle, idyllic period not soon to be forgotten either by him or by the tender-natured girl to whom he had just become engaged. Lord Willowby left them pretty much to themselves. They rode over the great dark heath, startling the rabbits; or drove along the wooded lanes, under shelter of the elms or limes; or walked through the long grass and buttercups of the park; or, in the evening, paced up and down that stone terrace, waiting for the first notes of the nightingale. It was a time for glad and wistful dreams, for tender self-confessions, and—what is more to the purpose—for the formation of perfectly ridiculous estimates of each other's character, tastes, and habits. This man, for example, who was naturally somewhat severe and exacting in his judgments, who was implacable in his contempt for meanness, hypocrisy, and pretense, and who was just a trifle too bitter and plain-spoken in expressing that contempt, had now grown wonderfully considerate to all human frailties, gentle in judgment, and good-natured in speech. He did not at all consider it necessary to tell her what he thought of her father. His fierce virtue did not prevent his promising to dine with her uncle. And he did not fancy that he himself was guilty of any gross hypocrisy in pretending to be immensely interested in the feeding of pigeons, the weeding of flower-beds, the records of local cricket matches, and the forthcoming visit of the bishop.

During those pleasant days they had talked, as lovers will, of the necessity of absolute confidence between sweetheart and sweetheart, between husband and wife. To guard against the sad misunderstandings of

life, they would always be explicitly frank with each other, whatever happened. But then, if you had reproached Balfour with concealing from his betrothed his opinion of her relations, he would probably have demanded in his turn what absolute confidence was? Would life be tolerable if every thing were to be spoken? A man comes home in the evening: he has lost his lawsuit—things have been bad in the City—perhaps he has been walking all day in a pair of tight boots: anyhow, he is tired, irritable, impatient. His wife meets him, and before letting him sit down for a moment, will hurry him off to the nursery to show him the wonderful drawings Adolphus has drawn on the wall. If he is absolutely frank, he will exclaim, 'Oh get away! You and your children are a thorough nuisance!' That would be frankness: absolute confidence could go no further. But the husband is not such a fool—he is not so selfishly cruel—as to say any thing of the kind. He goes off to get another pair of shoes; he sits down to dinner, perhaps a trifle silent; but by-and-by he recovers his equanimity, he begins to look at the brighter side of things, and is presently heard to declare that he is quite sure that boy has something of the artist in him, and that it is no wonder his mother takes such a pride in him, for he is the most intelligent child—etc.

Moreover, it was natural in the circumstances for Balfour to be unusually gentle and conciliatory. He was proud and pleased; it would have been strange if this new sense of happiness had not made him a little generous in his judgments of others. He was not consciously acting a part; but then every young man must necessarily wish to make of himself something of a hero in the eyes of his betrothed. Nor was she consciously acting a part when she impressed on him the conviction that all her aspirations and ambitions were connected with public life. Each was trying to please the other; and each was apt to see in the other what he and she desired to see there. To put the case in as short a form as may be: here was a girl whose whole nature was steeped in Tennyson, and here was a young man who had a profound admiration for Thackeray. But when, under the shadow of the great elms, in the stillness of these summer days, he read to