

## CHAPTER II

### THE GATE OF HAZARD

**W**HAT Lascelles had termed my years of vagrancy had had one educational effect—I understood the art of travelling comfortably. I thoroughly enjoyed my trip across France, and as I did not intend to take my profession too seriously, I broke my journey at Paris to renew some old and pleasant associations.

I learnt a piece of news there which gave me much satisfaction. An old 'Varsity friend of mine, Silas Mayhew, the companion of many an unsacred adventure, had been removed from Paris to the Madrid Embassy; and the renewal of our old comradeship was an anticipation of genuine pleasure, for our friendship was thoroughly sound, wind and limb.

One incident prior to my leaving London I ought perhaps to mention—the little comedy of leave-taking with Mrs. Curwen. She and my sister had fixed it up between them, and I learned the shameless manner in which Mercy had been bribed to bring it about.

After my semi-understanding with my father I felt myself in a measure bound not to do anything to interfere with the family scheme, and I told Mercy that I should not even call on Mrs. A. B. C.—our name for the widow. She betrayed me to her friend, however, and when I went into her sitting-room for an agreed