

CHAPTER XXX

TILL THE NEXT GENERATION

MAJOR DUPLAY had taken a flat in town, and Mina had come up to aid him in the task of furnishing it. The Major was busy and prosperous in these days. Blinkhampton was turning up trumps for all concerned, for Iver, for Harry, for Southend, and for him; the scheme even promised to be remunerative to the investing public. So he had told Mina that he must be on the spot, and that henceforward the country and the Continent would know him only in occasional days of recreation. He also murmured something about having met a very attractive woman, a widow of thirty-five. The general result seemed to be that he had forgotten his sorrows, was well-content, and a good deal more independent of his niece's society and countenance than he had been before. All this Mina told to Lady Evenswood when she went to lunch in Green Street.

"Yes, I think I've launched uncle," said she, complacently, "and now I shall devote myself to the Tristrams."

"You've been doing that for a long time, my dear."

"Yes, I suppose I have really," she laughed. "I've been a sort of Miss Swinkerton—I wish you knew her! Only I devoted myself to one family, and she does it for all the neighbourhood."

Lady Evenswood looked at her with a kindly smile.

"You were rather in love with Harry, you know," she said.

"Which was very absurd, but—yes, I was. Only then Cecily came and—well, it was altogether too artistic for me even to want to interfere. If I had wanted, it would have made no difference, of course. They've been pressing me to go on living at Merrion, and I shall."

"Oh, if you could get nothing but a pigsty on the estate, you'd take it. Though I don't know what you'll find to do."

"To do? Oh, plenty! Why, they're only just beginning