

Staunton Trial.

George Howard, she had striven unsuccessfully to convince the House of Lords that she was the mother of the infant claimant to the earldom.¹ Harriet was born in the year 1841, and from childhood had shown traces of weak intellect. In many respects she comported herself like other girls of her age. She was fond of dress, neat and tidy in her person; but it was impossible to give her the ordinary education, she could only express herself with great difficulty in a letter, and she could not spell the simplest words. In 1874 she left her mother's house and took up her abode in Walworth with her cousins, the Hincksmans.² Mr. Hincksman was a nephew of Mrs. Butterfield, and he had two step-daughters, Elizabeth and Alice Rhodes. The elder of these, Elizabeth, was married to a very juvenile husband, Patrick Staunton, whose brother, Louis, a year or so older than himself, was a frequent visitor at the Hincksman's.

Harriet Richardson was entitled in possession and reversion to something under four thousand pounds; Louis Staunton was an impecunious youth of three-and-twenty, an auctioneer's clerk by calling, insignificant in stature, but of the type, as a critic remarked at a later stage of his career, which housemaids call handsome. After a brief courtship they became engaged to be married. Mrs. Butterfield felt strongly that her daughter, though robust in health and of normal physique, was no. a fit person to enter into matrimony in any circumstances, and she was more than sceptical as to the disinterestedness of this particular suitor. Her opposition, however, was unavailing, and had the effect of making her daughter passionately angry and violent in her behaviour. She then attempted to place Harriet under the protection of the Court of Chancery as a lunatic, but the application was unsuccessful, and tended, not unnaturally, to increase the estrangement between parent and child.

The marriage took place at Clapham on the 16th of June, 1875, from the house of the bridegroom's sister, without any countenance from Mrs. Butterfield, who declined to be present. As there was no settlement, Louis Staunton

¹ See Annual Register, 1870.

² See pp. 46, 50.