

Rome one of the younger daughters of an illustrious ducal house. At that time his prospects had been of the best. He had been reputed clever and he was the heir to a large fortune.

The illustrious ducal house had little but its name and its past records of grandeurs on which to sustain itself, otherwise the Principessa Cristina would never have been allowed to throw herself away on a mere attaché. But the marriage had been solemnized with great ceremony; and young Ambrose and his lovely but very useless wife led a very contented existence for some seven or eight years. Then the blow had fallen. The kinsman to whose money Nigel Ambrose had been heir died, and in dying revealed the fact that he had been secretly married and as secretly separated from his wife for some time: unfortunately, though he had repented of his marriage, he could not undo the fact that his child, the son of his marriage, took precedence of young Ambrose.

The news came at a most unfortunate time, for Nigel was up to his eyes in debt. It was arranged that his wife and their two children should go back to Italy and live with her family for a time, whilst he made some new move in his career which would lead to something more materially satisfactory than diplomacy.

When they separated they had supposed that they would take up their life together again very soon; but this never came to pass. Ambrose was never able to give his wife the position and the home which she regarded naturally as her proper estate, and her family upheld her in her determination to remain in Italy. From