

prompt answer to her message to him convinced her—this she said with a happy confidence in her eyes—of the spirit in which he was now coming out to her; and if, when he came out here, she had only five minutes given to her to tell him— But the present writer refuses to reveal further the secrets that passed between these two women.

In fact, he would probably never have known, but that at this juncture he was privately appealed to for advice. And if, in the course of this faithful narrative, he has endeavoured as far as possible to keep himself in the background, and to be the mere mouth-piece and reporter of the party, that rôle must be abandoned for a moment. He must explain that he now found himself in a position of some difficulty. Balfour had written out to Lady Sylvia, informing her of the collapse of his father's firm. It was hopeless, he said, to think of the firm resuming business; the trade that had made his father's fortune was played out. In these circumstances, he considered himself bound to give up everything he possessed to his creditors, and he wished to know whether she, Lady Sylvia, would feel disposed to surrender in like manner the £50,000 settled on her before her marriage. He pointed out to her that she was not legally bound to do so, and that it was a very doubtful question whether she was morally bound; it was a matter for her private feeling. If she felt inclined to give up the money, he would endeavour to gain her father's consent. But he thought that would be difficult, unless she also would join in persuading him; and she might point out that, if he refused, she could in any case pay over the annual interest of the sum. He hoped she was well; and there an end.

Now, if Lady Sylvia had had a bank note for £50,000 in her pocket, she would have handed it over with a glad heart. She never doubted for a moment that she ought to pay over the money, especially as she now knew that it was her husband's wish; but this reference to her father rather bewildered her, and so she indirectly appealed for counsel.

Now, how was it possible to explain to this gentle creature that the principle on which an antenuptial settlement is based is that the wife is literally purchased for a sum of money, and that it is the bounden duty of the trustees to see that this purchase money shall not be inveigled away from her in any manner whatever? How was it pos-

sible to point out to her that she might have children, and that her husband and father were alike bound by their duties as trustees not to let her defraud these helpless things of the future? Nay, more: it would be necessary to tell her that these hypothetical young people might marry; and that, however they might love their mamma, papa, and grandpapa, some cantankerous son-in-law could suddenly come down on the papa and grandpapa and compel them to make good that money which they had allowed, in defiance of their trust, to be dissipated in a sort of quixotic sacrifice.

"I always thought the law was idiotic," says Queen T—.

"The law in this case is especially devoted to the protection of women, who are not supposed to be able to take care of themselves."

"Do you mean to say that if Lady Sylvia, to whom the money belongs, wishes to give it up, she can not give it up?"

"It does not belong to her; it belongs to Balfour and Lord Willowby, in trust for her; and they dare not give it up, except at their own risk. What Balfour meant by making himself a trustee can only be imagined; but he is a shrewd fellow."

"And so she can not give up the money! Surely that is a strange thing—that one is not allowed to defraud one's self!"

"You can defraud yourself as much as you like. If she chooses, she can pay over the £2,000 a year, or whatever it is, to Balfour's creditors; but if she surrendered the original sum, she would be defrauding her children; do you see that?" Or does your frantic anxiety to let a woman fling away a fortune that is legally hers blind you to everything?"

"I don't see that her children, if she has any," says this tiny but heroic champion of strict morality, "would benefit much by inheriting money that ought never to have belonged to them. That money, you know very well, belongs to Mr. Balfour's creditors."

"This I know very well: that you would be exceedingly glad to see these two absolute beggars, so that they should be thrown on each other's helpfulness. I have a suspicion that that is the foundation for this pretty anxiety in the cause of morality and justice. Now there is no use in being angry. Without doubt, you have a sensitive conscience, and you are anxious that Lady Sylvia's conscience should be consulted too; but all the same—"