

---

upon it, settled back into the past, she had plenty of leisure and plenty of temptation to revert to her old hopes and schemes. Half consciously she had allowed herself to build up a charming fabric of possibilities. *Possibly* Maurice might write and say, "It is Lucia I love, Lucia I want to marry. It matters nothing to me what her father is or was." (Quixotic and not-to-be-counted-upon piece of generosity!) *Possibly* she herself might then be justified in answering, "The accusation brought against her father has been proved false—my child is stainless—and you have proved your right to her;" and it was impossible, she believed, that Lucia, hearing all the truth, should not be touched as they would have her.

These imaginations, built upon such ardent and long-indulged wishes, acquired a considerable degree of strength during her visit to Mr. Strafford; and although a little surprised at not receiving, during her stay there, the usual weekly note from Maurice which she had calculated would cross her last important letter on the way, she came home eager to see Mr. Leigh, and to hear from him the last news from England.

But when she had paid her visit to her old