

The woman eyed the child in her arms with a frowning expression of doubt. 'All very well as long as it lasts,' she said. 'And what after that?'

'Of course, I shall call and see you,' he answered.

She looked hard at him, and expressed the whole value she set on that assurance in four words. 'Of course you will!'

The train started for London. Farnaby watched it, as it left the platform, with a look of unfeigned relief. 'There!' he thought to himself, 'Emma's reputation is safe enough now! When we are married, we mustn't have a love-child in the way of our prospects in life.'

Leaving the station, he stopped at the refreshment room, and drank a glass of brandy-and-water. 'Something to screw me up,' he thought, 'for what is to come.' What was to come (after he had got rid of the child) had been carefully considered by him, on the journey to Ramsgate. 'Emma's husband-that-is-to-be'—he had reasoned it out—'will naturally be the first person Emma wants to see, when the loss of the baby has upset the house. If Old Ronald has a grain of affection left in him, he must let her marry me after that!'

Acting on this view of his position, he took the way that led back to Slains-row, and rang the door-bell as became a visitor who had no reasons for concealment now.

The household was doubtless already disorganised by the discovery of the child's disappearance. Neither servant nor landlord was active in answering the bell. Farnaby submitted to be kept waiting with perfect composure. There are occasions on which a handsome man is bound to put his personal advantages to their best use. He took out his pocket-comb, and touched up the arrangement of his whiskers with a skilled and gentle hand. Approaching footsteps made themselves heard along the passage at

last. Farnaby put back his comb, and buttoned his coat briskly. 'Now for it!' he said, as the door was opened at last.

THE END OF THE PROLOGUE.

The Story.

CHAPTER I.

SIXTEEN years after the date of Mr. Ronald's disastrous discovery at Ramsgate—that is to say, in the year 1872—the steamship *Aquila* left the port of New York, bound for Liverpool.

It was the month of September. The passenger-list of the *Aquila* had comparatively few names inscribed on it. In the autumn season, the voyage from America to England, but for the remunerative value of the cargo, would prove to be for the most part a profitless voyage to shipowners. The flow of passengers, at that time of year, sets steadily the other way. Americans are returning from Europe to their own country. Tourists have delayed the voyage until the fierce August heat of the United States has subsided, and the delicious Indian Summer is ready to welcome them. At bed and board the passengers by the *Aquila* on her homeward voyage had plenty of room, and the choicest morsels for everybody alike on the well-spread dinner-table.

The wind was favourable, the weather was lovely. Cheerfulness and good-humour pervaded the ship from stem to stern. The courteous captain did the honours of the cabin-table with the air of a gentleman who was receiving friends in his own house. The handsome doctor promenaded the deck arm-in-arm with ladies in course of rapid recovery from the first gastric consequences of travelling by sea. The excellent chief-engineer, musical