

before he could go on talking. "All are against me now. When the world thinks a man is down—no one believes he can get up again. Trade difficulties have instantly super-vened. My trade is at a standstill. But a crueller blow—fate has cut off my right hand,—my heart is pierced, at a time when I want my head clear, and undisturbed by private woe. . . . But this is not a business question. Ah, forgive me, Mr Killick, if I ask my son-in-law to indulge me with a few words of sympathy quite apart from business. . . ."

Then, leading Seymour into the empty bureaux, Mr Copland told of the disloyal conduct of Miss Vincent. Telling the sad tale, he brought out a handkerchief and shed profuse tears.

"Her desertion has unmanned me. Brentwood, my dear fellow, you are a man of the world—with generous sympathies. You will not blame me for this weakness. What I have done for that ungrateful girl! Is it not cruel—to leave me in the hour of tribulation? At the first breath of evil report, she casts me off. Gratitude, regard, ignored—And I trusted so implicitly to her regard and proper feeling. . . . Dear Gladys, I believe, always saw through her—would not countenance her—tacitly blamed me for the connection. If you speak of this to Gladys, tell her she was right. . . ."

"Very well, we'll not pursue the subject further. . . . Thanks, thanks—you are kindness itself. Beg Mr Killick to join us. What is it that he wishes to know? How can I assist you?"

They had a long talk, but it was obvious that Mr Copland could not assist them. He could only show them his regret for a luminous past, and his fear of a dark future. He uttered unceasing laments for the death of Sir Gregory.

"What can we do without him? Knock out the cornerstone, and the building must fall. But to *me*, most of all, it is destruction. The poor dear fellow bolstered me up.—He put me on my legs and guaranteed to keep me there. And if he had lived, he would have done so. But this awful calamity—Oh, this crushing blow of death! . . ."

" . . . What is it they want to know? Most of the things I don't know myself. If they turn me inside out, they probably won't be any wiser"; and very plainly Mr Copland showed fear. He drew Lord Brentwood aside once, and spoke in a whisper. "What do they suspect? Hanky-panky?"