

2      TERESA OF WATLING STREET

is more marvellous than the rapid growth of our banking system, which is twice as great now as it was twenty years ago—and it was great enough then.

Such were the reflections of a young man who, on a June morning, stood motionless on the busy pavement opposite the headquarters of the British and Scottish Banking Company, Limited, in King William Street, City. He was a man of medium size, fair, thick-set, well-dressed, and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. The casual observer might have taken him for a superior sort of clerk, but the perfect style of his boots, his gloves, and his hat precluded such a possibility; it is in the second-rate finish of his extremities that the superior clerk, often gorgeous in a new frock-coat, betrays himself. This particular young man, the tenor of whose thoughts showed that he possessed imagination—the rarest of all qualities except honesty—had once been a clerk, but he was a clerk no longer.

He looked at his watch; it showed three minutes to twelve o'clock. He waited another minute, and then crossed through the traffic and entered the sober and forbidding portals of the bank. He had never before been inside a City bank, and the animated scene, to which