

of which belonged to him, was deserted again. There was a quicker rush out of it than into it. It stands there now, more lonely than Empire City—its derricks and machinery rusting and dropping to pieces, the houses empty and neglected, the land relapsing into its old condition of bog and marsh. But Gilead Beck will never see it again.

He kept away from Twickenham during this winding-up and settlement of affairs. It was a week later when, his mind at rest and his conscience clear of bills and doubts, because now there was nothing more to lose, he called at the house where he had spent so many happy hours.

Mrs. L'Estrange received him. She was troubled in look, and the traces of tears were on her face.

"It is a most unfortunate time," Gilead said sympathetically; "a most unfortunate time."

"Blow after blow, Mr. Beck," Agatha sobbed. "Stroke upon stroke."

"That is so, madam. They've got the knife well in, this time, and when they give it a twist we're bound to cry out. You've thought me selfish, I know, not to inquire before."

"No, Mr. Beck; no. It is only too kind of you to think of us in your own overwhelming disaster. I have never spent so wretched a week. Poor Lawrence has literally not a penny left, except what he gets from the sale of his horses, pictures, and things. Captain Ladds is the same; Phillis has no longer a farthing and now, O dear, O dear, I am going to lose her altogether."

"But when she marries Mr. Dunquerque you will see her often."

"No, no. Haven't they told you? Jack has got almost nothing—only ten thousand pounds altogether; and they have made up their minds to emigrate. They are going to Virginia, where Jack will buy a small estate."

"Is that so?" said Gilead meditatively.

"Lawrence says that he and Captain Ladds will go away together somewhere; perhaps back to Empire City."

"And you will be left alone—you, Mrs. L'Estrange—all alone in this country, and ruined. It mustn't be. He straightened himself up, and looked round the room. "It must not be, Mrs. L'Estrange. You know me partly—that is,