

Marchmont, how he perpetually used my rooms for observation purposes a system of telegraphy as to the movements of her uncle and the possibility of her getting out being arranged between them— and how I might have been in the Post Office instead of the Tin Tax, so large was the number of letters which I conveyed between the lovers.

Time went on, and at last matters arrived at such a pitch that Piers thought it best to seek an interview with Mr. Nagpore, represent the state of affairs, and ask the old gentleman's consent to his union with Miss Marchmont. He was a good actor, Piers Bulteel, and his dramatic description of his interview with Mr. Nagpore was one of the best things which he did. The old gentleman was furious, inveighed most bitterly against Bulteel's want of money, and against the frivolous, society-haunting life which he led. I fancy I can see Piers Bulteel now rolling a towel round his neck, to imitate the old gentleman's stiff cravat, and admirably representing his pomposity of manner as he addressed him—"I, sir, am a moral man, a man brought up in very different opinions from those entertained by those men of the present day whose lives I consider are disgraceful to the country to which we belong, and the age in which we live. I do not wish to say anything personally harsh to you, Mr. Bulteel; but what little money my niece may have is legally liable to my power of veto, and that power I shall undoubtedly exercise, if I thought that her fortune was to be squandered amongst that class of persons who swallow up the property of their prodigal son, and she and her husband would then look to me for sustenance." It was in vain that Bulteel assured Mr. Nagpore that he was doing him grievous wrong by those suppositions, that his life had merely been the ordinary life of a young man of the day, and that he had been in no way exceptionally vicious. These remarks only added fuel to Mr. Nagpore's wrath, who declared that the life he himself led was a protest against such lives as those commonly indulged in, and that for his niece's husband he required a man 'without any outside tinsel or glitter.'—and here Bulteel used to imitate him again,—'but a man of property honestly acquired, a man of virtue and respectability—words, sir, the meaning of which, it seems to me, is scarcely even understood now-a-days.'"

So Mr. Nagpore not merely refused his niece's hand to Piers Bulteel, but ordered that gentleman forthwith to give up prosecuting his suit; and, in order to prevent his having any immediate chance of so doing, sent Miss Marchmont to stay with some distant relations of hers, who were living at Kent. Mr. Nagpore was, he said, going away to Leeds, on some business which would occupy him a week, and he wanted to be certain that during his absence his niece would be out of Mr. Bulteel's reach.

From my window at the marker-gardener's lodging I saw Miss Marchmont packed off, in company with an old lady who came up to town to fetch her, and the next day I saw Mr. Nagpore start away in a cab, with a remarkable smart portmanteau, and looking less grim and more radiant than I had ever seen him before.

Piers Bulteel took this matter much more to heart than I had thought it possible. He was earnestly and truly attached to Ellen Marchmont, and lost all his pluck and spirits when he saw himself thus, as it were, indefinitely separated from her. I used all my endeavours to rouse him, but without success. At last, on the third day after the household of Hampstead had been broken up, Piers was so low that I insisted on his having an immediate change.