

sparrows with one bit of bread among you.'

'I don't know what you are talking about,' said Miss Honoria, with proud indifference.

'Oh yes, you do,' retorted Johnny, regarding himself in a mirror, and adjusting his white tie. 'You don't catch a man like Balfour stopping down at Willowby three whole days in the middle of the session, and all for nothing. Then it was from Willowby he telegraphed he would come here to-night after he had refused. Well, I wonder at poor old Syllabus; I thought she was a cut above a tea-and-coffee fellow. I suppose it's his £30,000 a year; at least it would be in your case, Susan. Oh, I know. I know when you part your hair at the side you mean mischief. And so we shall have a battle-royal to-night—Susan *v.* Syllabus—and all about a grocer!'

Those brothers! The young lady whom Master Johnny treated with so much familiarity and disrespect was of an appearance to drive the fancies of a young man mad. She was tall and slender and stately; though she was but just over seventeen, there was something almost mature and womanly in her presence; she had large dark eyes, heavy-lidded; big masses of black hair tightly braided up behind to show her shapely neck; a face such as Lely would have painted, but younger and fresher and pinker; a chin somewhat too full, but round with the soft contour of girlhood. She was certainly very unlike her cousin both in appearance and expression. Lady Sylvia's eyes were pensive and serious; this young woman's were full of practical life and audacity. Lady Sylvia's under lip retreated somewhat, and gave a sweet, shy, sensitive look to the fine face; whereas Honoria Blythe's under lip was full and round and ripe as a cherry, and was in fit accordance with her frank and even bold black eye.

Mrs. Blythe came into the drawing-room. She was a large and portly person, pale, with painted eyelashes and unnaturally yellow hair. Lord Willowby had no great liking for his sister-in-law; he would not allow Sylvia to go on a visit to her; when he and his daughter came to town, as on the present occasion, they stopped at a private hotel in Arlington Street. Finally, the head of the house made his appearance. Major Blythe had all the physique that his

elder brother, Lord Willowby, lacked. He was stout and roseate of face, bald for the most part, his eyes a trifle blood-shot, and his hand inclined to be unsteady, except when he was playing pool. He wore diamond studs; he said 'by Gad'; and he was hotly convinced that Arthur Orton, who was then being tried, was not Arthur Orton at all, but Roger Tichborne. So much for the younger branch of the Blythe family.

As for the elder branch, Lord Willowby was at that moment seated in an easy chair in a room in Arlington Street, reading the evening paper, while his daughter was in her own room, anxious as she never had been anxious before about her toilette and the services of the faithful Anne. Lady Sylvia had spent a miserable week. A week?—it seemed a thousand years rather; and as that portentous period had to be got through somehow, she had mostly devoted it to reading and re-reading six letters she had received from London, until every word and every phrase of these precious and secret documents was engraven on her memory. She had begun to reason with herself, too, about her hatred of the House of Commons. She tried hard to love that noble institution; she was quite sure, if only her father would take her over to Ballinascroon she would go into every house, and shake hands with the people, and persuade them to let Mr. Balfour remain their representative when the next general election came round; and she wondered, moreover, whether, when her lover went away on that perilous mission of his through the slums of Westminster, she could not, too, as well as he, put on some mean attire, and share with him the serious dangers and discomforts of that wild enterprise.

And now she was about to meet him, and a great dread possessed her lest her relatives should discover her secret. Again and again she pictured to herself the forthcoming interview, and her only safety seemed to be in preserving a cold demeanour and a perfect silence, so that she should escape the shame of being suspected.

The Blythes lived in a small and rather poorly furnished house in Dean Street, Park Lane; Lord Willowby and his daughter had not far to drive. When they went into the drawing-room, Lady Sylvia dared scarcely look around; it was only as she