

of her irresistible curiosity (of which he highly disapproved) there appeared in succession, at that woman's or girl's bridle-hand, a cavalry general in red breeches, on whom she was smiling; a rising politician in a grey suit, who talked to her with great animation but left her side abruptly to join a personage in a red fez and mounted on a white horse; and then, some time afterwards, the vexed Mr. Blunt and his indiscreet mother (though I really couldn't see where the harm was) had one more chance of a good stare. The third party that time was the Royal Pretender (Allègre had been painting his portrait lately), whose hearty, sonorous laugh was heard long before the mounted trio came riding very slowly abreast of the Blunts. There was colour in the girl's face. She was not laughing. Her expression was serious and her eyes thoughtfully downcast. Blunt admitted that on that occasion the charm, brilliance, and force of her personality was adequately framed between those magnificently mounted, paladin-like attendants, one older than the other but the two composing together admirably in the different stages of their manhood. Mr. Blunt had never before seen Henry Allègre so close. Allègre was riding nearest to the path on which Blunt was dutifully giving his arm to his mother (they had got out of their fiacre) and wondering if that confounded fellow would have the impudence to take off his hat. But he did not. Perhaps he didn't notice. Allègre was not a man of wandering glances. There were silver hairs in his beard but he looked as solid as a statue. Less than three months afterwards he was gone.

"What was it?" asked Mills, who had not changed his pose for a very long time.

"Oh, an accident. But he lingered. They were on their way to Corsica. A yearly pilgrimage. Sentimental perhaps. It was to Corsica that he carried her off — I mean first of all."