

the maidenly blush mantling to her cheek, there was not much reason to anticipate—a large family. Say, eight hundred a year for the pair. Well: eight hundred a year: a villa somewhere near Regent's Park, on the north-west side: a villa with small rooms, not stately rooms like those of Sir Jacob's: furnished with red carpet, red curtains, and no pictures—not like the furniture of Campden Villa: no carriage, but an occasional brougham and cabs—frowsy cabs: no great dinner-parties, where the light fell broken on brightly coloured glass, and was softly refracted on the velvet skin of peaches and the bloom of grapes, where servants moved softly about on the most noiseless of carpets, where the talk was of things rich, good, comfortable, and reassuring. None of these things: only Henry Bodkin with his jolly red face staring at one over a roast leg of mutton, a red-armed girl for a waiters, for guests some old friends of the old times, perhaps in the bagman line; for wine, hot sherry and brandied port: and after dinner, instead of the drawing-room with its soft lamps, music, tea, and gentle talk, Henry Bodkin and his friend sitting at opposite sides of the fireplace, smoking pipes and drinking brandy and water.

But did Sir Jacob mean anything?

And then she pictured herself the chate-laine of this splendid house—Lady Escomb: she swept in fancy across the carpets; she revelled in the sense, the imaginary sense—that is a sixth sense—of power, riches, and envied splendour. She felt herself equal to the post: she saw herself receiving Sir Jacob's guests, dispensing his hospitalities, and rejoicing in his greatness.

It was not a morning dream which would altogether have pleased Bodkin; but she gave the reins to her imagination, and as he never knew it, so he never grieved over it. That is the feminine motto in all ages: "He will never know, and so he won't grieve over it."

Mrs. Sampson, though past forty, was undeniably still a woman of some personal comeliness. She was stout, it is true, but not more stout than is becoming at that age, and she had a pleasant face still, with a certain shrewdness about the eyes which gave her an expression somewhat unusual, and therefore attractive. If the great Wellerian theory be true, that more widows are married than single women, then it will be found

on investigation that widows go off most readily at forty.

She had the morning entirely to herself. About a quarter of an hour before luncheon her lover presented himself. He was flushed and hot—came in wiping his forehead with a handkerchief, so unlike the calm, cold, and judicial Sir Jacob. "Lavinia," he cried, "you are quite alone, all alone? Like a Female Robinson Crusoe of quite the loveliest kind, born to blush unseen. 'When on those cheeks where rose and lily meet,' as the poet says. 'When on those cheeks where rose and lily meet——'"

"Henry, the servants may listen. Miss Escomb may be within hearing. Pray compose yourself."

"I can't, Lavinia, I really can't. I've great news for you, the greatest news. The Society is formed: a list of the committee has been drawn up by Lord Addlehed. I am secretary: five hundred pounds a year—*toi de lol*—'five hundred pounds a year and a heart both light and clear.' Is that right? Lord Addlehed finds all the expenses for the first year. The enemies of that philanthropic nobleman declare that he is cracked. To be sure, his manner is a little nervous; but that is from zeal in the good cause. And I put it to you, Lavinia, what greater proof of his lordship's sanity can there be than the undeniable fact that he has appointed me the secretary of the new Society?"

"What indeed, Henry?"

"Cracked, indeed! A little nervous in his manner, as I said: and his eyes are sometimes a little wild. But all pure zeal, Lavvy—my Lavvy—name the day."

"Henry!" She was, as had happened twice previously with this swain, quite carried away by the ardour of his wooing. "Henry, always the impetuous."

"Name the day, Lavinia. Oh! would she but name the day on which I might call her mine! And not Henry any more, Lavinia. Henry is associated with trade, with patent pills, with bankruptcy: call me by my second name, Theophilus. If it were not for the associations of the name, I would say, 'Call me Henry, call me Jack; call me blue or call me black—call me Theophilus or Doris, call me Sam or call Chloris—only—only—call me thine.'"

Who could be proof against pleading so impassioned?

"I really do think, Henry—I mean