

"My dear boy," Leigh said, "do not let us speak or think of the past now. You have atoned by fully confessing, the while you were nearly certain that, for the man whom you supposed to be your grandfather, to know you guilty of gambling with one of London's wildest young scapegraces, would be almost certain to result in calling down on you his deepest anger."

Ernest broke in pleasantly.

"Yes, Jarv, let us think no more about disagreeable things, or of shutting yourself up to perish of dullness in that great rambling old house of yours away in Kent; and don't descant upon our magnanimity, but come back to Maplewood, and let us all be happy," he said, cheerfully.

Jarvis suppressed a dreary little sigh. To the knowledge of the world, there was no dishonour attached to his name; and, if he was not the rich banker's grandson, he believed now that the woman who had usurped another's place, for the greed of wealth was not, as he at first—as well as others—believed his mother.

But a sweet girlish face was ever rising before his sightless eyes; and Birdie Wyld's sweet voice was ever sounding in his ears. If he was not a penniless outcast, he thought bitterly, he was blind—a mere helpless mole. It would be madness for him to dream of loving Lady Bozenthal's bright, beautiful daughter, henceforth.

It was nightfall, after a somewhat tedious journey, when our party reached Maplewood.

Mr. Chessom met them with some surprise; and Glencora, as she was passing up the stair case paused to exclaim:

"I don't wonder that you look astonished, to behold us here again, my dear Mr. Chessom—she could not to say grand papa—but the most astonishing things have happened. It will take a whole week, I'm sure, for your son to explain all that occurred in just one day. Come, Artimese. Gracious! how dreadfully jaded I feel," and the young lady went on to her dressing room.

"My poor boy, how sorry I am for this misfortune which has befallen you," Mr. Chessom said, clasping Jarvis Willoughby warmly by the hand.

"And so you are as generously forgiving as your grandson, Mr. Chessom. It is more—much more—than I deserve or hoped for," Jarvis said humbly.

"Not a word, my boy, not a word of that," the banker exclaimed, pressing the young man's hand again; "but I see you're looking weary, and Ernest is waiting to go with you to your old room. There, take him along, Ernest."

He turned then to kiss his granddaughter, and shake his son's hand.

"And what of Mrs. Willoughby?—where is she?" he inquired, as Ernest and Jarvis disappeared.

"I have many things to tell you which, as Glencora remarked, will take some time to relate," said Leigh; "let us go to the library."

"But not until you are rested and have had some refreshment, Leigh," the old gentleman said.

"I am not tired nor as famished as Miss Willoughby has been declaring herself during the last two hours of our journey; and my mind is struggling under so prodigious a load that I am anxious to relieve it at once," said Leigh.

They went to the library accordingly; and Leigh Chessom informed his father of Agatha Willoughby's death, and the singular circumstances therewith connected.

The banker's astoundment and perplexity may be more easily imagined than described.

"Am I really to understand that Mrs. Willoughby's children have been deceived into believing that she is not their mother?" he asked, half in bewilderment.

"Really and truly, dear father," Leigh told him. "It is a painfully complicated affair."

He drew a document from his pocket book.

"Here is the confession which, with her dying breath, Mrs. Willoughby affirmed to be a true one; and her last act was to sign to it a fictitious name which she positively asserted to be her real name."

"Aed in her last moments then, Mrs. Willoughby deliberately perjured herself. Leigh, ought you have permitted it?"

"I did so sorely against my will," Leigh answered. "At first, like yourself, I was horrified; but her wild, appealing look, in her passionate entreaty, forced me to accede, partly from pity, and mainly from fear lest, if I refused, a sudden and violent death might be the result. But I now sincerely regret my weakness."

Mabel—for she was still called so, old Mr. Chessom declared—that he should