

THE MATING OF LYDIA

495

that he had never really told her what he meant to do with Melrose's money. She had no precise idea. Their minds jumped together, and she saw the first laugh in his dark eyes.

"I shan't tell you! Beloved — be good and wait! But you guess already. We meet to-morrow — at Duddon."

She asked no question. The thin mystery — for her thoughts did indeed drive through it — pleased her; especially because it seemed to please him.

Then Mrs. Penfold and Susy were brought down, and Mrs. Penfold sat amid explanations and embraces, more feather-headed and inconsequent even than usual, but happy, because Lydia caressed her, and this handsome though pale young man on the hearthrug kissed her hand and even, at command, her still pink cheek; and it seemed there was to be a marriage — only not the marriage there should have been — a substitution, clearly, of Threlfall for Duddon? Lydia would live at Threlfall; would be immensely rich; and there would be no more bloodhounds in the park.

But when Faversham was gone, and realities began to sink into the little lady's mind, as Lydia sitting at her feet, and holding her hand, tried to infuse them, dejection followed. No coronet! — and now, no fortune! She did not understand these high-stepping morals, and she went sadly to bed; though never had Lydia been so sweet to her, so ready to brush her hair by the fire as long as ever she ebore, so full of daughterly promises.

Susy kissed her sister when they were alone, tenderly but absently.

"You're a rare ease, Lydia — unique, I think. The