

party gathering, to which every man had driven his own "rig," and was prepared for an evening unrestricted by idle form or ceremony. The doctor was in his drawing-room, looking as if he had but one care in the world, and that the fear that some of these troublesome women would, as usual, select this cold, stormy night, when everything was bright and cheerful, to call him with immediate and pressing urgency.

The professions were well represented. Talking with Mrs. Olmsted in a gentle tone, of many a poor patient in the poor parts of the neighborhood, was our old friend, the Rev. Mr. Ogilvie. The lawyer was not absent. His keen grey eyes were hidden beneath heavy brows, and there was that indefinable expression about him which says plainly: "I let you talk, but in point of law your evidence rests on no sound basis." Farmers were there; gentlemen who had been born in Canada, generally the descendants of half-pay officers, of either service, and many of them old countrymen, who had settled about Ashton because there was good society, and who found that a couple or three hundred pounds a year went very much further here than the same amount in the old country. Neither was the manufacturing interest without representation. Some years ago, there had been established a cloth factory on a stream not far from the village. Its former owners had fallen into the fatal but too common error of backing the paper of a firm of merchants in the neighboring town, and when the firm came to their end with a crash, the unfortunate endorser found himself a ruined man. The factory had been taken by a mortgagee, and had come under the hammer. A few weeks before the sale a stranger had been seen frequently driving out to Silver Creek, and had called for letters in the Ashton post-office by the name of Roberts, and the report was soon afloat—it was said to have originated at the post-office—that this stranger had come down with an intention of bidding at the sale. However, to those whom he occasionally met, he never disclosed his plans, and the knowing ones amongst the gossips dubbed him as "no fool." The report, however, proved true,

and Mr. Roberts had been for eighteen months the proprietor of the Silver Creek woollen mills. He was now leaning with one arm resting on the mantel-piece of Mrs. Olmsted's drawing-room, and was reviewing the company generally. His face was a curious and, indeed, interesting study. A half-open mouth, delicate features, vacant expression, narrow receding forehead, and small figure, with a very decided stoop, gave him at first sight an almost idiotically simple appearance. Nor did his voice belie his looks. With a lisp, he would talk the most senseless twaddle, and was ever ready to manufacture or to laugh at the most vapid jokes; but to those who would observe him closely, there might be seen in the midst of the most meaningless and nonsensical conversation, a quick, sly look, expressive of the sentiment, "I am not such a fool as you take me for." The unfolding of our tale will show how much of his composition was fool, and how much knave. The doctor did not like him. He couldn't, or, at any rate, would not say why it was; but it was evident that he mistrusted Mr. Roberts. The nearest explanation of his reasons that he could be persuaded to give was characteristic: "Well, a man's brain is a very small thing, and there can't be room in it for two characters. The man is either a fool or a knave. I do not know that he is a knave; but I know he is not half as great a fool as he makes himself out in company." But Mr. Roberts was not the only addition brought to Ashton by the purchase of the Silver Creek Mills. He was a married man, and Mrs. Roberts and her daughter were, when our hero entered, engaged in animated conversation with the host. Mrs. Roberts was a counterpart in many ways of her husband. The doctor said to his wife, "I don't like her; her eyes are too close together." But she was yet always considered a pretty woman, and our tale will show that she had a true woman's heart. To regular features was added a well-shaped head, shaded by the most lovely golden hair. We shall meet her again. Lucy Roberts resembled her mother very slightly. From her she had inherited the lovely golden tresses; but a pure