

why continue this incessant reasoning with himself? Better stop it at once! Why beat about the bush to prove what everyone already knew? Death in duels must come about, now and again, unless duels should be abolished altogether—a thing inconceivable! And as for the provocation he had given—what foul play had he been guilty of? The girl was eighteen, and old enough to know better, as the phrase goes. How had his conduct been unlike that of any other man of fashion and spirit? Could not the wench keep her eyes to herself? . . .

Oh no!—she meant it, all along. Innocent—inexperienced girl indeed! Innocent parent, rather! Little knows Father Stay-at-home how much his country-lass may learn of Life in a couple of seasons of town! Besides, who could say his suit would not have been *en tout bien, tout honneur*, if it had not been for his wife—curse her!—? How could anyone—how could he himself know what his course would have been had an honourable one been open to him? At least—do him this but justice!—he had honourably promised this Lucinda to make her his wife, if he could rid himself of his other encumbrance. He appealed to an imaginary court of Love and Honour with a confidence that his powers of imagination could keep it ignorant that he never meant this promise when he made it; and his confidence was misplaced, as it turned out. He had to avert summary justice—by repeating his pledge, and really meaning it, this time! He meant it, now; and could mean it with perfect safety, as he knew well that that other encumbrance would give him no chance to fling her off.

See now! A moment ago he resolved to put all this cowardice aside. And here it was back again! Patience, patience! It was all too recent for him to make an end of it yet awhile. But a time would come for forgetting. Was that Lucinda on the terrace—where his mother used