

## CHAPTER XXI.

HARDYMAN went on to the cottage. He found Isabel in some agitation. And there, by her side, with his tail wagging slowly, and his eye on Hardyman in expectation of a possible kick--there was the lost Tommie!

"Has Lady Lydiard gone?" Isabel asked eagerly.

"Yes," said Hardyman. "Where did you find the dog?"

As events had ordered it, the dog had found Isabel, under these circumstances.

The appearance of Lady Lydiard's card in the smoking-room had been an alarming event for Lady Lydiard's adopted daughter. She was guiltily conscious of not having answered her Ladyship's note, inclosed in Miss Pink's letter, and of not having taken her Ladyship's advice in regulating her conduct towards Hardyman. As he rose to leave the room and receive his visitor in the grounds, Isabel begged him to say nothing of her presence at the farm, unless Lady Lydiard exhibited a forgiving turn of mind by asking to see her. Left by herself in the smoking-room, she suddenly heard a bark in the passage which had a familiar sound in her ears. She opened the door--and in rushed Tommie, with one of his shrieks of delight! Curiosity had taken him into the house. He had heard the voices in the smoking-room; had recognized Isabel's voice; and had waited, with his customary cunning and his customary distrust of

strangers, until Hardyman was out of the way. Isabel kissed and caressed him, and then drove him out again to the lawn, fearing that Lady Lydiard might return to look for him. Going back to the smoking-room, she stood at the window watching for Hardyman's return. When the servants came to look for the dog, she could only tell them that she had last seen him in the grounds, not far from the cottage. The useless search being abandoned, and the carriage having left the gate, who should crawl out from the back of a cupboard in which some empty hampers were placed but Tommie himself! How he had contrived to get back to the smoking-room (unless she had omitted to completely close the door on her return) it was impossible to say. But there he was, determined this time to stay with Isabel, and keeping in his hiding place until he heard the movement of the carriage-wheels, which informed him that his lawful mistress had left the cottage! Isabel had at once called Hardyman, on the chance that the carriage might yet be stopped. It was already out of sight, and nobody knew which of two roads it had taken, both leading to London. In this emergency, Isabel could only look at Hardyman and ask what was to be done.

"I can't spare a servant till after the party," he answered. "The dog must be tied up in the stables."

Isabel shook her head. Tommie was not accustomed to be tied up. He would make a disturbance, and he would be beaten by the grooms. "I will take care of him," she said. "He won't leave me."

"There's something else to think of besides the dog," Hardyman rejoined irritably. "Look at these letters!" He pulled them out of his pocket as he spoke. "Here are no less than seven men, all calling themselves my friends, who accepted my invitation, and who write to excuse themselves on the very day of the party. Do you know why? They're all afraid of my father--I forgot to tell you he's a Cabinet Minister as well as a Lord. Cowards and cads. They have heard he isn't coming and they think to curry favor with the great man by stopping away. Come along, Isabel! Let's take their names off the luncheon table. Not a man of them shall ever darken my doors again!"

"I am to blame for what has happened," Isabel answered sadly. "I am estranging you from your friends. There is still time, Alfred, to alter your mind and let me go."

He put his arm round her with rough fondness. "I would sacrifice every friend I have in the world rather than lose you. Come along!"

They left the cottage. At the entrance to the tent, Hardyman noticed the dog at Isabel's heels, and vented his ill-temper, as usual with male humanity, on the nearest unoffending creature that he could find. "Be off, you mongrel brute!" he shouted. The tail of Tommie relaxed from its customary tight curve over the small of his back; and the legs of Tommie (with his tail between them) took him at full gallop to the friendly shelter of the cupboard in the smoking-room. It was one of those trifling circumstances which women notice seriously. Isabel said

nothing; she only thought to herself, "I wish he had shown his temper when I first knew him!"

They entered the tent.

"I'll read the names," said Hardyman, "and you find the cards and tear them up. Stop! I'll keep the cards. You're just the sort of woman my father likes. He'll be reconciled to me when he sees you, after we are married. If one of those men ever asks him for a place, I'll take care, if it's years hence, to put an obstacle in his way! Here; take my pencil, and make a mark on the cards to remind me; the same mark I set against a horse in my book when I don't like him--a cross, inclosed in a circle." He produced his pocketbook. His hands trembled with anger as he gave the pencil to Isabel and laid the book on the table. He had just read the name of the first false friend, and Isabel had just found the card, when a servant appeared with a message. "Mrs. Drumblade has arrived, sir, and wishes to see you on a matter of the greatest importance."

Hardyman left the tent, not very willingly. "Wait here," he said to Isabel; "I'll be back directly."

She was standing near her own place at the table. Moody had left one end of the jeweler's case visible above the napkin, to attract her attention. In a minute more the bracelet and note were in her hands. She dropped on her chair, overwhelmed by the conflicting emotions that rose

in her at the sight of the bracelet, at the reading of the note. Her head drooped, and the tears filled her eyes. "Are all women as blind as I have been to what is good and noble in the men who love them?" she wondered, sadly. "Better as it is," she thought, with a bitter sigh; "I am not worthy of him."

As she took up the pencil to write her answer to Moody on the back of her dinner-card, the servant appeared again at the door of the tent.

"My master wants you at the cottage, miss, immediately."

Isabel rose, putting the bracelet and the note in the silver-mounted leather pocket (a present from Hardyman) which hung at her belt. In the hurry of passing round the table to get out, she never noticed that her dress touched Hardyman's pocketbook, placed close to the edge, and threw it down on the grass below. The book fell into one of the heat cracks which Lady Lydiard had noticed as evidence of the neglected condition of the cottage lawn.

"You ought to hear the pleasant news my sister has just brought me," said Hardyman, when Isabel joined him in the parlor. "Mrs. Drumblade has been told, on the best authority, that my mother is not coming to the party."

"There must be some reason, of course, dear Isabel," added Mrs. Drumblade. "Have you any idea of what it can be? I haven't seen my

mother myself; and all my inquiries have failed to find it out."

She looked searchingly at Isabel as she spoke. The mask of sympathy on her face was admirably worn. Nobody who possessed only a superficial acquaintance with Mrs. Drumblade's character would have suspected how thoroughly she was enjoying in secret the position of embarrassment in which her news had placed her brother. Instinctively doubting whether Mrs. Drumblade's friendly behavior was quite as sincere as it appeared to be, Isabel answered that she was a stranger to Lady Rotherfield, and was therefore quite at a loss to explain the cause of her ladyship's absence. As she spoke, the guests began to arrive in quick succession, and the subject was dropped as a matter of course.

It was not a merry party. Hardyman's approaching marriage had been made the topic of much malicious gossip, and Isabel's character had, as usual in such cases, become the object of all the false reports that scandal could invent. Lady Rotherfield's absence confirmed the general conviction that Hardyman was disgracing himself. The men were all more or less uneasy. The women resented the discovery that Isabel was--personally speaking, at least--beyond the reach of hostile criticism. Her beauty was viewed as a downright offense; her refined and modest manners were set down as perfect acting; "really disgusting, my dear, in so young a girl." General Drumblade, a large and mouldy veteran, in a state of chronic astonishment (after his own matrimonial experience) at Hardyman's folly in marrying at all, diffused a wide circle of gloom, wherever he went and whatever he did. His accomplished

wife, forcing her high spirits on everybody's attention with a sort of kittenish playfulness, intensified the depressing effect of the general dullness by all the force of the strongest contrast. After waiting half an hour for his mother, and waiting in vain, Hardyman led the way to the tent in despair. "The sooner I fill their stomachs and get rid of them," he thought savagely, "the better I shall be pleased!"

The luncheon was attacked by the company with a certain silent ferocity, which the waiters noticed as remarkable, even in their large experience. The men drank deeply, but with wonderfully little effect in raising their spirits; the women, with the exception of amiable Mrs. Drumblade, kept Isabel deliberately out of the conversation that went on among them. General Drumblade, sitting next to her in one of the places of honor, discoursed to Isabel privately on "my brother-in-law Hardyman's infernal temper." A young marquis, on her other side--a mere lad, chosen to make the necessary speech in acknowledgment of his superior rank--rose, in a state of nervous trepidation, to propose Isabel's health as the chosen bride of their host. Pale and trembling, conscious of having forgotten the words which he had learnt beforehand, this unhappy young nobleman began: "Ladies and gentlemen, I haven't an idea--" He stopped, put his hand to his head, stared wildly, and sat down again; having contrived to state his own case with masterly brevity and perfect truth, in a speech of seven words.

While the dismay, in some cases, and the amusement in others, was still at its height, Hardyman's valet made his appearance, and, approaching

his master, said in a whisper, "Could I speak to you, sit, for a moment outside?"

"What the devil do you want?" Hardyman asked irritably. "Is that a letter in your hand? Give it to me."

The valet was a Frenchman. In other words, he had a sense of what was due to himself. His master had forgotten this. He gave up the letter with a certain dignity of manner, and left the tent. Hardyman opened the letter. He turned pale as he read it; crumpled it in his hand, and threw it down on the table. "By G--d! it's a lie!" he exclaimed furiously.

The guests rose in confusion. Mrs. Drumblade, finding the letter within her reach, coolly possessed herself of it; recognized her mother's handwriting; and read these lines:

"I have only now succeeded in persuading your father to let me write to you. For God's sake, break off your marriage at any sacrifice. Your father has heard, on unanswerable authority, that Miss Isabel Miller left her situation in Lady Lydiard's house on suspicion of theft."

While his sister was reading this letter, Hardyman had made his way to Isabel's chair. "I must speak to you, directly," he whispered. "Come away with me!" He turned, as he took her arm, and looked at the table. "Where is my letter?" he asked. Mrs. Drumblade handed it to him, dexterously crumpled up again as she had found it. "No bad news, dear



Alfred, I hope?" she said, in her most affectionate manner. Hardyman snatched the letter from her, without answering, and led Isabel out of the tent.

"Read that!" he said, when they were alone. "And tell me at once whether it's true or false."

Isabel read the letter. For a moment the shock of the discovery held her speechless. She recovered herself, and returned the letter.

"It is true," she answered.

Hardyman staggered back as if she had shot him.

"True that you are guilty?" he asked.

"No; I am innocent. Everybody who knows me believes in my innocence. It is true the appearances were against me. They are against me still." Having said this, she waited, quietly and firmly, for his next words.

He passed his hand over his forehead with a sigh of relief. "It's bad enough as it is," he said, speaking quietly on his side. "But the remedy for it is plain enough. Come back to the tent."

She never moved. "Why?" she asked.

"Do you suppose I don't believe in your innocence too?" he answered.

"The one way of setting you right with the world now is for me to make you my wife, in spite of the appearances that point to you. I'm too fond of you, Isabel, to give you up. Come back with me, and I will announce our marriage to my friends."

She took his hand, and kissed it. "It is generous and good of you," she said; "but it must not be."

He took a step nearer to her. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"It was against my will," she pursued, "that my aunt concealed the truth from you. I did wrong to consent to it, I will do wrong no more. Your mother is right, Alfred. After what has happened, I am not fit to be your wife until my innocence is proved. It is not proved yet."

The angry color began to rise in his face once more. "Take care," he said; "I am not in a humor to be trifled with."

"I am not trifling with you," she answered, in low, sad tones.

"You really mean what you say?"

"I mean it."

"Don't be obstinate, Isabel. Take time to consider."

"You are very kind, Alfred. My duty is plain to me. I will marry you--if you still wish it--when my good name is restored to me. Not before."

He laid one hand on her arm, and pointed with the other to the guests in the distance, all leaving the tent on the way to their carriages.

"Your good name will be restored to you," he said, "on the day when I make you my wife. The worst enemy you have cannot associate my name with a suspicion of theft. Remember that and think a little before you decide. You see those people there. If you don't change your mind by the time they have got to the cottage, it's good-bye between us, and good-bye forever. I refuse to wait for you; I refuse to accept a conditional engagement. Wait, and think. They're walking slowly; you have got some minutes more."

He still held her arm, watching the guests as they gradually receded from view. It was not until they had all collected in a group outside the cottage door that he spoke himself, or that he permitted Isabel to speak again.

"Now," he said, "you have had your time to get cool. Will you take my arm, and join those people with me? or will you say good-bye forever?"

"Forgive me, Alfred!" she began, gently. "I cannot consent, in justice to you, to shelter myself behind your name. It is the name of your

family; and they have a right to expect that you will not degrade it--"

"I want a plain answer," he interposed sternly. "Which is it? Yes, or No?"

She looked at him with sad compassionate eyes. Her voice was firm as she answered him in one word as he had desired. The word was--

"No."

Without speaking to her, without even looking at her, he turned and walked back to the cottage.

Making his way silently through the group of visitors--every one of whom had been informed of what had happened by his sister--with his head down and his lips fast closed, he entered the parlor and rang the bell which communicated with his foreman's rooms at the stables.

"You know that I am going abroad on business?" he said, when the man appeared.

"Yes, sir."

"I am going to-day--going by the night train to Dover. Order the horse to be put to instantly in the dogcart. Is there anything wanted before I am off?"

The inexorable necessities of business asserted their claims through the obedient medium of the foreman. Chafing at the delay, Hardyman was obliged to sit at his desk, signing checks and passing accounts, with the dogcart waiting in the stable yard.

A knock at the door startled him in the middle of his work. "Come in," he called out sharply.

He looked up, expecting to see one of the guests or one of the servants. It was Moody who entered the room. Hardyman laid down his pen, and fixed his eyes sternly on the man who had dared to interrupt him.

"What the devil do you want?" he asked.

"I have seen Miss Isabel, and spoken with her," Moody replied. "Mr. Hardyman, I believe it is in your power to set this matter right. For the young lady's sake, sir, you must not leave England without doing it."

Hardyman turned to his foreman. "Is this fellow mad or drunk?" he asked.

Moody proceeded as calmly and as resolutely as if those words had not been spoken. "I apologize for my intrusion, sir. I will trouble you with no explanations. I will only ask one question. Have you a memorandum of the number of that five-hundred pound note you paid away in France?"

Hardyman lost all control over himself.

"You scoundrel!" he cried, "have you been prying into my private affairs? Is it your business to know what I did in France?"

"Is it your vengeance on a woman to refuse to tell her the number of a bank-note?" Moody rejoined, firmly.

That answer forced its way, through Hardyman's anger, to Hardyman's sense of honor. He rose and advanced to Moody. For a moment the two men faced each other in silence. "You're a bold fellow," said Hardyman, with a sudden change from anger to irony. "I'll do the lady justice. I'll look at my pocketbook."

He put his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat; he searched his other pockets; he turned over the objects on his writing-table. The book was gone.

Moody watched him with a feeling of despair. "Oh! Mr. Hardyman, don't say you have lost your pocketbook!"

He sat down again at his desk, with sullen submission to the new disaster. "All I can say is you're at liberty to look for it," he replied. "I must have dropped it somewhere." He turned impatiently to the foreman, "Now then! What is the next check wanted? I shall go mad if

I wait in this damned place much longer!"

Moody left him, and found his way to the servants' offices. "Mr. Hardyman has lost his pocketbook," he said. "Look for it, indoors and out--on the lawn, and in the tent. Ten pounds reward for the man who finds it!"

Servants and waiters instantly dispersed, eager for the promised reward. The men who pursued the search outside the cottage divided their forces. Some of them examined the lawn and the flower-beds. Others went straight to the empty tent. These last were too completely absorbed in pursuing the object in view to notice that they disturbed a dog, eating a stolen lunch of his own from the morsels left on the plates. The dog slunk away under the canvas when the men came in, waited in hiding until they had gone, then returned to the tent, and went on with his luncheon.

Moody hastened back to the part of the grounds (close to the shrubbery) in which Isabel was waiting his return.

She looked at him, while he was telling her of his interview with Hardyman, with an expression in her eyes which he had never seen in them before--an expression which set his heart beating wildly, and made him break off in his narrative before he had reached the end.

"I understand," she said quietly, as he stopped in confusion. "You have made one more sacrifice to my welfare. Robert! I believe you are the

noblest man that ever breathed the breath of life!"

His eyes sank before hers; he blushed like a boy. "I have done nothing for you yet," he said. "Don't despair of the future, if the pocketbook should not be found. I know who the man is who received the bank note; and I have only to find him to decide the question whether it is the stolen note or not."

She smiled sadly at his enthusiasm. "Are you going back to Mr. Sharon to help you?" she asked. "That trick he played me has destroyed my belief in him. He no more knows than I do who the thief really is."

"You are mistaken, Isabel. He knows--and I know." He stopped there, and made a sign to her to be silent. One of the servants was approaching them.

"Is the pocketbook found?" Moody asked.

"No, sir."

"Has Mr. Hardyman left the cottage?"

"He has just gone, sir. Have you any further instructions to give us?"

"No. There is my address in London, if the pocketbook should be found."



The man took the card that was handed to him and retired. Moody offered his arm to Isabel. "I am at your service," he said, "when you wish to return to your aunt."

They had advanced nearly as far as the tent, on their way out of the grounds, when they were met by a gentleman walking towards them from the cottage. He was a stranger to Isabel. Moody immediately recognized him as Mr. Felix Sweetsir.

"Ha! our good Moody!" cried Felix. "Enviably man! you look younger than ever." He took off his hat to Isabel; his bright restless eyes suddenly became quiet as they rested on her. "Have I the honor of addressing the future Mrs. Hardyman? May I offer my best congratulations? What has become of our friend Alfred?"

Moody answered for Isabel. "If you will make inquiries at the cottage, sir," he said, "you will find that you are mistaken, to say the least of it, in addressing your questions to this young lady."

Felix took off his hat again--with the most becoming appearance of surprise and distress.

"Something wrong, I fear?" he said, addressing Isabel. "I am, indeed, ashamed if I have ignorantly given you a moment's pain. Pray accept my most sincere apologies. I have only this instant arrived; my health

would not allow me to be present at the luncheon. Permit me to express the earnest hope that matters may be set right to the satisfaction of all parties. Good-afternoon!"

He bowed with elaborate courtesy, and turned back to the cottage.

"Who is that?" Isabel asked.

"Lady Lydiard's nephew, Mr. Felix Sweetsir," Moody answered, with a sudden sternness of tone, and a sudden coldness of manner, which surprised Isabel.

"You don't like him?" she said.

As she spoke, Felix stopped to give audience to one of the grooms, who had apparently been sent with a message to him. He turned so that his face was once more visible to Isabel. Moody pressed her hand significantly as it rested on his arm.

"Look well at that man," he whispered. "It's time to warn you. Mr. Felix Sweetsir is the worst enemy you have!"

Isabel heard him in speechless astonishment. He went on in tones that trembled with suppressed emotion.

"You doubt if Sharon knows the thief. You doubt if I know the thief.

Isabel! as certainly as the heaven is above us, there stands the wretch who stole the bank-note!"

She drew her hand out of his arm with a cry of terror. She looked at him as if she doubted whether he was in his right mind.

He took her hand, and waited a moment trying to compose himself.

"Listen to me," he said. "At the first consultation I had with Sharon he gave this advice to Mr. Troy and to me. He said, 'Suspect the very last person on whom suspicion could possibly fall.' Those words, taken with the questions he had asked before he pronounced his opinion, struck through me as if he had struck me with a knife. I instantly suspected Lady Lydiard's nephew. Wait! From that time to this I have said nothing of my suspicion to any living soul. I knew in my own heart that it took its rise in the inveterate dislike that I have always felt for Mr. Sweetsir, and I distrusted it accordingly. But I went back to Sharon, for all that, and put the case into his hands. His investigations informed me that Mr. Sweetsir owed 'debts of honor' (as gentlemen call them), incurred through lost bets, to a large number of persons, and among them a bet of five hundred pounds lost to Mr. Hardyman. Further inquiries showed that Mr. Hardyman had taken the lead in declaring that he would post Mr. Sweetsir as a defaulter, and have him turned out of his clubs, and turned out of the betting-ring. Ruin stared him in the face if he failed to pay his debt to Mr. Hardyman on the last day left to him--the day after the note was lost. On that very morning, Lady

Lydiard, speaking to me of her nephew's visit to her, said, 'If I had given him an opportunity of speaking, Felix would have borrowed money of me; I saw it in his face.' One moment more, Isabel. I am not only certain that Mr. Sweetsir took the five-hundred pound note out of the open letter, I am firmly persuaded that he is the man who told Lord Rotherfield of the circumstances under which you left Lady Lydiard's house. Your marriage to Mr. Hardyman might have put you in a position to detect the theft. You, not I, might, in that case, have discovered from your husband that the stolen note was the note with which Mr. Sweetsir paid his debt. He came here, you may depend on it, to make sure that he had succeeded in destroying your prospects. A more depraved villain at heart than that man never swung from a gallows!"

He checked himself at those words. The shock of the disclosure, the passion and vehemence with which he spoke, overwhelmed Isabel. She trembled like a frightened child.

While he was still trying to soothe and reassure her, a low whining made itself heard at her feet. They looked down, and saw Tommie. Finding himself noticed at last, he expressed his sense of relief by a bark. Something dropped out of his mouth. As Moody stooped to pick it up, the dog ran to Isabel and pushed his head against her feet, as his way was when he expected to have the handkerchief thrown over him, preparatory to one of those games at hide-and-seek which have been already mentioned. Isabel put out her hand to caress him, when she was stopped by a cry from Moody. It was his turn to tremble now. His voice

faltered as he said the words, "The dog has found the pocketbook!"

He opened the book with shaking hands. A betting-book was bound up in it, with the customary calendar. He turned to the date of the day after the robbery.

There was the entry: "Felix Sweetsir. Paid 500 pounds. Note numbered, N 8, 70564; dated 15th May, 1875."

Moody took from his waistcoat pocket his own memorandum of the number of the lost bank-note. "Read it Isabel," he said. "I won't trust my memory."

She read it. The number and date of the note entered in the pocketbook exactly corresponded with the number and date of the note that Lady Lydiard had placed in her letter.

Moody handed the pocketbook to Isabel. "There is the proof of your innocence," he said, "thanks to the dog! Will you write and tell Mr. Hardyman what has happened?" he asked, with his head down and his eyes on the ground.

She answered him, with the bright color suddenly flowing over her face.

"You shall write to him," she said, "when the time comes."

"What time?" he asked.

She threw her arms round his neck, and hid her face on his bosom.

"The time," she whispered, "when I am your wife."

A low growl from Tommie reminded them that he too had some claim to be noticed.

Isabel dropped on her knees, and saluted her old playfellow with the heartiest kisses she had ever given him since the day when their acquaintance began. "You darling!" she said, as she put him down again, "what can I do to reward you?"

Tommie rolled over on his back--more slowly than usual, in consequence of his luncheon in the tent. He elevated his four paws in the air and looked lazily at Isabel out of his bright brown eyes. If ever a dog's look spoke yet, Tommie's look said, "I have eaten too much; rub my stomach."

POSTSCRIPT.

Persons of a speculative turn of mind are informed that the following

document is for sale, and are requested to mention what sum they will give for it.

"IOU, Lady Lydiard, five hundred pounds (L500), Felix Sweetsir."

Her Ladyship became possessed of this pecuniary remittance under circumstances which surround it with a halo of romantic interest. It was the last communication she was destined to receive from her accomplished nephew. There was a Note attached to it, which cannot fail to enhance its value in the estimation of all right-minded persons who assist the circulation of paper money.

The lines that follow are strictly confidential:

"Note.--Our excellent Moody informs me, my dear aunt, that you have decided (against his advice) on 'refusing to prosecute.' I have not the slightest idea of what he means; but I am very much obliged to him, nevertheless, for reminding me of a circumstance which is of some interest to yourself personally.

"I am on the point of retiring to the Continent in search of health. One generally forgets something important when one starts on a journey. Before Moody called, I had entirely forgotten to mention that I had the pleasure of borrowing five hundred pounds of you some little time since.

"On the occasion to which I refer, your language and manner suggested

that you would not lend me the money if I asked for it. Obviously, the only course left was to take it without asking. I took it while Moody was gone to get some curacoa; and I returned to the picture-gallery in time to receive that delicious liqueur from the footman's hands.

"You will naturally ask why I found it necessary to supply myself (if I may borrow an expression from the language of State finance) with this 'forced loan.' I was actuated by motives which I think do me honor. My position at the time was critical in the extreme. My credit with the money-lenders was at an end; my friends had all turned their backs on me. I must either take the money or disgrace my family. If there is a man living who is sincerely attached to his family, I am that man. I took the money.

"Conceive your position as my aunt (I say nothing of myself), if I had adopted the other alternative. Turned out of the Jockey Club, turned out of Tattersalls', turned out of the betting-ring; in short, posted publicly as a defaulter before the noblest institution in England, the Turf--and all for want of five hundred pounds to stop the mouth of the greatest brute I know of, Alfred Hardyman! Let me not harrow your feelings (and mine) by dwelling on it. Dear and admirable woman! To you belongs the honor of saving the credit of the family; I can claim nothing but the inferior merit of having offered you the opportunity.

"My IOU, it is needless to say, accompanies these lines. Can I do anything for you abroad?--F. S."



To this it is only necessary to add (first) that Moody was perfectly right in believing F. S. to be the person who informed Hardyman's father of Isabel's position when she left Lady Lydiard's house; and (secondly) that Felix did really forward Mr. Troy's narrative of the theft to the French police, altering nothing in it but the number of the lost bank-note.

What is there left to write about? Nothing is left--but to say good-by (very sorrowfully on the writer's part) to the Persons of the Story.

Good-by to Miss Pink--who will regret to her dying day that Isabel's answer to Hardyman was No.

Good-by to Lady Lydiard--who differs with Miss Pink, and would have regretted it, to her dying day, if the answer had been Yes.

Good-by to Moody and Isabel--whose history has closed with the closing of the clergyman's book on their wedding-day.

Good-by to Hardyman--who has sold his farm and his horses, and has begun

a new life among the famous fast trotters of America.

Good-by to Old Sharon--who, a martyr to his promise, brushed his hair and washed his face in honor of Moody's marriage; and catching a severe cold as the necessary consequence, declared, in the intervals of sneezing, that he would "never do it again."

And last, not least, good-by to Tommie? No. The writer gave Tommie his dinner not half an hour since, and is too fond of him to say good-by.