

BOOK THE FOURTH. LOVE AND MONEY

CHAPTER 1

In an interval of no more than three weeks what events may not present themselves? what changes may not take place? Behold Amelius, on the first drizzling day of November, established in respectable lodgings, at a moderate weekly rent. He stands before his small fireside, and warms his back with an Englishman's severe sense of enjoyment. The cheap looking-glass on the mantelpiece reflects the head and shoulders of a new Amelius. His habits are changed; his social position is in course of development. Already, he is a strict economist. Before long, he expects to become a married man.

It is good to be economical: it is, perhaps, better still to be the accepted husband of a handsome young woman. But, for all that, a man in a state of moral improvement, with prospects which his less favoured fellow creatures may reasonably envy, is still a man subject to the mischievous mercy of circumstances, and capable of feeling it keenly. The face of the new Amelius wore an expression of anxiety, and, more remarkable yet, the temper of the new Amelius was out of order.

For the first time in his life he found himself considering trivial questions of sixpences, and small favours of discount for cash payments--an irritating state of things in itself. There were more serious anxieties, however, to trouble him than these. He had no reason to complain of the beloved object herself. Not twelve hours since he had said to Regina, with a voice that faltered, and a heart that beat wildly, "Are you fond enough of me to let me marry you?" And she had answered placidly, with a heart that would have satisfied the most exacting stethoscope in the medical profession, "Yes, if you like." There was a moment of rapture, when she submitted for the first time to be kissed, and when she consented, on being gently reminded that it was expected of her, to return the kiss--once, and no more. But there was also an attendant train of serious considerations which followed on the heels of Amelius when the kissing was over, and when he had said goodbye for the day.

He had two women for enemies, both resolutely against him in the matter of

his marriage.

Regina's correspondent and bosom friend, Cecilia, who had begun by disliking him, without knowing why, persisted in maintaining her unfavourable opinion of the new friend of the Farnabys. She was a young married woman; and she had an influence over Regina which promised, when the fit opportunity came, to make itself felt. The second, and by far the more powerful hostile influence, was the influence of Mrs. Farnaby. Nothing could exceed the half sisterly, half motherly, goodwill with which she received Amelius on those rare occasions when they happened to meet, unembarrassed by the presence of a third person in the room. Without actually reverting to what had passed between them during their memorable interview, Mrs. Farnaby asked questions, plainly showing that the forlorn hope which she associated with Amelius was a hope still firmly rooted in her mind. "Have you been much about London lately?" "Have you met with any girls who have taken your fancy?" "Are you getting tired of staying in the same place, and are you going to travel soon?" Inquiries such as these she was, sooner or later, sure to make when they were alone. But if Regina happened to enter the room, or if Amelius contrived to find his way to her in some other part of the house, Mrs. Farnaby deliberately shortened the interview and silenced the lovers--still as resolute as ever to keep Amelius exposed to the adventurous freedom of a bachelor's life. For the last week, his only opportunities of speaking to Regina had been obtained for him secretly by the well-rewarded devotion of her maid. And he had now the prospect before him of asking Mr. Farnaby for the hand of his adopted daughter, with the certainty of the influence of two women being used against him--even if he succeeded in obtaining a favourable reception for his proposal from the master of the house.

Under such circumstances as these--alone, on a rainy November day, in a lodging on the dreary eastward side of the Tottenham Court Road--even Amelius bore the aspect of a melancholy man. He was angry with his cigar because it refused to light freely. He was angry with the poor deaf servant-of-all-work, who entered the room, after one thumping knock at the door, and made, in muffled tones, the barbarous announcement, "Here's somebody a-wantin' to see yer."

"Who the devil is Somebody?" Amelius shouted.

"Somebody is a citizen of the United States," answered Rufus, quietly entering the room. "And he's sorry to find Claude A. Goldenheart's temperature at boiling-point already!"

He had not altered in the slightest degree since he had left the steamship at Queenstown. Irish hospitality had not fattened him; the change from sea to land had not suggested to him the slightest alteration in his dress. He still wore the huge felt hat in which he had first presented himself to notice on the deck of the vessel. The maid-of-all-work raised her eyes to the face of the long lean stranger, overshadowed by the broadbrimmed hat, in reverent amazement. "My love to you, miss," said Rufus, with his customary grave cordiality; "I'll shut the door." Having dismissed the maid with that gentle hint, he shook hands heartily with Amelius. "Well, I call this a juicy morning," he said, just as if they had met at the cabin breakfast-table as usual.

For the moment, at least, Amelius brightened at the sight of his fellow-traveller. "I am really glad to see you," he said. "It's lonely in these new quarters, before one gets used to them."

Rufus relieved himself of his hat and great coat, and silently looked about the room. "I'm big in the bones," he remarked, surveying the rickety lodging-house furniture with some suspicion; "and I'm a trifle heavier than I look. I shan't break one of these chairs if I sit down on it, shall I?" Passing round the table (littered with books and letters) in search of the nearest chair, he accidentally brushed against a sheet of paper with writing on it.

"Memorandum of friends in London, to be informed of my change of address," he read, looking at the paper, as he picked it up, with the friendly freedom that characterized him. "You have made pretty good use of your time, my son, since I took my leave of you in Queenstown harbour. I call this a reasonable long list of acquaintances made by a young stranger in London."

"I met with an old friend of my family at the hotel," Amelius explained. "He was a great loss to my poor father, when he got an appointment in India; and, now he has returned, he has been equally kind to me. I am indebted to his introduction for most of the names on that list."

"Yes?" said Rufus, in the interrogative tone of a man who was waiting to hear more. "I'm listening, though I may not look like it. Git along."

Amelius looked at his visitor, wondering in what precise direction he was to "git along."

"I'm no friend to partial information," Rufus proceeded; "I like to round it off complete, as it were, in my own mind. There are names on this list that you haven't accounted for yet. Who provided you, sir, with the balance of your

new friends?"

Amelius answered, not very willingly, "I met them at Mr. Farnaby's house."

Rufus looked up from the list with the air of a man surprised by disagreeable information, and unwilling to receive it too readily. "How?" he exclaimed, using the old English equivalent (often heard in America) for the modern "What?"

"I met them at Mr. Farnaby's," Amelius repeated.

"Did you happen to receive a letter of my writing, dated Dublin?" Rufus asked.

"Yes."

"Do you set any particular value on my advice?"

"Certainly!"

"And you cultivate social relations with Farnaby and family, notwithstanding?"

"I have motives for being friendly with them, which--which I haven't had time to explain to you yet."

Rufus stretched out his long legs on the floor, and fixed his shrewd grave eyes steadily on Amelius.

"My friend," he said, quietly, "in respect of personal appearance and pleasing elasticity of spirits, I find you altered for the worse, I do. It may be Liver, or it may be Love. I reckon, now I think of it, you're too young yet for Liver. It's the brown miss--that's what 'tis. I hate that girl, sir, by instinct."

"A nice way of talking of a young lady you never saw!" Amelius broke out.

Rufus smiled grimly. "Go ahead!" he said. "If you can get vent in quarrelling with me, go ahead, my son."

He looked round the room again, with his hands in his pockets, whistling. Descending to the table in due course of time, his quick eye detected a photograph placed on the open writing desk which Amelius had been using earlier in the day. Before it was possible to stop him, the photograph was in

his hand. "I believe I've got her likeness," he announced. "I do assure you I take pleasure in making her acquaintance in this sort of way. Well, now, I declare she's a columnar creature! Yes, sir; I do justice to your native produce--your fine fleshy beef-fed English girl. But I tell you this: after a child or two, that sort runs to fat, and you find you have married more of her than you bargained for. To what lengths may you have proceeded, Amelius, with this splendid and spanking person?"

Amelius was just on the verge of taking offence. "Speak of her respectfully," he said, "if you expect me to answer you."

Rufus stared in astonishment. "I'm paying her all manner of compliments," he protested, "and you're not satisfied yet. My friend, I still find something about you, on this occasion, which reminds me of meat cut against the grain. You're almost nasty--you are! The air of London, I reckon, isn't at all the thing for you. Well, it don't matter to me; I like you. Afloat or ashore, I like you. Do you want to know what I should do, in your place, if I found myself steering a little too nigh to the brown miss? I should--well, to put it in one word, I should scatter. Where's the harm, I'll ask you, if you try another girl or two, before you make your mind up. I shall be proud to introduce you to our slim and snaky sort at Coolspring. Yes. I mean what I say; and I'll go back with you across the pond." Referring in this disrespectful manner to the Atlantic Ocean, Rufus offered his hand in token of unalterable devotion and goodwill.

Who could resist such a man as this? Amelius, always in extremes, wrung his hand, with an impetuous sense of shame. "I've been sulky," he said, "I've been rude, I ought to be ashamed of myself--and I am. There's only one excuse for me, Rufus. I love her with all my heart and soul; and I'm engaged to be married to her. And yet, if you understand my way of putting it, I'm--in short, I'm in a mess."

With this characteristic preface, he described his position as exactly as he could; having due regard to the necessary reserve on the subject of Mrs. Farnaby. Rufus listened, with the closest attention, from beginning to end; making no attempt to disguise the unfavourable impression which the announcement of the marriage-engagement had made on him. When he spoke next, instead of looking at Amelius as usual, he held his head down, and looked gloomily at his boots.

"Well," he said, "you've gone ahead this time, and that's a fact. She didn't raise any difficulties that a man could ride off on--did she?"

"She was all that was sweet and kind!" Amelius answered, with enthusiasm.

"She was all that was sweet and kind," Rufus absently repeated, still intent on the solid spectacle of his own boots. "And how about uncle Farnaby? Perhaps he's sweet and kind likewise, or perhaps he cuts up rough? Possible--is it not, sir?"

"I don't know; I haven't spoken to him yet."

Rufus suddenly looked up. A faint gleam of hope irradiated his long lank face. "Mercy be praised! there's a last chance for you," he remarked. "Uncle Farnaby may say No."

"It doesn't matter what he says," Amelius rejoined. "She's old enough to choose for herself, he can't stop the marriage."

Rufus lifted one wiry yellow forefinger, in a state of perpendicular protest. "He cannot stop the marriage," the sagacious New Englander admitted; "but he can stop the money, my son. Find out how you stand with him before another day is over your head."

"I can't go to him this evening," said Amelius; "he dines out."

"Where is he now?"

"At his place of business."

"Fix him at his place of business. Right away!" cried Rufus, springing with sudden energy to his feet.

"I don't think he would like it," Amelius objected. "He's not a very pleasant fellow, anywhere; but he's particularly disagreeable at his place of business."

Rufus walked to the window, and looked out. The objections to Mr. Farnaby appeared to fail, so far, in interesting him.

"To put it plainly," Amelius went on, "there's something about him that I can't endure. And--though he's very civil to me, in his way--I don't think he has ever got over the discovery that I am a Christian Socialist."

Rufus abruptly turned round from the window, and became attentive again. "So you told him that--did you?" he said.

"Of course!" Amelius rejoined, sharply. "Do you suppose I am ashamed of the principles in which I have been brought up?"

"You don't care, I reckon, if all the world knows your principles, persisted Rufus, deliberately leading him on.

"Care?" Amelius reiterated. "I only wish I had all the world to listen to me. They should hear of my principles, with no bated breath, I promise you!"

There was a pause. Rufus turned back again to the window. "When Farnaby's at home, where does he live?" he asked suddenly--still keeping his face towards the street.

Amelius mentioned the address. "You don't mean that you are going to call there?" he inquired, with some anxiety.

"Well, I reckoned I might catch him before dinner-time. You seem to be sort of feared to speak to him yourself. I'm your friend, Amelius--and I'll speak for you."

The bare idea of the interview struck Amelius with terror. "No, no!" he said. "I'm much obliged to you, Rufus. But in a matter of this sort, I shouldn't like to transfer the responsibility to my friend. I'll speak to Mr. Farnaby in a day or two."

Rufus was evidently not satisfied with this. "I do suppose, now," he suggested, "you're not the only man moving in this metropolis who fancies Miss Regina. Query, my son: if you put off Farnaby much longer--" He paused and looked at Amelius. "Ah," he said, "I reckon I needn't enlarge further: there is another man. Well, it's the same in my country; I don't know what he does, with You: he always turns up, with Us, just at the time when you least want to see him."

There was another man--an older and a richer man than Amelius; equally assiduous in his attentions to the aunt and to the niece; submissively polite to his favoured young rival. He was the sort of person, in age and in temperament, who would be perfectly capable of advancing his own interests by means of the hostile influence of Mrs. Farnaby. Who could say what the result might be if, by some unlucky accident, he made the attempt before Amelius had secured for himself the support of the master of the house? In his present condition of nervous irritability, he was ready to believe in any coincidence of the disastrous sort. The wealthy rival was a man of business, a near city neighbour of Mr. Farnaby. They might be together at that

moment; and Regina's fidelity to her lover might be put to a harder test than she was prepared to endure. Amelius remembered the gentle conciliatory smile (too gentle by half) with which his placid mistress had received his first kisses--and, without stopping to weigh conclusions, snatched up his hat. "Wait here for me, Rufus, like a good fellow. I'm off to the stationer's shop." With those parting words, he hurried out of the room.

Left by himself, Rufus began to rummage the pockets of his frockcoat--a long, loose, and dingy garment which had become friendly and comfortable to him by dint of ancient use. Producing a handful of correspondence, he selected the largest envelope of all; shook out on the table several smaller letters enclosed; picked one out of the number; and read the concluding paragraph only, with the closest attention.

"I enclose letters of introduction to the secretaries of literary institutions in London, and in some of the principal cities of England. If you feel disposed to lecture yourself, or if you can persuade friends and citizens known to you to do so, I believe it may be in your power to advance in this way the interests of our Bureau. Please take notice that the more advanced institutions, which are ready to countenance and welcome free thought in religion, politics, and morals, are marked on the envelopes with a cross in red ink. The envelopes without a mark are addressed to platforms on which the customary British prejudices remain rampant, and in which the charge for places reaches a higher figure than can be as yet obtained in the sanctuaries of free thought."

Rufus laid down the letter, and, choosing one among the envelopes marked in red ink, looked at the introduction enclosed. "If the right sort of invitation reached Amelius from this institution," he thought, "the boy would lecture on Christian Socialism with all his heart and soul. I wonder what the brown miss and her uncle would say to that?"

He smiled to himself, and put the letter back in the envelope, and considered the subject for a while. Below the odd rough surface, he was a man in ten thousand; no more single-hearted and more affectionate creature ever breathed the breath of life. He had not been understood in his own little circle; there had been a want of sympathy with him, and even a want of knowledge of him, at home. Amelius, popular with everybody, had touched the great heart of this man. He perceived the peril that lay hidden under the strange and lonely position of his fellow-voyager--so innocent in the ways of the world, so young and so easily impressed. His fondness for Amelius, it is hardly too much to say, was the fondness of a father for a son. With a sigh, he shook his head, and gathered up his letters, and put them back in his

pockets. "No, not yet," he decided. "The poor boy really loves her; and the girl may be good enough to make the happiness of his life." He got up and walked about the room. Suddenly he stopped, struck by a new idea. "Why shouldn't I judge for myself?" he thought. "I've got the address--I reckon I'll look in on the Farnabys, in a friendly way."

He sat down at the desk, and wrote a line, in the event of Amelius being the first to return to the lodgings:

DEAR BOY,

"I don't find her photograph tells me quite so much as I want to know. I have a mind to see the living original. Being your friend, you know, it's only civil to pay my respects to the family. Expect my unbiased opinion when I come back.

"Yours,

"RUFUS."

Having enclosed and addressed these lines, he took up his greatcoat--and checked himself in the act of putting it on. The brown miss was a British miss. A strange New Englander had better be careful of his personal appearance, before he ventured into her presence. Urged by this cautious motive, he approached the looking-glass, and surveyed himself critically.

"I doubt I might be the better," it occurred to him, "if I brushed my hair, and smelt a little of perfume. Yes. I'll make a toilet. Where's the boy's bedroom, I wonder?"

He observed a second door in the sitting-room, and opened it at hazard. Fortune had befriended him, so far: he found himself in his young friend's bedchamber.

The toilet of Amelius, simple as it was, had its mysteries for Rufus. He was at a loss among the perfumes. They were all contained in a modest little dressing case, without labels of any sort to describe the contents of the pots and bottles. He examined them one after another, and stopped at some recently invented French shaving-cream. "It smells lovely," he said, assuming it to be some rare pomatum. "Just what I want, it seems, for my head." He rubbed the shaving cream into his bristly iron-gray hair, until his arms ached. When he had next sprinkled his handkerchief and himself profusely, first with rose water, and then (to make quite sure) with eau-de-

cologne used as a climax, he felt that he was in a position to appeal agreeably to the senses of the softer sex. In five minutes more, he was on his way to Mr. Farnaby's private residence.

CHAPTER 2

The rain that had begun with the morning still poured on steadily in the afternoon. After one look out of the window, Regina decided on passing the rest of the day luxuriously, in the company of a novel, by her own fireside. With her feet on the tender, and her head on the soft cushion of her favourite easy-chair, she opened the book. Having read the first chapter and part of the second, she was just lazily turning over the leaves in search of a love scene, when her languid interest in the novel was suddenly diverted to an incident in real life. The sitting-room door was gently opened, and her maid appeared in a state of modest confusion.

"If you please, miss, here's a strange gentleman who comes from Mr. Goldenheart. He wishes particularly to say--"

She paused, and looked behind her. A faint and curious smell of mingled soap and scent entered the room, followed closely by a tall, calm, shabbily-dressed man, who laid a wiry yellow hand on the maid's shoulder, and stopped her effectually before she could say a word more.

"Don't you think of troubling yourself to git through with it, my dear; I'm here, and I'll finish for you." Addressing the maid in these encouraging terms, the stranger advanced to Regina, and actually attempted to shake hands with her! Regina rose--and looked at him. It was a look that ought to have daunted the boldest man living; it produced no sort of effect on this man. He still held out his hand; his lean face broadened with a pleasant smile. "My name is Rufus Dingwell," he said. "I come from Coolspring, Mass.; and Amelius is my introduction to yourself and family."

Regina silently acknowledged this information by a frigid bow, and addressed herself to the maid, waiting at the door: "Don't leave the room, Phoebe."

Rufus, inwardly wondering what Phoebe was wanted for, proceeded to express the cordial sentiments proper to the occasion. "I have heard about you, miss; and I take pleasure in making your acquaintance."

The unwritten laws of politeness obliged Regina to say something. "I have not heard Mr. Goldenheart mention your name," she remarked. "Are you an old friend of his?"

Rufus explained with genial alacrity. "We crossed the Pond together, miss. I like the boy; he's bright and spry; he refreshes me--he does. We go ahead with most things in my country; and friendship's one of them. How do you find yourself? Won't you shake hands?" He took her hand, without waiting to be repelled this time, and shook it with the heartiest good-will.

Regina shuddered faintly: she summoned assistance in case of further familiarity. "Phoebe, tell my aunt."

Rufus added a message on his own account. "And say this, my dear. I sincerely desire to make the acquaintance of Miss Regina's aunt, and any other members of the family circle."

Phoebe left the room, smiling. Such an amusing visitor as this was a rare person in Mr. Farnaby's house. Rufus looked after her, with unconcealed approval. The maid appeared to be more to his taste than the mistress. "Well, that's a pretty creature, I do declare," he said to Regina. "Reminds me of our American girls--slim in the waist, and carries her head nicely. How old may she be, now?"

Regina expressed her opinion of this familiar question by pointing, with silent dignity, to a chair.

"Thank you, miss; not that one," said Rufus. "You see, I'm long in the legs, and if I once got down as low as that, I reckon I should have to restore the balance by putting my feet up on the grate; and that's not manners in Great Britain--and quite right too."

He picked out the highest chair he could find, and admired the workmanship as he drew it up to the fireplace. "Most sumptuous and elegant," he said. "The style of the Renaissance, as they call it." Regina observed with dismay that he had not got his hat in his hand like other visitors. He had left it no doubt in the hall; he looked as if he had dropped in to spend the day, and stay to dinner.

"Well, miss, I've seen your photograph," he resumed; "and I don't much approve of it, now I see you. My sentiments are not altogether favourable to that art. I delivered a lecture on photographic portraiture at Coolspring; and I described it briefly as justice without mercy. The audience took the idea; they larked, they did. Larkin' reminds me of Amelius. Do you object to his being a Christian Socialist, miss?"

The young lady's look, when she answered the question, was not lost on

Rufus. He registered it, mentally, in case of need. "Amelius will soon get over all that nonsense," she said, "when he has been a little longer in London."

"Possible," Rufus admitted. "The boy is fond of you. Yes: he loves you. I have noticed him, and I can certify to that. I may also remark that he wants a deal of love in return. No doubt, miss, you have observed that circumstance yourself?"

Regina resented this last inquiry as an outrage on propriety. "What next will he say?" she thought to herself. "I must put this presuming man in his proper place." She darted another annihilating look at him, as she spoke in her turn. "May I ask, Mr.--Mr.----?"

"Dingwell," said Rufus, prompting her.

"May I ask, Mr. Dingwell, if you have favoured me by calling here at the request of Mr. Goldenheart?"

Genial and simple-minded as he was, eagerly as he desired to appreciate at her full value the young lady who was one day to be the wife of Amelius, Rufus felt the tone in which those words were spoken. It was not easy to stimulate his modest sense of what was fairly due to him into asserting itself, but the cold distrust, the deliberate distance of Regina's manner, exhausted the long-suffering indulgence of this singularly patient man. "The Lord, in his mercy, preserve Amelius from marrying You," he thought, as he rose from his chair, and advanced with a certain simple dignity to take leave of her.

"It did not occur to me, miss, to pay my respects to you, till Amelius and I had parted company," he said. "Please to excuse me. I should have been welcome, in my country, with no better introduction than being (as I may say) his friend and well-wisher. If I have made a mistake--"

He stopped. Regina had suddenly changed colour. Instead of looking at him, she was looking over his shoulder, apparently at something behind him. He turned to see what it was. A lady, short and stout, with strange wild sorrowful eyes, had noiselessly entered the room while he was speaking: she was waiting, as it seemed, until he had finished what he had to say. When they confronted each other, she moved to meet him, with a firm heavy step, and with her hand held out in token of welcome.

"You may feel equally sure, sir, of a friendly reception here," she said, in her steady self-possessed way. "I am this young lady's aunt; and I am glad to see

the friend of Amelius in my house." Before Rufus could answer, she turned to Regina. "I waited," she went on, "to give you an opportunity of explaining yourself to this gentleman. I am afraid he has mistaken your coldness of manner for intentional rudeness."

The colour rushed back into Regina's face--she vibrated for a moment between anger and tears. But the better nature in her broke its way through the constitutional shyness and restraint which habitually kept it down. "I meant no harm, sir," she said, raising her large beautiful eyes submissively to Rufus; "I am not used to receiving strangers. And you did ask me some very strange questions," she added, with a sudden burst of self-assertion. "Strangers are not in the habit of saying such things in England." She looked at Mrs. Farnaby, listening with impenetrable composure, and stopped in confusion. Her aunt would not scruple to speak to the stranger about Amelius in her presence--there was no knowing what she might not have to endure. She turned again to Rufus. "Excuse me," she said, "if I leave you with my aunt--I have an engagement." With that trivial apology, she made her escape from the room.

"She has no engagement," Mrs. Farnaby briefly remarked as the door closed. "Sit down, sir."

For once, even Rufus was not at his ease. "I can hit it off, ma'am, with most people," he said. "I wonder what I've done to offend your niece?"

"My niece (with many good qualities) is a narrow-minded young woman," Mrs. Farnaby explained. "You are not like the men she is accustomed to see. She doesn't understand you--you are not a commonplace gentleman. For instance," Mrs. Farnaby continued, with the matter-of-fact gravity of a woman innately inaccessible to a sense of humour, "you have got something strange on your hair. It seems to be melting, and it smells like soap. No: it's no use taking out your handkerchief--your handkerchief won't mop it up. I'll get a towel." She opened an inner door, which disclosed a little passage, and a bath-room beyond it. "I'm the strongest person in the house," she resumed, returning with a towel in her hand, as gravely as ever. "Sit still, and don't make apologies. If any of us can rub you dry, I'm the woman." She set to work with the towel, as if she had been Rufus's mother, making him presentable in the days of his boyhood. Giddy under the violence of the rubbing, staggered by the contrast between the cold reception accorded to him by the niece, and the more than friendly welcome offered by the aunt, Rufus submitted to circumstances in docile and silent bewilderment. "There; you'll do till you get home--nobody can laugh at you now," Mrs. Farnaby announced. "You're an absent-minded man, I suppose? You wanted to wash

your head, and you forgot the warm water and the towel. Was that how it happened, sir?"

"I thank you with all my heart, ma'am; I took it for pomatum," Rufus answered. "Would you object to shaking hands again? This cordial welcome of yours reminds me, I do assure you, of home. Since I left New England, I've never met with the like of you. I do suppose now it was my hair that set Miss Regina's back up? I'm not quite easy in my mind, ma'am, about your niece. I'm sort of feared of what she may say of me to Amelius. I meant no harm, Lord knows."

The secret of Mrs. Farnaby's extraordinary alacrity in the use of the towel began slowly to show itself now. The tone of her American guest had already become the friendly and familiar tone which it had been her object to establish. With a little management, he might be made an invaluable ally in the great work of hindering the marriage of Amelius.

"You are very fond of your young friend?" she began quietly.

"That is so, ma'am."

"And he has told you that he has taken a liking to my niece?"

"And shown me her likeness," Rufus added.

"And shown you her likeness. And you thought you would come here, and see for yourself what sort of girl she was?"

"Naturally," Rufus admitted.

Mrs. Farnaby revealed, without further hesitation, the object that she had in view. "Amelius is little more than a lad, still," she said. "He has got all his life before him. It would be a sad thing, if he married a girl who didn't make him happy." She turned in her chair, and pointed to the door by which Regina had left them. "Between ourselves," she resumed, dropping her voice to a whisper, "do you believe my niece will make him happy?"

Rufus hesitated.

"I'm above family prejudices," Mrs. Farnaby proceeded. "You needn't be afraid of offending me. Speak out."

Rufus would have spoken out to any other woman in the universe. This

woman had preserved him from ridicule--this woman had rubbed his head dry. He prevaricated.

"I don't suppose I understand the ladies in this country," he said.

But Mrs. Farnaby was not to be trifled with. "If Amelius was your son, and if he asked you to consent to his marriage with my niece," she rejoined, "would you say Yes?"

This was too much for Rufus. "Not if he went down on both his knees to ask me," he answered.

Mrs. Farnaby was satisfied at last, and owned it without reserve. "My own opinion," she said, "exactly expressed! don't be surprised. Didn't I tell you I had no family prejudices? Do you know if he has spoken to my husband, yet?"

Rufus looked at his watch. "I reckon he's just about done it by this time."

Mrs. Farnaby paused, and reflected for a moment. She had already attempted to prejudice her husband against Amelius, and had received an answer which Mr. Farnaby considered to be final. "Mr. Goldenheart honours us if he seeks our alliance; he is the representative of an old English family." Under these circumstances, it was quite possible that the proposals of Amelius had been accepted. Mrs. Farnaby was not the less determined that the marriage should never take place, and not the less eager to secure the assistance of her new ally. "When will Amelius tell you about it?" she asked.

"When I go back to his lodgings, ma'am."

"Go back at once--and bear this in mind as you go. If you can find out any likely way of parting these two young people (in their own best interests), depend on one thing--if I can help you, I will. I'm as fond of Amelius as you are. Ask him if I haven't done my best to keep him away from my niece. Ask him if I haven't expressed my opinion, that she's not the right wife for him. Come and see me again as soon as you like. I'm fond of Americans. Good morning."

Rufus attempted to express his sense of gratitude, in his own briefly eloquent way. He was not allowed a hearing. With one and the same action, Mrs. Farnaby patted him on the shoulder, and pushed him out of the room.

"If that woman was an American citizen," Rufus reflected, on his way

through the streets, "she'd be the first female President of the United States!" His admiration of Mrs. Farnaby's energy and resolution, expressed in these strong terms, acknowledged but one limit. Highly as he approved of her, there was nevertheless an unfathomable something in the woman's eyes that disturbed and daunted him.

CHAPTER 3

Rufus found his friend at the lodgings, prostrate on the sofa, smoking furiously. Before a word had passed between them, it was plain to the New Englander that something had gone wrong.

"Well," he asked; "and what does Farnaby say?"

"Damn Farnaby!"

Rufus was secretly conscious of an immense sense of relief. "I call that a stiff way of putting it," he quietly remarked; "but the meaning's clear. Farnaby has said No."

Amelius jumped off the sofa, and planted himself defiantly on the hearthrug.

"You're wrong for once," he said, with a bitter laugh. "The exasperating part of it is that Farnaby has said neither Yes nor No. The oily-whiskered brute--you haven't seen him yet, have you?--began by saying Yes. 'A man like me, the heir of a fine old English family, honoured him by making proposals; he could wish no more brilliant prospect for his dear adopted child. She would fill the high position that was offered to her, and fill it worthily.' That was the fawning way in which he talked to me at first! He squeezed my hand in his horrid cold shiny paw till, I give you my word of honour, I felt as if I was going to be sick. Wait a little; you haven't heard the worst of it yet. He soon altered his tone--it began with his asking me, if I had 'considered the question of settlements'. I didn't know what he meant. He had to put it in plain English; he wanted to hear what my property was. 'Oh, that's soon settled,' I said. 'I've got five hundred a year; and Regina is welcome to every farthing of it.' He fell back in his chair as if I had shot him; he turned--it was worse than pale, he positively turned green. At first he wouldn't believe me; he declared I must be joking. I set him right about that immediately. His next change was a proud impudence. 'Have you not observed, sir, in what style Regina is accustomed to live in my house? Five hundred a year? Good heavens! With strict economy, five hundred a year might pay her milliner's bill and the keep of her horse and carriage. Who is to pay for everything else--the establishment, the dinner-parties and balls, the tour abroad, the children, the nurses, the doctor? I tell you this, Mr. Goldenheart, I'm willing to make a sacrifice to you, as a born gentleman, which I would certainly not consent to in the case of any self-made man. Enlarge your income, sir, to no more than four times five hundred pounds, and I guarantee a yearly

allowance to Regina of half as much again, besides the fortune which she will inherit at my death. That will make your income three thousand a year to start with. I know something of domestic expenses, and I tell you positively, you can't do it on a farthing less.' That was his language, Rufus. The insolence of his tone I can't attempt to describe. If I hadn't thought of Regina, I should have behaved in a manner unworthy of a Christian--I believe I should have taken my walking-cane, and given him a sound thrashing."

Rufus neither expressed surprise nor offered advice. He was lost in meditation on the wealth of Mr. Farnaby. "A stationer's business seems to eventuate in a lively profit, in this country," he said.

"A stationer's business?" Amelius repeated disdainfully. "Farnaby has half a dozen irons in the fire besides that. He's got a newspaper, and a patent medicine, and a new bank, and I don't know what else. One of his own friends said to me, 'Nobody knows whether Farnaby is rich or poor; he is going to do one of two things--he is going to die worth millions, or to die bankrupt.' Oh, if I can only live to see the day when Socialism will put that sort of man in his right place!"

"Try a republic, on our model, first," said Rufus. "When Farnaby talks of the style his young woman is accustomed to live in, what does he mean?"

"He means," Amelius answered smartly, "a carriage to drive out in, champagne on the table, and a footman to answer the door."

"Farnaby's ideas, sir, have crossed the water and landed in New York," Rufus remarked. "Well, and what did you say to him, on your side?"

"I gave it to him, I can tell you! 'That's all ostentation,' I said. 'Why can't Regina and I begin life modestly? What do we want with a carriage to drive out in, and champagne on the table, and a footman to answer the door? We want to love each other and be happy. There are thousands of as good gentlemen as I am, in England, with wives and families, who would ask for nothing better than an income of five hundred a year. The fact is, Mr. Farnaby, you're positively saturated with the love of money. Get your New Testament and read what Christ says of rich people.' What do you think he did, when I put it in that unanswerable way? He held up his hand, and looked horrified. 'I can't allow profanity in my office,' says he. 'I have my New Testament read to me in church, sir, every Sunday.' That's the sort of Christian, Rufus, who is the average product of modern times! He was as obstinate as a mule; he wouldn't give way a single inch. His adopted

daughter, he said, was accustomed to live in a certain style. In that same style she should live when she was married, so long as he had a voice in the matter. Of course, if she chose to set his wishes and feelings at defiance, in return for all that he had done for her, she was old enough to take her own way. In that case, he would tell me as plainly as he meant to tell her, that she must not look to a single farthing of his money to help her, and not expect to find her name down in his will. He felt the honour of a family alliance with me as sincerely as ever. But he must abide by the conditions that he had stated. On those terms, he would be proud to give me the hand of Regina at the altar, and proud to feel that he had done his duty by his adopted child. I let him go on till he had run himself out--and then I asked quietly, if he could tell me the way to increase my income to two thousand a year. How do you think he answered me?"

"Perhaps he offered to utilise your capital in his business," Rufus guessed.

"Not he! He considered business quite beneath me; my duty to myself, as a gentleman, was to adopt a profession. On reflection, it turned out that there was but one likely profession to try, in my case--the Law. I might be called to the Bar, and (with luck) I might get remunerative work to do, in eight or ten years' time. That, I declare to you, was the prospect he set before me, if I chose to take his advice. I asked if he was joking. Certainly not! I was only one-and-twenty years old (he reminded me); I had plenty of time to spare--I should still marry young if I married at thirty. I took up my hat, and gave him a bit of my mind at parting. 'If you really mean anything,' I said, 'you mean that Regina is to pine and fade and be a middle-aged woman, and that I am to resist the temptations that beset a young man in London, and lead the life of a monk for the next ten years--and all for what? For a carriage to ride out in, champagne on the table, and a footman to answer the door! Keep your money, Mr. Farnaby; Regina and I will do without it.'--What are you laughing at? I don't think you could have put it more strongly yourself."

Rufus suddenly recovered his gravity. "I tell you this, Amelius," he replied; "you afford (as we say in my country) meaty fruit for reflection--you do."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, I reckon you remember when we were aboard the boat. You gave us a narrative of what happened in that Community of yours, which I can truly characterise as a combination of native eloquence and chastening good sense. I put the question to myself, sir, what has become of that well-informed and discreet young Christian, now he has changed the sphere to England and mixed with the Farnabys? It's not to be denied that I see him

before me in the flesh when I look across the table here; but it's equally true that I miss him altogether, in the spirit."

Amelius sat down again on the sofa. "In plain words," he said, "you think I have behaved like a fool in this matter?"

Rufus crossed his long legs, and nodded his head in silent approval. Instead of taking offence, Amelius considered a little.

"It didn't strike me before," he said. "But, now you mention it, I can understand that I appear to be a simple sort of fellow in what is called Society here; and the reason, I suspect, is that it's not the society in which I have been accustomed to mix. The Farnabys are new to me, Rufus. When it comes to a question of my life at Tadmor, of what I saw and learnt and felt in the Community--then, I can think and speak like a reasonable being, because I am thinking and speaking of what I know thoroughly well. Hang it, make some allowance for the difference of circumstances! Besides, I'm in love, and that alters a man--and, I have heard some people say, not always for the better. Anyhow, I've done it with Farnaby, and it can't be undone. There will be no peace for me now, till I have spoken to Regina. I have read the note you left for me. Did you see her, when you called at the house?"

The quiet tone in which the question was put surprised Rufus. He had fully expected, after Regina's reception of him, to be called to account for the liberty that he had taken. Amelius was too completely absorbed by his present anxieties to consider trivial questions of etiquette. Hearing that Rufus had seen Regina, he never even asked for his friend's opinion of her. His mind was full of the obstacles that might be interposed to his seeing her again.

"Farnaby is sure, after what has passed between us, to keep her out of my way if he can," Amelius said. "And Mrs. Farnaby, to my certain knowledge, will help him. They don't suspect you. Couldn't you call again--you're old enough to be her father--and make some excuse to take her out with you for a walk?"

The answer of Rufus to this was Roman in its brevity. He pointed to the window, and said, "Look at the rain."

"Then I must try her maid once more," said Amelius, resignedly. He took his hat and umbrella. "Don't leave me, old fellow," he resumed as he opened the door. "This is the turning-point of my life. I'm sorely in need of a friend."

"Do you think she will marry you against the will of her uncle and aunt?" Rufus asked.

"I am certain of it," Amelius answered. With that he left the room.

Rufus looked after him sadly. Sympathy and sorrow were expressed in every line of his rugged face. "My poor boy! how will he bear it, if she says No? What will become of him, if she says Yes?" He rubbed his hand irritably across his forehead, like a man whose own thoughts were repellent to him. In a moment more, he plunged into his pockets, and drew out again the letters introducing him to the secretaries of public institutions. "If there's salvation for Amelius," he said, "I reckon I shall find it here."

CHAPTER 4

The medium of correspondence between Amelius and Regina's maid was an old woman who kept a shop for the sale of newspapers and periodicals, in a by-street not far from Mr. Farnaby's house. From this place his letters were delivered to the maid, under cover of the morning newspapers--and here he found the answers waiting for him later in the day. "If Rufus could only have taken her out for a walk, I might have seen Regina this afternoon," thought Amelius. "As it is, I may have to wait till to-morrow, or later still. And then, there's the sovereign to Phoebe." He sighed as he thought of the fee. Sovereigns were becoming scarce in our young Socialist's purse.

Arriving in sight of the newsvendor's shop, Amelius noticed a man leaving it, who walked away towards the farther end of the street. When he entered the shop himself a minute afterwards, the woman took up a letter from the counter. "A young man has just left this for you," she said.

Amelius recognised the maid's handwriting on the address. The man whom he had seen leaving the shop was Phoebe's messenger.

He opened the letter. Her mistress, Phoebe explained, was too much flurried to be able to write. The master had astonished the whole household by appearing among them at least three hours before the time at which he was accustomed to leave his place of business. He had found "Mrs. Ormond" (otherwise Regina's friend and correspondent, Cecilia) paying a visit to his niece, and had asked to speak with her in private, before she took leave. The result was an invitation to Regina, from Mrs. Ormond, to stay for a little while at her house in the neighbourhood of Harrow. The ladies were to leave London together, in Mrs. Ormond's carriage, that afternoon. Under stress of strong persuasion, on the part of her uncle and aunt as well as her friend, Regina had ended in giving way. But she had not forgotten the interests of Amelius. She was willing to see him privately on the next day, provided he left London by the train which reached Harrow soon after eleven in the forenoon. If it happened to rain, then he must put off his journey until the first fine day, arriving in any case at the same hour. The place at which he was to wait was described to him; and with these instructions the letter ended.

The rapidity with which Mr. Farnaby had carried out his resolution to separate the lovers placed the weakness of Regina's character before Amelius in a new and startling light. Why had she not stood on her

privileges, as a woman who had arrived at years of discretion, and refused to leave London until she had first heard what her lover had to say? Amelius had left his American friend, feeling sure that Regina's decision would be in his favour, when she was called upon to choose between the man who was ready to marry her, and the man who was nothing but her uncle by courtesy. For the first time, he now felt that his own confident anticipations might, by bare possibility, deceive him. He returned to his lodgings, in such a state of depression, that compassionate Rufus insisted on taking him out to dinner, and hurried him off afterwards to the play. Thoroughly prostrated, Amelius submitted to the genial influence of his friend. He had not even energy enough to feel surprised when Rufus stopped, on their way to the tavern, at a dingy building adorned with a Grecian portico, and left a letter and a card in charge of a servant at the side-door.

The next day, by a happy interposition of Fortune, proved to be a day without rain. Amelius followed his instructions to the letter. A little watery sunshine showed itself as he left the station at Harrow. His mind was still in such a state of doubt and disturbance that it drew from superstition a faint encouragement to hope. He hailed the feeble November sunlight as a good omen.

Mr. and Mrs. Ormond's place of residence stood alone, surrounded by its own grounds. A wooden fence separated the property, on one side, from a muddy little by-road, leading to a neighbouring farm. At a wicket-gate in this fence, giving admission to a shrubbery situated at some distance from the house, Amelius now waited for the appearance of the maid.

After a delay of a few minutes only, the faithful Phoebe approached the gate with a key in her hand. "Where is she?" Amelius asked, as the girl opened the gate for him.

"Waiting for you in the shrubbery. Stop, sir; I have something to say to you first."

Amelius took out his purse, and produced the fee. Even he had observed that Phoebe was perhaps a little too eager to get her money!

"Thank you, sir. Please to look at your watch. You mustn't be with Miss Regina a moment longer than a quarter of an hour."

"Why not?"

"This is the time, sir, when Mrs. Ormond is engaged every day with her cook

and housekeeper. In a quarter of an hour the orders will be given--and Mrs. Ormond will join Miss Regina for a walk in the grounds. You will be the ruin of me, sir, if she finds you here." With that warning, the maid led the way along the winding paths of the shrubbery.

"I must thank you for your letter, Phoebe," said Amelius, as he followed her. "By-the-by, who was your messenger?"

Phoebe's answer was no answer at all. "Only a young man, sir," she said.

"In plain words, your sweetheart, I suppose?"

Phoebe's expressive silence was her only reply. She turned a corner, and pointed to her mistress standing alone before the entrance of a damp and deserted summer-house.

Regina put her handkerchief to her eyes, when the maid had discreetly retired. "Oh," she said softly, "I am afraid this is very wrong."

Amelius removed the handkerchief by the exercise of a little gentle force, and administered comfort under the form of a kiss. Having opened the proceedings in this way, he put his first question, "Why did you leave London?"

"How could I help it!" said Regina, feebly. "They were all against me. What else could I do?"

It occurred to Amelius that she might, at her age, have asserted a will of her own. He kept his idea, however, to himself, and, giving her his arm, led her slowly along the path of the shrubbery. "You have heard, I suppose, what Mr. Farnaby expects of me?" he said.

"Yes, dear."

"I call it worse than mercenary--I call it downright brutal."

"Oh, Amelius, don't talk so!"

Amelius came suddenly to a standstill. "Does that mean you agree with him?" he asked.

"Don't be angry with me, dear. I only meant there was some excuse for him."

"What excuse?"

"Well, you see, he has a high idea of your family, and he thought you were rich people. And--I know you didn't mean it, Amelius--but, still, you did disappoint him."

Amelius dropped her arm. This mildly-persistent defence of Mr. Farnaby exasperated him.

"Perhaps I have disappointed you?" he said.

"Oh, no, no! Oh, how cruel you are!" The ready tears showed themselves again in her magnificent eyes--gentle considerate tears that raised no storm in her bosom, and produced no unbecoming results in her face. "Don't be hard on me!" she said, appealing to him helplessly, like a charming overgrown child.

Some men might have still resisted her; but Amelius was not one of them. He took her hand, and pressed it tenderly.

"Regina," he said, "do you love me?"

"You know I do!"

He put his arm round her waist, he concentrated the passion that was in him into a look, and poured the look into her eyes. "Do you love me as dearly as I love you?" he whispered.

She felt it with all the little passion that was in her. After a moment of hesitation, she put one arm timidly round his neck, and, bending her grand head, laid it on his bosom. Her finely-rounded, supple, muscular figure trembled, as if she had been the most fragile woman living. "Dear Amelius!" she murmured inaudibly. He tried to speak to her--his voice failed him. She had, in perfect innocence, fired his young blood. He drew her closer and closer to him: he lifted her head, with a masterful resolution which she was not able to resist, and pressed his kisses in hot and breathless succession on her lips. His vehemence frightened her. She tore herself out of his arms with a sudden exertion of strength that took him completely by surprise. "I didn't think you would have been rude to me!" With that mild reproach, she turned away, and took the path which led from the shrubbery to the house. Amelius followed her, entreating that she would accept his excuses and grant him a few minutes more. He modestly laid all the blame on her beauty--lamented that he had not resolution enough to resist the charm of

it. When did that commonplace compliment ever fail to produce its effect? Regina smiled with the weakly complacent good-nature, which was only saved from being contemptible by its association with her personal attractions. "Will you promise to behave?" she stipulated. And Amelius, not very eagerly, promised.

"Shall we go into the summer-house?" he suggested.

"It's very damp at this time of year," Regina answered, with placid good sense. "Perhaps we might catch cold--we had better walk about."

They walked accordingly. "I wanted to speak to you about our marriage," Amelius resumed.

She sighed softly. "We have some time to wait," she said, "before we can think of that."

He passed this reply over without notice. "You know," he went on, "that I have an income of five hundred a year?"

"Yes, dear."

"There are hundreds of thousands of respectable artisans, Regina, (with large families), who live comfortably on less than half my income."

"Do they, dear?"

"And many gentlemen are not better off. Curates, for instance. Do you see what I am coming to, my darling?"

"No, dear."

"Could you live with me in a cottage in the country, with a nice garden, and one little maid to wait on us, and two or three new dresses in a year?"

Regina lifted her fine eyes in sober ecstasy to the sky. "It sounds very tempting," she remarked, in the sweetest tones of her voice.

"And it could all be done," Amelius proceeded, "on five hundred a year."

"Could it, dear?"

"I have calculated it--allowing the necessary margin--and I am sure of what I

say. And I have done something else; I have asked about the Marriage License. I can easily find lodgings in the neighbourhood. We might be married at Harrow in a fortnight."

Regina started: her eyes opened widely, and rested on Amelius with an expression of incredulous wonder. "Married in a fortnight?" she repeated. "What would my uncle and aunt say?"

"My angel, our happiness doesn't depend on your uncle and aunt--our happiness depends on ourselves. Nobody has any power to control us. I am a man, and you are a woman; and we have a right to be married whenever we like." Amelius pronounced this last oracular sentence with his head held high, and a pleasant inner persuasion of the convincing manner in which he had stated his case.

"Without my uncle to give me away!" Regina exclaimed. "Without my aunt! With no bridesmaids, and no friends, and no wedding-breakfast! Oh, Amelius, what can you be thinking of?" She drew back a step, and looked at him in helpless consternation.

For the moment, and the moment only, Amelius lost all patience with her. "If you really loved me," he said bitterly, "you wouldn't think of the bridesmaids and the breakfast!" Regina had her answer ready in her pocket--she took out her handkerchief. Before she could lift it to her eyes, Amelius recovered himself. "No, no," he said, "I didn't mean that--I am sure you love me--take my arm again. Do you know, Regina, I doubt whether your uncle has told you everything that passed between us. Are you really aware of the hard terms that he insists on? He expects me to increase my five hundred a year to two thousand, before he will sanction our marriage."

"Yes, dear, he told me that."

"I have as much chance of earning fifteen hundred a year, Regina, as I have of being made King of England. Did he tell you that?"

"He doesn't agree with you, dear--he thinks you might earn it (with your abilities) in ten years."

This time it was the turn of Amelius to look at Regina in helpless consternation. "Ten years?" he repeated. "Do you coolly contemplate waiting ten years before we are married? Good heavens! is it possible that you are thinking of the money? that you can't live without carriages and footmen, and ostentation and grandeur--?"

He stopped. For once, even Regina showed that she had spirit enough to be angry. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself to speak to me in that way!" she broke out indignantly. "If you have no better opinion of me than that, I won't marry you at all--no, not if you had fifty thousand a year, sir, to-morrow! Am I to have no sense of duty to my uncle--to the good man who has been a second father to me? Do you think I am ungrateful enough to set his wishes at defiance? Oh yes, I know you don't like him! I know that a great many people don't like him. That doesn't make any difference to Me! But for dear uncle Farnaby, I might have gone to the workhouse, I might have been a starving needlewoman, a poor persecuted maid-of-all-work. Am I to forget that, because you have no patience, and only think of yourself? Oh, I wish I had never met with you! I wish I had never been fool enough to be as fond of you as I am!" With that confession, she turned her back on him, and took refuge in her handkerchief once more.

Amelius stood looking at her in silent despair. After the tone in which she had spoken of her obligations to her uncle, it was useless to anticipate any satisfactory result from the exertion of his influence over Regina. Recalling what he had seen and heard, in Mrs. Farnaby's room, Amelius could not doubt that the motive of pacifying his wife was the motive which had first led Farnaby to receive Regina into his house. Was it unreasonable or unjust to infer, that the orphan child must have been mainly indebted to Mrs. Farnaby's sense of duty to the memory of her sister for the parental protection afforded to her, from that time forth? It would have been useless, and worse than useless, to place before Regina such considerations as these. Her exaggerated idea of the gratitude that she owed to her uncle was beyond the limited reach of reason. Nothing was to be gained by opposition; and no sensible course was left but to say some peace-making words and submit.

"I beg your pardon, Regina, if I have offended you. You have sadly disappointed me. I haven't deliberately misjudged you; I can say no more."

She turned round quickly, and looked at him. There was an ominous change to resignation in his voice, there was a dogged submission in his manner, that alarmed her. She had never yet seen him under the perilously-patient aspect in which he now presented himself, after his apology had been made.

"I forgive you, Amelius, with all my heart," she said--and timidly held out her hand.

He took it, raised it silently to his lips, and dropped it again.

She suddenly turned pale. All the love that she had in her to give to a man, she had given to Amelius. Her heart sank; she asked herself, in blank terror, if she had lost him.

"I am afraid it is I who have offended you," she said. "Don't be angry with me, Amelius! don't make me more unhappy than I am!"

"I am not in the least angry," he answered, still in the quiet subdued way that terrified her. "You can't expect me, Regina, to contemplate a ten years' engagement cheerfully."

She took his hand, and held it in both her own hands--held it, as if his love for her was there and she was determined not to let it go.

"If you will only leave it to me," she pleaded, "the engagement shan't be so long as that. Try my uncle with a little kindness and respect, Amelius, instead of saying hard words to him. Or let me try him, if you are too proud to give way. May I say that you had no intention of offending him, and that you are willing to leave the future to me?"

"Certainly," said Amelius, "if you think it will be of the slightest use." His tone added plainly, "I don't believe in your uncle, mind, as you do."

She still persisted. "It will be of the greatest use," she went on. "He will let me go home again, and he will not object to your coming to see me. He doesn't like to be despised and set at defiance--who does? Be patient, Amelius; and I will persuade him to expect less money from you--only what you may earn, dear, with your talents, long before ten years have passed." She waited for a word of reply which might show that she had encouraged him a little. He only smiled. "You talk of loving me," she said, drawing back from him with a look of reproach; "and you don't even believe what I say to you." She stopped, and looked behind her with a faint cry of alarm. Hurried footsteps were audible on the other side of the evergreens that screened them. Amelius stepped back to a turn in the path, and discovered Phoebe.

"Don't stay a moment longer, sir!" cried the girl. "I've been to the house--and Mrs. Ormond isn't there--and nobody knows where she is. Get out by the gate, sir, while you have the chance."

Amelius returned to Regina. "I mustn't get the girl into a scrape," he said. "You know where to write to me. Good-bye."

Regina made a sign to the maid to retire. Amelius had never taken leave of her as he was taking leave of her now. She forgot the fervent embrace and the daring kisses--she was desperate at the bare idea of losing him. "Oh, Amelius, don't doubt that I love you! Say you believe I love you! Kiss me before you go!"

He kissed her--but, ah, not as he had kissed her before. He said the words she wanted him to say--but only to please her, not with all his heart. She let him go; reproaches would be wasted at that moment.

Phoebe found her pale and immovable, rooted to the spot on which they had parted. "Dear, dear me, miss, what's gone wrong?"

And her mistress answered wildly, in words that had never before passed her placid lips, "O Phoebe, I wish I was dead!"

Such was the impression left on the mind of Regina by the interview in the shrubbery.

The impression left on the mind of Amelius was stated in equally strong language, later in the day. His American friend asked innocently for news, and was answered in these terms:

"Find something to occupy my mind, Rufus, or I shall throw the whole thing over and go to the devil."

The wise man from New England was too wise to trouble Amelius with questions, under these circumstances. "Is that so?" was all he said. Then he put his hand in his pocket, and, producing a letter, laid it quietly on the table.

"For me?" Amelius asked.

"You wanted something to occupy your mind," the wily Rufus answered. "There 'tis."

Amelius read the letter. It was dated, "Hampden Institution." The secretary invited Amelius, in highly complimentary terms, to lecture, in the hall of the Institution, on Christian Socialism as taught and practised in the Community at Tadmor. He was offered two-thirds of the profits derived from the sale of places, and was left free to appoint his own evening (at a week's notice) and to issue his own advertisements. Minor details were reserved to be discussed with the secretary, when the lecturer had consented to the

arrangement proposed to him.

Having finished the letter, Amelius looked at his friend. "This is your doing," he said.

Rufus admitted it, with his customary candour. He had a letter of introduction to the secretary, and he had called by appointment that morning. The Institution wanted something new to attract the members and the public. Having no present intention of lecturing himself, he had thought of Amelius, and had spoken his thought. "I mentioned," Rufus added slyly, "that I didn't reckon you would mount the platform. But he's a sanguine creature, that secretary--and he said he'd try."

"Why should I say No?" Amelius asked, a little irritably. "The secretary pays me a compliment, and offers me an opportunity of spreading our principles. Perhaps," he added, more quietly, after a moment's reflection, "you thought I might not be equal to the occasion--and, in that case, I don't say you were wrong."

Rufus shook his head. "If you had passed your life in this decrepit little island," he replied, "I might have doubted you, likely enough. But Tadmor's situated in the United States. If they don't practise the boys in the art of orating, don't you tell me there's an American citizen with a voice in that society. Guess again, my son. You won't? Well, then, 'twas uncle Farnaby I had in my mind. I said to myself--not to the secretary--Amelius is bound to consider uncle Farnaby. Oh, my! what would uncle Farnaby say?"

The hot temper of Amelius took fire instantly. "What the devil do I care for Farnaby's opinions?" he burst out. "If there's a man in England who wants the principles of Christian Socialism beaten into his thick head, it's Farnaby. Are you going to see the secretary again?"

"I might look in," Rufus answered, "in the course of the evening."

"Tell him I'll give the lecture--with my compliments and thanks. If I can only succeed," pursued Amelius, hearing himself with the new idea, "I may make a name as a lecturer, and a name means money, and money means beating Farnaby with his own weapons. It's an opening for me, Rufus, at the crisis of my life."

"That is so," Rufus admitted. "I may as well look up the secretary."

"Why shouldn't I go with you?" Amelius suggested.

"Why not?" Rufus agreed.

They left the house together.