

## Chapter 7

M. It was but yesterday you spoke him well - You've changed your mind so soon? N. Not I - 'tis he That, changing to my thought, has changed my mind. No man puts rotten apples in his pouch Because their upper side looked fair to him. Constancy in mistake is constant folly.

THE news that the rich heir of the Transomes was actually come back, and had been seen at Treby, was carried to some one else who had more reasons for being interested in it than the Reverend Rufus Lyon was yet conscious of having. It was owing to this that at three o'clock, two days afterwards, a carriage and pair, with coachman and footman in crimson and drab, passed through the lodge-gates of Transome Court. Inside there was a hale good-natured-looking man of sixty, whose hands rested on a knotted stick held between his knees; and a blue-eyed, well-featured lady, fat and middle-aged - a mountain of satin, lace, and exquisite muslin embroidery. They were not persons of highly remarkable appearance, but to most Trebians they seemed absolutely unique, and likely to be known anywhere. If you had looked down on them from the box of Sampson's coach, he would have said, after lifting his hat, 'Sir Maximus and his lady - did you see?' thinking it needless to add the surname.

'We shall find her greatly elated, doubtless,' Lady Debarry was saying. 'She has been in the shade so long.'

'Ah, poor thing!' said Sir Maximus. 'A fine woman she was in her bloom. I remember the first county ball she attended we were all ready to fight for the sake of dancing with her. I always liked her from that time - I never swallowed the scandal about her myself.'

'If we are to be intimate with her,' said Lady Debarry, 'I wish you would avoid making such allusions, Sir Maximus. I should not like Selina and Harriet to hear them.'

'My dear, I should have forgotten all about the scandal, only you remind me of it sometimes,' retorted the baronet, smiling and taking out his snuff-box.

'These sudden turns of fortune are often dangerous to an excitable constitution,' said Lady Debarry, not choosing to notice her husband's epigram. 'Poor Lady Alicia Methurst got heart-disease from a sudden piece of luck - the death of her uncle, you know. If Mrs Transome were wise she would go to town - she can afford it now - and consult Dr Truncheon. I should say myself he would order her digitalis: I have often guessed exactly what a prescription would be. But it certainly

was always one of her weak points to think that she understood medicine better than other people.'

'She's a healthy woman enough, surely: see how upright she is, and she rides about like a girl of twenty.'

'She is so thin that she makes me shudder.'

'Pooh I she's slim and active; women are not bid for by the pound.'

'Pray don't be so coarse.'

Sir Maximus laughed and showed his good teeth, which made his laughter very becoming. The carriage stopped, and they were soon ushered into Mrs Transome's sitting-room, where she was working at her worsted embroidery. A little daily embroidery had been a constant element in Mrs Transome's life; that soothing occupation of taking stitches to produce what neither she nor any one else wanted, was then the resource of many a well-born and unhappy woman.

She received much warm congratulation and pressure of her hand with perfect composure of manner; but she became paler than usual, and her hands turned quite cold. The Debarrys did not yet know what Harold's politics were.

'Well, our lucky youngster is come in the nick of time,' said Sir Maximus: 'if he'll stand, he and Philip can run in harness together and keep out both the Whigs.'

'It is really quite a providential thing - his returning just now,' said Lady Debarry. 'I couldn't help thinking that something would occur to prevent Philip from having such a man as Peter Garstin for his colleague.'

'I call my friend Harold a youngster,' said Sir Maximus, 'for, you know, I remember him only as he was when that portrait was taken.'

'That is a long while ago,' said Mrs Transome. 'My son is much altered, as you may imagine.'

There was a confused sound of voices in the library while this talk was going on. Mrs Transome chose to ignore that noise, but her face, from being pale, began to flush a little.

'Yes, yes, on the outside, I daresay. But he was a fine fellow - I always liked him. And if anybody had asked me what I should choose for the good of the county, I couldn't have thought of anything better than having a young Transome for a neighbour who will take an active part.

The Transomes and the Debarrys were always on the right side together in old days. Of course he'll stand - he has made up his mind to it?'

The need for an answer to this embarrassing question was deferred by the increase of inarticulate sounds accompanied by a bark from the library, and the sudden appearance at the tapestry-hung doorway of old Mr Transome with a cord round his waist, playing a very poor-paced horse for a black-maned little boy about three years old, who was urging him on with loud encouraging noises and occasional thumps from a stick which he wielded with some difficulty. The old man paused with a vague gentle smile at the doorway, while the baronet got up to speak to him. Nimrod snuffed at his master's legs to ascertain that he was not hurt, and the little boy, finding something new to be looked at, let go the cord and came round in front of the company, dragging his stick, and standing at a safe war-dancing distance as he fixed his great black eyes on Lady Debarry.

'Dear me, what a splendid little boy, Mrs Transome I why - it cannot be - can it be - that you have the happiness to be a grandmamma?' 'Yes; that is my son's little boy.'

'Indeed!' said Lady Debarry, really amazed. 'I never heard you speak of his marriage. He has brought you home a daughter-in-law, then?'

'No,' said Mrs Transome, coldly; 'she is dead.'

'O - o - oh!' said Lady Debarry, in a tone ludicrously undecided between condolence, satisfaction, and general mistiness. 'How very singular - I mean that we should not have heard of Mr Harold's marriage. But he's a charming little fellow: come to me, you round-cheeked cherub.'

The black eyes continued fixed as if by a sort of fascination on Lady Debarry's face, and her affable invitation was unheeded. At last, putting his head forward and pouting his lips, the cherub gave forth with marked intention the sounds, 'Nau-o-oom,' many times repeated: apparently they summed up his opinion of Lady Debarry, and may perhaps have meant 'naughty old woman', but his speech was a broken lisping polyglot of hazardous interpretation. Then he turned to pull at the Blenheim spaniel, which, being old and peevish, gave a little snap.

'Go, go, Harry; let poor Puff alone - he'll bite you,' said Mrs Transome, stooping to release her aged pet.

Her words were too suggestive, for Harry immediately laid hold of her arm with his teeth, and bit with all his might. Happily the stuffs upon

it were some protection, but the pain forced Mrs Transome to give a low cry; and Sir Maximus, who had now turned to reseate himself, shook the little rascal off, whereupon he burst away and trotted into the library again.

'I fear you are hurt,' said Lady Debarry, with sincere concern. 'What a little savage! Do have your arm attended to, my dear - I recommend fomentation - don't think of me.'

'O thank you, it is nothing,' said Mrs Transome, biting her lip and smiling alternately; 'it will soon go off. The pleasures of being a grandmamma, you perceive. The child has taken a dislike to me; but he makes quite a new life for Mr Transome; they were playfellows at once.'

'Bless my heart!' said Sir Maximus, 'it is odd to think of

Harold having been a family man so long. I made up my mind he was a young bachelor. What an old stager I am, to be sure! And whom has he married? I hope we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing Mrs Harold Transome.' Sir Maximus, occupied with old Mr Transome, had not over heard the previous conversation on that subject.

'She is no longer living,' Lady Debarry hastily interposed: 'but now, my dear Sir Maximus, we must not hinder Mrs Transome from attending to her arm. I am sure she is in pain. Don't say another word, my dear - we shall see you again - you and Mr Harold will come and dine with us on Thursday - say yes, only yes. Sir Maximus is longing to see him; and Philip will be down.'

'Yes, yes!' said Sir Maximus; 'he must lose no time in making Philip's acquaintance. Tell him Philip is a fine fellow - carried everything before him at Oxford. And your son must be returned along with him for North Loamshire. You said he meant to stand?'

'I will write and let you know if Harold has any engagement for Thursday; he would of course be happy otherwise,' said Mrs Transome, evading the question.

'If not Thursday, the next day - the very first day he can.'

The visitors left, and Mrs Transome was almost glad of the painful bite which had saved her from being questioned further about Harold's politics. 'This is the last visit I shall receive from them,' she said to herself as the door closed behind them, and she rang for Denner.

'That poor creature is not happy, Sir Maximus,' said Lady Debarry as they drove along. 'Something annoys her about her son. I hope there

is nothing unpleasant in his character. Either he kept his marriage a secret from her, or she was ashamed of it. He is thirty-four at least by this time. After living in the East so long he may have become a sort of person one would not care to be intimate with; and that savage boy - he doesn't look like a lady's child.'

'Pooh, my dear,' said Sir Maximus, 'women think so much of those minutiae. In the present state of the country it is our duty to look at a man's position and politics. Philip and my brother are both of that opinion, and I think they know what's right, if any man does. We are bound to regard every man of our party as a public instrument, and to pull all together. The Transomes have always been a good Tory family, but it has been a cipher of late years. This young fellow coming back with a fortune to give the family a head and a position is a clear gain to the county; and with Philip he'll get into the right hands - of course he wants guiding, having been out of the country so long. All we have to ask is, whether a man's a Tory, and will make a stand for the good of the country? - that's the plain English of the matter. And I do beg of you, my dear, to set aside all these gossiping niceties, and exert yourself, like a woman of sense and spirit as you are, to bring the right people together.'

Here Sir Maximus gave a deep cough, took out his snuff-box, and tapped it: he had made a serious marital speech, an exertion to which he was rarely urged by anything smaller than a matter of conscience. And this outline of the whole duty of a Tory was matter of conscience with him; though the Duffield Watchman had pointed expressly to Sir Maximus Debarry amongst others, in branding the co-operation of the Tories as a conscious selfishness and reckless immorality, which, however, would be defeated by the co-operation of all the friends of truth and liberty, who, the Watchman trusted, would subordinate all non-political differences in order to return representatives pledged to support the present government.

'I am sure, Sir Maximus,' Lady Debarry answered, 'you could not have observed that anything was wanting in my manners to Mrs Transome.'

'No, no, my dear; but I say this by way of caution. Never mind what was done at Smyrna, or whether Transome likes to sit with his heels tucked up. We may surely wink at a few things for the sake of the public interest, if God Almighty does; and if He didn't, I don't know what would have become of the country - government could never have been carried on, and many a good battle would have been lost. That's the philosophy of the matter, and the common sense too.'

Good Sir Maximus gave a deep cough and tapped his box again, inwardly remarking, that if he had not been such a lazy fellow he might have made as good a figure as his son Philip.

But at this point the carriage, which was rolling by a turn towards Treby Magna, passed a well-dressed man, who raised his hat to Sir Maximus, and called to the coachman to stop.

'Excuse me, Sir Maximus,' said this personage, standing uncovered at the carriage-door, 'but I have just learned something of importance at Treby, which I thought you would like to know as soon as possible.'

'Ah! what's that? Something about Garstin or Clement?' said Sir Maximus, seeing the other draw a poster from his pocket.

'No; rather worse, I fear you will think. A new Radical candidate. I got this by a stratagem from the printer's boy. They're not posted yet.'

'A Radical!' said Sir Maximus, in a tone of incredulous disgust, as he took the folded bill. 'What fool is he? - he'll have no chance.'

'They say he's richer than Garstin.'

'Harold Transome!' shouted Sir Maximus, as he read the name in three-inch letters. 'I don't believe it - it's a trick - it's a squib: why - why - we've just been to his place - eh? do you know any more? Speak, sir - speak; don't deal out your story like a damned mountebank, who wants to keep people gaping.'

'Sir Maximus, pray don't give way so,' said Lady Debarry.

'I'm afraid there's no doubt about it, sir,' said Christian. 'After getting the bill, I met Mr Labron's clerk, and he said he had just had the whole story from Jermyn's clerk. The Ram Inn is engaged already, and a committee is being made up. He says Jermyn goes like a steam-engine, when he has a mind, although he makes such long-winded speeches.'

'Jermyn be hanged for a two-faced rascal! Tell Mitchell to drive on. It's of no use to stay chattering here. Jump up on the box and go home with us. I may want you.'

'You see I was right, Sir Maximus,' said the baronet's wife, 'I had an instinct that we should find him an unpleasant person.'

'Fudge! if you had such a fine instinct, why did you let us go to Transome Court and make fools of ourselves?'

'Would you have listened to me? But of course you will not have him to dine with you?'

'Dine with me? I should think not. I'd sooner he should dine off me. I see how it is clearly enough. He has become a regular beast among those Mahometans - he's got neither religion nor morals left. He can't know anything about English politics. He'll go and cut his own nose off as a land-holder, and never know. However, he won't get in - he'll spend his money for nothing.'

'I fear he is a very licentious man,' said Lady Debarry. 'We know now why his mother seemed so uneasy. I should think she reflects a little, poor creature.'

'It's a confounded nuisance we didn't meet Christian on our way, instead of coming back; but better now than later. He's an uncommonly adroit, useful fellow, that factotum of Philip's. I wish Phil would take my man and give me Christian. I'd make him house-steward; he might reduce the accounts a little.'

Perhaps Sir Maximus would not have been so sanguine as to Mr Christian's economical virtues if he had seen that gentleman relaxing himself the same evening among the other distinguished dependants of the family and frequenters of the steward's room. But a man of Sir Maximus's rank is like those antediluvian animals whom the system of things condemned to carry such a huge bulk that they really could not inspect their bodily appurtenance, and had no conception of their own tails: their parasites doubtless had a merry time of it, and after did extremely well when the high-bred saurian himself was ill at ease. Treby Manor, measured from the front saloon to the remotest shed, was as large as a moderate-sized village, and there were certainly more lights burning in it every evening, more wine, spirits, and ale drunk, more waste and more folly, than could be found in some large villages. There was fast revelry in the steward's room, and slow revelry in the Scotch bailiff's room; short whist, costume, and flirtation in the housekeeper's room, and the same at a lower price in the servants' hall; a select Olympian feast in the private apartment of the cook, who was a much grander person than her ladyship, and wore gold and jewellery to a vast amount of suet; a gambling group in the stables, and the coachman, perhaps the most innocent member of the establishment, tipping in majestic solitude by a fire in the harness room. For Sir Maximus, as every one said, was a gentleman of the right sort, condescended to no mean inquiries, greeted his head-servants with a 'good evening, gentlemen', when he met them in the park, and only snarled in a subdued way when he looked over the accounts, willing to endure some personal inconvenience in order to keep up the institutions of the country, to maintain his hereditary establishment, and do his duty in that station of life - the station of the long-tailed saurian - to which it had pleased Providence to call him.

The focus of brilliancy at Treby Manor that evening was in no way the dining-room, where Sir Maximus sipped his port under some mental depression, as he discussed with his brother, the Reverend Augustus, the sad fact, that one of the oldest names in the county was to be on the wrong side - not in the drawing-room, where Miss Debarry and Miss Selina, quietly elegant in their dress and manners, were feeling rather dull than otherwise, having finished Mr Bulwer's Eugene Aram, and being thrown back on the last great prose work of Mr Southey, while their mamma slumbered a little on the sofa. No; the centre of eager talk and enjoyment was the steward's room, where Mr Scales, house-steward and head-butler, a man most solicitous about his boots, wristbands, the roll of his whiskers, and other attributes of a gentleman, distributed cigars, cognac, and whisky, to various colleagues and guests who were discussing, with that freedom of conjecture which is one of our inalienable privileges as Britons, the probable amount of Harold Transome's fortune, concerning which fame had already been busy long enough to have acquired vast magnifying power.

The chief part in this scene was undoubtedly Mr Christian's, although he had hitherto been comparatively silent; but he occupied two chairs with so much grace, throwing his right leg over the seat of the second, and resting his right hand on the back; he held his cigar and displayed a splendid seal-ring with such becoming nonchalance, and had his grey hair arranged with so much taste, that experienced eyes would at once have seen even the great Scales himself to be but a secondary character.

'Why,' said Mr Crowder, an old respectable tenant, though much in arrear as to his rent, who condescended frequently to drink in the steward's room for the sake of the conversation; 'why, I suppose they get money so fast in the East - it's wonderful. Why,' he went on, with a hesitating look towards Mr Scales, 'this Transome has p'raps got a matter of a hundred thousand.'

'A hundred thousand, my dear sir! fiddle-stick's end of a hundred thousand,' said Mr Scales, with a contempt very painful to be borne by a modest man.

'Well,' said Mr Crowder, giving way under torture, as the all-knowing butler puffed and stared at him, 'perhaps not so much as that.'

'Not so much, sir! I tell you that a hundred thousand pounds is a bagatelle.'

'Well, I know it's a big sum,' said Mr Crowder, deprecatingly.



Here there was a general laugh. All the other intellects present were more cultivated than Mr Crowder's.

'Bagatelle is the French for trifle, my friend,' said Mr Christian. 'Don't talk over people's heads so, Scales. I shall have hard work to understand you myself soon.'

'Come, that's a good one,' said the head-gardener, who was a ready admirer; 'I should like to hear the thing you don't understand, Christian.'

'He's a first-rate hand at sneering,' said Mr Scales, rather nettled.

'Don't be waspish, man. I'll ring the bell for lemons, and make some punch. That's the thing for putting people up to the unknown tongues,' said Mr Christian, starting up, and slapping Scales's shoulder as he passed him.

'What I mean, Mr Crowder, is this.' Here Mr Scales paused to puff, and pull down his waistcoat in a gentlemanly manner, and drink. He was wont in this way to give his hearers time for meditation.

'Come, then, speak English; I'm not against being taught,' said the reasonable Crowder.

'What I mean is, that in a large way of trade a man turns his capital over almost as soon as he can turn himself. Bless your soul! I know something about these matters, eh, Brent?'

'To be sure you do - few men more,' said the gardener, who was the person appealed to.

'Not that I've had anything to do with commercial families myself. I've those feelings that I look to other things besides lucre. But I can't say that I've not been intimate with parties who have been less nice than I am myself; and knowing what I know, I shouldn't wonder if Transome had as much as five hundred thousand. Bless your soul, sir I people who get their money out of land are as long scraping five pounds together as your trading men are in turning five pounds into a hundred.'

'That's a wicked thing, though,' said Mr Crowder, meditatively. 'However,' he went on, retreating from this difficult ground, 'trade or no trade, the Transomes have been poor enough this many a long year. I've a brother a tenant on their estate - I ought to know a little bit about that.'

'They've kept up no establishment at all,' said Mr Scales, with disgust. 'They've even let their kitchen gardens. I suppose it was the eldest son's gambling. I've seen something of that. A man who has always lived in first-rate families is likely to know a thing or two on that subject.'

'Ah, but it wasn't gambling did the first mischief,' said Mr Crowder, with a slight smile, feeling that it was his turn to have some superiority. 'New-comers don't know what happened in this country twenty and thirty year ago. I'm turned fifty myself, and my father lived under Sir Maximus's father. But if anybody from London can tell me more than I know about this country-side, I'm willing to listen.'

'What was it, then, if it wasn't gambling?' said Mr Scales, with some impatience. 'I don't pretend to know.'

'It was law - law - that's what it was. Not but what the Transomes always won.'

'And always lost,' said the too-ready Scales. 'Yes, yes; I think we all know the nature of law.'

'There was the last suit of all made the most noise, as I understood,' continued Mr Crowder; 'but it wasn't tried hereabout. They said there was a deal o' false swearing. Some young man pretended to be the true heir - let me see - I can't justly remember the names - he'd got two. He swore he was one man, and they swore he was another. However, Lawyer Jermyn won it - they say he'd win a game against the Old One himself - and the young fellow turned out to be a scamp. Stop a bit - his name was Scaddon - Henry Scaddon.'

Mr Christian here let a lemon slip from his hand into the punch-bowl with a plash which sent some of the nectar into the company's faces.

'Hallo! What a bungler I am!' he said, looking as if he were quite jarred by this unusual awkwardness of his. 'Go on with your tale, Mr Crowder - a scamp named Harry Scaddon.'

'Well, that's the tale,' said Mr Crowder. 'He was never seen nothing of any more. It was a deal talked of at the time - and I've sat by; and my father used to shake his head; and always when this Mrs Transome was talked of, he used to shake his head, and say she carried things with a high hand once. But, Lord I it was before the battle of Waterloo, and I'm a poor hand at tales; I don't see much good in 'em myself - but if anybody'll tell me a cure for the sheep-rot I'll thank him.'

Here Mr Crowder relapsed into smoking and silence, a little discomfited that the knowledge of which he had been delivered had turned out rather a shapeless and insignificant birth.

'Well, well, bygones should be bygones; there are secrets in most good families,' said Mr Scales, winking, 'and this young Transome, coming back with a fortune to keep up the establishment, and have things done in a decent and gentlemanly way - it would all have been right if he'd not been this sort of Radical madman. But now he's done for himself. I heard Sir Maximus say at dinner that he would be excommunicated; and that's a pretty strong word, I take it.'

'What does it mean, Scales,' said Mr Christian, who loved tormenting.

'Ay, what's the meaning?' insisted Mr Crowder, encouraged by finding that even Christian was in the dark.

'Well, it's a law term - speaking in a figurative sort of way - meaning that a Radical was no gentleman.'

'Perhaps it's partly accounted for by his getting his money so fast, and in foreign countries,' said Mr Crowder, tentatively. 'It's reasonable to think he'd be against the land and this country - eh, Sircome?'

Sircome was an eminent miller who had considerable business transactions at the manor, and appreciated Mr Scales's merits at a handsome percentage on the yearly account. He was a highly honourable tradesman, but in this and in other matters submitted to the institutions of his country; for great houses, as he observed, must have great butlers. He replied to his friend Crowder sententiously.

'I say nothing. Before I bring words to market, I should like to see 'em a bit scarcer. There's the land and there's trade - I hold with both. I swim with the stream.'

'Hey-day, Mr Sircome! that's a Radical maxim,' said Mr Christian, who knew that Mr Sircome's last sentence was his favourite formula. 'I advise you to give it up, else it will injure the quality of your flour.'

'A Radical maxim!' said Mr Sircome, in a tone of angry astonishment. 'I should like to hear you prove that. It's as old as my grandfather, anyhow.'

'I'll prove it in one minute,' said the glib Christian. 'Reform has set in by the will of the majority - that's the rabble you know; and the respectability and good sense of the country, which are in the minority, are afraid of Reform running on too fast. So the stream must be running towards Reform and Radicalism; and if you swim with it,

Mr Sir - come, you're a Reformer and a Radical, and your flour is objectionable, and not full weight - and being tried by Scales, will be found wanting.'

There was a roar of laughter. This pun upon Scales was highly appreciated by every one except the miller and the butler. The latter pulled down his waistcoat, and puffed and stared in rather an excited manner. Mr Christian's wit, in general, seemed to him a poor kind of quibbling.

'What a fellow you are for fence, Christian,' said the gardener. 'Hang me, if I don't think you're up to everything.'

'That's a compliment you might pay Old Nick, if you come to that,' said Mr Sircome, who was in the painful position of a man deprived of his formula.

'Yes, yes,' said Mr Scales; 'I'm no fool myself, and could parry a thrust if I liked, but I shouldn't like it to be said of me that I was up to everything. I'll keep a little principle if you please.'

'To be sure,' said Christian, ladling out the punch. 'What would justice be without Scales?'

The laughter was not quite so full-throated as before. Such excessive cleverness was a little Satanic.

'A joke's a joke among gentlemen,' said the butler, getting exasperated; 'I think there has been quite liberties enough taken with my name. But if you must talk about names, I've heard of a party before now calling himself a Christian, and being anything but it.'

'Come, that's beyond a joke,' said the surgeon's assistant, a fast man, whose chief scene of dissipation was the Manor. 'Let it drop, Scales.'

'Yes, I daresay it's beyond a joke. I'm not a harlequin to talk nothing but jokes. I leave that to other Christians, who are up to everything, and have been everywhere - to the hulks, for what I know; and more than that, they come from nobody knows where, and try to worm themselves into gentlemen's confidence, to the prejudice of their betters.'

There was a stricter sequence in Mr Scales's angry eloquence than was apparent - some chief links being confined to his own breast, as is often the case in energetic discourse. The company were in a state of expectation. There was something behind worth knowing, and something before them worth seeing. In the general decay of other fine British pugnacious sports, a quarrel between gentlemen was all the

more exciting, and though no one would himself have liked to turn on Scales, no one was sorry for the chance of seeing him put down. But the amazing Christian was unmoved. He had taken out his handkerchief and was rubbing his lips carefully. After a slight pause, he spoke with perfect coolness.

'I don't intend to quarrel with you, Scales. Such talk as this is not profitable to either of us. It makes you purple in the face - you are apoplectic, you know - and it spoils good company. Better tell a few fibs about me behind my back - it will heat you less, and do me more harm. I'll leave you to it; I shall go and have a game at whist with the ladies.'

As the door closed behind the questionable Christian, Mr Scales was in a state of frustration that prevented speech. Every one was rather embarrassed.

'That's a most uncommon sort o' fellow,' said Mr Crowder, in an under-tone, to his next neighbour, the gardener. 'Why, Mr Philip picked him up in foreign parts, didn't he?'

'He was a courier,' said the gardener. 'He's had a deal of experience. And I believe, by what I can make out - for he's been pretty free with me sometimes - there was a time when he was in that rank of life that he fought a duel.' 'Ah I that makes him such a cool chap,' said Mr Crowder.

'He's what I call an overbearing fellow,' said Mr Sircome, also sotto voce, to his next neighbour, Mr Filmore, the surgeon's assistant. 'He runs you down with a sort of talk that's neither here nor there. He's got a deal too many samples in his pocket for me.'

'All I know is, he's a wonderful hand at cards,' said Mr Filmore, whose whiskers and shirt-pin were quite above the average. 'I wish I could play ecarte as he does; it's beautiful to see him; he can make a man look pretty blue - he'll empty his pocket for him in no time.'

'That's none to his credit,' said Mr Sircome.

The conversation had in this way broken up into tete-a-tete, and the hilarity of the evening might be considered a failure. Still the punch was drunk, the accounts were duly swelled, and, notwithstanding the innovating spirit of the time, Sir Maximus Debarry's establishment was kept up in a sound hereditary British manner.