



Anthony Trollope
Can You Forgive Her?

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?

CAN YOU FORGIVE HER? is the first in Trollope's six-volume sequence of novels known as the Palliser series. They chart the career of Plantagenet Palliser, and his troubled marriage to Lady Glencora. The novels depict the social milieu of the aristocracy and upper middle-class of mid-Victorian England, with occasional forays into low life and the criminal underworld. They combine the machinations of politics with an intimate exploration of personal relationships to paint an unparalleled portrait of an age. The novels can be read independently and as part of a linked whole. They are:

Can You Forgive Her? (1865)

Phineas Finn (1869)

The Eustace Diamonds (1872)

Phineas Redux (1873)

The Prime Minister (1876)

The Duke's Children (1880)

DINAH BIRCH is Professor of English Literature and Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Liverpool. Her work on Victorian literature includes *Ruskin's Myths* (1988), *Ruskin on Turner* (1990), and *Our Victorian Education* (2007). For Oxford World's Classics she has edited George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1996), Ruskin's *Selected Writings* (2004), and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (2011). She writes regularly for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *London Review of Books*, and is the General Editor of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (2009).

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics have brought readers closer to the world's great literature. Now with over 700 titles—from the 4,000-year-old myths of Mesopotamia to the twentieth century's greatest novels—the series makes available lesser-known as well as celebrated writing.

The pocket-sized hardbacks of the early years contained introductions by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other literary figures which enriched the experience of reading.

Today the series is recognized for its fine scholarship and reliability in texts that span world literature, drama and poetry, religion, philosophy, and politics. Each edition includes perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

Can You Forgive Her?



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

DINAH BIRCH

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

Introduction, Select Bibliography, Explanatory Notes © Dinah Birch 2012
Biographical Preface, Chronology © Katherine Mullin and Francis O'Gorman 2011
Appendix © Nicholas Shrimpton 2011

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published as a World's Classics paperback 1982
Reissued as an Oxford World's Classics paperback 1999, 2008
New edition 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by Cenveo, Bangalore, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

ISBN 978-0-19-957817-7

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

CONTENTS

<i>Biographical Preface</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
<i>Note on the Text</i>	xxix
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	xxx
<i>A Chronology of Anthony Trollope</i>	xxxiii
CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?	I
<i>Appendix: The Chronology and Political Contexts of the Palliser Novels</i>	676
<i>Explanatory Notes</i>	687

This page intentionally left blank

BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE

ANTHONY TROLLOPE was born on 24 April 1815 in London. He was the fourth surviving child of a failing barrister and gentleman farmer, Thomas Anthony Trollope, and his wife Frances (née Milton), who became a successful novelist and travel writer. Trollope's childhood was dominated by uncongenial schooling. He was sent to Harrow, the boys' public school in north London, as a day boy, then to Sunbury, Surrey, while awaiting a place at his father's former school, Winchester College. Trollope was admitted to Winchester in 1827, but his father's embarrassing inability to pay the fees became known to fellow pupils. He was moved back from Winchester to Harrow in 1830 for two further years, which he later described as 'the worst period of my life'.¹ Unsurprisingly, he did not shine academically, and when, in 1834, the whole family fled to Bruges in Belgium to avoid imprisonment for debt, he obtained a clerkship in the London headquarters of the newly-created Post Office through his mother's connections.

The beginning of Trollope's long Post Office career was not encouraging. He soon became known for unpunctuality, and was, by his own account, 'always on the eve of being dismissed'.² His scanty salary led him into debt, and travails with money-lenders would later inform the scrapes of many fictional characters. Trollope was sustained by a habit of imagination that was first acquired during his unhappy adolescence. Daydreaming not only allowed him 'to live in a world altogether outside the world of my own material life':³ it served as an apprenticeship for fiction. Yet it took a change of scene from London to rural Ireland to persuade Trollope to express his imagination in writing.

In July 1841, aged 26, Trollope was appointed deputy postal surveyor's clerk, based in Banagher, King's County (now Co. Offaly). His new-found professional success helped him to grow in social confidence. Ireland prompted his lifelong enthusiasm for hunting with hounds, too. That enthusiasm was never far from his writing, and sometimes it made life difficult for him at work, not least because hounds and horses were an expensive pastime. Within a year, he became engaged to Rose Heseltine, the daughter of a Rotherham banker who was holidaying in what is now Dun Laoghaire. Trollope proposed after barely a fortnight's acquaintance. The wedding was, for

¹ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: OUP, 1980), 11.

² *Ibid.* 46.

³ *Ibid.* 43.

financial reasons, postponed for two years until 11 June 1844. Marriage and the birth of two sons, Henry Merivale in 1846 and Frederick James Anthony in 1847, helped Trollope to find what he called the 'vigour necessary to prosecute two professions at the same time'.⁴ His first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847), sold far fewer than the 400 copies printed. But it was favourably reviewed and was followed by a second Irish tale, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (1848). Both kept an uneasy silence on the Famine, to which Trollope was a horrified witness, but his recollections of the famine years would inform the later *Castle Richmond* (1860). The failure of *La Vendée* (1850), on the French Revolution, together with the increasing demands of his Post Office career, conspired to deflect Trollope from fiction for some years.

In 1851, he was sent to the south-west of England to investigate ways of expanding the rural postal system. His successful development of the pillar box, which he first tried out in St Helier in the Channel Islands in 1852, led to the spread of post boxes throughout the UK. The project won Trollope promotion to the surveyorship of the north of Ireland in 1854, and his family settled in Donnybrook. During these years, he composed the first novel to bring him real recognition, *The Warden* (1855). The first of six 'Chronicles of Barsetshire', *The Warden* was set, like its successors, in a fictional county, based on the south-west England Trollope knew. Although they dramatized changes in the ecclesiastical world, the 'Chronicles' were also secular in their interests. While *The Warden* brought him less than £10, Trollope 'soon felt it had not failed as the others had failed',⁵ and began work on *Barchester Towers* (1857). It was warmly reviewed. But it was not until the publication of *Dr Thorne* (1858) that he met with unmixed success. The novels following—*Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867)—established his reputation, his popularity, and his fortune.

During the twelve years between *The Warden* and *The Last Chronicle*, Trollope published seventeen novels, numerous short stories, and several collections of travel writing. This extraordinary scale of production was sustained by his habit of rising at five each morning to allow three hours of writing—250 words each quarter of an hour, he boasted in *An Autobiography*—before leaving for the office at nine. Other celebrated writers have written to a similar schedule, but Trollope's pride in his achievement has never been entirely admired by critics. His schedule made him an invaluable contributor to the *Cornhill Magazine*, founded in 1859 by the novelist, William Makepeace Thackeray. The

⁴ Ibid. 69.

⁵ Ibid. 98.

serialization of *Framley Parsonage* in the *Cornhill's* first issues did much to secure the magazine's and Trollope's reputation. Through the *Cornhill*, he made lasting friendships with major literary and artistic figures. By 1859, he was living in the north London suburb of Waltham Cross, after a promotion to Post Office surveyor of the eastern district. He was soon elected to the Garrick and Athenaeum Clubs, and became a stalwart of the Royal Literary Fund. These were marks of serious literary success. He also, in 1860, met a young American woman, Kate Field, with whom he fell in love. The nature of *that* relationship is known almost as little as Trollope's relationship with Rose. But Kate mattered to him—and would do till the end of his life.

Trollope concluded the Barsetshire Chronicles on a high note, considering *The Last Chronicle of Barset* to be his best novel. Following the model of Honoré de Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, Trollope saw realist fiction as capable of depicting a complex culture through a multi-volume series. The Palliser volumes, beginning with *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865) and ending with *The Duke's Children* (1880), were his other major sequence. These novels, like the Barsetshire Chronicles, could be read separately and in different orders without irrecoverable loss—but they formed a continuous whole all the same. In the story of the Pallisers, Trollope developed one of his strongest themes—the difficult marriage and its negotiations. He also explored great political issues, including the 1867 Reform Bill and the disestablishment of the Irish Church, while inviting readers to map the Conservative leader Daubeny onto Disraeli, and the Liberal Gresham onto Gladstone. His portrayal of democratic politics has remained consequential for generations. The novels' political appeal, nonetheless, was carefully balanced against other enticements: 'If I wrote politics for my own sake, I must put in love and intrigue, social incidents, a dash of sport, for the sake of my readers',⁶ he said, with characteristic pragmatism.

Trollope resigned from the Post Office in 1867. His earnings from writing had long outstripped his salary. The following year, feeling that 'to sit in the British Parliament should be the highest object of ambition to every educated Englishman',⁷ he stood as the Liberal candidate for Beverley in the 1868 General Election. He was unsuccessful. That failure haunted his fiction as it must have haunted his private life. Trollope interspersed the Palliser series with other novels and studies. He was by this stage a professional writer whose commitment was broken significantly only by field sports and travel. Trollope's international voyages included Australia, where Frederick, his younger son, was a sheep

⁶ Ibid. 317.

⁷ Ibid. 290.

farmer: *Australia and New Zealand* (1873) was a result. Trollope and Rose left London in 1880 for South Harting in Sussex, hoping country air would ease his persistent asthma. This was no retirement: the last two years of his life saw a further six books, including *Mr Scarborough's Family* (1883), a study of parental domination, and the unfinished *The Landleaguers*, a return to Irish matters (published posthumously, 1883).

In early November 1882, Trollope suffered a stroke, and, on 6 December, he died in London at the age of 67. He had written forty-seven novels, five volumes of short stories, four travel books, three biographies, an autobiography, and two translations from the classics, together with uncollected pieces of journalism. His prodigious output included a biography of Thackeray, and a study of Cicero whose political judiciousness was often a silent model behind his admirable fictional politicians. Few who knew Trollope could avoid commenting on his loud and bluff persona in public: at 5 ft. 10 in., and around 16 stones, he struck those who met him as burly—a man of bodily appetites. It was difficult for many to imagine him dissecting the emotional complexities of his characters with such delicacy and sympathy.

Trollope's posthumous *An Autobiography* (1883) startled a large number of readers. Its dry discussion of how much money his fiction made denied any Romantic model of authorship. Here was no account of the creative flash of inspiration. Writing fiction was more like a trade, the result of well-applied skill and labour. But, knowing at first hand the cost of his father's failure, it was important to Trollope to demonstrate to his family, if to no one else, that he had made such a success of his life. He had no university degree, and was without the much-coveted honour of a seat in Parliament. He wished to demonstrate too, in a culture less familiar with the notion of a professional writer than ours, that writing could indeed be a life. His estate was valued at the huge sum of £25,892 19s. 3d.

Biographies of Trollope are always to some degree doomed to follow the sparse facts laid out in *An Autobiography*. The nature of his marriage, his feelings for Kate Field, his relationship with his sons, let alone the secrets of his inner life, are among the topics on which it is impossible to write with certainty. Trollope had no commitment to privacy—but private he remains. Declining to reveal himself in correspondence, he is, perhaps, only glimpsed in the astonishingly fertile novels about human lives, desires, and choices, which were his enduring bequest to English literature.

Katherine Mullin
Francis O'Gorman

INTRODUCTION

[*Readers who are unfamiliar with the plot may prefer to treat the Introduction as an Afterword.*]

‘OF *Can You Forgive Her?* I cannot speak with too great affection.’¹ Trollope never lost his liking for *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864–5), and many of his readers have come to share his pleasure. As the first of his six Palliser novels, it introduces the ambitious range of political and social interests that characterize the series. He was at the height of his fame when he wrote it, and the £3,525 he received for the book was the largest payment that he was ever to earn for a novel. Trollope was a little disappointed by its first reception: ‘I do not know that of itself it did very much to increase my reputation.’² What did increase his reputation, in the longer term, was his treatment of the Liberal politician Plantagenet Palliser and his spirited wife Glencora, whose political and marital life becomes the narrative thread which holds the series together. Palliser was first seen in *The Small House at Allington* (1864): ‘He was a thin-minded, plodding, respectable man, willing to devote all his youth to work, in order that in old age he might be allowed to sit among the Councillors of the State.’³ His growing stature becomes central to *Can You Forgive Her?*, as his rigid character expands in interaction with the vitality of his wife. Glencora’s risky escapades energize the novel, as they animate Palliser, and she is the principal reason that Trollope and many of his readers developed a particular fondness for the book. Glencora is repeatedly seen to defy the constraints of her position as a wealthy lady. Despite his evident partiality for her liveliness, Trollope’s suspicion of social rebels prompts him to distance himself from her irreverent behaviour, and in his *Autobiography* he stiffly describes her as ‘in all respects inferior’ to her husband.⁴ Glencora is certainly among the novel’s transgressors, yet she is not the woman we are asked to forgive. As Trollope explains in the novel’s opening paragraph, it is Glencora’s friend Alice Vavasor, engaged to the gentlemanly John Grey

¹ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (1883), ed. Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, repr. 1999), 179.

² Ibid.

³ Anthony Trollope, *The Small House at Allington* (1864), ed. James R. Kincaid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 251.

⁴ *Autobiography*, 181.

as the story begins, 'whose offence against the world I am to tell you, and if possible to excuse' (p. 7).

Trollope claims the reader's personal investment as essential to his purpose. His confiding tone is established in the direct question of his title—*Can You Forgive Her?* The novel's final paragraph reiterates the 'hope' that Alice will be pardoned (p. 675). This does not, however, imply that he is willing to relinquish control of Alice's story, for the reader is not an equal partner. For all the 'tentative humility'⁵ that Trollope claimed for his title, our interpretation of her 'offence' is firmly directed, and the required answer to the title's question is never seriously in doubt. Alice's behaviour is sometimes perverse, but Trollope makes it clear that she is to be pitied as she struggles for an answer to her own troublesome question—'What should a woman do with her life?' (p. 92). The national politics that preoccupy Palliser are an almost exclusively male business, but the broader politics of gender define the identities of both men and women, and they matter more to this novel than the affairs of state. In this preoccupation Trollope addresses the pressing interests of his middle-class readership, for changes initiated by the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 had created intense debate about the position of women—their chances of employment, their social relations with men, and their legal and cultural status. When Palliser speaks of 'the redundancy of the female population' (p. 570),⁶ he reflects widespread anxieties about the numerical excess of single women in mid-Victorian Britain which made it impossible for every girl to find a husband. Trollope was no feminist. But his warm attachment to Kate Field, the independently-minded American lecturer and journalist he met in 1860, had shaken some of his old assumptions about the supposed limits of women's potential. He signalled his sympathy by donating two stories to Emily Faithfull's uncompromisingly feminist Victoria Press—'The Journey to Panama' in 1861, followed by 'Miss Ophelia Gledde', whose central character is in part a homage to Kate Field, in 1863. His fiction repeatedly considers the frustrations of energetic young women who could not resign themselves to giving up their independent power of action in the world.

Yet Trollope could not allow that the heart of the problem lay in the lack of practical alternatives to marriage and motherhood. 'A woman's

⁵ *Autobiography*, 180.

⁶ The polemical essayist William Rathbone Greg was among the most influential of those who spoke of the 'redundancy' of women. See W. R. Greg, 'Why Are Women Redundant?', *National Review*, 14 (Apr. 1862), 434–60; repr. in his *Literary and Social Judgements* (London: Bungey, 1868).

life is important to her,—as is that of a man to him,—not chiefly in regard to that which she shall do with it. The chief thing for her to look to is the manner in which that something shall be done' (p. 92). In Trollope's view, Alice's suffering is rooted in her persistent indecision, not in the limited choices available to her. Perplexed as to what she should do with herself, she makes promises that are broken in a manner that seems disgraceful. Though Trollope was keenly aware of the topical resonance of her predicament, his deepest fascination with its contradictions lay in its human dimension, rather than the controversies generated by the 'woman question' as it was understood in the 1860s. He had first treated the story in *The Noble Filt*, a play written in 1850, when he was living in Ireland and struggling to launch a literary career. Set in the Bruges of 1792, *The Noble Filt* is a somewhat grandiose affair, mixing a mannered Shakespearian blank verse with ungainly passages of prose. Nevertheless, this apprentice drama is immediately recognizable as an embryonic version of the novel, with a plot that parallels the central action of *Can You Forgive Her?* Trollope's hopes for *The Noble Filt* were conclusively dashed when George Bartley, the actor and family friend who first read the work, delivered a crushing verdict: 'There is not one character, serious or comic, to challenge the sympathy of the audience; and without that all the good writing in the world will not ensure success on the stage.'⁷ Trollope took the judgement as 'critical gospel', as he recalls in his *Autobiography*, and set the play aside.⁸ But he did not forget it, and in 1863 he returned to its subject.

Margaret de Wynter, the heroine of *The Noble Filt*, loves Count Upsel, an upright and scholarly nobleman, and is engaged to be married to him. Yet she is unhappy, and rejects the blameless Count in favour of Steinmark, leader of the republicans in Bruges, though she dislikes Steinmark and knows he is not to be trusted. She tries to explain to her baffled father:

Love's not enough to fill a woman's heart.
 Although you smile, I say it, feel it here.
 Love's not enough to fill a human heart,
 E'en though it beat within a woman's breast.⁹

This is the germ of *Can You Forgive Her?*, where the obstinate Margaret is transformed into the equally stubborn Alice Vavasor, torn between

⁷ Anthony Trollope, *The Noble Filt: A Comedy by Anthony Trollope*, ed. Michael Sadleir (London: Constable & Co., 1923), p. xiv.

⁸ *Autobiography*, 86.

⁹ *The Noble Filt*, 8.

the rival claims of her 'wild' cousin George Vavasor and the 'worthy' John Grey. Having ended her engagement with Grey, the man who retains her love throughout the novel, she makes a wilful renewal of her earlier commitment to George Vavasor, before returning to Grey and at last becoming his wife. 'I have done that which no woman can do and honour herself afterwards. I have been——a jilt' (p. 624). Jilt or not, Trollope is not inclined to condemn her, partly because Alice finds it so hard to forgive herself. Trollope identifies her troubles as the expression of a more serious disturbance than what Henry James impatiently dismissed as 'the conscientious flutterings of an excellent young lady'.¹⁰ The intensity of her fearful uncertainty as to the direction she should take amounts to something approaching a pathology. But it is essential to Trollope's purposes that she is not, finally, a rebel. Alice's pained repentance implies that her identity is, after all, invested in the codes of value that constitute his understanding of a woman's honour.

Trollope's bluff authorial persona sweeps Alice's troubles aside, suggesting that their solution is not complicated. 'Fall in love, marry the man, have two children, and live happy ever afterwards. I maintain that answer has as much wisdom in it as any other that can be given;—or perhaps more' (p. 92). Alice has, he maintains, simply 'thought too much about it' (p. 92). But the complexities of Alice's unfolding story undermine this no-nonsense account of her situation. Trollope acknowledges that Grey's calmly dominating personality—he is 'perhaps over-conscious of his own strength' (p. 99)—is a real threat to her autonomy. Alice is motherless, and John Vavasor, her lazy and self-indulgent father, has provided no guidance or support as she has grown up. She has been compelled to develop a level of independence as a girl which it is hard to renounce as a woman. Grey is, we are repeatedly told, a very superior creature, but his self-assured perfection leaves no scope for Alice's desire to make her own mark on public affairs. He has no wish to commit himself to a career and is oblivious to her dream of an active life in London, dismissing her interest in politics as an irrelevance and assuming that the domestic life of a lady in rural Cambridgeshire, tellingly described by Trollope as 'very flat' (p. 85), will be quite sufficient for her needs. Robert Polhemus has pointed out that Trollope is not hostile to 'women's quest for authority',¹¹ and in his analysis of Grey's power he is as divided as Alice herself: 'She loved

¹⁰ Henry James, review of *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Nation* (New York), 28 Sept. 1865, i. 410.

¹¹ Robert Polhemus, '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex: Older Men—Younger Women Relationships in Trollope', in Margaret Markwick, Deborah Denenholz Morse,

him much, and admired him even more than she loved him. He was noble, generous, clever, good,—so good as to be almost perfect; nay, for aught she knew he was perfect. Would that he had some faults! Would that he had! Would that he had!’ (p. 24).

George Vavasor, who is callous, dishonest, and violent, has faults of the worst kind, and Alice knows it. What drives her perverse impulse to re-engage herself to him is the opportunity that he seems to provide for her to make a contribution to the work of the world, for George’s embryonic political vocation depends on the funds that she can supply. George muses on her future as John Grey’s wife: ‘He’d make an upper servant of her; very respectable, no doubt, but still only an upper servant (p. 104).’ It is one of the few moments in the novel where George is seen to be right. Though Alice resists her fate, Trollope is careful to note that her aspirations do not extend to a wish for professional independence. She was ‘not so far advanced as to think that women should be lawyers and doctors’ (p. 93). The feminine values she has internalized mean that she continues to understand her role in terms of a dedicated service, though she intends to devote herself to George’s political objectives rather than his domestic needs. In this she resembles George Vavasor’s strong-willed sister Kate, who is still more dedicated to furthering his ambitions. The most pressing difficulty in the situation Alice has created for herself lies in the hard fact that a marriage with George would not be a matter of sisterly loyalty. It would require a sexual submission alongside the surrender of her money. Though she is happy to sacrifice her time and her financial security to promote George’s interests, and to provide her life with a sense of purpose, she cannot bear the prospect of his love-making. Trollope is explicit on this point. When John Grey touches her hand, ‘the fibres of her body had seemed to melt within her at the touch, so that she could have fallen at his feet’, while George Vavasor’s advances horrify her. ‘Must she submit to his caresses,—lie on his bosom,—turn herself warmly to his kisses? “No,” she said, “no,”—speaking audibly, as she walked about the room; “no;—it was not in my bargain; I never meant it”’ (p. 309). These conflicts lock Alice into a condition of paralysis. Only George’s descent into open brutality and crime, followed by a conveniently final flight to America, can rescue her from disaster. Like the choice that Trollope seems to offer in his title, Alice’s freedom is not real. She must marry John Grey, and the reader must forgive her. This is a novel

that defends the exercise of benevolent power, even as it chafes against its inexorability.

These divisions are characteristic of Trollope's uneasy relations with the values that he seems to advocate. Though he was for many years perceived as a largely conformist figure, content to represent the self-satisfaction of mid-Victorian prosperity, critics and readers have become alert to the layers of dissonance to be uncovered in his fiction's relations with a broader cultural context. In a famously guarded phrase from the *Autobiography*, Trollope called himself an 'advanced, but still a conservative Liberal'.¹² Scholars have re-examined his elusive position in the light of twentieth- and twenty-first-century experience. Lauren Goodlad remarks that 'Trollope's enhanced profile in the world of Victorian studies has doubtless much to do with the interest in liberalism after more than twenty years of neo-liberal economic and cultural ascendancy'.¹³ As Victorian political thought has been reinterpreted as the expression of continuing debate rather than a single-minded commitment to ideals of individualism and progress, the liberalism that was central to its culture is increasingly thought to be 'best characterised by its pervasive tensions and paradoxes'.¹⁴ Trollope's work is increasingly interpreted in terms of its 'drive towards a synthetic vision that holds opposing terms continuously in frame'.¹⁵ The restless liberalism enacted in Trollope's novels sets an intellectual commitment to reform alongside an emotional identification with older social structures. These discords define his representation of Alice's self-generated confusions in *Can You Forgive Her?*. Her difficulties are an expression of her fractured nature, but they also reflect what Lynette Felber has defined as 'the contradictions inherent in Victorian liberalism',¹⁶ antagonisms which shape the strategies of a novel that is far more varied in its perspectives than it might initially appear.

Trollope described himself as a predominantly realistic novelist, writing with the wish 'to "hew out some lump of the earth," and to

¹² *Autobiography*, 291.

¹³ Lauren Goodlad, 'Trollopian Form: An Introduction', *Literature Compass*, 7–9 (2010), 851.

¹⁴ Lauren Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. ix.

¹⁵ Carolyn Dever and Lisa Niles, 'Introduction', in Dever and Niles (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

¹⁶ Lynette Felber, 'The Advanced Conservative Liberal: Victorian Liberalism and the Aesthetics of Anthony Trollope's Palliser Novels', *Modern Philology*, 107 (2010), 446. See also David Craig, 'Advanced Conservative Liberalism: Party and Principle in Trollope's Parliamentary Novels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 38 (2010), 355–71.

make men and women walk upon it just as they do walk here among us'.¹⁷ Contemporary reviewers warmed to his apparent disdain for the febrile plots and hidden villainies of 'what is called sensational literature', applauding his more sober fidelity to 'the fundamental healthiness of English feeling'.¹⁸ In fact, Trollope's interpretation of realism did not rule out the narrative resources of the sensational. The plot of *Can You Forgive Her?*, with its dramatic brushes with adultery, violence and attempted murder, and its persistent concern with the shifting status of women, is by no means as distant from the techniques of sensationalism as his first readers might have wished to imagine. As Jenny Bourne Taylor explains, here as elsewhere in his fiction he challenges simple critical divisions, of the kind that customarily 'defined higher realism against its sensational other'.¹⁹ In Trollope's novels the sensationalist and the realist coexist, for 'a good artist should be both—and both in the highest degree'.²⁰

The formal structure of *Can You Forgive Her?*, like its subject material, is only in part a product of realism. Though the range and length of the novel led some contemporary reviewers to grumble about shapelessness—'There is, as usual, no plot'²¹—this is a tightly controlled work, exploring Trollope's conflicted ideals through a series of meticulously planned symmetries. Like Alice, Glencora must choose between two men. Her husband, Plantagenet Palliser, is seen to have the legitimate claim on her loyalty, just as John Grey is consistently identified as Alice's rightful lover. But Palliser was not Glencora's first choice. He resembles the unadventurous Grey in that he is not an exciting prospect. 'He rather prided himself on being dull, and on conquering in spite of his dulness' (p. 200). Burgo Fitzgerald, the man who won Glencora's heart in her girlhood, is all that Palliser is not—headstrong, beautiful, and utterly irresponsible. Glencora is fully aware of his faults, just as Alice understands the defects of George Vavasor. Though she shrinks from turning her fantasy into reality, she is still tempted by the idea of breaking away from her suffocating life with Plantagenet Palliser in order to become Burgo's mistress. Trollope is as reluctant to condemn her as he is to blame Alice, whose plight is comparable. Glencora's frustrations are not trivial, though the freedom she imagines

¹⁷ *Autobiography*, 145.

¹⁸ Unsigned review of *Can You Forgive Her?*, *London Review*, 7 Oct. 1865, 390.

¹⁹ Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Trollope and the Sensational Novel', in Dever and Niles (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, 97.

²⁰ *Autobiography*, 227.

²¹ Unsigned review of *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Saturday Review*, 19 Aug. 1865, 242.

for herself with Burgo is a treacherous illusion, as unreal as Alice's fantasy of a busy political career in London as George Vavasor's wife. In order to retain Trollope's respect, and the reader's, Glencora must demonstrate her final obedience to the social codes that define her feminine gentility. She will not escape with Burgo Fitzgerald, and knows that she will not, 'Because I am a man's wife, and because I care for his honour, if not for my own' (p. 565).

The options available to Alice and Glencora are heavily constrained, but Trollope is careful to compensate both women with the prospect of marital fulfilment. Glencora's movement towards the sexual reconciliation with her husband that is to lead to the birth of an heir is suggested with accomplished delicacy. Palliser is prepared to relinquish his long-nurtured ambition to become Chancellor of the Exchequer in order to take her abroad for a year, and she is moved by this unequivocal sign of the value he places on their marriage: 'she gently put up her hand and rested it on the back of his' (p. 493). The moment of reciprocal affection between Palliser and his wife, like the turning point of Alice's story as she is finally brought to accept John Grey as a husband, is as much a matter of silence as of words. Neither woman finds it painless to be forgiven. Glencora 'was silent', unable to bring herself to say that she would try to love her husband, or to accept 'his forgiveness too easily' (p. 493). Alice too is also unable to find words for her capitulation, in a scene which gives full weight to Grey's generous fidelity, but is pointedly deficient in the tenderness which draws Glencora back to her husband. Grey displays none of George's physical violence, but he overcomes Alice's last resistance with a disconcerting degree of coercion:

I have a right to demand your hand. My happiness requires it, and I have a right to expect your compliance. I do demand it.

Alice 'sat silent beneath his gaze' (pp. 624–5). To the very end, their relations are seen in terms of the exercise of power:

'Alice', he said, as he pressed her close with his arm, 'the battle is over now, and I have won it.'

'You win everything,—always,' she said, whispering to him, as she still shrank from his embrace.' (p. 625)

We are asked to see this as a joyful conclusion to Alice's troubles, but the language of the resolution tells another story. In terms of the novel's overt politics of gender, Grey is clearly justified in exercising the dominance that has marked his character throughout the novel. Only his benign forcefulness can release Alice from her self-destructive impasse. Yet the suggestion that something is amiss in Alice's situation persists.

She is pardoned, but Trollope withholds his full forgiveness from the overbearing John Grey.

The wealthy widow Mrs Greenow, who must also choose between two suitors in *Can You Forgive Her?*, suggests a more subversive way of reading these ambivalent patterns of meaning. She is not in the least inclined to be silent. Her reverence for the memory of her dead husband is an extravagantly voluble and theatrical performance, though Trollope is careful to suggest that her much-paraded sorrow is not wholly a pretence. If she were nothing more than a self-interested hypocrite, she could not earn the measure of approval that he wants his readers to allow. Kate Vavasor is both dismayed and impressed by her aunt's determination to enjoy the freedom that a well-heeled widowhood allows, but she glimpses an element of genuine feeling in Mrs Greenow's act:

'I was a happy woman, Kate, while that lasted.' And Kate was surprised to see that real tears—one or two on each side—were making their way down her aunt's cheeks. But they were soon checked with a handkerchief of the broadest hem and of the finest cambric. (p. 60)

Kate's aunt might seem to be the least fortunate of the three women whose romantic vicissitudes are traced in *Can You Forgive Her?*, for neither of the deceased Mr Greenow's would-be successors are 'worthy'. Mr Cheesacre, the amorous 'fat Norfolk farmer' (p. 65), is reassuringly prosperous, as he never tires of reminding anyone who cares to listen, but he is irredeemably foolish and coarse. His rival, Captain Bellfield, has a little more style, but is a penniless and unreliable adventurer. Mrs Greenow, like Alice and Glencora, is not blind to the shortcomings of her suitors. But she is free in a way that they are not, for she is not subject to the sexual imperatives that must accompany the marriages of young women. She has all the financial resources and intelligence that a self-respecting middle-aged widow could need, and she can dictate her own terms. As he describes her management of the competition between the two men who aspire to her hand and her fortune, Trollope acknowledges her dexterity: 'That Mrs Greenow was always in truth the dominant spirit I need hardly say' (p. 653). Her clever manoeuvrings add a level of humour to a novel that, with its repeated contemplations of suicide (Burgo, George, Glencora, and Alice all consider self-destruction as a solution to their problems), might otherwise seem unduly sombre. But she is more than a comic turn. Kate Vavasor, who shares Mrs Greenow's resolve to evade a condition of dependence, develops a grudging admiration for her aunt's buoyant qualities: 'With all her absurdities I like her. Her faults are

terrible faults, but she has not the fault of hiding them by falsehood. She is never stupid, and she is very good-natured' (p. 116). Nevertheless, Trollope does not want us to see Mrs Greenow as the most admirable of the three contentedly married women who conclude the novel. Her determination to direct her own narrative, and that of others (she is clearly going to succeed in her plan to marry Mr Cheesacre to the needy Charlie Fairstairs), means that she approaches Trollope's own masculine authority a little too closely: 'she had a pleasure in telling her own story, and told it as though she believed every word that she spoke' (p. 653). Though Trollope acknowledges the hunger for freedom that he repeatedly identifies in his female characters, some degree of submission is inseparable from ideal femininity in his eyes.

Mrs Greenow's shrewd understanding of the power that money gives, and of her need 'to keep the purse-strings altogether in her own hands' after her marriage, is what makes her choosing the shifty but appealing Captain Bellfield as a husband 'not altogether without prudence' (p. 549). But it also confirms her sturdy refusal to assent to the values of a perfect lady. Alice's careless disposal of her fortune, which she hands over to George before they are married, is a mark of her vulnerability, but also of what Trollope perceives to be her true womanliness. Glencora knows that the profligate Burgo would have run through her vast riches, but is not much interested: 'Burgo would have spent my money,—all that it would have been possible for me to give him. But there would have been something left, and I think that by that time I could have won even him to care for me' (p. 232). This too, for Trollope, is a testament to her worth. A refusal to allow money to take first place in human relations is a sign of the sensitivity that Trollope esteems so highly in both men and women. Even Mrs Greenow, who understands the value of money better than most, finds that Cheesacre's incessant boasts about his wealth disqualify him as a lover:

'And look here, Mr Cheesacre, if it should ever come to pass that you are making love to a lady in earnest—'

'I couldn't be more in earnest,' said he.

'That you are making love to a lady in earnest, talk to her a little more about your passion and a little less about your purse. Now, good night.' (p. 341)

When Trollope considers the blend of merits and faults that make up Glencora's character, the fact that she never uses her wealth as a weapon against her husband counts heavily in her favour:

Never to him or to any other,—not even to herself,—had she hinted that much was due to her because she had been magnificent as an heiress. There were

many things about this woman that were not altogether what a husband might wish. She was not softly delicate in all her ways; but in disposition and temper she was altogether generous. I do not know that she was at all points a lady, but had Fate so willed it she would have been a thorough gentleman. (p. 415)

Alice, Glencora, and Mrs Greenow are all, in varying degrees, open-handed to their men; so too is Kate Vavasor. Though the *Athenaeum* makes the tart observation that they 'do not show themselves fit to be entrusted with money',²² the feeling of the novel challenges any such condemnation. As Janette Rutherford and Josephine Maltby have shown, the dependence of men on women for money is a 'constant theme in Trollope's novels'.²³ Despite his traditional views of the roles of men and women, he rarely represents such reliance as a force for social disturbance. Financial generosity is one of the means by which Trollope suggests that women have earned our interest, approval, or forgiveness.

The poet W. H. Auden claimed that 'of all novelists in any country, Trollope best understands the role of money'.²⁴ His fiction is proving to be especially fertile ground for the 'emerging body of literary and cultural criticism founded upon economic paradigms, models and tropes'.²⁵ Throughout *Can You Forgive Her?*, the reader is left in no doubt as to the pivotal importance of finance. The funds available to each character are precisely measured, alongside their attitude to their money, or their debts. For Trollope, there is no more conclusive test of character. Burgo Fitzgerald gives half a crown to a destitute prostitute who approaches him in the street—'a poor wretched girl, lightly clad in thin raiment, into whose bones the sharp freezing air was penetrating' (p. 249). His compassion confirms that the modest pension that rescues him from penury in the concluding pages of the novel will not upset the novel's moral economy. Yet Trollope remains aware of the social injustice that preserves the undeserving Burgo from the starvation that threatens the young prostitute. 'Such as you are never poor' (p. 250), she tells him, and her observation is at once a product of naive deference and cynical experience. '[H]ow shall we reconcile to ourselves that seeming injustice?' (p. 672), Trollope asks towards the

²² Unsigned review of *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Athenaeum*, 2 Sept. 1865, 305.

²³ Janette Rutherford and Josephine Maltby, "'Frank Must Marry Money': Men, Women and Property in Trollope's Novels", *Accounting Historians Journal*, 33 (2006), 192.

²⁴ W. H. Auden, 'A Poet of the Actual', review of James Pope Hennessy's *Anthony Trollope*, *New Yorker*, 1 Apr. 1972, 104.

²⁵ Mark Osten and Martha Woodmanson, 'Introduction', in Osten and Woodmanson (eds.), *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

end of the novel, thinking of the enormous inheritance awaiting Glencora's baby son. The force of his question is qualified by the word 'seeming', and he leaves it unanswered. Charity, rather than revolution, is the only solution that the novel has to offer, and Trollope is uncomfortably aware of its inadequacy.

George Vavasor's response to a still more disturbing encounter with abject poverty is just as revealing. Jane, a former mistress now reduced to the lowest depths of misery and want, pleads for a sovereign to buy food. George is unmoved. 'I shall give you nothing;—not a penny' (p. 599). Trollope spares no detail in emphasizing the pathos of Jane's efforts to remind George of the sexual appeal that had once provided her with a living. This woman's story is very different from those of Alice, Glencora, and Mrs Greenow, and it is not the primary business of this novel to dwell on her bleak circumstances. Yet Trollope wants to remind his readers of darker reflections within the adventures of his more affluent characters. He emphasizes the gravity of his point by beginning with a biblical reference:

The whole story was told so that those who ran might read it.²⁶ When she had left her home this afternoon, she had struggled hard to dress herself so that something of the charm of apparel might be left to her; but she had known of her own failure at every twist that she had given to her gown, and at every jerk with which she had settled her shawl. She had despaired at every push she had given to her old flowers, vainly striving to bring them back to their old forms; but still she had persevered. With long tedious care she had mended the old gloves which would hardly hold her fingers. She had carefully hidden the rags of her sleeves. She had washed her little shrivelled collar, and had smoothed it out painfully. It had been a separate grief to her that she could find no cuffs to put round her wrists;—and yet she knew that no cuffs could have availed her anything. Nothing could avail her now. (p. 598)

"George," she said, standing at the bottom of the sofa, "what am I to do?" (p. 598). Her question is a grim echo of Alice's 'What should a woman do with her life?', and of Alice's sympathy with Mrs Greenow's position: 'What's a woman to do?' (p. 49). George's dismissal of Jane's appeal underscores the radical distinction between his cruelty and the fecklessness of the sweet-tempered but spoiled and helpless Burgo. Despite his casual approach to debt, when confronted with absolute need Burgo is able to act on the relation between money and human responsibility. George understands such a connection only as far as he

²⁶ The reference here is taken from Habakkuk 2: 2 (*KJV*): 'Write the vision, and make it plain, that he may run that readeth it.'

is 'ashamed of the thing he was about to do' (p. 321) in embarking on his plan to acquire Alice's fortune, hiding his dishonour with an appeal to his faithful sister Kate to act as a go-between. Even Kate cannot justify his predatory behaviour. 'There seems to me to be something sacred about property that belongs to the girl you are going to marry' (p. 321). George's ruthless disregard of Jane's distress makes it clear that Alice is risking more than her reputation in choosing him as a partner. It is not an accident that Trollope repeatedly uses the phrase 'I fear' in describing her vacillations (pp. 21, 25, 37). She too might be destroyed, for George's arrogant repudiation of commonly-shared moral principles, a withdrawal that always makes a man dangerous in Trollope's eyes, means that he will never be a dependable husband:

There had grown upon him lately certain Bohemian propensities,—a love of absolute independence in his thoughts as well as actions,—which were antagonistic to marriage. He was almost inclined to think that marriage was an old-fashioned custom, fitted indeed well enough for the usual dull life of the world at large,—as many men both in heathen and in Christian ages have taught themselves to think of religion,—but which was not adapted to his advanced intelligence. (p. 252)

This is Trollope's voice at its most culturally conservative. It helps to explain why George's bid to enter Parliament must end in failure, while John Grey, inspired by the devotion to duty that he has witnessed in Plantagenet Palliser, finally sheds his earlier indifference to public life and is permitted a smooth path to an honourable political career. Yet Grey's entry into Parliament is not just the expression of an old tradition of social obligation. It also reflects the changing values of a world in which male idleness, like that of Burgo Fitzgerald, John Vavasor, or Jeffrey Palliser, is increasingly seen to be demeaning. Nicholas Dames writes of the centrality of 'the narrativization of professional labour' in Trollope's fiction, describing a process that implies Grey's former life as a self-contained gentleman scholar is no longer adequate to qualify him as the perfect man.²⁷ In this sense, the conclusion of the novel vindicates Alice's political idealism.

Trollope associates the deliberate suppression of feeling that degrades George's relations with women with his similarly unscrupulous political philosophy, in which election as a Member of Parliament is nothing more than the means to private advantage. Both are a product of his perverted relativism. 'Vavasor had educated himself to

²⁷ Nicholas Dames, 'Trollope and the Career: Vocational Trajectories and the Management of Ambition', *Victorian Studies*, 45 (2003), 248.

badness with his eyes open. He had known what was wrong, and had done it, having taught himself to think that bad things were best' (p. 378). Alice is mistaken, though not wholly so, in her assumption that George is motivated by high-minded principles in his desire to become a politician. Trollope concedes that the scale of George's ambition had once represented the potential for something larger than the vicious opportunist he has become: 'Nature, I think, had so fashioned George Vavasor, that he might have been a good, and perhaps a great man' (p. 378). What Nature gave, society and self-will has corrupted. Trollope's account of the squalid dealings with Mr Scruby and Mr Grimes that are the necessary means of securing George's brief term as the Member of Parliament for the metropolitan borough of Chelsea includes some of the most cynical passages of this novel that, in the phrase of George Levine, 'comes close to being a novel of disenchantment'.²⁸ And yet his tribute to the honour that properly accompanies election to the House of Commons, and his confession of his own longing to be entitled to sit as a member, is passionately felt:

I have told myself, in anger and in grief, that to die and not to have won that right of way, though but for a session,—not to have passed by the narrow entrance through those lamps,—is to die and not to have done that which it most becomes an Englishman to have achieved. (p. 377)

His claim that from the House 'flow the waters of the world's progress,—the fullest fountain of advancing civilization' (p. 378) is not meant ironically. George Vavasor's debased behaviour has robbed him of any entitlement to his privilege. Nevertheless, Trollope concedes that, despite his lack of the capacity to live up to the high demands of a genuine political vocation, even George can understand the 'ambition of serving with truth so great a nation as that which fate had made his own' (p. 378).

Trollope's own ill-fated 1868 campaign for election as the Liberal member for the Yorkshire seat of Beverley confirms that he meant what he said about his desire to achieve the honour of political office. Looking back on what he described as 'the most wretched fortnight of my manhood',²⁹ Trollope bitterly recalls the electors' indifference to the issues he tried to address, and the useless expense of his campaign. Though *Can You Forgive Her?* was published three years before Trollope's thwarted bid to embark on a career in politics, he is already

²⁸ George Levine, 'Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* and the Myth of Realism', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1974), 27.

²⁹ *Autobiography*, 300.

qualifying his idealism with a sour sense of the contaminated reality of British politics. George has identified himself with 'the extremely Radical interest' (p. 35), but his political allegiance has more to do with his wish to cross his traditionally-minded grandfather than any serious ideological commitment. In fact George has no solid political beliefs, Conservative, Liberal, or Radical. The House of Commons is for him primarily the means to prosperity, while such advancement seems possible. When his hopes are gone, the 'Member for the Chelsea Districts' occupies his time in contemplating the practicalities of murder. Like Glencora's childish image of herself basking in the glow of Burgo's adoration in marble balconies, with vines clustered above her head, George's visions of bloodshed are not quite serious. 'He did not, himself, think it probable that he would become a murderer. But he received some secret satisfaction in allowing his mind to dwell upon the subject' (p. 507). George's moral deterioration represents Trollope's conviction that an impulse to concealment and secrecy might open the way to serious mental derangement. The potential for disorder represented by the hidden brooding of both Glencora and George reminds the reader that the consolations of the imagination may become toxic, if not tempered by commonly established social values.

Despite Trollope's own Liberal allegiances, many of his most devious politicians, along with the most magnanimous, associate themselves with the Liberal Party. Unprincipled figures like George Vavasor, or the repugnant Mr Bott, with his parasitical designs on Palliser's patronage, or Ferdinand Lopez, whose reckless political career galvanizes *The Prime Minister* (1876), see their politics as a means to social advancement for themselves, rather than the people they claim to represent. Trollope's political fiction often suggests a model for Liberal aspirations that are epitomized by nothing more theoretically sophisticated than Palliser's wistful hankering for the notion of equality: 'Equality is a dream. But sometimes one likes to dream.'³⁰ Such ideals can only safely be maintained by wealthy aristocrats like Plantagenet Palliser or the Duke of St Bungay, who are by virtue of their position immune to the temptations of using politics to bolster social ambitions of their own. The Duke of St Bungay, however, is a reflection of the limitations of a political structure of this kind. The knowing old Duke is seen as an 'aristocratic pillar of the British Constitutional Republic', and a 'strong rock of support to the Liberal

³⁰ Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (1876), ed. Nicholas Shrimpton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 518.

cause' (p. 203). He is an influential voice of common sense and moderation, and yet he tells Alice that he had wanted something more from his life as a politician: 'I've voted for every Liberal measure that has come seriously before Parliament since I had a seat in either House, and I've not been able to get beyond Whiggery yet' (p. 191). The old-fashioned 'Whiggery' which confines both the Duke and Palliser in Trollope's early political fiction represents an uneasy confluence between idealism and the preservation of privilege. The Duke declares himself to be staunchly opposed to what he calls 'the ballot', by which he means the introduction of secrecy in voting, a change which was essential to genuine electoral and social reform, in that it excluded any possibility of effective intimidation or bribery. 'I hate it with so keen a private hatred, that I doubt whether I could vote for it', the Duke confesses (p. 191). The Duke's intense antipathy to the secret ballot is a reflection of Trollope's own cautious view of the matter. 'Undue influence on voters is a great evil from which this country had already done much to emancipate itself by extending electoral divisions and by an increase of independent feeling. These, I thought, and not secret voting, were the weapons by which electoral intimidation should be overcome.'³¹ The secret ballot represented a serious threat to the local influence that had enabled aristocratic statesmen to preserve their political advantage through the generations. Its introduction in 1872 was one of the factors which accelerated the slow decline of the great land-owning families as a serious force in politics, a process which Trollope records in the progress of the Palliser novels, as the Liberal dynasty of the Pallisers begins to open itself to new and more thoroughly democratic influences in the closing volumes of the series.

Trollope's emphasis on the use of money in relation to the exercise of power is associated with a larger political narrative, as he traces the historical transition from the inheritance of landed estates to that of capital as the central means by which economic resources were transferred. Here as elsewhere the friction between traditional social values and a progressive pressure for change gives rise to the tensions which drive the plot of *Can You Forgive Her?*. This is one of the ways in which the novel reflects its kinship with sensation fiction. As Teresa Wagner points out, the 'plotting villains'³² of sensation novels were often involved in murky financial speculations. George Vavasor makes

³¹ *Autobiography*, 302.

³² Teresa Wagner, 'Speculations at Home in the Victorian Novel: Making Stock-Market Villains and New Paper Fictions', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36 (2008), 21.

his living as a stockbroker—not quite, in the early 1860s, a profession that could claim equal gentlemanly standing with a career in the Church, army, or law. Yet he is heir to the Vavasor estate throughout most of the novel, a position which allies him with an older social order. He moves between two incompatible identities, a recalcitrant yet intriguing reflection of Trollope's own essential ambivalence: 'He was a stockbroker, a thoroughgoing Radical, and yet he was the heir to a fine estate, which had come down from father to son for four hundred years! There was something captivating about his history and adventures' (p. 35). George's speculative manipulations of the money market are an expression of the inclination to gamble that Trollope consistently regards as a sign of corruption. Glencora and Burgo are both tempted by its excitement, but in George's case gambling has become more than a pastime. It is a mode of existence: 'I hold myself in readiness to risk everything at any moment, in order to gain any object that may serve my turn. I am always ready to lead a forlorn hope. That's what I mean by tossing up every day for every shilling that I have' (p. 37). The old squire sees that his granddaughter Kate is worth more than George, his wild and selfish grandson. 'You are a good girl, Kate. I wish you had been a boy, that's all' (p. 448). But Kate is not a boy. The squire resists the conventions of the landowning classes in excluding George from his will, and is moved to provide Kate with a generous income. He would have gone further and made Kate his heir, had it not been for her firm declaration that she would transfer such a legacy to her brother. Her misguided feminine loyalty, rather than the social conventions of her class, excludes her from the prospect of inheritance. Neither Kate nor Alice, the squire's second granddaughter, can possess the Vavasor estate. Nor can Mrs Greenow, the old squire's daughter, who has fortunately secured an ample supply of money for herself from trade, where such restrictions did not apply. The process of inheritance must be postponed for a generation, in the hope that an appropriate male heir should in time present himself.

Having denied herself the possibility of inheriting the family estate, Kate is equally unable to find a role through marriage, the traditional solution for her rootlessness. Like her brother, she is stranded in a condition of social indeterminacy. Just as George has rejected familiar models for masculine identity without being able to find an adequate substitute, Kate falls between the old and the new in her values and aspirations. Her deepest commitment is to her brother. 'The truth is, I'm married to George,' she confesses to Alice. 'If George ever married, I should have nothing to do in the world;—literally

nothing—nothing—nothing—nothing!’ (pp. 54–5) But she cannot marry George, and she is equally debarred from the close partnership with Alice that seems to suggest itself as an alternative. The bonds between women—Glencora and Alice, Mrs Greenow and Kate—are repeatedly seen to be closely supportive in *Can You Forgive Her?*, but the friendship between Alice and Kate is particularly affectionate, and their exchanges are marked with an intimacy that Alice withholds from both John Grey and George Vavasor. Kate’s attempts to persuade Alice to accept her brother’s offer of marriage are certainly more pressing than anything George can manage on his own behalf: ‘Oh, Alice, may I hope? Alice, my own Alice, my darling, my friend! Say that it shall be so’ (p. 265). It is Kate’s passionate urging that inclines Alice to accept George’s proposal, and the dynamics of this exceptionally fervent scene imply that in doing so she is also accepting Kate.³³ Though Kate is safely provided for at the end of the novel, she continues to feel herself a ‘desolate, solitary being’, telling Alice that ‘Except you, I have nothing left to me’ (p. 581). This is a novel that finds harmonious resolutions for three marriage plots, but not every woman can be rescued by a wedding.

Nor do all of the men in *Can You Forgive Her?* profit from the social arrangements that seem to operate so heavily in their favour. The novel carries more than its share of male disappointments and fallen hopes. Palliser’s likeable cousin Jeffrey has few prospects in life once he loses his chance of the dukedom; Burgo Fitzgerald’s Continental exile seems certain to be miserable; and on a less grand level, the servile Mr Bott’s carefully cultivated political schemes come to nothing, while John Vavasor continues to waste his days between his futile work in the ‘dingy little office near Chancery Lane’ (p. 8) and his club. The most spectacular ruin, however, remains that of George Vavasor. After the final wreck of his chances, Trollope asks of him the troubled question that echoes throughout this intricately mixed novel. For George, the answer must be final: ‘What was he to do? In truth, there was nothing for him to do’ (p. 482).

³³ See Sharon Marcus, ‘Contracting Female Marriage in Anthony Trollope’s *Can You Forgive Her?*’, *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 60 (Dec. 2005), 291–325; also Kate Flint, ‘Queer Trollope’, in Dever and Niles (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, 99–112.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

TROLLOPE began to write *Can You Forgive Her?* on 16 August 1863, and completed the work on 28 April 1864. Following the convention made popular by Dickens and Thackeray, it was published in monthly parts (costing a shilling each) between January 1864 and August 1865, illustrated by H. K. Browne and E. Taylor. It appeared in book form (published by Chapman & Hall) in two volumes, the first in September 1864 and the second in July 1865. The two volumes cost twenty-two shillings. A single-volume edition, costing twelve shillings, was published in 1866.

The text used in this edition is that established for the Oxford Trollope, first published under the general editorship of Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page in 1948, with a few obvious errors silently corrected.

The text of *Can You Forgive Her?* is divided into eighty chapters. Each of the twenty original monthly instalments contained four chapters. When the novel first appeared in book form, the two volumes each contained forty chapters.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Autobiography, Biography, and Letters

- Trollope, Anthony, *An Autobiography*, ed. Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, repr. 1999).
——— *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. N. John Hall, 2 vols. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983).
Glendinning, Victoria, *Anthony Trollope* (London: Hutchinson, 1992).
Hall, John N., *Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
Mullen, Richard, *Anthony Trollope: A Victorian in His World* (London: Duckworth, 1990).
Super, R. H., *The Chronicler of Barsetshire: A Life of Anthony Trollope* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

Bibliography

- Lyons, Annette K., *Anthony Trollope: An Annotated Bibliography* (Greenwood, Fla.: Penkevill, 1985).
Olmsted, J. C., and Welch, J. E., *The Reputation of Trollope: An Annotated Bibliography 1925–1975* (New York: Garland, 1978).
Sadleir, Michael, *Trollope: A Bibliography* (London: Constable, 1928).

Critical and Contextual Material

- Anderson, Amanda, 'Trollope's Modernity', *ELH* 74 (2007), 509–34.
apRoberts, Ruth, *Trollope: Artist and Moralist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971).
Auden, W. H., 'A Poet of the Actual', review of James Pope Hennessy's *Anthony Trollope*, *New Yorker*, 1 Apr. 1972, 104.
Craig, David, 'Advanced Conservative Liberalism: Party and Principle in Trollope's Parliamentary Novels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 38 (2010), 355–71.
Craig, Randall, 'Rhetoric and Courtship in *Can You Forgive Her?*', *ELH* 62 (1995), 217–35.
Dames, Nicholas, 'Trollope and the Career: Vocational Trajectories and the Management of Ambition', *Victorian Studies*, 45 (2003), 247–78.
Dever, Carolyn, and Niles, Lisa (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
Felber, Lynette, 'The Advanced Conservative Liberal: Victorian Liberalism and the Aesthetics of Anthony Trollope's Palliser Novels', *Modern Philology*, 107 (2010), 421–6.
Flint, Kate, 'Queer Trollope', in Dever and Niles (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, 9–112.
Goodlad, Lauren, 'Trollopian Form: An Introduction', *Literature Compass*, 7–9 (2010), 851–4.

- *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
- Greg, W. R., 'Why Are Women Redundant?', *National Review*, 14 (Apr. 1862), 434–60; repr. in his *Literary and Social Judgements* (London: Bungay, 1868).
- Halperin, John H., *Trollope and Politics: The Study of the Pallisers and Others* (London: Macmillan, 1977).
- James, Henry, Review of *Can You Forgive Her?*, *Nation* (New York), 28 Sept. 1865, i. 409–10.
- Kincaid, James, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
- Levine, George, 'Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* and the Myth of Realism', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1974), 5–30.
- McMaster, Juliet, *Trollope's Palliser Novels: Theme and Pattern* (London: Macmillan, 1978).
- Marcus, Sharon, 'Contracting Female Marriage in Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 60 (Dec. 2005), 291–325.
- Markwick, Margaret, Morse, Deborah Denenholz, and Gagnier, Regenia (eds.), *The Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope's Novels* (London: Ashgate, 2009).
- Morse, Deborah Denenholz, *Women in Trollope's Palliser Novels* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1987).
- Mullen, Richard, and Munson, James (eds.), *The Penguin Companion to Trollope* (London: Penguin, 1996).
- Osten, Mark, and Woodmanson, Martha (eds.), *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- Polhemus, Robert, *The Changing World of Anthony Trollope* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).
- '(A)genda Trouble and the Lot Complex: Older Men–Younger Women Relationships in Trollope', in Markwick, Morse, and Gagnier (eds.), *Politics of Gender in Anthony Trollope's Novels*, 11–31.
- Rutherford, Janette, and Maltby, Josephine, '"Frank Must Marry Money": Men, Women and Property in Trollope's Novels', *Accounting Historians Journal*, 33 (2006), 169–99.
- Skilton, David, *Anthony Trollope and His Contemporaries: A Study in the Theory and Conventions of Mid-Victorian Fiction* (London: Longman, 1972; rev. 1996).
- Smalley, Donald, *Trollope: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).
- Taylor, Jenny Bourne, 'Trollope and the Sensational Novel', in Dever and Niles (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, 85–98.
- Terry, R. C. (ed.), *The Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Trollope, Anthony, *The Noble Filt: A Comedy by Anthony Trollope*, ed. Michael Sadleir (London: Constable & Co., 1923).

Wagner, Teresa, 'Speculations at Home in the Victorian Novel: Making Stock-Market Villains and New Paper Fictions', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 36 (2008), 21–40.

Wall, Stephen, *Trollope and Character* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988).

Useful websites

<http://www.trollopesociety.org/>

<http://www.anthonytrollope.com/>

<http://www.trollope.org/>

A CHRONOLOGY OF ANTHONY TROLLOPE

(Selected publications are noted here only; volume publication is given in all cases.)

<i>Life</i>	<i>Historical and Cultural Background</i>
1815 (24 April) AT born in London.	Battle of Waterloo and final defeat of Napoleon.
1823 Enters Harrow Boys' School.	Monroe doctrine formulated to protect American interests in relation to Europe.
1825 At school in Sunbury.	Stockton and Darlington Railway, first public railway, opens.
1827 Admitted to Winchester College.	
1830 Back at home in poverty then to Harrow School again.	Accession of William IV in Britain; in France, rioting sees overthrow of the Bourbons and accession of Louis Philippe.
1832	First Reform Act increases electorate to c.700,000 men.
1834 Trollope family flee creditors to Bruges; AT takes up clerkship at London Post Office; a period of poverty and an unpromising start to work.	'New Poor Law'; Tolpuddle martyrs (early example of, in effect, trade union membership).
1839	First commercial telegraph in UK.
1841 After much misery, AT is offered the post of deputy postal surveyor's clerk at Banagher, King's county, Ireland; begins to hunt.	British occupation of Hong Kong; Robert Peel becomes Prime Minister.
1843 Begins <i>The Macdermots of Ballycloran</i> .	Wordsworth becomes Poet Laureate.
1844 Marries Rose Heseltine from Rotherham (d. 1917).	Factory Act shortens working day, increases minimum hours of schooling.
1845	Great Famine begins in Ireland (-1850).
1846 Henry Merivale Trollope born (d. 1926).	Repeal of Corn Laws, major achievement for free trade; Lord John Russell becomes Prime Minister.
1847 Frederick James Anthony Trollope born (d. 1910); <i>The Macdermots of Ballycloran</i> .	Ten Hours Factory Act (cuts working day to 10 hours for women and children).

<i>Life</i>	<i>Historical and Cultural Background</i>
1848 <i>The Kellys and the O'Kellys</i> .	European revolutions; second Chartist petition.
1850 <i>La Vendée</i> , a failure.	Tennyson becomes Poet Laureate; restoration of Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy.
1851 Working for the Post Office in England.	Great Exhibition, evidence of British dominance in trade.
1852 Suggests the new pillar box for post on the Channel Islands.	Opening of new Palace of Westminster; Earl of Derby becomes Prime Minister followed by Earl of Aberdeen.
1853	Crimean War (–1856).
1854 Post Office surveyor for the north of Ireland: family in Donnybrook.	
1855 <i>The Warden</i> , first of the 'Chronicles of Barsetshire'; thereafter, he sets himself writing targets (usually 10,000 words a week).	Abolition of final newspaper tax leads to growth of new journalism and newspaper titles; Palmerston becomes Prime Minister.
1857 <i>Barchester Towers</i> , a success.	Indian Mutiny; Matrimonial Causes Act extends availability of divorce.
1858 <i>Doctor Thorne</i> (Barsetshire).	Jewish Disabilities Act; abolition of property qualification for MPs; Earl of Derby is Prime Minister, then Palmerston again.
1860 Beginning of instalments of <i>Framley Parsonage</i> ; moves to London as Post Office surveyor; meets Kate Field, an American woman, in Florence, with whom he forms a strong attachment.	Wilberforce–Huxley debate on evolution.
1861	American Civil War begins.
1862 Elected to Garrick Club.	London Exposition; Lincoln's Emancipation proclamation.
1864 Elected to the Athenaeum. <i>The Small House at Allington</i> (Barsetshire, but introduces Plantagenet and Glencora Palliser).	
1864–5 <i>Can You Forgive Her?</i> (first of the Palliser novels; vol. 1, Sept. 1864; vol. 2, July 1865).	

Life

Historical and Cultural Background

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1865</p> <p>1866</p> <p>1867 <i>The Last Chronicle of Barset</i>. Resigns from the Post Office to edit <i>Saint Pauls: A Monthly Magazine</i> with illustrations by Millais.</p> <p>1868 Defeated as Liberal candidate for Beverley in the General Election.</p> <p>1869 <i>He Knew He Was Right; Phineas Finn</i> (Palliser).</p> <p>1870 <i>The Vicar of Bullhampton</i>.</p> <p>1871 Travels in Australasia.</p> <p>1872 <i>The Eustace Diamonds</i> (Palliser).</p> <p>1873 <i>Phineas Redux</i> (Palliser); <i>Australia and New Zealand</i>.</p> <p>1874</p> <p>1875 <i>The Way We Live Now</i>.</p> <p>1876 <i>The Prime Minister</i> (Palliser).</p> <p>1877 <i>The American Senator</i>.</p> <p>1878 <i>Is He Popenjoy?; South Africa</i>.</p> <p>1879 <i>Thackeray</i> in the English Men of Letters series.</p> <p>1880 Moves to South Harting, Sussex. <i>The Duke's Children</i> (Palliser); <i>Life of Cicero</i>.</p> <p>1881 <i>Dr Wortle's School</i>.</p> | <p>Abolition of slavery in North America; Earl Russell becomes Prime Minister.</p> <p>Success with commercial transatlantic cable; Earl of Derby becomes Prime Minister.</p> <p>Second Reform Act (further extension of franchise to about 2 million electors).</p> <p>Trades Union Congress formed; Disraeli becomes Prime Minister followed by Gladstone.</p> <p>Suez Canal opened; first issue of <i>Nature</i>.</p> <p>Forster's Education Act, widely extending provision of primary education; first Married Women's Property Act, granting married women the right to their own earnings and to inherit property in their own name.</p> <p>Paris Commune; legalization of Trade Unions.</p> <p>Financial crisis begins US Long Depression.</p> <p>First Impressionist Exhibition (Paris); Disraeli becomes Prime Minister.</p> <p>Third Republic in France; Theosophical Society founded.</p> <p>The telephone patented.</p> <p>Exposition Universelle (Paris), including arts and machinery.</p> <p>First Anglo-Boer War (–1881); Gladstone becomes Prime Minister.</p> <p>Assassination of US President James Garfield.</p> |
|--|--|

*Life**Historical and Cultural Background*

- 1882 *Lord Palmerston; The Fixed Period*, a futuristic novel. Suffers a stroke; (6 Dec.), dies in nursing home. Buried in Kensal Green (his grave reads: 'He was a loving husband, a loving father, and a true friend'); leaves estate worth £25,892 19s. 3d.
- 1883 *Mr Scarborough's Family; An Autobiography*.
- 1887 Publication of AT's brother, Thomas Adolphus Trollope's *What I Remember*, with alternative account of the family upbringing.
- Phoenix Park Murders; Egypt now British protectorate; second Married Women's Property Act allowing married women to own and control their own property.
- Death of Richard Wagner.

CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

VOLUME I

1. Mr Vavasor and His Daughter	7
2. Lady Macleod	12
3. John Grey, the Worthy Man	22
4. George Vavasor, the Wild Man	32
5. The Balcony at Basle	39
6. The Bridge over the Rhine	48
7. Aunt Greenow	57
8. Mr Cheesacre	65
9. The Rivals	74
10. Nethercoats	85
11. John Grey goes to London	91
12. Mr George Vavasor at Home	100
13. Mr Grimes gets His Odd Money	107
14. Alice Vavasor becomes Troubled	113
15. Paramount Crescent	124
16. The Roebury Club	133
17. Edgehill	140
18. Alice Vavasor's Great Relations	153
19. Tribute from Oileymead	161
20. Which shall it be?	167
21. Alice is taught to grow Upwards, towards the Light	174
22. Dandy and Flirt	180
23. Dinner at Matching Priory	191
24. Three Politicians	199
25. In which much of the History of the Pallisers is told	207
26. Lady Midlothian	217

27. The Priory Ruins	226
28. Alice leaves the Priory	233
29. Burgo Fitzgerald	242
30. Containing a Love-letter	251
31. Among the Fells	257
32. Containing an Answer to the Love-letter	268
33. Monkshade	275
34. Mr Vavasor speaks to His Daughter	282
35. Passion versus Prudence	291
36. John Grey goes a Second Time to London	299
37. Mr Tombe's Advice	308
38. The Inn at Shap	314
39. Mr Cheesacre's Hospitality	324
40. Mrs Greenow's Little Dinner in the Close	331

VOLUME II

41. A Noble Lord Dies	343
42. Parliament Meets	350
43. Mrs Marsham	358
44. The Election for the Chelsea Districts	370
45. George Vavasor takes His Seat	377
46. A Love Gift	384
47. Mr Cheesacre's Disappointment	393
48. Preparations for Lady Monk's Party	404
49. How Lady Glencora went to Lady Monk's Party	410
50. How Lady Glencora came back from Lady Monk's Party	419
51. Bold Speculations on Murder	429
52. What occurred in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall	435
53. The Last Will of the Old Squire	444
54. Showing how Alice was Punished	452
55. The Will	460
56. Another Walk on the Fells	468

57. Showing how the Wild Beast got himself back from the Mountains	477
58. The Pallisers at Breakfast	485
59. The Duke of St Bungay in Search of a Minister	493
60. Alice Vavasor's Name gets into the Money Market	502
61. The Bills are made all right	510
62. Going Abroad	516
63. Mr John Grey in Queen Anne Street	525
64. The Rocks and Valleys	532
65. The First Kiss	543
66. Lady Monk's Plan	550
67. The Last Kiss	558
68. From London to Baden	568
69. From Baden to Lucerne	576
70. At Lucerne	584
71. Showing how George Vavasor received a Visit	593
72. Showing how George Vavasor paid a Visit	602
73. In which come Tidings of Great Moment to all the Pallisers	609
74. Showing what happened in the Churchyard	617
75. Rouge et Noir	625
76. The Landlord's Bill	635
77. The Travellers return Home	643
78. Mr Cheesacre's Fate	650
79. Diamonds are Diamonds	661
80. The Story is finished within the Halls of the Duke of Omnium	670

This page intentionally left blank

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

MR VAVASOR AND HIS DAUGHTER

WHETHER or no, she, whom you are to forgive, if you can, did or did not belong to the Upper Ten Thousand* of this our English world, I am not prepared to say with any strength of affirmation. By blood she was connected with big people,—distantly connected with some very big people indeed, people who belonged to the Upper Ten Hundred if there be any such division; but of these very big relations she had known and seen little, and they had cared as little for her. Her grandfather, Squire Vavasor of Vavasor Hall, in Westmoreland, was a country gentleman, possessing some thousand a year at the outside, and he therefore never came up to London, and had no ambition to have himself numbered as one in any exclusive set. A hot-headed, ignorant, honest old gentleman, he lived ever at Vavasor Hall, declaring, to any who would listen to him, that the country was going to the mischief, and congratulating himself that at any rate, in his county, parliamentary reform had been powerless to alter the old political arrangements. Alice Vavasor, whose offence against the world I am to tell you, and if possible to excuse, was the daughter of his younger son; and as her father, John Vavasor, had done nothing to raise the family name to eminence, Alice could not lay claim to any high position from her birth as a Vavasor. John Vavasor had come up to London early in life as a barrister, and had failed.* He had failed at least in attaining either much wealth or much repute, though he had succeeded in earning, or perhaps I might better say, in obtaining, a livelihood. He had married a lady somewhat older than himself, who was in possession of four hundred a year, and who was related to those big people to whom I have alluded. Who these were, and the special nature of the relationship, I shall be called upon to explain hereafter, but at present it will suffice to say that Alice Macleod gave great offence to all her friends by her marriage. She did not, however, give them much time for the indulgence of their anger. Having given birth to a daughter within twelve months of her marriage, she died, leaving in abeyance that question as to whether the fault of her marriage should or should not be pardoned by her family.

When a man marries an heiress for her money, if that money be within her own control, as was the case with Miss Macleod's fortune, it is generally well for the speculating lover that the lady's friends should quarrel with him and with her. She is thereby driven to throw herself entirely into the gentleman's arms, and he thus becomes possessed of the wife and the money without the abominable nuisance of stringent settlements. But the Macleods, though they quarrelled with Alice, did not quarrel with her *à l'outrance*.* They snubbed herself and her chosen husband; but they did not so far separate themselves from her and her affairs as to give up the charge of her possessions. Her four hundred a year was settled very closely on herself and on her children, without even a life interest having been given to Mr Vavasor, and therefore when she died the mother's fortune became the property of the little baby. But, under these circumstances, the big people did not refuse to interest themselves to some extent on behalf of the father. I do not suppose that any actual agreement or compact was made between Mr Vavasor and the Macleods; but it came to be understood between them that if he made no demand upon them for his daughter's money, and allowed them to have charge of her education, they would do something for him. He was a practising barrister, though his practice had never amounted to much; and a practising barrister is always supposed to be capable of filling any situation which may come in his way. Two years after his wife's death Mr Vavasor was appointed assistant commissioner in some office which had to do with insolvents, and which was abolished three years after his appointment. It was at first thought that he would keep his eight hundred a year for life and be required to do nothing for it; but a wretched cheeseparing Whig government, as John Vavasor called it when describing the circumstances of the arrangement to his father, down in Westmoreland, would not permit this; it gave him the option of taking four hundred a year for doing nothing, or of keeping his whole income and attending three days a week for three hours a day during term time, at a miserable dingy little office near Chancery* Lane, where his duty would consist in signing his name to accounts which he never read, and at which he was never supposed even to look. He had sulkily elected to keep the money, and this signing had now been for nearly twenty years the business of his life. Of course he considered himself to be a very hardly-used man. One Lord Chancellor* after another he petitioned, begging that he might be relieved from the cruelty of his position, and allowed to take his salary without doing anything in return for it. The amount of work which he did perform was certainly a minimum of labour.

Term time, as terms were counted in Mr Vavasor's office, hardly comprised half the year, and the hours of weekly attendance did not do more than make one day's work a week for a working man; but Mr Vavasor had been appointed an assistant commissioner, and with every Lord Chancellor he argued that all Westminster Hall, and Lincoln's Inn* to boot, had no right to call upon him to degrade himself by signing his name to accounts. In answer to every memorial he was offered the alternative of freedom with half his income; and so the thing went on.

There can, however, be no doubt that Mr Vavasor was better off and happier with his almost nominal employment than he would have been without it. He always argued that it kept him in London; but he would undoubtedly have lived in London with or without his official occupation. He had become so habituated to London life in a small way, before the choice of leaving London was open to him, that nothing would have kept him long away from it. After his wife's death he dined at his club every day on which a dinner was not given to him by some friend elsewhere, and was rarely happy except when so dining. They who have seen him scanning the steward's list of dishes, and giving the necessary orders for his own and his friend's dinner, at about half-past four in the afternoon, have seen John Vavasor at the only moment of the day at which he is ever much in earnest. All other things are light and easy to him,—to be taken easily and to be dismissed easily. Even the eating of the dinner calls forth from him no special sign of energy. Sometimes a frown will gather on his brow as he tastes the first half glass from his bottle of claret; but as a rule that which he has prepared for himself with so much elaborate care, is consumed with only pleasant enjoyment. Now and again it will happen that the cook is treacherous even to him, and then he can hit hard; but in hitting he is quiet, and strikes with a smile on his face.

Such had been Mr Vavasor's pursuits and pleasures in life up to the time at which my story commences. But I must not allow the reader to suppose that he was a man without good qualities. Had he when young possessed the gift of industry I think that he might have shone in his profession, and have been well spoken of and esteemed in the world. As it was he was a discontented man, but nevertheless he was popular, and to some extent esteemed. He was liberal as far as his means would permit; he was a man of his word; and he understood well that code of by-laws which was presumed to constitute the character of a gentleman in his circle. He knew how to carry himself well among men, and understood thoroughly what might be said, and what might not; what might be

done among those with whom he lived, and what should be left undone. By nature, too, he was kindly disposed, loving many persons a little if he loved few or none passionately. Moreover, at the age of fifty, he was a handsome man, with a fine forehead, round which the hair and beard was only beginning to show itself to be grey. He stood well, with a large person, only now beginning to become corpulent. His eyes were bright and grey, and his mouth and chin were sharply cut, and told of gentle birth. Most men who knew John Vavasor well, declared it to be a pity that he should spend his time in signing accounts in Chancery Lane.

I have said that Alice Vavasor's big relatives cared but little for her in her early years; but I have also said that they were careful to undertake the charge of her education, and I must explain away this little discrepancy. The biggest of these big people had hardly heard of her; but there was a certain Lady Macleod, not very big herself, but, as it were, hanging on to the skirts of those who were so, who cared very much for Alice. She was the widow of a Sir Archibald Macleod, KCB,* who had been a soldier, she herself having also been a Macleod by birth; and for very many years past—from a time previous to the birth of Alice Vavasor—she had lived at Cheltenham, making short sojourns in London during the spring, when the contents of her limited purse would admit of her doing so. Of old Lady Macleod I think I may say that she was a good woman;—that she was a good woman, though subject to two of the most serious drawbacks to goodness which can afflict a lady. She was a Calvinistic Sabbatarian* in religion, and in worldly matters she was a devout believer in the high rank of her noble relatives. She could almost worship a youthful marquis, though he lived a life that would disgrace a heathen among heathens; and she could and did, in her own mind, condemn crowds of commonplace men and women to all eternal torments which her imagination could conceive, because they listened to profane music in a park on Sunday. Yet she was a good woman. Out of her small means she gave much away. She owed no man anything. She strove to love her neighbours. She bore much pain with calm unspeaking endurance, and she lived in trust of a better world. Alice Vavasor, who was after all only her cousin, she loved with an exceeding love, and yet Alice had done very much to extinguish such love. Alice, in the years of her childhood, had been brought up by Lady Macleod; at the age of twelve she had been sent to a school at Aix-la-Chapelle,*—a comitatus* of her relatives having agreed that such was to be her fate, much in opposition to Lady Macleod's judgment; at nineteen she had returned to Cheltenham, and after remaining there for little more than a year, had expressed her unwillingness to

remain longer with her cousin. She could sympathize neither with her relative's faults or virtues. She made an arrangement, therefore, with her father, that they two would keep house together in London, and so they had lived for the last five years;—for Alice Vavasor when she will be introduced to the reader had already passed her twenty-fourth birthday.

Their mode of life had been singular and certainly not in all respects satisfactory. Alice when she was twenty-one had the full command of her own fortune; and when she induced her father, who for the last fifteen years had lived in lodgings, to take a small house in Queen Anne Street,* of course she offered to incur a portion of the expense. He had warned her that his habits were not those of a domestic man, but he had been content simply so to warn her. He had not felt it to be his duty to decline the arrangement because he knew himself to be unable to give to his child all that attention which a widowed father under such circumstances should pay to an only daughter. The house had been taken, and Alice and he had lived together, but their lives had been quite apart. For a short time, for a month or two, he had striven to dine at home and even to remain at home through the evening; but the work had been too hard for him and he had utterly broken down. He had said to her and to himself that his health would fail him under the effects of so great a change made so late in life, and I am not sure that he had not spoken truly. At any rate the effort had been abandoned, and Mr Vavasor now never dined at home. Nor did he and his daughter ever dine out together. Their joint means did not admit of their giving dinners, and therefore they could not make their joint way in the same circle. It thus came to pass that they lived apart,—quite apart. They saw each other, probably, daily; but they did little more than see each other. They did not even breakfast together, and after three o'clock in the day Mr Vavasor was never to be found in his own house.

Miss Vavasor had made for herself a certain footing in society, though I am disposed to doubt her right to be considered as holding a place among the Upper Ten Thousand. Two classes of people she had chosen to avoid, having been driven to such avoidings by her aunt's preferences; marquises and such-like, whether wicked or otherwise, she had eschewed, and had eschewed likewise all Low Church tendencies. The eschewing of marquises is not generally very difficult. Young ladies living with their fathers on very moderate incomes in or about Queen Anne Street are not usually much troubled on that matter. Nor can I say that Miss Vavasor was so troubled. But with her there was a certain definite thing to be done towards such eschewal. Lady Macleod by no means avoided her noble relatives, nor did she at all avoid

Alice Vavasor. When in London she was persevering in her visits to Queen Anne Street, though she considered herself, nobody knew why, not to be on speaking terms with Mr Vavasor. And she strove hard to produce an intimacy between Alice and her noble relatives—such an intimacy as that which she herself enjoyed;—an intimacy which gave her a footing in their houses but no footing in their hearts, or even in their habits. But all this Alice declined with as much consistency as she did those other struggles which her old cousin made on her behalf,—strong, never-flagging, but ever-failing efforts to induce the girl to go to such places of worship as Lady Macleod herself frequented.

A few words must be said as to Alice Vavasor's person; one fact also must be told, and then, I believe, I may start upon my story. As regards her character, I will leave it to be read in the story itself. The reader already knows that she appears upon the scene at no very early age, and the mode of her life had perhaps given to her an appearance of more years than those which she really possessed. It was not that her face was old, but that there was nothing that was girlish in her manners. Her demeanour was as staid, and her voice as self-possessed, as though she had already been ten years married. In person she was tall and well made, rather large in her neck and shoulders, as were all the Vavasors, but by no means fat. Her hair was brown, but very dark, and she wore it rather lower upon her forehead than is customary at the present day. Her eyes, too, were dark, though they were not black, and her complexion, though not quite that of a brunette, was far away from being fair. Her nose was somewhat broad, and retroussé too, but to my thinking it was a charming nose, full of character, and giving to her face at times a look of pleasant humour, which it would otherwise have lacked. Her mouth was large, and full of character, and her chin oval, dimpled, and finely chiselled, like her father's. I beg you, in taking her for all in all, to admit that she was a fine, handsome, high-spirited young woman.

And now for my fact. At the time of which I am writing she was already engaged to be married.

CHAPTER 2

LADY MACLEOD

I CANNOT say that the house in Queen Anne Street was a pleasant house. I am now speaking of the material house, made up of the walls and furniture, and not of any pleasantness or unpleasantness supplied

by the inmates. It was a small house on the south side of the street, squeezed in between two large mansions which seemed to crush it, and by which its fair proportion of doorstep and area was in truth curtailed. The stairs were narrow; the dining-room was dark, and possessed none of those appearances of plenteous hospitality which a dining-room should have. But all this would have been as nothing if the drawing-room had been pretty as it is the bounden duty of all drawing-rooms to be. But Alice Vavasor's drawing-room was not pretty. Her father had had the care of furnishing the house, and he had intrusted the duty to a tradesman who had chosen green paper, a green carpet, green curtains, and green damask chairs. There was a green damask sofa, and two green armchairs opposite to each other at the two sides of the fireplace. The room was altogether green, and was not enticing. In shape it was nearly square, the very small back room on the same floor not having been, as is usual, added to it. This had been fitted up as a 'study' for Mr Vavasor, and was very rarely used for any purpose.

Most of us know when we enter a drawing-room whether it is a pretty room or no; but how few of us know how to make a drawing-room pretty! There has come up in London in these latter days a form of room so monstrously ugly that I will venture to say that no other people on earth but Londoners would put up with it. Londoners, as a rule, take their houses as they can get them, looking only to situation, size, and price. What Grecian, what Roman, what Turk, what Italian would endure, or would ever have endured, to use a room with a monstrous cantle* in the form of a parallelogram cut sheerly out of one corner of it? This is the shape of room we have now adopted,—or rather which the builders have adopted for us,—in order to throw the whole first floor into one apartment which may be presumed to have noble dimensions,—with such drawback from it as the necessities of the staircase may require. A sharp unadorned corner projects itself into these would-be noble dimensions, and as ugly a form of chamber is produced as any upon which the eye can look. I would say more on the subject if I dared to do so here, but I am bound now to confine myself to Miss Vavasor's room. The monstrous deformity of which I have spoken was not known when that house in Queen Anne Street was built. There is to be found no such abomination of shape in the buildings of our ancestors,—not even in the days of George the Second. But yet the drawing-room of which I speak was ugly, and Alice knew that it was so. She knew that it was ugly, and she would greatly have liked to banish the green sofa, to have re-papered the wall, and to have hung up curtains with a dash of pink through them. With the green carpet she

would have been contented. But her father was an extravagant man; and from the day on which she had come of age she had determined that it was her special duty to avoid extravagance.

'It's the ugliest room I ever saw in my life,' her father once said to her.

'It is not very pretty,' Alice replied.

'I'll go halves with you in the expense of redoing it,' said Mr Vavasor.

'Wouldn't that be extravagant, papa? The things have not been here quite four years yet.'

Then Mr Vavasor had shrugged his shoulders and said nothing more about it. It was little to him whether the drawing-room in Queen Anne Street was ugly or pretty. He was on the committee of his club, and he took care that the furniture there should be in all respects comfortable.

It was now June; and that month Lady Macleod was in the habit of spending among her noble relatives in London when she had succeeded in making both ends so far overlap each other at Cheltenham as to give her the fifty pounds necessary for this purpose. For though she spent her month in London among her noble friends, it must not be supposed that her noble friends gave her bed and board. They sometimes gave her tea, such as it was, and once or twice in the month they gave the old lady a second-rate dinner. On these occasions she hired a little parlour and bedroom behind it in King Street, Saint James's,* and lived a hot, uncomfortable life, going about at nights to gatherings of fashionable people of which she in her heart disapproved, seeking for smiles which seldom came to her, and which she excused herself for desiring because they were the smiles of her kith and her kin, telling herself always that she made this vain journey to the modern Babylon* for the good of Alice Vavasor, and telling herself as often that she now made it for the last time. On the occasion of her preceding visit she had reminded herself that she was then seventy-five years old, and had sworn to herself that she would come to London no more; but here she was again in London, having justified the journey to herself on the plea that there were circumstances in Alice's engagement which made it desirable that she should for a while be near her niece. Her niece, as she thought, was hardly managing her own affairs discreetly.

'Well, aunt,' said Alice, as the old lady walked into the drawing-room one morning at eleven o'clock. Alice always called Lady Macleod her aunt, though, as has been before explained, there was no such close connection between them. During Lady Macleod's sojourn in

London these morning visits were made almost every day. Alice never denied herself, and even made a point of remaining at home to receive them unless she had previously explained that she would be out; but I am not prepared to say that they were, of their own nature, agreeable to her.

‘Would you mind shutting the window, my dear?’ said Lady Macleod, seating herself stiffly on one of the small ugly green chairs. She had been educated at a time when easy-chairs were considered vicious, and among people who regarded all easy postures as being so; and she could still boast, at seventy-six, that she never leaned back. ‘Would you mind shutting the window? I’m so warm that I’m afraid of the draught.’

‘You don’t mean to say that you’ve walked from King Street,’ said Alice, doing as she was desired.

‘Indeed I do,—every step of the way. Cabs are so ruinous. It’s a most unfortunate thing; they always say it’s just over the two miles here. I don’t believe a word of it, because I’m only a little more than the half-hour walking it; and those men will say anything. But how can I prove it, you know?’

‘I really think it’s too far for you to walk when it’s so warm.’

‘But what can I do, my dear? I must come, when I’ve specially come up to London to see you. I shall have a cab back again, because it’ll be hotter then, and dear Lady Midlothian has promised to send her carriage at three to take me to the concert. I do so wish you’d go, Alice.’

‘It’s out of the question, aunt. The idea of my going in that way at the last moment, without any invitation!’

‘It wouldn’t be without an invitation, Alice. The marchioness has said to me over and over again how glad she would be to see you, if I would bring you.’

‘Why doesn’t she come and call if she is so anxious to know me?’

‘My dear, you’ve no right to expect it; you haven’t indeed. She never calls even on me.’

‘I know I’ve no right, and I don’t expect it, and I don’t want it. But neither has she a right to suppose that, under such circumstances, I shall go to her house. You might as well give it up, aunt. Cart-ropes wouldn’t drag me there.’

‘I think you are very wrong,—particularly under your present circumstances. A young woman that is going to be married, as you are——’

‘As I am,——perhaps.’

‘That’s nonsense, Alice. Of course you are; and for his sake you are bound to cultivate any advantages that naturally belong to you. As to

Lady Midlothian or the marchioness coming to call on you here in your father's house, after all that has passed, you really have no right to look for it.'

'And I don't look for it.'

'That sort of people are not expected to call. If you'll think of it, how could they do it with all the demands they have on their time?'

'My dear aunt, I wouldn't interfere with their time for worlds.'

'Nobody can say of me, I'm sure, that I run after great people or rich people. It does happen that some of the nearest relations I have,—indeed I may say the nearest relations,—are people of high rank; and I do not see that I'm bound to turn away from my own flesh and blood because of that, particularly when they are always so anxious to keep up the connection.'

'I was only speaking of myself, aunt. It is very different with you. You have known them all your life.'

'And how are you to know them if you won't begin? Lady Midlothian said to me only yesterday that she was glad to hear that you were going to be married so respectably, and then——'

'Upon my word I'm very much obliged to her ladyship. I wonder whether she considered that she married respectably when she took Lord Midlothian?'

Now Lady Midlothian had been unfortunate in her marriage, having united herself to a man of bad character, who had used her ill, and from whom she had now been for some years separated. Alice might have spared her allusion to this misfortune when speaking of the countess to the cousin who was so fond of her, but she was angered by the application of that odious word respectable to her own prospects; and perhaps the more angered as she was somewhat inclined to feel that the epithet did suit her own position. Her engagement, she had sometimes told herself, was very respectable, and had as often told herself that it lacked other attractions which it should have possessed. She was not quite pleased with herself in having accepted John Grey,—or rather perhaps was not satisfied with herself in having loved him. In her many thoughts on the subject, she always admitted to herself that she had accepted him simply because she loved him;—that she had given her quick assent to his quick proposal simply because he had won her heart. But she was sometimes almost angry with herself that she had permitted her heart to be thus easily taken from her, and had rebuked herself for her girlish facility. But the marriage would be at any rate respectable. Mr Grey was a man of high character, of good though moderate means; he was, too, well educated, of good birth, a

gentleman, and a man of talent. No one could deny that the marriage would be highly respectable, and her father had been more than satisfied. Why Miss Vavasor herself was not quite satisfied will, I hope, in time make itself appear. In the meanwhile it can be understood that Lady Midlothian's praise would gall her.

'Alice, don't be uncharitable,' said Lady Macleod severely. 'Whatever may have been Lady Midlothian's misfortunes no one can say that they have resulted from her own fault.'

'Yes, they can, aunt, if she married a man whom she knew to be a scapegrace because he was very rich and an earl.'

'She was the daughter of a nobleman herself, and only married in her own degree. But I don't want to discuss that. She meant to be good-natured when she mentioned your marriage, and you should take it as it was meant. After all she was only your mother's second cousin——'

'Dear aunt, I make no claim on her cousinship.'

'But she admits the claim, and is quite anxious that you should know her. She has been at the trouble to find out everything about Mr Grey, and told me that nothing could be more satisfactory.'

'Upon my word I am very much obliged to her.'

Lady Macleod was a woman of much patience, and possessed also of considerable perseverance. For another half-hour she went on expatiating on the advantages which would accrue to Alice as a married woman from an acquaintance with her noble relatives, and endeavouring to persuade her that no better opportunity than the present would present itself. There would be a place in Lady Midlothian's carriage, as none other of the daughters were going but Lady Jane. Lady Midlothian would take it quite as a compliment, and a concert was not like a ball or any customary party. An unmarried girl might very properly go to a concert under such circumstances as now existed without any special invitation. Lady Macleod ought to have known her adopted niece better. Alice was immovable. As a matter of course she was immovable. Lady Macleod had seldom been able to persuade her to anything, and ought to have been well sure that, of all things, she could not have persuaded her to this.

Then, at last, they came to another subject, as to which Lady Macleod declared that she had specially come on this special morning, forgetting, probably, that she had already made the same assertion with reference to the concert. But in truth the last assertion was the correct one, and on that other subject she had been hurried on to say more than she meant by the eagerness of the moment. All the morning she had

been full of the matter on which she was now about to speak. She had discussed it quite at length with Lady Midlothian;—though she was by no means prepared to tell Alice Vavasor that any such discussion had taken place. From the concert, and the effect which Lady Midlothian's countenance might have upon Mr Grey's future welfare, she got herself by degrees round to a projected Swiss tour which Alice was about to make. Of this Swiss tour she had heard before, but had not heard who were to be Miss Vavasor's companions until Lady Midlothian had told her. How it had come to pass that Lady Midlothian had interested herself so much in the concerns of a person whom she did not know, and on whom she in her greatness could not be expected to call, I cannot say; but from some quarter she had learned who were the proposed companions of Alice Vavasor's tour, and she had told Lady Macleod that she did not at all approve of the arrangement.

'And when do you go, Alice?' said Lady Macleod.

'Early in July, I believe. It will be very hot, but Kate must be back by the middle of August.' Kate Vavasor was Alice's first cousin.

'Oh! Kate is to go with you?'

'Of course she is. I could not go alone, or with no one but George. Indeed it was Kate who made up the party.'

'Of course you could not go alone with George,' said Lady Macleod, very grimly. Now George Vavasor was Kate's brother, and was therefore also first cousin to Alice. He was heir to the old squire down in Westmoreland, with whom Kate lived, their father being dead. Nothing, it would seem, could be more rational than that Alice should go to Switzerland with her cousins; but Lady Macleod was clearly not of this opinion; she looked very grim as she made this allusion to cousin George, and seemed to be preparing herself for a fight.

'That is exactly what I say,' answered Alice. 'But, indeed, he is simply going as an escort to me and Kate, as we don't like the rôle of unprotected females. It is very good-natured of him, seeing how much his time is taken up.'

'I thought he never did anything.'

'That's because you don't know him, aunt.'

'No; certainly I don't know him.' She did not add that she had no wish to know Mr George Vavasor, but she looked it. 'And has your father been told that he is going?'

'Of course he has.'

'And does——' Lady Macleod hesitated a little before she went on, and then finished her question with a little spasmodic assumption of courage. 'And does Mr Grey know that he is going?'

Alice remained silent for a full minute before she answered this question, during which Lady Macleod sat watching her grimly, with her eyes very intent upon her niece's face. If she supposed such silence to have been in any degree produced by shame in answering the question, she was much mistaken. But it may be doubted whether she understood the character of the girl whom she thought she knew so well, and it is probable that she did make such mistake.

'I might tell you simply that he does,' said Alice at last, 'seeing that I wrote to him yesterday, letting him know that such were our arrangements; but I feel that I should not thus answer the question you mean to ask. You want to know whether Mr Grey will approve of it. As I only wrote yesterday of course I have not heard, and therefore cannot say. But I can say this, aunt, that much as I might regret his disapproval, it would make no change in my plans.'

'Would it not? Then I must tell you, you are very wrong. It ought to make a change. What! the disapproval of the man you are going to marry make no change in your plans?'

'Not in that matter. Come, aunt, if we must discuss this matter let us do it at any rate fairly. In an ordinary way, if Mr Grey had asked me to give up for any reason my trip altogether, I should have given it up certainly, as I would give up any other indifferent project at the request of so dear a friend,—a friend with whom I am so—so—so—closely connected. But if he asked me not to travel with my cousin George, I should refuse him absolutely, without a word of parley on the subject, simply because of the nature and closeness of my connection with him. I suppose you understand what I mean, aunt?'

'I suppose I do. You mean that you would refuse to obey him on the very subject on which he has a right to claim your obedience.'

'He has no right to claim my obedience on any subject,' said Alice; and as she spoke Aunt Macleod jumped up with a little start at the vehemence of the words, and of the tone in which they were expressed. She had heard that tone before, and might have been used to it; but, nevertheless, the little jump was involuntary. 'At present he has no right to my obedience on any subject, but least of all on that,' said Alice. 'His advice he may give me, but I am quite sure he will not ask for obedience.'

'And if he advises you you will slight his advice.'

'If he tells me that I had better not travel with my cousin George I shall certainly not take his advice. Moreover, I should be careful to let him know how much I was offended by any such counsel from him. It would show a littleness on his part, and a suspicion of which

I cannot suppose him to be capable.' Alice, as she said this, got up from her seat and walked about the room. When she had finished she stood at one of the windows with her back to her visitor. There was silence between them for a minute or two, during which Lady Macleod was deeply considering how best she might speak the terrible words, which, as Alice's nearest female relative, she felt herself bound to utter. At last she collected her thoughts and her courage, and spoke out.

'My dear Alice, I need hardly say that if you had a mother living, or any person with you filling the place of a mother, I should not interfere in this matter.'

'Of course, Aunt Macleod, if you think I am wrong you have quite a right to say so.'

'I do think you are wrong,—very wrong, indeed; and if you persist in this I am afraid I must say that I shall think you wicked. Of course Mr Grey cannot like you to travel with George Vavasor.'

'And why not, aunt?' Alice, as she asked this question, turned round and confronted Lady Macleod boldly. She spoke with a steady voice, and fixed her eyes upon the old lady's face, as though determined to show that she had no fear of what might be said to her.

'Why not, Alice? Surely you do not wish me to say why not.'

'But I do wish you to say why not. How can I defend myself till the accusation is made?'

'You are now engaged to marry Mr Grey, with the consent and approbation of all your friends. Two years ago you had—had——'

'Had what, aunt? If you mean to say that two years ago I was engaged to my cousin George you are mistaken. Three years ago I told him that under certain conditions I would become engaged to him. But my conditions did not suit him, nor his me, and no engagement was ever made. Mr Grey knows the history of the whole thing. As far as it was possible I have told him everything that took place.'

'The fact was, Alice, that George Vavasor's mode of life was such that an engagement with him would have been absolute madness.'

'Dear aunt, you must excuse me if I say that I cannot discuss George Vavasor's mode of life. If I were thinking of becoming his wife you would have a perfect right to discuss it, because of your constant kindness to me. But as matters are he is simply a cousin; and as I like him and you do not, we had better say nothing about him.'

'I must say this,—that after what has passed, and at the present crisis of your life——'

'Dear aunt, I'm not in any crisis.'

‘Yes, you are, Alice; in the most special crisis of a girl’s life. You are still a girl, but you are the promised wife of a very worthy man, who will look to you for all his domestic happiness. George Vavasor has the name, at least, of being very wild.’

‘The worthy man and the wild man must fight it out between them. If I were going away with George by himself, there might be something in what you say.’

‘That would be monstrous.’

‘Monstrous or not, it isn’t what I’m about to do. Kate and I have put our purses together, and are going to have an outing for our special fun and gratification. As we should be poor travellers alone, George has promised to go with his sister. Papa knows all about it, and never thought of making any objection.’

Lady Macleod shook her head. She did not like to say anything against Mr Vavasor before his daughter; but the shaking of her head was intended to signify that Mr Vavasor’s assent in such a matter was worth nothing.

‘I can only say again,’ said Lady Macleod, ‘that I think Mr Grey will be displeased,—and that he will have very great cause for displeasure. And I think, moreover, that his approbation ought to be your chief study. I believe, my dear, I’ll ask you to let Jane get me a cab. I shan’t have a bit too much time to dress for the concert.’

Alice simply rang the bell, and said no further word on the subject which they had been discussing. When Lady Macleod got up to go away, Alice kissed her, as was customary with them, and the old lady as she went uttered her customary valediction. ‘God bless you, my dear. Good-bye! I’ll come to-morrow if I can.’ There was therefore no quarrel between them. But both of them felt that words had been spoken which must probably lead to some diminution of their past intimacy.

When Lady Macleod had gone Alice sat alone for an hour thinking of what had passed between them,—thinking rather of those two men, the worthy man and the wild man, whose names had been mentioned in close connection with herself. John Grey was a worthy man, a man worthy at all points, as far as she knew him. She told herself that it was so. And she told herself, also, that her cousin George was wild,—very wild. And yet her thoughts were, I fear, on the whole more kindly towards her cousin than towards her lover. She had declared to her aunt that John Grey would be incapable of such suspicion as would be shown by any objection on his part to the arrangements made for the tour. She had said so, and had so believed; and yet she continued to brood over the position which her affairs would take, if he did make

the objection which Lady Macleod anticipated. She told herself over and over again, that under such circumstances she would not give way an inch. 'He is free to go,' she said to herself. 'If he does not trust me he is quite free to go.' It may almost be said that she came at last to anticipate from her lover that very answer to her own letter which she had declared him to be incapable of making.

CHAPTER 3

JOHN GREY, THE WORTHY MAN

MR GREY'S answer to Alice Vavasor's letter, which was duly sent by return of post and duly received on the morning after Lady Macleod's visit, may perhaps be taken as giving a sample of his worthiness. It was dated from Nethercoats, a small country-house in Cambridgeshire which belonged to him, at which he already spent much of his time, and at which he intended to live altogether after his marriage.

'Nethercoats, June, 186—.

'DEAREST ALICE,

'I am glad you have settled your affairs,—foreign affairs, I mean,—so much to your mind. As to your home affairs they are not, to my thinking, quite so satisfactorily arranged. But as I am a party interested in the latter my opinion may perhaps have an undue bias. Touching the tour, I quite agree with you that you and Kate would have been uncomfortable alone. It's a very fine theory, that of women being able to get along without men as well as with them; but, like other fine theories, it will be found very troublesome by those who first put it in practice. Gloved hands, petticoats, feminine softness, and the general homage paid to beauty, all stand in the way of success. These things may perhaps some day be got rid of, and possibly with advantage; but while young ladies are still encumbered with them a male companion will always be found to be a comfort. I don't quite know whether your cousin George is the best possible knight you might have chosen. I should consider myself to be infinitely preferable, had my going been upon the cards. Were you in danger of meeting Paynim* foes, he, no doubt, would kill them off much quicker than I could do, and would be much more serviceable in liberating you from the dungeons of oppressors, or even from stray tigers in the Swiss forests. But I doubt his being punctual with the luggage. He will want you or Kate to keep the

accounts, if any are kept. He will be slow in getting you glasses of water at the railway stations, and will always keep you waiting at breakfast. I hold that a man with two ladies on a tour should be an absolute slave to them, or they will not fully enjoy themselves. He should simply be an upper servant, with the privilege of sitting at the same table with his mistresses. I have my doubts as to whether your cousin is fit for the place; but, as to myself, it is just the thing that I was made for. Luckily, however, neither you nor Kate are without wills of your own, and perhaps you may be able to reduce Mr Vavasor to obedience.

‘As to the home affairs I have very little to say here,—in this letter. I shall of course run up and see you before you start, and shall probably stay a week in town. I know I ought not to do so, as it will be a week of idleness, and yet not a week of happiness. I’d sooner have an hour with you in the country than a whole day in London. And I always feel in town that I’ve too much to do to allow of my doing anything. If it were sheer idleness I could enjoy it, but it is a feverish idleness, in which one is driven here and there, expecting some gratification which not only never comes, but which never even begins to come. I will, however, undergo a week of it,—say the last seven days of this month, and shall trust to you to recompense me by as much of yourself as your town doings will permit.

‘And now again as to those home affairs. If I say nothing now I believe you will understand why I refrain. You have cunningly just left me to imply, from what you say, that all my arguments have been of no avail; but you do not answer them, or even tell me that you have decided. I shall therefore imply nothing, and still trust to my personal eloquence for success. Or rather not trust,—not trust, but hope.

‘The garden is going on very well. We are rather short of water, and therefore not quite as bright as I had hoped; but we are preparing with untiring industry for future brightness. Your commands have been obeyed in all things, and Morrison always says “The mistress didn’t mean this,” or “The mistress did intend that.” God bless the mistress is what I now say, and send her home, to her own home, to her flowers, and her fruit, and her house, and her husband, as soon as may be, with no more of those delays which are to me so grievous, and which seem to me to be so unnecessary. That is my prayer.

‘Yours ever and always,
‘J. G.’

‘I didn’t give commands,’ Alice said to herself, as she sat with the letter at her solitary breakfast-table. ‘He asked me how I liked the

things, and of course I was obliged to say. I was obliged to seem to care, even if I didn't care.' Such were her first thoughts as she put the letter back into its envelope, after reading it the second time. When she opened it, which she did quickly, not pausing a moment lest she should suspect herself of fearing to see what might be its contents, her mind was full of that rebuke which her aunt had anticipated, and which she had almost taught herself to expect. She had torn the letter open rapidly, and had dashed at its contents with quick eyes. In half a moment she had seen what was the nature of the reply respecting the proposed companion of her tour, and then she had completed her reading slowly enough. 'No; I gave no commands,' she repeated to herself, as though she might thereby absolve herself from blame in reference to some possible future accusations, which might perhaps be brought against her under certain circumstances which she was contemplating.

Then she considered the letter bit by bit, taking it backwards, and sipping her tea every now and then amidst her thoughts. No; she had no home, no house, there. She had no husband;—not as yet. He spoke of their engagement as though it were a betrothal, as betrothals used to be of yore; as though they were already in some sort married. Such betrothals were not made now-a-days. There still remained, both to him and to her, a certain liberty of extricating themselves from this engagement. Should he come to her and say that he found that their contemplated marriage would not make him happy, would not she release him without a word of reproach? Would not she regard him as much more honourable in doing so than in adhering to a marriage which was distasteful to him? And if she would so judge him,—judge him and certainly acquit him, was it not reasonable that she under similar circumstances should expect a similar acquittal? Then she declared to herself that she carried on this argument within her own breast simply as an argument, induced to do so by that assertion on his part that he was already her husband,—that his house was even now her home. She had no intention of using that power which was still hers. She had no wish to go back from her pledged word. She thought that she had no such wish. She loved him much, and admired him even more than she loved him. He was noble, generous, clever, good,—so good as to be almost perfect; nay, for aught she knew he was perfect. Would that he had some faults! Would that he had! Would that he had! How could she, full of faults as she knew herself to be,—how could she hope to make happy a man perfect as he was! But then there would be no doubt as to her present duty. She loved him, and that was everything. Having told him that she loved him, and

having on that score accepted his love, nothing but a change in her heart towards him could justify her in seeking to break the bond which bound them together. She did love him, and she loved him only.

But she had once loved her cousin. Yes, truly it was so. In her thoughts she did not now deny it. She had loved him, and was tormented by a feeling that she had had a more full delight in that love than in this other that had sprung up subsequently. She had told herself that this had come of her youth;—that love at twenty was sweeter than it could be afterwards. There had been a something of rapture in that earlier dream which could never be repeated,—which could never live, indeed, except in a dream. Now, now that she was older and perhaps wiser, love meant a partnership, in which each partner would be honest to the other, in which each would wish and strive for the other's welfare, so that thus their joint welfare might be insured. Then, in those early girl-ish days, it had meant a total abnegation of self. The one was of earth, and therefore possible. The other had been a ray from heaven,—and impossible, except in a dream.

And she had been mistaken in her first love. She admitted that frankly. He whom she had worshipped had been an idol of clay,* and she knew that it was well for her to have abandoned that idolatry. He had not only been untrue to her, but, worse than that, had been false in excusing his untruth. He had not only promised falsely, but had made such promises with a deliberate, premeditated falsehood. And he had been selfish, coldly selfish, weighing the value of his own low lusts against that of her holy love. She had known this, and had parted from him with an oath to herself that no promised contrition on his part should ever bring them again together. But she had pardoned him as a man, though never as a lover, and had bade him welcome again as a cousin and as her friend's brother. She had again become very anxious as to his career, not hiding her regard, but professing that anxiety aloud. She knew him to be clever, ambitious, bold,—and she believed even yet, in spite of her own experience, that he might not be bad at heart. Now, as she told herself that in truth she loved the man to whom her troth was plighted, I fear that she almost thought more of that other man from whom she had torn herself asunder.

'Why should he find himself unhappy in London?' she said, as she went back to the letter. 'Why should he pretend to condemn the very place which most men find the fittest for all their energies? Were I a man, no earthly consideration should induce me to live elsewhere. It is odd how we differ in all things. However brilliant might be his own light, he would be contented to hide it under a bushel.'

And at last she recurred to that matter as to which she had been so anxious when she first opened her lover's letter. It will be remembered how assured she had expressed herself that Mr Grey would not condescend to object to her travelling with her cousin. He had not so condescended. He had written on the matter with a pleasant joke, like a gentleman as he was, disdaining to allude to the past passages in the life of her whom he loved, abstaining even from expressing anything that might be taken as a permission on his part. There had been in Alice's words, as she told him of their proposed plan, a something that had betrayed a tremor in her thoughts. She had studiously striven so to frame her phrases that her tale might be told as any other simple statement,—as though there had been no trembling in her mind as she wrote. But she had failed, and she knew that she had failed. She had failed; and he had read all her effort and all her failure. She was quite conscious of this; she felt it thoroughly; and she knew that he was noble and a gentleman to the last drop of his blood. And yet—yet—yet there was almost a feeling of disappointment in that he had not written such a letter as Lady Macleod had anticipated.

During the next week Lady Macleod still came almost daily to Queen Anne Street, but nothing further was said between her and Miss Vavasor as to the Swiss tour; nor were any questions asked about Mr Grey's opinion on the subject. The old lady of course discovered that there was no quarrel, or, as she believed, any probability of a quarrel; and with that she was obliged to be contented. Nor did she again on this occasion attempt to take Alice to Lady Midlothian's. Indeed, their usual subjects of conversation were almost abandoned, and Lady Macleod's visits, though they were as constant as heretofore, were not so long. She did not dare to talk about Mr Grey, and because she did not so dare, was determined to regard herself as in a degree ill-used. So she was silent, reserved, and fretful. At length came the last day of her London season, and her last visit to her niece. 'I would come because it's my last day,' said Lady Macleod; 'but really I'm so hurried, and have so many things to do, that I hardly know how to manage it.'

'It's very kind,' said Alice, giving her aunt an affectionate squeeze of the hand.

'I'm keeping the cab, so I can stay just twenty-five minutes. I've marked the time accurately, but I know the man will swear it's over the half-hour.'

'You'll have no more trouble about cabs, aunt, when you are back in Cheltenham.'

'The flies* are worse, my dear. I really think they're worse. I pay the

bill every month, but they've always one down that I didn't have. It's the regular practice, for I've had them from all the men in the place.'

'It's hard enough to find honest men anywhere, I suppose.'

'Or honest women either. What do you think of Mrs Green wanting to charge me for an extra week, because she says I didn't give her notice till Tuesday morning? I won't pay her, and she may stop my things if she dares. However, it's the last time. I shall never come up to London again, my dear.'

'Oh, aunt, don't say that!'

'But I do say it, my dear. What should an old woman like me do, trailing up to town every year, merely because it's what people choose to call the season?'

'To see your friends, of course. Age doesn't matter when a person's health is so good as yours.'

'If you knew what I suffer from lumbago,—though I must say coming to London always does cure that for the time. But as for friends——! Well, I suppose one has no right to complain when one gets to be as old as I am; but I declare I believe that those I love best would sooner be without me than with me.'

'Do you mean me, aunt?'

'No, my dear, I don't mean you. Of course my life would have been very different if you could have consented to remain with me till you were married. But I didn't mean you. I don't know that I meant any one. You shouldn't mind what an old woman like me says.'

'You're a little melancholy because you're going away.'

'No, indeed. I don't know why I stayed the last week. I did say to Lady Midlothian that I thought I should go on the 20th; and, though I know that she knew that I really didn't go, she has not once sent to me since. To be sure they've been out every night; but I thought she might have asked me to come and lunch. It's so very lonely dining by myself in lodgings in London.'

'And yet you never will come and dine with me.'

'No, my dear; no. But we won't talk about that. I've just one word more to say. Let me see. I've just six minutes to stay. I've made up my mind that I'll never come up to town again,—except for one thing.'

'And what's that, aunt?' Alice, as she asked the question, well knew what that one thing was.

'I'll come for your marriage, my dear. I do hope you will not keep me waiting long.'

'Ah! I can't make any promise. There's no knowing when that may be.'

‘And why should there be no knowing? I always think that when a girl is once engaged the sooner she’s married the better. There may be reasons for delay on the gentleman’s part.’

‘There very often are, you know.’

‘But, Alice, you don’t mean to say that Mr Grey is putting it off?’

Alice was silent for a moment, during which Lady Macleod’s face assumed a look of almost tragic horror. Was there something wrong on Mr Grey’s side of which she was altogether unaware? Alice, though for a second or two she had been guilty of a slight playful deceit, was too honest to allow the impression to remain. ‘No, aunt,’ she said; ‘Mr Grey is not putting it off. It has been left to me to fix the time.’

‘And why don’t you fix it?’

‘It is such a serious thing! After all it is not more than four months yet since I—I accepted him. I don’t know that there has been any delay.’

‘But you might fix the time now, if he wishes it.’

‘Well, perhaps I shall,—some day, aunt. I’m going to think about it, and you mustn’t drive me.’

‘But you should have some one to advise you, Alice.’

‘Ah! that’s just it. People always do seem to think it so terrible that a girl should have her own way in anything. She mustn’t like any one at first; and then, when she does like some one, she must marry him directly she’s bidden. I haven’t much of my own way at present; but you see, when I’m married I shan’t have it at all. You can’t wonder that I shouldn’t be in a hurry.’

‘I am not advocating anything like hurry, my dear. But, goodness gracious me! I’ve been here twenty-eight minutes, and that horrid man will impose upon me. Good-bye; God bless you! Mind you write.’ And Lady Macleod hurried out of the room more intent at the present moment upon saving her sixpence than she was on any other matter whatsoever.

And then John Grey came up to town, arriving a day or two after the time that he had fixed. It is not, perhaps, improbable that Alice had used some diplomatic skill in preventing a meeting between Lady Macleod and her lover. They both were very anxious to obtain the same object, and Alice was to some extent opposed to their views. Had Lady Macleod and John Grey put their forces together she might have found herself unable to resist their joint endeavours. She was resolved that she would not at any rate name any day for her marriage before her return from Switzerland; and she may therefore have thought it wise to keep Mr Grey in the country till after Lady Macleod

had gone, even though she thereby cut down the time of his sojourn in London to four days. On the occasion of that visit Mr Vavasor did a very memorable thing. He dined at home with the view of welcoming his future son-in-law. He dined at home, and asked, or rather assented to Alice's asking, George and Kate Vavasor to join the dinner-party. 'What an auspicious omen for the future nuptials!' said Kate, with her little sarcastic smile. 'Uncle John dines at home, and Mr Grey joins in the dissipation of a dinner-party. We shall all be changed soon, I suppose, and George and I will take to keeping a little cottage in the country.'

'Kate,' said Alice, angrily, 'I think you are about the most unjust person I ever met. I would forgive your raillery, however painful it might be, if it were only fair.'

'And to whom is it unfair on the present occasion;—to your father?'

'It was not intended for him.'

'To yourself?'

'I care nothing as to myself; you know that very well.'

'Then it must have been unfair to Mr Grey.'

'Yes; it was Mr Grey whom you meant to attack. If I can forgive him for not caring for society, surely you might do so.'

'Exactly; but that's just what you can't do, my dear. You don't forgive him. If you did you might be quite sure that I should say nothing. And if you choose to bid me hold my tongue I will say nothing. But when you tell me all your own thoughts about this thing you can hardly expect but what I should let you know mine in return. I'm not particular; and if you are ready for a little good, wholesome, useful hypocrisy, I won't balk you. I mayn't be quite so dishonest as you call me, but I'm not so wedded to truth but what I can look, and act, and speak a few falsehoods if you wish it. Only let us understand each other.'

'You know I wish for no falsehood, Kate.'

'I know it's very hard to understand what you do wish. I know that for the last year or two I have been trying to find out your wishes, and, upon my word, my success has been very indifferent. I suppose you wish to marry Mr Grey, but I'm by no means certain. I suppose the last thing on earth you'd wish would be to marry George.'

'The very last. You're right there at any rate.'

'Alice——! sometimes you drive me too hard; you do, indeed. You make me doubt whether I hate or love you most. Knowing what my feelings are about George, I cannot understand how you can bring

yourself to speak of him to me with such contempt!’ Kate Vavasor, as she spoke these words, left the room with a quick step, and hurried up to her own chamber. There Alice found her in tears, and was driven by her friend’s real grief into the expression of an apology, which she knew was not properly due from her. Kate was acquainted with all the circumstances of that old affair between her brother and Alice. She had given in her adhesion* to the propriety of what Alice had done. She had allowed that her brother George’s behaviour had been such as to make any engagement between them impossible. The fault, therefore, had been hers in making any reference to the question of such a marriage. Nor had it been by any means her first fault of the same kind. Till Alice had become engaged to Mr Grey she had spoken of George only as her brother, or as her friend’s cousin, but now she was constantly making allusion to those past occurrences, which all of them should have striven to forget. Under these circumstances was not Lady Macleod right in saying that George Vavasor should not have been accepted as a companion for the Swiss tour?

The little dinner-party went off very quietly; and if no other ground existed for charging Mr Grey with London dissipation than what that afforded, he was accused most unjustly. The two young men had never before met each other; and Vavasor had gone to his uncle’s house, prepared not only to dislike but to despise his successor in Alice’s favour. But in this he was either disappointed or gratified, as the case may be. ‘He has plenty to say for himself,’ he said to Kate on his way home.

‘Oh yes; he can talk.’

‘And he doesn’t talk like a prig either, which was what I expected. He’s uncommonly handsome.’

‘I thought men never saw that in each other. I never see it in any man.’

‘I see it in every animal,—in men, women, horses, dogs, and even pigs. I like to look on handsome things. I think people always do who are ugly themselves.’

‘And so you’re going into raptures in favour of John Grey.’

‘No, I’m not. I very seldom go into raptures about anything. But he talks in the way I like a man to talk. How he bowled my uncle over about those actors; and yet if my uncle knows anything about anything it is about the stage twenty years ago.’ There was nothing more said then about John Grey; but Kate understood her brother well enough to be aware that this praise meant very little. George Vavasor spoke sometimes from his heart, and did so more frequently to his sister than to any one else; but his words came generally from his head.

On the day after the little dinner in Queen Anne Street, John Grey came to say good-bye to his betrothed;—for his betrothed she certainly was, in spite of those very poor arguments which she had used in trying to convince herself that she was still free if she wished to claim her freedom. Though he had been constantly with Alice during the last three days, he had not hitherto said anything as to the day of their marriage. He had been constantly with her alone, sitting for hours in that ugly green drawing-room, but he had never touched the subject. He had told her much of Switzerland, which she had never yet seen but which he knew well. He had told her much of his garden and house, whither she had once gone with her father, whilst paying a visit nominally to the colleges at Cambridge. And he had talked of various matters, matters bearing in no immediate way upon his own or her affairs; for Mr Grey was a man who knew well how to make words pleasant; but previous to this last moment he had said nothing on that subject on which he was so intent.

‘Well, Alice,’ he said, when the last hour had come, ‘and about that question of home affairs?’

‘Let us finish off the foreign affairs first.’

‘We have finished them; haven’t we?’

‘Finished them! why, we haven’t started yet.’

‘No; you haven’t started. But we’ve had the discussion. Is there any reason why you’d rather not have this thing settled?’

‘No; no special reason.’

‘Then why not let it be fixed? Do you fear coming to me as my wife?’

‘No.’

‘I cannot think that you repent your goodness to me.’

‘No; I don’t repent it;—what you call my goodness! I love you too entirely for that.’

‘My darling!’ And now he passed his arm round her waist as they stood near the empty fireplace. ‘And if you love me——’

‘I do love you.’

‘Then why should you not wish to come to me?’

‘I do wish it. I think I wish it.’

‘But, Alice, you must have wished it altogether when you consented to be my wife.’

‘A person may wish for a thing altogether, and yet not wish for it instantly.’

‘Instantly! Come; I have not been hard on you. This is still June. Will you say the middle of September, and we shall still be in time for warm pleasant days among the lakes? Is that asking for too much?’

‘It is not asking for anything.’

‘Nay, but it is, love. Grant it, and I will swear that you have granted me everything.’

She was silent, having things to say but not knowing in what words to put them. Now that he was with her she could not say the things which she had told herself that she would utter to him. She could not bring herself to hint to him that his views of life were so unlike her own, that there could be no chance of happiness between them, unless each could strive to lean somewhat towards the other. No man could be more gracious in word and manner than John Grey; no man more chivalrous in his carriage towards a woman; but he always spoke and acted as though there could be no question that his manner of life was to be adopted, without a word or thought of doubting, by his wife. When two came together, why should not each yield something, and each claim something? This she had meant to say to him on this day; but now that he was with her she could not say it.

‘John,’ she said at last, ‘do not press me about this till I return.’

‘But then you will say the time is short. It would be short then.’

‘I cannot answer you now;—indeed, I cannot. That is, I cannot answer in the affirmative. It is such a solemn thing.’

‘Will it ever be less solemn, dearest?’

‘Never, I hope never.’

He did not press her further then, but kissed her and bade her farewell.

CHAPTER 4

GEORGE VAVASOR, THE WILD MAN

IT will no doubt be understood that George Vavasor did not roam about in the woods unshorn, or wear leathern trappings and sandals, like Robinson Crusoe, instead of coats and trousers. His wildness was of another kind. Indeed, I don’t know that he was in truth at all wild, though Lady Macleod had called him so, and Alice had assented to her use of the word.

George Vavasor had lived in London since he was twenty, and now, at the time of the beginning of my story, he was a year or two over thirty. He was and ever had been the heir to his grandfather’s estate; but that estate was small, and when George first came to London his father was a strong man of forty, with as much promise of life in him as

his son had. A profession had therefore been absolutely necessary to him; and he had, at his uncle John's instance, been placed in the office of a parliamentary land agent. With this parliamentary land agent he had quarrelled to the knife, but not before he had by his talents made himself so useful that he had before him the prospects of a lucrative partnership in the business. George Vavasor had many faults, but idleness—absolute idleness—was not one of them. He would occasionally postpone his work to pleasure. He would be at Newmarket when he should have been at Whitehall. But it was not usual with him to be in bed when he should be at his desk, and when he was at his desk he did not whittle his ruler, or pick his teeth, or clip his nails. Upon the whole his friends were pleased with the first five years of his life in London—in spite of his having been found to be in debt on more than one occasion. But his debts had been paid; and all was going on swimmingly, when one day he knocked down the parliamentary agent with a blow between the eyes, and then there was an end of that. He himself was wont to say that he had known very well what he was about, that it had behoved him to knock down the man who was to have been his partner, and that he regretted nothing in the matter. At any rate the deed was looked upon with approving eyes by many men of good standing,—or, at any rate, sufficient standing to help George to another position; and within six weeks of the time of his leaving the office at Whitehall, he had become a partner in an established firm of wine merchants. A great-aunt had just then left him a couple of thousand pounds, which no doubt assisted him in his views with the wine merchants.

In this employment he remained for another period of five years, and was supposed by all his friends to be doing very well. And indeed he did not do badly, only that he did not do well enough to satisfy himself. He was ambitious of making the house to which he belonged the first house in the trade in London, and scared his partners by the boldness and extent of his views. He himself declared that if they would only have gone along with him he would have made them princes in the wine market. But they were men either of more prudence or of less audacity than he, and they declined to walk in his courses. At the end of the five years Vavasor left the house, not having knocked any one down on this occasion, and taking with him a very nice sum of money.

The last two of these five years had certainly been the best period of his life, for he had really worked very hard, like a man, giving up all pleasure that took time from him,—and giving up also most pleasures which were dangerous on account of their costliness. He went to no

racers, played no billiards, and spoke of Cremorne* as a childish thing, which he had abandoned now that he was no longer a child. It was during these two years that he had had his love passages with his cousin; and it must be presumed that he had, at any rate, intended at one time to settle himself respectably as a married man. He had, however, behaved very badly to Alice, and the match had been broken off.

He had also during the last two years quarrelled with his grandfather. He had wished to raise a sum of money on the Vavasor estate, which, as it was unentailed,* he could only do with his grandfather's concurrence. The old gentleman would not hear of it,—would listen with no patience to the proposition. It was in vain that George attempted to make the squire understand that the wine business was going on very well, that he himself owed no man anything, that everything with him was flourishing;—but that his trade might be extended indefinitely by the use of a few thousand pounds at moderate interest. Old Mr Vavasor was furious. No documents and no assurances could make him lay aside a belief that the wine merchants, and the business, and his grandson were all ruined and ruinous together. No one but a ruined man would attempt to raise money on the family estate! So they had quarrelled, and had never spoken or seen each other since. 'He shall have the estate for his life,' the squire said to his son John. 'I don't think I have a right to leave it away from him. It never has been left away from the heir. But I'll tie it up so that he shan't cut a tree on it.' John Vavasor perhaps thought that the old rule of primogeniture* might under such circumstances have been judiciously abandoned—in this one instance, in his own favour. But he did not say so. Nor would he have said it had there been a chance of his doing so with success. He was a man from whom no very noble deed could be expected; but he was also one who would do no ignoble deed.

After that George Vavasor had become a stockbroker, and a stockbroker he was now. In the first twelve months after his leaving the wine business,—the same being the first year after his breach with Alice,—he had gone back greatly in the estimation of men. He had lived in open defiance of decency. He had spent much money and had apparently made none, and had been, as all his friends declared, on the high road to ruin. Aunt Macleod had taken her judgment from this period of his life when she had spoken of him as a man who never did anything. But he had come forth again suddenly as a working man; and now they who professed to know, declared that he was by no means poor. He was in the City every day; and during the last two years had earned the character of a shrewd fellow who knew what he was about, who might not

perhaps be very mealy-mouthed in affairs of business, but who was fairly and decently honourable in his money transactions. In fact, he stood well on 'Change.

And during these two years he had stood a contest for a seat in Parliament, having striven to represent the metropolitan borough of Chelsea* on the extremely Radical interest. It is true that he had failed, and that he had spent a considerable sum of money in the contest. 'Where on earth does your nephew get his money?' men said to John Vavasor at his club. 'Upon my word I don't know,' said Vavasor. 'He doesn't get it from me, and I'm sure he doesn't get it from my father.' But George Vavasor, though he failed at Chelsea, did not spend his money altogether fruitlessly. He gained reputation by the struggle, and men came to speak of him as though he were one who would do something. He was a stockbroker, a thoroughgoing Radical, and yet he was the heir to a fine estate, which had come down from father to son for four hundred years! There was something captivating about his history and adventures, especially as just at the time of the election he became engaged to an heiress, who died a month before the marriage should have taken place. She died without a will, and her money all went to some third cousins.

George Vavasor bore this last disappointment like a man, and it was at this time that he again became fully reconciled to his cousin. Previous to this they had met; and Alice, at her cousin Kate's instigation, had induced her father to meet him. But at first there had been no renewal of real friendship. Alice had given her cordial assent to her cousin's marriage with the heiress, Miss Grant, telling Kate that such an engagement was the very thing to put him thoroughly on his feet. And then she had been much pleased by his spirit at that Chelsea election. 'It was grand of him, wasn't it?' said Kate, her eyes brimming full of tears. 'It was very spirited,' said Alice. 'If you knew all, you would say so. They could get no one else to stand but that Mr Travers, and he wouldn't come forward, unless they would guarantee all his expenses.' 'I hope it didn't cost George much,' said Alice. 'It did, though; nearly all he had got. But what matters? Money's nothing to him, except for its uses. My own little mite* is my own now, and he shall have every farthing of it for the next election, even though I should go out as a housemaid the next day.' There must have been something great about George Vavasor, or he would not have been so idolized by such a girl as his sister Kate.

Early in the present spring, before the arrangements for the Swiss journey were made, George Vavasor had spoken to Alice about that intended marriage which had been broken off by the lady's death. He was

sitting one evening with his cousin in the drawing-room in Queen Anne Street, waiting for Kate, who was to join him there before going to some party. I wonder whether Kate had had a hint from her brother to be late! At any rate, the two were together for an hour, and the talk had been all about himself. He had congratulated her on her engagement with Mr Grey, which had just become known to him, and had then spoken of his own last intended marriage.

‘I grieved for her,’ he said, ‘greatly.’

‘I’m sure you did, George.’

‘Yes, I did;—for her, herself. Of course the world has given me credit for lamenting the loss of her money. But the truth is, that as regards both herself and her money, it is much better for me that we were never married.’

‘Do you mean even though she should have lived?’

‘Yes;—even had she lived.’

‘And why so? If you liked her, her money was surely no drawback.’

‘No; not if I had liked her.’

‘And did you not like her?’

‘No.’

‘Oh, George!’

‘I did not love her as a man should love his wife, if you mean that. As for my liking her, I did like her. I liked her very much.’

‘But you would have loved her?’

‘I don’t know. I don’t find that task of loving so very easy. It might have been that I should have learned to hate her.’

‘If so, it is better for you, and better for her, that she has gone.’

‘It is better. I am sure of it. And yet I grieve for her, and in thinking of her I almost feel as though I were guilty of her death.’

‘But she never suspected that you did not love her?’

‘Oh no. But she was not given to think much of such things. She took all that for granted. Poor girl! she is at rest now, and her money has gone, where it should go, among her own relatives.’

‘Yes; with such feelings as yours are about her, her money would have been a burden to you.’

‘I would not have taken it. I hope, at least, that I would not have taken it. Money is a sore temptation, especially to a poor man like me. It is well for me that the trial did not come in my way.’

‘But you are not such a very poor man now, are you, George? I thought your business was a good one.’

‘It is, and I have no right to be a poor man. But a man will be poor who does such mad things as I do. I had three or four thousand pounds

clear, and I spent every shilling of it on the Chelsea election. Goodness knows whether I shall have a shilling at all when another chance comes round; but if I have I shall certainly spend it, and if I have not, I shall go in debt wherever I can raise a hundred pounds.'

'I hope you will be successful at last.'

'I feel sure that I shall. But, in the mean time, I cannot but know that my career is perfectly reckless. No woman ought to join her lot to mine unless she has within her courage to be as reckless as I am. You know what men do when they toss up for shillings?'

'Yes, I suppose I do.'

'I am tossing up every day of my life for every shilling that I have.'

'Do you mean that you're—gambling?'

'No. I have given that up altogether. I used to gamble, but I never do that now, and never shall again. What I mean is this,—that I hold myself in readiness to risk everything at any moment, in order to gain any object that may serve my turn. I am always ready to lead a forlorn hope. That's what I mean by tossing up every day for every shilling that I have.'

Alice did not quite understand him, and perhaps he did not intend that she should. Perhaps his object was to mystify her imagination. She did not understand him, but I fear that she admired the kind of courage which he professed. And he had not only professed it: in that matter of the past election he had certainly practised it.

In talking of beauty to his sister he had spoken of himself as being ugly. He would not generally have been called ugly by women, had not one side of his face been dreadfully scarred by a cicatrice,* which in healing, had left a dark indented line down from his left eye to his lower jaw. That black ravine running through his cheek was certainly ugly. On some occasions, when he was angry or disappointed, it was very hideous; for he would so contort his face that the scar would, as it were, stretch itself out, revealing all its horrors, and his countenance would become all scar. 'He looked at me like the devil himself—making the hole in his face gape at me,' the old squire had said to John Vavasor in describing the interview in which the grandson had tried to bully his grandfather into assenting to his own views about the mortgage. But in other respects George's face was not ugly, and might have been thought handsome by many women. His hair was black, and was parted in the front. His forehead, though low, was broad. His eyes were dark and bright, and his eyebrows were very full, and perfectly black. At those periods of his anger, all his face which was not scar, was eye and eyebrow. He wore a thick black moustache, which covered his mouth, but