
New Grub Street
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PART 1

Chapter 1. A Man Of His Day

As the Milvains sat down to breakfast the clock of Wattleborough parish church struck eight; it was two miles away, but the strokes were borne very distinctly on the west wind this autumn morning. Jasper, listening before he cracked an egg, remarked with cheerfulness:
'There's a man being hanged in London at this moment.'
'Surely it isn't necessary to let us know that,' said his sister Maud, coldly.
'And in such a tone, too!' protested his sister Dora.
'Who is it?' inquired Mrs Milvain, looking at her son with pained forehead.
'I don't know. It happened to catch my eye in the paper yesterday that someone was to be hanged at Newgate this morning. There's a certain satisfaction in reflecting that it is not oneself.'
'That's your selfish way of looking at things,' said Maud.
'Well,' returned Jasper, 'seeing that the fact came into my head, what better use could I make of it? I could curse the brutality of an age that sanctioned such things; or I could grow doleful over the misery of the poor fellow. But those emotions would be as little profitable to others as to myself. It just happened that I saw the thing in a light of consolation. Things are bad with me, but not so bad as THAT. I might be going out between Jack Ketch and the Chaplain to be hanged; instead of that, I am eating a really fresh egg, and very excellent buttered toast, with coffee as good as can be reasonably expected in this part of the world.—(Do try boiling the milk, mother.)—The tone in which I spoke was spontaneous; being so, it needs no justification.'
He was a young man of five-and-twenty, well built, though a trifle meagre, and of pale complexion. He had hair that was very nearly black, and a clean-shaven face, best described, perhaps, as of bureaucratic type. The clothes he wore were of expensive material, but had seen a good deal of service. His stand-up collar curled over at the corners, and his necktie was lilac-sprigged.
Of the two sisters, Dora, aged twenty, was the more like him in visage, but she spoke with a gentleness which seemed to indicate a different character. Maud, who was twenty-two, had bold, handsome features, and very beautiful hair of russet tinge; hers was not a face that readily smiled. Their mother had the look and manners of an invalid, though she sat at table in the ordinary way. All were dressed as ladies, though very simply. The room, which looked upon a small patch of garden, was furnished with old-fashioned comfort, only one or two objects suggesting the decorative spirit of 1882.
'A man who comes to be hanged,' pursued Jasper, impartially, 'has the satisfaction of knowing that he has brought society to its last resource.

He is a man of such fatal importance that nothing will serve against him but the supreme effort of law. In a way, you know, that is success.'
'In a way,' repeated Maud, scornfully.
'Suppose we talk of something else,' suggested Dora, who seemed to fear a conflict between her sister and Jasper.
Almost at the same moment a diversion was afforded by the arrival of the post. There was a letter for Mrs Milvain, a letter and newspaper for her son. Whilst the girls and their mother talked of unimportant news communicated by the one correspondent, Jasper read the missive addressed to himself.
'This is from Reardon,' he remarked to the younger girl. 'Things are going badly with him. He is just the kind of fellow to end by poisoning or shooting himself.'
'But why?'
'Can't get anything done; and begins to be sore troubled on his wife's account.'
'Is he ill?'
'Overworked, I suppose. But it's just what I foresaw. He isn't the kind of man to keep up literary production as a paying business. In favourable circumstances he might write a fairly good book once every two or three years. The failure of his last depressed him, and now he is struggling hopelessly to get another done before the winter season. Those people will come to grief.'
'The enjoyment with which he anticipates it!' murmured Maud, looking at her mother.
'Not at all,' said Jasper. 'It's true I envied the fellow, because he persuaded a handsome girl to believe in him and share his risks, but I shall be very sorry if he goes to the—to the dogs. He's my one serious friend. But it irritates me to see a man making such large demands upon fortune. One must be more modest—as I am. Because one book had a sort of success he imagined his struggles were over. He got a hundred pounds for "On Neutral Ground," and at once counted on a continuance of payments in geometrical proportion. I hinted to him that he couldn't keep it up, and he smiled with tolerance, no doubt thinking "He judges me by himself." But I didn't do anything of the kind.—(Toast, please, Dora.)—I'm a stronger man than Reardon; I can keep my eyes open, and wait.'
'Is his wife the kind of person to grumble?' asked Mrs Milvain.
'Well, yes, I suspect that she is. The girl wasn't content to go into modest rooms—they must furnish a flat. I rather wonder he didn't start a carriage for her. Well, his next book brought only another hundred, and now, even if he finishes this one, it's very doubtful if he'll get as much. "The Optimist" was practically a failure.'
'Mr Yule may leave them some money,' said Dora.

‘Yes. But he may live another ten years, and he would see them both in Marylebone Workhouse before he advanced sixpence, or I’m much mistaken in him. Her mother has only just enough to live upon; can’t possibly help them. Her brother wouldn’t give or lend twopence halfpenny.’
‘Has Mr Reardon no relatives!’
‘I never heard him make mention of a single one. No, he has done the fatal thing. A man in his position, if he marry at all, must take either a work-girl or an heiress, and in many ways the work-girl is preferable.’
‘How can you say that?’ asked Dora. ‘You never cease talking about the advantages of money.’
‘Oh, I don’t mean that for ME the work-girl would be preferable; by no means; but for a man like Reardon. He is absurd enough to be conscientious, likes to be called an “artist,” and so on. He might possibly earn a hundred and fifty a year if his mind were at rest, and that would be enough if he had married a decent little dressmaker. He wouldn’t desire superfluities, and the quality of his work would be its own reward. As it is, he’s ruined.’
‘And I repeat,’ said Maud, ‘that you enjoy the prospect.’
‘Nothing of the kind. If I seem to speak exultantly it’s only because my intellect enjoys the clear perception of a fact.—A little marmalade, Dora; the home-made, please.’
‘But this is very sad, Jasper,’ said Mrs Milvain, in her half-absent way. ‘I suppose they can’t even go for a holiday?’
‘Quite out of the question.’
‘Not even if you invited them to come here for a week?’
‘Now, mother,’ urged Maud, ‘THAT’S impossible, you know very well.’
‘I thought we might make an effort, dear. A holiday might mean everything to him.’
‘No, no,’ fell from Jasper, thoughtfully. ‘I don’t think you’d get along very well with Mrs Reardon; and then, if her uncle is coming to Mr Yule’s, you know, that would be awkward.’
‘I suppose it would; though those people would only stay a day or two, Miss Harrow said.’
‘Why can’t Mr Yule make them friends, those two lots of people?’ asked Dora. ‘You say he’s on good terms with both.’
‘I suppose he thinks it’s no business of his.’
Jasper mused over the letter from his friend.
‘Ten years hence,’ he said, ‘if Reardon is still alive, I shall be lending him five-pound notes.’
A smile of irony rose to Maud’s lips. Dora laughed.
‘To be sure! To be sure!’ exclaimed their brother. ‘You have no faith. But just understand the difference between a man like Reardon and a man like me. He is the old type of unpractical artist; I am the literary man of 1882. He won’t make concessions, or rather, he can’t make them; he

can't supply the market. I—well, you may say that at present I do nothing; but that's a great mistake, I am learning my business. Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilful tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begins to go off slackly, he is ready with something new and appetising. He knows perfectly all the possible sources of income. Whatever he has to sell he'll get payment for it from all sorts of various quarters; none of your unpractical selling for a lump sum to a middleman who will make six distinct profits. Now, look you: if I had been in Reardon's place, I'd have made four hundred at least out of "The Optimist"; I should have gone shrewdly to work with magazines and newspapers and foreign publishers, and—all sorts of people. Reardon can't do that kind of thing, he's behind his age; he sells a manuscript as if he lived in Sam Johnson's Grub Street. But our Grub Street of to-day is quite a different place: it is supplied with telegraphic communication, it knows what literary fare is in demand in every part of the world, its inhabitants are men of business, however seedy.'

'It sounds ignoble,' said Maud.

'I have nothing to do with that, my dear girl. Now, as I tell you, I am slowly, but surely, learning the business. My line won't be novels; I have failed in that direction, I'm not cut out for the work. It's a pity, of course; there's a great deal of money in it. But I have plenty of scope. In ten years, I repeat, I shall be making my thousand a year.'

'I don't remember that you stated the exact sum before,' Maud observed.

'Let it pass. And to those who have shall be given. When I have a decent income of my own, I shall marry a woman with an income somewhat larger, so that casualties may be provided for.'

Dora exclaimed, laughing:

'It would amuse me very much if the Reardons got a lot of money at Mr Yule's death—and that can't be ten years off, I'm sure.'

'I don't see that there's any chance of their getting much,' replied Jasper, meditatively. 'Mrs Reardon is only his niece. The man's brother and sister will have the first helping, I suppose. And then, if it comes to the second generation, the literary Yule has a daughter, and by her being invited here I should think she's the favourite niece. No, no; depend upon it they won't get anything at all.'

Having finished his breakfast, he leaned back and began to unfold the London paper that had come by post.

'Had Mr Reardon any hopes of that kind at the time of his marriage, do you think?' inquired Mrs Milvain.

'Reardon? Good heavens, no! Would he were capable of such forethought!'

In a few minutes Jasper was left alone in the room. When the servant came to clear the table he strolled slowly away, humming a tune.

The house was pleasantly situated by the roadside in a little village named Finden. Opposite stood the church, a plain, low, square-towered building. As it was cattle-market to-day in the town of Wattleborough, droves of beasts and sheep occasionally went by, or the rattle of a grazier's cart sounded for a moment. On ordinary days the road saw few vehicles, and pedestrians were rare.

Mrs Milvain and her daughters had lived here for the last seven years, since the death of the father, who was a veterinary surgeon. The widow enjoyed an annuity of two hundred and forty pounds, terminable with her life; the children had nothing of their own. Maud acted irregularly as a teacher of music; Dora had an engagement as visiting governess in a Wattleborough family. Twice a year, as a rule, Jasper came down from London to spend a fortnight with them; to-day marked the middle of his autumn visit, and the strained relations between him and his sisters which invariably made the second week rather trying for all in the house had already become noticeable.

In the course of the morning Jasper had half an hour's private talk with his mother, after which he set off to roam in the sunshine. Shortly after he had left the house, Maud, her domestic duties dismissed for the time, came into the parlour where Mrs Milvain was reclining on the sofa.

'Jasper wants more money,' said the mother, when Maud had sat in meditation for a few minutes.

'Of course. I knew that. I hope you told him he couldn't have it.'

'I really didn't know what to say,' returned Mrs Milvain, in a feeble tone of worry.

'Then you must leave the matter to me, that's all. There's no money for him, and there's an end of it.'

Maud set her features in sullen determination. There was a brief silence.

'What's he to do, Maud?'

'To do? How do other people do? What do Dora and I do?'

'You don't earn enough for your support, my dear.'

'Oh, well!' broke from the girl. 'Of course, if you grudge us our food and lodging—'

'Don't be so quick-tempered. You know very well I am far from grudging you anything, dear. But I only meant to say that Jasper does earn something, you know.'

'It's a disgraceful thing that he doesn't earn as much as he needs. We are sacrificed to him, as we always have been. Why should we be pinching and stinting to keep him in idleness?'

'But you really can't call it idleness, Maud. He is studying his profession.'

'Pray call it trade; he prefers it. How do I know that he's studying anything? What does he mean by "studying"? And to hear him speak scornfully of his friend Mr Reardon, who seems to work hard all through the year! It's disgusting, mother. At this rate he will never earn his own living. Who hasn't seen or heard of such men? If we had another

hundred a year, I would say nothing. But we can't live on what he leaves us, and I'm not going to let you try. I shall tell Jasper plainly that he's got to work for his own support.'
Another silence, and a longer one. Mrs Milvain furtively wiped a tear from her cheek.
'It seems very cruel to refuse,' she said at length, 'when another year may give him the opportunity he's waiting for.'
'Opportunity? What does he mean by his opportunity?'
'He says that it always comes, if a man knows how to wait.'
'And the people who support him may starve meanwhile! Now just think a bit, mother. Suppose anything were to happen to you, what becomes of Dora and me? And what becomes of Jasper, too? It's the truest kindness to him to compel him to earn a living. He gets more and more incapable of it.'
'You can't say that, Maud. He earns a little more each year. But for that, I should have my doubts. He has made thirty pounds already this year, and he only made about twenty-five the whole of last. We must be fair to him, you know. I can't help feeling that he knows what he's about. And if he does succeed, he'll pay us all back.'
Maud began to gnaw her fingers, a disagreeable habit she had in privacy.
'Then why doesn't he live more economically?'
'I really don't see how he can live on less than a hundred and fifty a year. London, you know—'
'The cheapest place in the world.'
'Nonsense, Maud!'
'But I know what I'm saying. I've read quite enough about such things. He might live very well indeed on thirty shillings a week, even buying his clothes out of it.'
'But he has told us so often that it's no use to him to live like that. He is obliged to go to places where he must spend a little, or he makes no progress.'
'Well, all I can say is,' exclaimed the girl impatiently, 'it's very lucky for him that he's got a mother who willingly sacrifices her daughters to him.'
'That's how you always break out. You don't care what unkindness you say!'
'It's a simple truth.'
'Dora never speaks like that.'
'Because she's afraid to be honest.'
'No, because she has too much love for her mother. I can't bear to talk to you, Maud. The older I get, and the weaker I get, the more unfeeling you are to me.'
Scenes of this kind were no uncommon thing. The clash of tempers lasted for several minutes, then Maud flung out of the room. An hour

later, at dinner-time, she was rather more caustic in her remarks than usual, but this was the only sign that remained of the stormy mood. Jasper renewed the breakfast-table conversation.

'Look here,' he began, 'why don't you girls write something? I'm convinced you could make money if you tried. There's a tremendous sale for religious stories; why not patch one together? I am quite serious.'

'Why don't you do it yourself,' retorted Maud.

'I can't manage stories, as I have told you; but I think you could. In your place, I'd make a speciality of Sunday-school prize-books; you know the kind of thing I mean. They sell like hot cakes. And there's so deuced little enterprise in the business. If you'd give your mind to it, you might make hundreds a year.'

'Better say "abandon your mind to it."'

'Why, there you are! You're a sharp enough girl. You can quote as well as anyone I know.'

'And please, why am I to take up an inferior kind of work?'

'Inferior? Oh, if you can be a George Eliot, begin at the earliest opportunity. I merely suggested what seemed practicable. But I don't think you have genius, Maud. People have got that ancient prejudice so firmly rooted in their heads—that one mustn't write save at the dictation of the Holy Spirit. I tell you, writing is a business. Get together half-a-dozen fair specimens of the Sunday-school prize; study them; discover the essential points of such composition; hit upon new attractions; then go to work methodically, so many pages a day. There's no question of the divine afflatus; that belongs to another sphere of life. We talk of literature as a trade, not of Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare. If I could only get that into poor Reardon's head. He thinks me a gross beast, often enough. What the devil—I mean what on earth is there in typography to make everything it deals with sacred? I don't advocate the propagation of vicious literature; I speak only of good, coarse, marketable stuff for the world's vulgar. You just give it a thought, Maud; talk it over with Dora.'

He resumed presently:

'I maintain that we people of brains are justified in supplying the mob with the food it likes. We are not geniuses, and if we sit down in a spirit of long-eared gravity we shall produce only commonplace stuff. Let us use our wits to earn money, and make the best we can of our lives. If only I had the skill, I would produce novels out-trashing the trashiest that ever sold fifty thousand copies. But it needs skill, mind you: and to deny it is a gross error of the literary pedants. To please the vulgar you must, one way or another, incarnate the genius of vulgarity. For my own part, I shan't be able to address the bulkiest multitude; my talent doesn't lend itself to that form. I shall write for the upper middle-class of intellect, the people who like to feel that what they are reading has some special cleverness, but who can't distinguish between stones and

paste. That's why I'm so slow in warming to the work. Every month I feel surer of myself, however.
That last thing of mine in The West End distinctly hit the mark; it wasn't too flashy, it wasn't too solid. I heard fellows speak of it in the train.'
Mrs Milvain kept glancing at Maud, with eyes which desired her attention to these utterances. None the less, half an hour after dinner, Jasper found himself encountered by his sister in the garden, on her face a look which warned him of what was coming.
'I want you to tell me something, Jasper. How much longer shall you look to mother for support? I mean it literally; let me have an idea of how much longer it will be.'
He looked away and reflected.
'To leave a margin,' was his reply, 'let us say twelve months.'
'Better say your favourite "ten years" at once.'
'No. I speak by the card. In twelve months' time, if not before, I shall begin to pay my debts. My dear girl, I have the honour to be a tolerably long-headed individual. I know what I'm about.'
'And let us suppose mother were to die within half a year?'
'I should make shift to do very well.'
'You? And please—what of Dora and me?'
'You would write Sunday-school prizes.'
Maud turned away and left him.
He knocked the dust out of the pipe he had been smoking, and again set off for a stroll along the lanes. On his countenance was just a trace of solicitude, but for the most part he wore a thoughtful smile. Now and then he stroked his smoothly-shaven jaws with thumb and fingers. Occasionally he became observant of wayside details—of the colour of a maple leaf, the shape of a tall thistle, the consistency of a fungus. At the few people who passed he looked keenly, surveying them from head to foot.
On turning, at the limit of his walk, he found himself almost face to face with two persons, who were coming along in silent companionship; their appearance interested him. The one was a man of fifty, grizzled, hard featured, slightly bowed in the shoulders; he wore a grey felt hat with a broad brim and a decent suit of broadcloth. With him was a girl of perhaps two-and-twenty, in a slate-coloured dress with very little ornament, and a yellow straw hat of the shape originally appropriated to males; her dark hair was cut short, and lay in innumerable crisp curls. Father and daughter, obviously. The girl, to a casual eye, was neither pretty nor beautiful, but she had a grave and impressive face, with a complexion of ivory tone; her walk was gracefully modest, and she seemed to be enjoying the country air.
Jasper mused concerning them. When he had walked a few yards, he looked back; at the same moment the unknown man also turned his head.

‘Where the deuce have I seen them—him and the girl too?’ Milvain asked himself.
And before he reached home the recollection he sought flashed upon his mind.
‘The Museum Reading-room, of course!’

Chapter 2. The House Of Yule

‘I think’ said Jasper, as he entered the room where his mother and Maud were busy with plain needlework, ‘I must have met Alfred Yule and his daughter.’
‘How did you recognise them?’ Mrs Milvain inquired.
‘I passed an old buffer and a pale-faced girl whom I know by sight at the British Museum. It wasn’t near Yule’s house, but they were taking a walk.’
‘They may have come already. When Miss Harrow was here last, she said “in about a fortnight.”’
‘No mistaking them for people of these parts, even if I hadn’t remembered their faces. Both of them are obvious dwellers in the valley of the shadow of books.’
‘Is Miss Yule such a fright then?’ asked Maud.
‘A fright! Not at all. A good example of the modern literary girl. I suppose you have the oddest old-fashioned ideas of such people. No, I rather like the look of her. Simpatica, I should think, as that ass Whelpdale would say. A very delicate, pure complexion, though morbid; nice eyes; figure not spoilt yet. But of course I may be wrong about their identity.’
Later in the afternoon Jasper’s conjecture was rendered a certainty. Maud had walked to Wattleborough, where she would meet Dora on the latter’s return from her teaching, and Mrs Milvain sat alone, in a mood of depression; there was a ring at the door-bell, and the servant admitted Miss Harrow.
This lady acted as housekeeper to Mr John Yule, a wealthy resident in this neighbourhood; she was the sister of his deceased wife—a thin, soft-speaking, kindly woman of forty-five. The greater part of her life she had spent as a governess; her position now was more agreeable, and the removal of her anxiety about the future had developed qualities of cheerfulness which formerly no one would have suspected her to possess. The acquaintance between Mrs Milvain and her was only of twelve months’ standing; prior to that, Mr Yule had inhabited a house at the end of Wattleborough remote from Finden.
‘Our London visitors came yesterday,’ she began by saying.
Mrs Milvain mentioned her son’s encounter an hour or two ago.
‘No doubt it was they,’ said the visitor. ‘Mrs Yule hasn’t come; I hardly expected she would, you know. So very unfortunate when there are difficulties of that kind, isn’t it?’
She smiled confidentially.
‘The poor girl must feel it,’ said Mrs Milvain.
‘I’m afraid she does. Of course it narrows the circle of her friends at home. She’s a sweet girl, and I should so like you to meet her. Do come

and have tea with us to-morrow afternoon, will you? Or would it be too much for you just now?'
'Will you let the girls call? And then perhaps Miss Yule will be so good as to come and see me?'
'I wonder whether Mr Milvain would like to meet her father? I have thought that perhaps it might be some advantage to him. Alfred is so closely connected with literary people, you know.'
'I feel sure he would be glad,' replied Mrs Milvain. 'But—what of Jasper's friendship with Mrs Edmund Yule and the Reardons? Mightn't it be a little awkward?'
'Oh, I don't think so, unless he himself felt it so. There would be no need to mention that, I should say. And, really, it would be so much better if those estrangements came to an end. John makes no scruple of speaking freely about everyone, and I don't think Alfred regards Mrs Edmund with any serious unkindness. If Mr Milvain would walk over with the young ladies to-morrow, it would be very pleasant.'
'Then I think I may promise that he will. I'm sure I don't know where he is at this moment. We don't see very much of him, except at meals.'
'He won't be with you much longer, I suppose?'
'Perhaps a week.'
Before Miss Harrow's departure Maud and Dora reached home. They were curious to see the young lady from the valley of the shadow of books, and gladly accepted the invitation offered them.
They set out on the following afternoon in their brother's company. It was only a quarter of an hour's walk to Mr Yule's habitation, a small house in a large garden. Jasper was coming hither for the first time; his sisters now and then visited Miss Harrow, but very rarely saw Mr Yule himself who made no secret of the fact that he cared little for female society. In Wattleborough and the neighbourhood opinions varied greatly as to this gentleman's character, but women seldom spoke very favourably of him. Miss Harrow was reticent concerning her brother-in-law; no one, however, had any reason to believe that she found life under his roof disagreeable. That she lived with him at all was of course occasionally matter for comment, certain Wattleborough ladies having their doubts regarding the position of a deceased wife's sister under such circumstances; but no one was seriously exercised about the relations between this sober lady of forty-five and a man of sixty-three in broken health.
A word of the family history.
John, Alfred, and Edmund Yule were the sons of a Wattleborough stationer. Each was well educated, up to the age of seventeen, at the town's grammar school. The eldest, who was a hot-headed lad, but showed capacities for business, worked at first with his father, endeavouring to add a bookselling department to the trade in stationery; but the life of home was not much to his taste, and at one-

and-twenty he obtained a clerk's place in the office of a London newspaper. Three years after, his father died, and the small patrimony which fell to him he used in making himself practically acquainted with the details of paper manufacture, his aim being to establish himself in partnership with an acquaintance who had started a small paper-mill in Hertfordshire.

His speculation succeeded, and as years went on he became a thriving manufacturer. His brother Alfred, in the meantime, had drifted from work at a London bookseller's into the modern Grub Street, his adventures in which region will concern us hereafter.

Edmund carried on the Wattleborough business, but with small success. Between him and his eldest brother existed a good deal of affection, and in the end John offered him a share in his flourishing paper works; whereupon Edmund married, deeming himself well established for life. But John's temper was a difficult one; Edmund and he quarrelled, parted; and when the younger died, aged about forty, he left but moderate provision for his widow and two children.

Only when he had reached middle age did John marry; the experiment could not be called successful, and Mrs Yule died three years later, childless.

At fifty-four John Yule retired from active business; he came back to the scenes of his early life, and began to take an important part in the municipal affairs of Wattleborough. He was then a remarkably robust man, fond of out-of-door exercise; he made it one of his chief efforts to encourage the local Volunteer movement, the cricket and football clubs, public sports of every kind, showing no sympathy whatever with those persons who wished to establish free libraries, lectures, and the like. At his own expense he built for the Volunteers a handsome drill-shed; he founded a public gymnasium; and finally he allowed it to be rumoured that he was going to present the town with a park. But by presuming too far upon the bodily vigour which prompted these activities, he passed of a sudden into the state of a confirmed invalid. On an autumn expedition in the Hebrides he slept one night under the open sky, with the result that he had an all but fatal attack of rheumatic fever. After that, though the direction of his interests was unchanged, he could no longer set the example to Wattleborough youth of muscular manliness. The infliction did not improve his temper; for the next year or two he was constantly at warfare with one or other of his colleagues and friends, ill brooking that the familiar control of various local interests should fall out of his hands. But before long he appeared to resign himself to his fate, and at present Wattleborough saw little of him. It seemed likely that he might still found the park which was to bear his name; but perhaps it would only be done in consequence of directions in his will. It was believed that he could not live much longer.

With his kinsfolk he held very little communication. Alfred Yule, a battered man of letters, had visited Wattleborough only twice (including the present occasion) since John's return hither. Mrs Edmund Yule, with her daughter—now Mrs Reardon—had been only once, three years ago. These two families, as you have heard, were not on terms of amity with each other, owing to difficulties between Mrs Alfred and Mrs Edmund; but John seemed to regard both impartially. Perhaps the only real warmth of feeling he had ever known was bestowed upon Edmund, and Miss Harrow had remarked that he spoke with somewhat more interest of Edmund's daughter, Amy, than of Alfred's daughter, Marian. But it was doubtful whether the sudden disappearance from the earth of all his relatives would greatly have troubled him. He lived a life of curious self-absorption, reading newspapers (little else), and talking with old friends who had stuck to him in spite of his irascibility.

Miss Harrow received her visitors in a small and soberly furnished drawing-room. She was nervous, probably because of Jasper Milvain, whom she had met but once—last spring—and who on that occasion had struck her as an alarmingly modern young man. In the shadow of a window-curtain sat a slight, simply-dressed girl, whose short curly hair and thoughtful countenance Jasper again recognised. When it was his turn to be presented to Miss Yule, he saw that she doubted for an instant whether or not to give her hand; yet she decided to do so, and there was something very pleasant to him in its warm softness. She smiled with a slight embarrassment, meeting his look only for a second.

'I have seen you several times, Miss Yule,' he said in a friendly way, 'though without knowing your name. It was under the great dome.'

She laughed, readily understanding his phrase.

'I am there very often,' was her reply.

'What great dome?' asked Miss Harrow, with surprise.

'That of the British Museum Reading-room,' explained Jasper; 'known to some of us as the valley of the shadow of books. People who often work there necessarily get to know each other by sight.

In the same way I knew Miss Yule's father when I happened to pass him in the road yesterday.'

The three girls began to converse together, perforce of trivialities. Marian Yule spoke in rather slow tones, thoughtfully, gently; she had linked her fingers, and laid her hands, palms downwards, upon her lap—a nervous action. Her accent was pure, unpretentious; and she used none of the fashionable turns of speech which would have suggested the habit of intercourse with distinctly metropolitan society.

'You must wonder how we exist in this out-of-the-way place,' remarked Maud.

'Rather, I envy you,' Marian answered, with a slight emphasis.

The door opened, and Alfred Yule presented himself. He was tall, and his head seemed a disproportionate culmination to his meagre body, it was

so large and massively featured. Intellect and uncertainty of temper were equally marked upon his visage; his brows were knitted in a permanent expression of severity. He had thin, smooth hair, grizzled whiskers, a shaven chin. In the multitudinous wrinkles of his face lay a history of laborious and stormy life; one readily divined in him a struggling and embittered man. Though he looked older than his years, he had by no means the appearance of being beyond the ripeness of his mental vigour.

'It pleases me to meet you, Mr Milvain,' he said, as he stretched out his bony hand. 'Your name reminds me of a paper in The Wayside a month or two ago, which you will perhaps allow a veteran to say was not ill done.'

'I am grateful to you for noticing it,' replied Jasper.

There was positively a touch of visible warmth upon his cheek. The allusion had come so unexpectedly that it caused him keen pleasure. Mr Yule seated himself awkwardly, crossed his legs, and began to stroke the back of his left hand, which lay on his knee. He seemed to have nothing more to say at present, and allowed Miss Harrow and the girls to support conversation. Jasper listened with a smile for a minute or two, then he addressed the veteran.'Have you seen The Study this week, Mr Yule?'

'Yes.'

'Did you notice that it contains a very favourable review of a novel which was tremendously abused in the same columns three weeks ago?'

Mr Yule started, but Jasper could perceive at once that his emotion was not disagreeable.

'You don't say so.'

'Yes. The novel is Miss Hawk's "On the Boards." How will the editor get out of this?'

'H'm! Of course Mr Fadge is not immediately responsible; but it'll be unpleasant for him, decidedly unpleasant.' He smiled grimly. 'You hear this, Marian?'

'How is it explained, father?'

'May be accident, of course; but—well, there's no knowing. I think it very likely this will be the end of Mr Fadge's tenure of office. Rackett, the proprietor, only wants a plausible excuse for making a change. The paper has been going downhill for the last year; I know of two publishing houses who have withdrawn their advertising from it, and who never send their books for review. Everyone foresaw that kind of thing from the day Mr Fadge became editor. The tone of his paragraphs has been detestable. Two reviews of the same novel, eh? And diametrically opposed? Ha! Ha!'

Gradually he had passed from quiet appreciation of the joke to undisguised mirth and pleasure. His utterance of the name 'Mr Fadge'

sufficiently intimated that he had some cause of personal discontent with the editor of The Study.
'The author,' remarked Milvain, 'ought to make a good thing out of this.'
'Will, no doubt. Ought to write at once to the papers, calling attention to this sample of critical impartiality. Ha! ha!'
He rose and went to the window, where for several minutes he stood gazing at vacancy, the same grim smile still on his face. Jasper in the meantime amused the ladies (his sisters had heard him on the subject already) with a description of the two antagonistic notices. But he did not trust himself to express so freely as he had done at home his opinion of reviewing in general; it was more than probable that both Yule and his daughter did a good deal of such work.
'Suppose we go into the garden,' suggested Miss Harrow, presently. 'It seems a shame to sit indoors on such a lovely afternoon.'
Hitherto there had been no mention of the master of the house. But Mr Yule now remarked to Jasper:
'My brother would be glad if you would come and have a word with him. He isn't quite well enough to leave his room to-day.'
So, as the ladies went gardenwards, Jasper followed the man of letters upstairs to a room on the first floor. Here, in a deep cane chair, which was placed by the open window, sat John Yule. He was completely dressed, save that instead of coat he wore a dressing-gown. The facial likeness between him and his brother was very strong, but John's would universally have been judged the finer countenance; illness notwithstanding, he had a complexion which contrasted in its pure colour with Alfred's parchmenty skin, and there was more finish about his features. His abundant hair was reddish, his long moustache and trimmed beard a lighter shade of the same hue.
'So you too are in league with the doctors,' was his bluff greeting, as he held a hand to the young man and inspected him with a look of slighting good-nature.
'Well, that certainly is one way of regarding the literary profession,' admitted Jasper, who had heard enough of John's way of thinking to understand the remark.
'A young fellow with all the world before him, too. Hang it, Mr Milvain, is there no less pernicious work you can turn your hand to?'
'I'm afraid not, Mr Yule. After all, you know, you must be held in a measure responsible for my depravity.'
'How's that?'
'I understand that you have devoted most of your life to the making of paper. If that article were not so cheap and so abundant, people wouldn't have so much temptation to scribble.'
Alfred Yule uttered a short laugh.
'I think you are cornered, John.'

‘I wish,’ answered John, ‘that you were both condemned to write on such paper as I chiefly made; it was a special kind of whitey-brown, used by shopkeepers.’
He chuckled inwardly, and at the same time reached out for a box of cigarettes on a table near him. His brother and Jasper each took one as he offered them, and began to smoke.
‘You would like to see literary production come entirely to an end?’ said Milvain.
‘I should like to see the business of literature abolished.’
‘There’s a distinction, of course. But, on the whole, I should say that even the business serves a good purpose.’
‘What purpose?’
‘It helps to spread civilisation.’
‘Civilisation!’ exclaimed John, scornfully. ‘What do you mean by civilisation? Do you call it civilising men to make them weak, flabby creatures, with ruined eyes and dyspeptic stomachs? Who is it that reads most of the stuff that’s poured out daily by the ton from the printing-press? Just the men and women who ought to spend their leisure hours in open-air exercise; the people who earn their bread by sedentary pursuits, and who need to live as soon as they are free from the desk or the counter, not to moon over small print. Your Board schools, your popular press, your spread of education! Machinery for ruining the country, that’s what I call it.’
‘You have done a good deal, I think, to counteract those influences in Wattleborough.’
‘I hope so; and if only I had kept the use of my limbs I’d have done a good deal more. I have an idea of offering substantial prizes to men and women engaged in sedentary work who take an oath to abstain from all reading, and keep it for a certain number of years. There’s a good deal more need for that than for abstinence from strong liquor. If I could have had my way I would have revived prize-fighting.’
His brother laughed with contemptuous impatience.
‘You would doubtless like to see military conscription introduced into England?’ said Jasper.
‘Of course I should! You talk of civilising; there’s no such way of civilising the masses of the people as by fixed military service. Before mental training must come training of the body. Go about the Continent, and see the effect of military service on loutish peasants and the lowest classes of town population. Do you know why it isn’t even more successful? Because the damnable education movement interferes. If Germany would shut up her schools and universities for the next quarter of a century and go ahead like blazes with military training there’d be a nation such as the world has never seen. After that, they might begin a little book-teaching again—say an hour and a half a day for everyone above nine years old. Do you suppose, Mr Milvain, that

society is going to be reformed by you people who write for money? Why, you are the very first class that will be swept from the face of the earth as soon as the reformation really begins!'
Alfred puffed at his cigarette. His thoughts were occupied with Mr Fadge and The Study. He was considering whether he could aid in bringing public contempt upon that literary organ and its editor. Milvain listened to the elder man's diatribe with much amusement.
'You, now,' pursued John, 'what do you write about?'
'Nothing in particular. I make a salable page or two out of whatever strikes my fancy.'
'Exactly! You don't even pretend that you've got anything to say. You live by inducing people to give themselves mental indigestion—and bodily, too, for that matter.'
'Do you know, Mr Yule, that you have suggested a capital idea to me? If I were to take up your views, I think it isn't at all unlikely that I might make a good thing of writing against writing. It should be my literary specialty to rail against literature. The reading public should pay me for telling them that they oughtn't to read. I must think it over.'
'Carlyle has anticipated you,' threw in Alfred.
'Yes, but in an antiquated way. I would base my polemic on the newest philosophy.'
He developed the idea facetiously, whilst John regarded him as he might have watched a performing monkey.
'There again! your new philosophy!' exclaimed the invalid. 'Why, it isn't even wholesome stuff, the kind of reading that most of you force on the public. Now there's the man who has married one of my nieces—poor lass! Reardon, his name is. You know him, I dare say. Just for curiosity I had a look at one of his books; it was called "The Optimist." Of all the morbid trash I ever saw, that beat everything. I thought of writing him a letter, advising a couple of anti-bilious pills before bedtime for a few weeks.'
Jasper glanced at Alfred Yule, who wore a look of indifference.
'That man deserves penal servitude in my opinion,' pursued John. 'I'm not sure that it isn't my duty to offer him a couple of hundred a year on condition that he writes no more.'
Milvain, with a clear vision of his friend in London, burst into laughter. But at that point Alfred rose from his chair.
'Shall we rejoin the ladies?' he said, with a certain pedantry of phrase and manner which often characterised him.
'Think over your ways whilst you're still young,' said John as he shook hands with his visitor.
'Your brother speaks quite seriously, I suppose?' Jasper remarked when he was in the garden with Alfred.
'I think so. It's amusing now and then, but gets rather tiresome when you hear it often. By-the-bye, you are not personally acquainted with Mr

Fadge?'
'I didn't even know his name until you mentioned it.'
'The most malicious man in the literary world. There's no uncharitableness in feeling a certain pleasure when he gets into a scrape. I could tell you incredible stories about him; but that kind of thing is probably as little to your taste as it is to mine.'
Miss Harrow and her companions, having caught sight of the pair, came towards them. Tea was to be brought out into the garden.
'So you can sit with us and smoke, if you like,' said Miss Harrow to Alfred. 'You are never quite at your ease, I think, without a pipe.'
But the man of letters was too preoccupied for society. In a few minutes he begged that the ladies would excuse his withdrawing; he had two or three letters to write before post-time, which was early at Finden.
Jasper, relieved by the veteran's departure, began at once to make himself very agreeable company. When he chose to lay aside the topic of his own difficulties and ambitions, he could converse with a spontaneous gaiety which readily won the good-will of listeners. Naturally he addressed himself very often to Marian Yule, whose attention complimented him. She said little, and evidently was at no time a free talker, but the smile on her face indicated a mood of quiet enjoyment. When her eyes wandered, it was to rest on the beauties of the garden, the moving patches of golden sunshine, the forms of gleaming cloud. Jasper liked to observe her as she turned her head: there seemed to him a particular grace in the movement; her head and neck were admirably formed, and the short hair drew attention to this.
It was agreed that Miss Harrow and Marian should come on the second day after to have tea with the Milvains. And when Jasper took leave of Alfred Yule, the latter expressed a wish that they might have a walk together one of these mornings.

Chapter 3. Holiday

Jasper's favourite walk led him to a spot distant perhaps a mile and a half from home. From a tract of common he turned into a short lane which crossed the Great Western railway, and thence by a stile into certain meadows forming a compact little valley. One recommendation of this retreat was that it lay sheltered from all winds; to Jasper a wind was objectionable. Along the bottom ran a clear, shallow stream, overhung with elder and hawthorn bushes; and close by the wooden bridge which spanned it was a great ash tree, making shadow for cows and sheep when the sun lay hot upon the open field. It was rare for anyone to come along this path, save farm labourers morning and evening.

But to-day—the afternoon that followed his visit to John Yule's house—he saw from a distance that his lounging-place on the wooden bridge was occupied. Someone else had discovered the pleasure there was in watching the sun-flecked sparkle of the water as it flowed over the clean sand and stones. A girl in a yellow-straw hat; yes, and precisely the person he had hoped, at the first glance, that it might be. He made no haste as he drew nearer on the descending path. At length his footstep was heard; Marian Yule turned her head and clearly recognised him. She assumed an upright position, letting one of her hands rest upon the rail. After the exchange of ordinary greetings, Jasper leaned back against the same support and showed himself disposed for talk.

'When I was here late in the spring,' he said, 'this ash was only just budding, though everything else seemed in full leaf.'

'An ash, is it?' murmured Marian. 'I didn't know. I think an oak is the only tree I can distinguish. Yet,' she added quickly, 'I knew that the ash was late; some lines of Tennyson come to my memory.'

'Which are those?'

'Delaying, as the tender ash delays

To clothe herself when all the woods are green,

somewhere in the "Idylls."'

'I don't remember; so I won't pretend to—though I should do so as a rule.'

She looked at him oddly, and seemed about to laugh, yet did not.

'You have had little experience of the country?' Jasper continued.

'Very little. You, I think, have known it from childhood?'

'In a sort of way. I was born in Wattleborough, and my people have always lived here. But I am not very rural in temperament. I have really no friends here; either they have lost interest in me, or I in them. What do you think of the girls, my sisters?'

The question, though put with perfect simplicity, was embarrassing.
'They are tolerably intellectual,' Jasper went on, when he saw that it would be difficult for her to answer. 'I want to persuade them to try their hands at literary work of some kind or other. They give lessons, and both hate it.'
'Would literary work be less—burdensome?' said Marian, without looking at him.
'Rather more so, you think?'
She hesitated.
'It depends, of course, on—on several things.'
'To be sure,' Jasper agreed. 'I don't think they have any marked faculty for such work; but as they certainly haven't for teaching, that doesn't matter. It's a question of learning a business. I am going through my apprenticeship, and find it a long affair. Money would shorten it, and, unfortunately, I have none.'
'Yes,' said Marian, turning her eyes upon the stream, 'money is a help in everything.'
'Without it, one spends the best part of one's life in toiling for that first foothold which money could at once purchase. To have money is becoming of more and more importance in a literary career; principally because to have money is to have friends. Year by year, such influence grows of more account. A lucky man will still occasionally succeed by dint of his own honest perseverance, but the chances are dead against anyone who can't make private interest with influential people; his work is simply overwhelmed by that of the men who have better opportunities.'
'Don't you think that, even to-day, really good work will sooner or later be recognised?'
'Later, rather than sooner; and very likely the man can't wait; he starves in the meantime. You understand that I am not speaking of genius; I mean marketable literary work. The quantity turned out is so great that there's no hope for the special attention of the public unless one can afford to advertise hugely. Take the instance of a successful all-round man of letters; take Ralph Warbury, whose name you'll see in the first magazine you happen to open. But perhaps he is a friend of yours?'
'Oh no!'
'Well, I wasn't going to abuse him. I was only going to ask: Is there any quality which distinguishes his work from that of twenty struggling writers one could name? Of course not. He's a clever, prolific man; so are they. But he began with money and friends; he came from Oxford into the thick of advertised people; his name was mentioned in print six times a week before he had written a dozen articles. This kind of thing will become the rule. Men won't succeed in literature that they may get into society, but will get into society that they may succeed in literature.'

‘Yes, I know it is true,’ said Marian, in a low voice.
‘There’s a friend of mine who writes novels,’ Jasper pursued. ‘His books are not works of genius, but they are glaringly distinct from the ordinary circulating novel. Well, after one or two attempts, he made half a success; that is to say, the publishers brought out a second edition of the book in a few months. There was his opportunity. But he couldn’t use it; he had no friends, because he had no money. A book of half that merit, if written by a man in the position of Warbury when he started, would have established the reputation of a lifetime. His influential friends would have referred to it in leaders, in magazine articles, in speeches, in sermons. It would have run through numerous editions, and the author would have had nothing to do but to write another book and demand his price. But the novel I’m speaking of was practically forgotten a year after its appearance; it was whelmed beneath the flood of next season’s literature.’
Marian urged a hesitating objection.
‘But, under the circumstances, wasn’t it in the author’s power to make friends? Was money really indispensable?’
‘Why, yes—because he chose to marry. As a bachelor he might possibly have got into the right circles, though his character would in any case have made it difficult for him to curry favour.
But as a married man, without means, the situation was hopeless. Once married you must live up to the standard of the society you frequent; you can’t be entertained without entertaining in return. Now if his wife had brought him only a couple of thousand pounds all might have been well. I should have advised him, in sober seriousness, to live for two years at the rate of a thousand a year. At the end of that time he would have been earning enough to continue at pretty much the same rate of expenditure.’
‘Perhaps.’
‘Well, I ought rather to say that the average man of letters would be able to do that. As for Reardon—’
He stopped. The name had escaped him unawares.
‘Reardon?’ said Marian, looking up. ‘You are speaking of him?’
‘I have betrayed myself Miss Yule.’
‘But what does it matter? You have only spoken in his favour.’
‘I feared the name might affect you disagreeably.’
Marian delayed her reply.
‘It is true,’ she said, ‘we are not on friendly terms with my cousin’s family. I have never met Mr Reardon. But I shouldn’t like you to think that the mention of his name is disagreeable to me.’
‘It made me slightly uncomfortable yesterday—the fact that I am well acquainted with Mrs Edmund Yule, and that Reardon is my friend. Yet I didn’t see why that should prevent my making your father’s acquaintance.’

‘Surely not. I shall say nothing about it; I mean, as you uttered the name unintentionally.’
There was a pause in the dialogue. They had been speaking almost confidentially, and Marian seemed to become suddenly aware of an oddness in the situation. She turned towards the uphill path, as if thinking of resuming her walk.
‘You are tired of standing still,’ said Jasper. ‘May I walk back a part of the way with you?’
‘Thank you; I shall be glad.’
They went on for a few minutes in silence.
‘Have you published anything with your signature, Miss Yule?’ Jasper at length inquired.
‘Nothing. I only help father a little.’
The silence that again followed was broken this time by Marian.
‘When you chanced to mention Mr Reardon’s name,’ she said, with a diffident smile in which lay that suggestion of humour so delightful upon a woman’s face, ‘you were going to say something more about him?’
‘Only that—’ he broke off and laughed. ‘Now, how boyish it was, wasn’t it? I remember doing just the same thing once when I came home from school and had an exciting story to tell, with preservation of anonymities. Of course I blurted out a name in the first minute or two, to my father’s great amusement. He told me that I hadn’t the diplomatic character. I have been trying to acquire it ever since.
‘But why?’
‘It’s one of the essentials of success in any kind of public life. And I mean to succeed, you know. I feel that I am one of the men who do succeed. But I beg your pardon; you asked me a question. Really, I was only going to say of Reardon what I had said before: that he hasn’t the tact requisite for acquiring popularity.’
‘Then I may hope that it isn’t his marriage with my cousin which has proved a fatal misfortune?’
‘In no case,’ replied Milvain, averting his look, ‘would he have used his advantages.’
‘And now? Do you think he has but poor prospects?’
‘I wish I could see any chance of his being estimated at his right value. It’s very hard to say what is before him.’
‘I knew my cousin Amy when we were children,’ said Marian, presently. ‘She gave promise of beauty.’
‘Yes, she is beautiful.’
‘And—the kind of woman to be of help to such a husband?’
‘I hardly know how to answer, Miss Yule,’ said Jasper, looking frankly at her. ‘Perhaps I had better say that it’s unfortunate they are poor.’
Marian cast down her eyes.

‘To whom isn’t it a misfortune?’ pursued her companion. ‘Poverty is the root of all social ills; its existence accounts even for the ills that arise from wealth. The poor man is a man labouring in fetters. I declare there is no word in our language which sounds so hideous to me as “Poverty.”’
Shortly after this they came to the bridge over the railway line. Jasper looked at his watch.
‘Will you indulge me in a piece of childishness?’ he said. ‘In less than five minutes a London express goes by; I have often watched it here, and it amuses me. Would it weary you to wait?’
‘I should like to,’ she replied with a laugh.
The line ran along a deep cutting, from either side of which grew hazel bushes and a few larger trees. Leaning upon the parapet of the bridge, Jasper kept his eye in the westward direction, where the gleaming rails were visible for more than a mile. Suddenly he raised his finger.
‘You hear?’
Marian had just caught the far-off sound of the train. She looked eagerly, and in a few moments saw it approaching. The front of the engine blackened nearer and nearer, coming on with dread force and speed. A blinding rush, and there burst against the bridge a great volley of sunlit steam. Milvain and his companion ran to the opposite parapet, but already the whole train had emerged, and in a few seconds it had disappeared round a sharp curve. The leafy branches that grew out over the line swayed violently backwards and forwards in the perturbed air.
‘If I were ten years younger,’ said Jasper, laughing, ‘I should say that was jolly! It enspirits me. It makes me feel eager to go back and plunge into the fight again.’
‘Upon me it has just the opposite effect,’ fell from Marian, in very low tones.
‘Oh, don’t say that! Well, it only means that you haven’t had enough holiday yet. I have been in the country more than a week; a few days more and I must be off. How long do you think of staying?’
‘Not much more than a week, I think.’
‘By-the-bye, you are coming to have tea with us to-morrow,’ Jasper remarked a propos of nothing. Then he returned to another subject that was in his thoughts.
‘It was by a train like that that I first went up to London. Not really the first time; I mean when I went to live there, seven years ago. What spirits I was in! A boy of eighteen going to live independently in London; think of it!’
‘You went straight from school?’
‘I was for two years at Redmayne College after leaving Wattleborough Grammar School. Then my father died, and I spent nearly half a year at home. I was meant to be a teacher, but the prospect of entering a school by no means appealed to me. A friend of mine was studying in London

for some Civil Service exam., so I declared that I would go and do the same thing.'
'Did you succeed?'
'Not I! I never worked properly for that kind of thing. I read voraciously, and got to know London. I might have gone to the dogs, you know; but by when I had been in London a year a pretty clear purpose began to form in me. Strange to think that you were growing up there all the time. I may have passed you in the street now and then.'
Marian laughed.
'And I did at length see you at the British Museum, you know.'
They turned a corner of the road, and came full upon Marian's father, who was walking in this direction with eyes fixed upon the ground.
'So here you are!' he exclaimed, looking at the girl, and for the moment paying no attention to Jasper. 'I wondered whether I should meet you.' Then, more dryly, 'How do you do, Mr Milvain?'
In a tone of easy indifference Jasper explained how he came to be accompanying Miss Yule.
'Shall I walk on with you, father?' Marian asked, scrutinising his rugged features.
'Just as you please; I don't know that I should have gone much further. But we might take another way back.'
Jasper readily adapted himself to the wish he discerned in Mr Yule; at once he offered leave-taking in the most natural way. Nothing was said on either side about another meeting.
The young man proceeded homewards, but, on arriving, did not at once enter the house. Behind the garden was a field used for the grazing of horses; he entered it by the unfastened gate, and strolled idly hither and thither, now and then standing to observe a poor worn-out beast, all skin and bone, which had presumably been sent here in the hope that a little more labour might still be exacted from it if it were suffered to repose for a few weeks. There were sores upon its back and legs; it stood in a fixed attitude of despondency, just flicking away troublesome flies with its grizzled tail.
It was tea-time when he went in. Maud was not at home, and Mrs Milvain, tormented by a familiar headache, kept her room; so Jasper and Dora sat down together. Each had an open book on the table; throughout the meal they exchanged only a few words.
'Going to play a little?' Jasper suggested when they had gone into the sitting-room.
'If you like.'
She sat down at the piano, whilst her brother lay on the sofa, his hands clasped beneath his head. Dora did not play badly, but an absentmindedness which was commonly observable in her had its effect upon the music. She at length broke off idly in the middle of a passage,

and began to linger on careless chords. Then, without turning her head, she asked:
'Were you serious in what you said about writing storybooks?'
'Quite. I see no reason why you shouldn't do something in that way. But I tell you what; when I get back, I'll inquire into the state of the market. I know a man who was once engaged at Jolly & Monk's—the chief publishers of that kind of thing, you know; I must look him up—what a mistake it is to neglect any acquaintance!—and get some information out of him. But it's obvious what an immense field there is for anyone who can just hit the taste of the new generation of Board school children. Mustn't be too goody-goody; that kind of thing is falling out of date. But you'd have to cultivate a particular kind of vulgarity.
There's an idea, by-the-bye. I'll write a paper on the characteristics of that new generation; it may bring me a few guineas, and it would be a help to you.'
'But what do you know about the subject?' asked Dora doubtfully.
'What a comical question! It is my business to know something about every subject—or to know where to get the knowledge.'
'Well,' said Dora, after a pause, 'there's no doubt Maud and I ought to think very seriously about the future. You are aware, Jasper, that mother has not been able to save a penny of her income.'
'I don't see how she could have done. Of course I know what you're thinking; but for me, it would have been possible. I don't mind confessing to you that the thought troubles me a little now and then; I shouldn't like to see you two going off governessing in strangers' houses. All I can say is, that I am very honestly working for the end which I am convinced will be most profitable.
I shall not desert you; you needn't fear that. But just put your heads together, and cultivate your writing faculty. Suppose you could both together earn about a hundred a year in Grub Street, it would be better than governessing; wouldn't it?'
'You say you don't know what Miss Yule writes?'
'Well, I know a little more about her than I did yesterday. I've had an hour's talk with her this afternoon.'
'Indeed?'
'Met her down in the Leggatt fields. I find she doesn't write independently; just helps her father. What the help amounts to I can't say. There's something very attractive about her. She quoted a line or two of Tennyson; the first time I ever heard a woman speak blank verse with any kind of decency.'
'She was walking alone?'
'Yes. On the way back we met old Yule; he seemed rather grumpy, I thought. I don't think she's the kind of girl to make a paying business of literature. Her qualities are personal. And it's pretty clear to me that the

valley of the shadow of books by no means agrees with her disposition. Possibly old Yule is something of a tyrant.'
'He doesn't impress me very favourably. Do you think you will keep up their acquaintance in London?'
'Can't say. I wonder what sort of a woman that mother really is? Can't be so very gross, I should think.'
'Miss Harrow knows nothing about her, except that she was a quite uneducated girl.'
'But, dash it! by this time she must have got decent manners. Of course there may be other objections. Mrs Reardon knows nothing against her.'
Midway in the following morning, as Jasper sat with a book in the garden, he was surprised to see Alfred Yule enter by the gate.
'I thought,' began the visitor, who seemed in high spirits, 'that you might like to see something I received this morning.'
He unfolded a London evening paper, and indicated a long letter from a casual correspondent. It was written by the authoress of 'On the Boards,' and drew attention, with much expenditure of witticism, to the conflicting notices of that book which had appeared in The Study. Jasper read the thing with laughing appreciation.
'Just what one expected!'
'And I have private letters on the subject,' added Mr Yule.
'There has been something like a personal conflict between Fadge and the man who looks after the minor notices. Fadge, more so, charged the other man with a design to damage him and the paper. There's talk of legal proceedings. An immense joke!'
He laughed in his peculiar croaking way.
'Do you feel disposed for a turn along the lanes, Mr Milvain?'
'By all means.—There's my mother at the window; will you come in for a moment?'
With a step of quite unusual sprightliness Mr Yule entered the house. He could talk of but one subject, and Mrs Milvain had to listen to a laboured account of the blunder just committed by The Study. It was Alfred's Yule's characteristic that he could do nothing lighthandedly. He seemed always to converse with effort; he took a seat with stiff ungainliness; he walked with a stumbling or sprawling gait.
When he and Jasper set out for their ramble, his loquacity was in strong contrast with the taciturn mood he had exhibited yesterday and the day before. He fell upon the general aspects of contemporary literature.
'... The evil of the time is the multiplication of ephemerides. Hence a demand for essays, descriptive articles, fragments of criticism, out of all proportion to the supply of even tolerable work. The men who have an aptitude for turning out this kind of thing in vast quantities are enlisted by every new periodical, with the result that their productions are ultimately watered down into worthlessness.... Well now, there's Fadge. Years ago some of Fadge's work was not without a certain—a certain