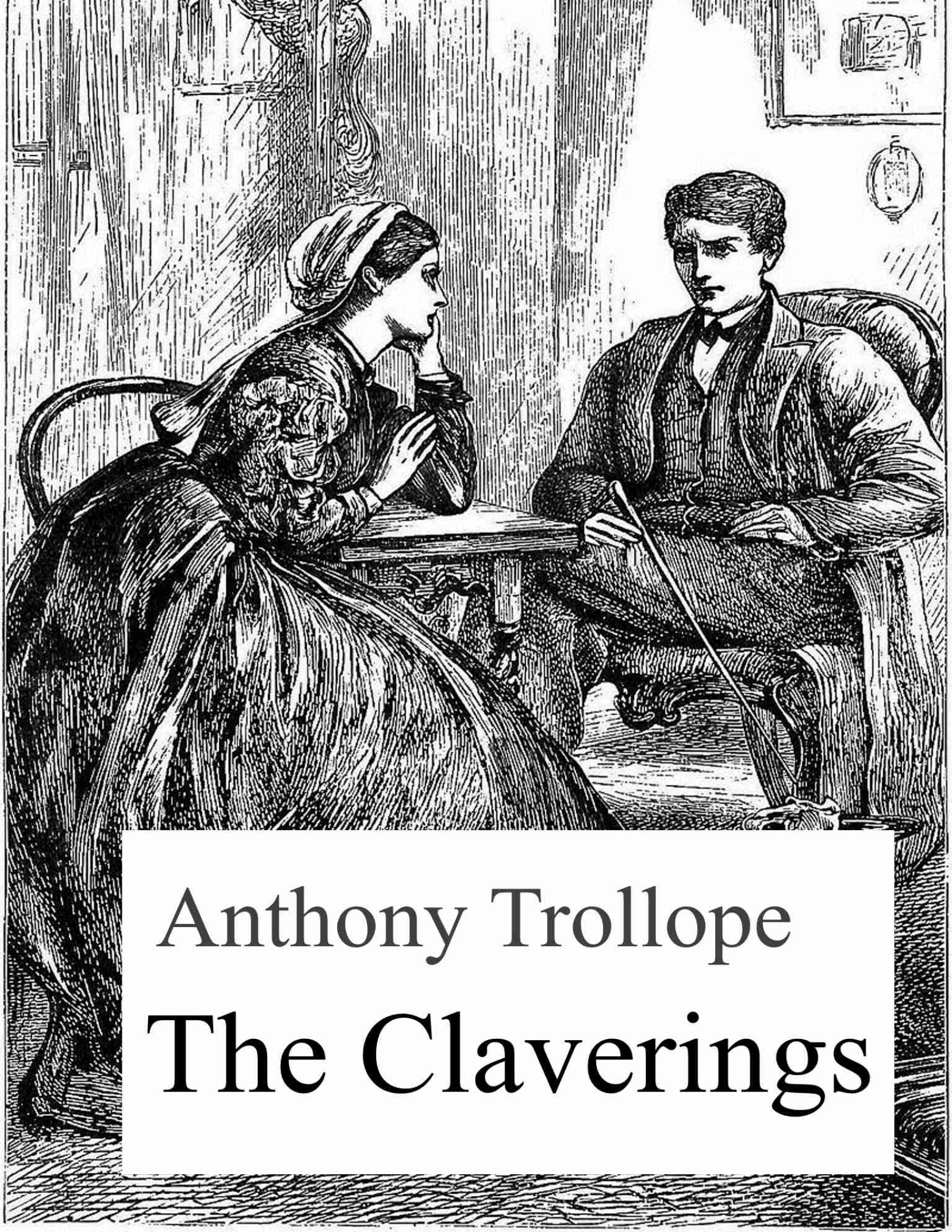

Anthony Trollope

The Claverings

The Claverings

The Claverings

JULIA BRABAZON

The gardens of Clavering Park were removed some three hundred yards from the large, square, sombre-looking stone mansion which was the country-house of Sir Hugh Clavering, the eleventh baronet of that name; and in these gardens, which had but little of beauty to recommend them, I will introduce my readers to two of the personages with whom I wish to make them acquainted in the following story. It was now the end of August, and the parterres, beds, and bits of lawn were dry, disfigured, and almost ugly, from the effects of a long drought. In gardens to which care and labour are given abundantly, flower-beds will be pretty, and grass will be green, let the weather be what it may; but care and labour were but scantily bestowed on the Clavering Gardens, and everything was yellow, adust, harsh, and dry. Over the burnt turf towards a gate that led to the house, a lady was walking, and by her side there walked a gentleman.

"You are going in, then, Miss Brabazon," said the gentleman, and it was very manifest from his tone that he intended to convey some deep reproach in his words.

"Of course I am going in," said the lady. "You asked me to walk with you, and I refused. You have now waylaid me, and therefore I shall escape,—unless I am prevented by violence." As she spoke she stood still for a moment, and looked into his face with a smile which seemed to indicate that if such violence were used, within rational bounds, she would not feel herself driven to great anger.

But though she might be inclined to be playful, he was by no means in that mood. "And why did you refuse me when I asked you?" said he.

"For two reasons, partly because I thought it better to avoid any conversation with you."

"That is civil to an old friend."

"But chiefly,"—and now as she spoke she drew herself up, and dismissed the smile from her face, and allowed her eyes to fall upon the ground; —"but chiefly because I thought that Lord Ongar would prefer that I should not roam alone about Clavering Park with any young gentleman while I am down here; and that he might specially object to my roaming with you, were he to know that you and I were—old acquaintances. Now I have been very frank, Mr. Clavering, and I think that that ought to be enough."

"You are afraid of him already, then?"

"I am afraid of offending any one whom I love, and especially any one to whom I owe any duty."

"Enough! Indeed it is not. From what you know of me do you think it likely that that will be enough?" He was now standing in front of her, between her and the gate, and she made no effort to leave him.

"And what is it you want? I suppose you do not mean to fight Lord Ongar, and that if you did you would not come to me."

"Fight him! No; I have no quarrel with him. Fighting him would do no good."

"None in the least; and he would not fight if you were to ask him; and you could not ask him without being false to me."

"I should have had an example for that, at any rate."

"That's nonsense, Mr. Clavering. My falsehood, if you should choose to call me false, is of a very different nature, and is pardonable by all laws known to the world."

"You are a jilt,—that is all."

"Come, Harry, don't use hard words,"—and she put her hand kindly upon his arm. "Look at me, such as I am, and at yourself, and then say whether anything but misery could come of a match between you and me. Our ages by the register are the same, but I am ten years older than you by the world. I have two hundred a year, and I owe at this moment six hundred pounds. You have, perhaps, double as much, and would lose half of that if you married. You are an usher at a school."

"No, madam, I am not an usher at a school."

"Well, well, you know I don't mean to make you angry."

"At the present moment, I am a schoolmaster, and if I remained so, I might fairly look forward to a liberal income. But I am going to give that up."

"You will not be more fit for matrimony because you are going to give up your profession. Now Lord Ongar has—heaven knows what;—perhaps sixty thousand a year."

"In all my life I never heard such effrontery,—such barefaced, shameless worldliness!"

"Why should I not love a man with a large income?"

"He is old enough to be your father."

"He is thirty-six, and I am twenty-four."

"Thirty-six!"

"There is the Peerage for you to look at. But, my dear Harry, do you not know that you are perplexing me and yourself too, for nothing? I was fool enough when I came here from Nice, after papa's death, to let you talk nonsense to me for a month or two."

"Did you or did you not swear that you loved me?"

"Oh, Mr. Clavering, I did not imagine that your strength would have condescended to take such advantage over the weakness of a woman. I remember no oaths of any kind, and what foolish assertions I may have made, I am not going to repeat. It must have become manifest to you during these two years that all that was a romance. If it be a pleasure to you to look back to it, of that pleasure I cannot deprive you. Perhaps I also may sometimes look back. But I shall never speak of that time again; and you, if you are as noble as I take you to be, will not speak of it either. I know you would not wish to injure me."

"I would wish to save you from the misery you are bringing on yourself."

"In that you must allow me to look after myself. Lord Ongar certainly wants a wife, and I intend to be true to him,—and useful."

"How about love?"

"And to love him, sir. Do you think that no man can win a woman's love, unless he is filled to the brim with poetry, and has a neck like Lord Byron, and is handsome like your worship? You are very handsome, Harry, and you, too, should go into the market and make the best of yourself. Why should you not learn to love some nice girl that has money to assist you?"

"Julia!"

"No, sir; I will not be called Julia. If you do, I will be insulted, and leave you instantly. I may call you Harry, as being so much younger,—though we were born in the same month,—and as a sort of cousin. But I shall never do that after to-day."

"You have courage enough, then, to tell me that you have not ill-used me?"

"Certainly I have. Why, what a fool you would have me be! Look at me, and tell me whether I am fit to be the wife of such a one as you. By the time you are entering the world, I shall be an old woman, and shall have lived my life. Even if I were fit to be your mate when we were living here together, am I fit, after what I have done and seen during the last two years? Do you think it would really do any good to any one if I were to jilt, as you call it, Lord Ongar, and tell them all,—your cousin, Sir Hugh, and my sister, and your father,—that I was going to keep myself up, and marry you when you were ready for me?"

"You mean to say that the evil is done."

"No, indeed. At the present moment I owe six hundred pounds, and I don't know where to turn for it, so that my husband may not be dunned for my debts as soon as he has married me. What a wife I should have been for you;—should I not?"

"I could pay the six hundred pounds for you with money that I have earned myself,—though you do call me an usher;—and perhaps would ask fewer questions about it than Lord Ongar will do with all his thousands."

"Dear Harry, I beg your pardon about the usher. Of course, I know that you are a fellow of your college, and that St. Cuthbert's, where you teach the boys, is one of the grandest schools in England; and I hope you'll be a bishop; nay,—I think you will, if you make up your mind to try for it."

"I have given up all idea of going into the church."

"Then you'll be a judge. I know you'll be great and distinguished, and that you'll do it all yourself. You are distinguished already. If you could only know how infinitely I should prefer your lot to mine! Oh, Harry, I envy you! I do envy you! You have got the ball at your feet, and the world before you, and can win everything for yourself."

"But nothing is anything without your love."

"Psha! Love, indeed. What could I do for you but ruin you? You know it as well as I do; but you are selfish enough to wish to continue a romance which would be absolutely destructive to me, though for a while it might afford a pleasant relaxation to your graver studies. Harry, you can choose in the world. You have divinity, and law, and literature, and art. And if debarred from love now by the exigencies of labour, you will be as fit for love in ten years' time as you are at present."

"But I do love now."

"Be a man, then, and keep it to yourself. Love is not to be our master. You can choose, as I say; but I have had no choice,—no choice but to be married

well, or to go out like a snuff of a candle. I don't like the snuff of a candle, and, therefore, I am going to be married well."

"And that suffices?"

"It must suffice. And why should it not suffice? You are very uncivil, cousin, and very unlike the rest of the world. Everybody compliments me on my marriage. Lord Ongar is not only rich, but he is a man of fashion, and a man of talent."

"Are you fond of race-horses yourself?"

"Very fond of them."

"And of that kind of life?"

"Very fond of it. I mean to be fond of everything that Lord Ongar likes. I know that I can't change him, and, therefore, I shall not try."

"You are right there, Miss Brabazon."

"You mean to be impertinent, sir; but I will not take it so. This is to be our last meeting in private, and I won't acknowledge that I am insulted. But it must be over now, Harry; and here I have been pacing round and round the garden with you, in spite of my refusal just now. It must not be repeated, or things will be said which I do not mean to have ever said of me. Good-by, Harry."

"Good-by, Julia."

"Well, for that once let it pass. And remember this: I have told you all my hopes, and my one trouble. I have been thus open with you because I

thought it might serve to make you look at things in a right light. I trust to your honour as a gentleman to repeat nothing that I have said to you."

"I am not given to repeat such things as those."

"I'm sure you are not. And I hope you will not misunderstand the spirit in which they have been spoken. I shall never regret what I have told you now, if it tends to make you perceive that we must both regard our past acquaintance as a romance, which must, from the stern necessity of things, be treated as a dream which we have dreamt, or a poem which we have read."

"You can treat it as you please."

"God bless you, Harry; and I will always hope for your welfare, and hear of your success with joy. Will you come up and shoot with them on Thursday?"

"What, with Hugh? No; Hugh and I do not hit it off together. If I shot at Clavering I should have to do it as a sort of head-keeper. It's a higher position, I know, than that of an usher, but it doesn't suit me."

"Oh, Harry! that is so cruel! But you will come up to the house. Lord Ongar will be there on the thirty-first; the day after to-morrow, you know."

"I must decline even that temptation. I never go into the house when Hugh is there, except about twice a year on solemn invitation—just to prevent there being a family quarrel."

"Good-by, then," and she offered him her hand.

"Good-by, if it must be so."

"I don't know whether you mean to grace my marriage?"

"Certainly not. I shall be away from Clavering, so that the marriage bells may not wound my ears. For the matter of that, I shall be at the school."

"I suppose we shall meet some day in town."

"Most probably not. My ways and Lord Ongar's will be altogether different, even if I should succeed in getting up to London. If you ever come to see Hermione here, I may chance to meet you in the house. But you will not do that often, the place is so dull and unattractive."

"It is the dearest old park."

"You won't care much for old parks as Lady Ongar."

"You don't know what I may care about as Lady Ongar; but as Julia Brabazon I will now say good-by for the last time." Then they parted, and the lady returned to the great house, while Harry Clavering made his way across the park towards the rectory.

Three years before this scene in the gardens at Clavering Park, Lord Brabazon had died at Nice, leaving one unmarried daughter, the lady to whom the reader has just been introduced. One other daughter he had, who was then already married to Sir Hugh Clavering, and Lady Clavering was the Hermione of whom mention has already been made. Lord Brabazon, whose peerage had descended to him in a direct line from the time of the Plantagenets, was one of those unfortunate nobles of whom England is burdened with but few, who have no means equal to their rank. He had married late in life, and had died without a male heir. The title which had come from the Plantagenets was now lapsed; and when the last lord died, about four hundred a year was divided between his two

daughters. The elder had already made an excellent match, as regarded fortune, in marrying Sir Hugh Clavering; and the younger was now about to make a much more splendid match in her alliance with Lord Ongar. Of them I do not know that it is necessary to say much more at present.

And of Harry Clavering it perhaps may not be necessary to say much in the way of description. The attentive reader will have already gathered nearly all that should be known of him before he makes himself known by his own deeds. He was the only son of the Reverend Henry Clavering, rector of Clavering, uncle of the present Sir Hugh Clavering, and brother of the last Sir Hugh. The Reverend Henry Clavering, and Mrs. Clavering his wife, and his two daughters, Mary and Fanny Clavering, lived always at Clavering Rectory, on the outskirts of Clavering Park, at a full mile's distance from the house. The church stood in the park, about midway between the two residences. When I have named one more Clavering, Captain Clavering, Captain Archibald Clavering, Sir Hugh's brother, and when I shall have said also that both Sir Hugh and Captain Clavering were men fond of pleasure and fond of money, I shall have said all that I need now say about the Clavering family at large.

Julia Brabazon had indulged in some reminiscence of the romance of her past poetic life when she talked of cousinship between her and Harry Clavering. Her sister was the wife of Harry Clavering's first cousin, but between her and Harry there was no relationship whatever. When old Lord Brabazon had died at Nice she had come to Clavering Park, and had created some astonishment among those who knew Sir Hugh by making good her footing in his establishment. He was not the man to take up a wife's sister, and make his house her home, out of charity or from domestic love. Lady Clavering, who had been a handsome woman and fashionable withal, no doubt may have had some influence; but Sir Hugh was a man much prone to follow his own courses. It must be presumed

that Julia Brabazon had made herself agreeable in the house, and also probably useful. She had been taken to London through two seasons, and had there held up her head among the bravest. And she had been taken abroad,—for Sir Hugh did not love Clavering Park, except during six weeks of partridge shooting; and she had been at Newmarket with them, and at the house of a certain fast hunting duke with whom Sir Hugh was intimate; and at Brighton with her sister, when it suited Sir Hugh to remain alone at the duke's; and then again up in London, where she finally arranged matters with Lord Ongar. It was acknowledged by all the friends of the two families, and indeed I may say of the three families now—among the Brabazon people, and the Clavering people, and the Courton people,—Lord Ongar's family name was Courton,—that Julia Brabazon had been very clever. Of her and Harry Clavering together no one had ever said a word. If any words had been spoken between her and Hermione on the subject, the two sisters had been discreet enough to manage that they should go no further. In those short months of Julia's romance Sir Hugh had been away from Clavering, and Hermione had been much occupied in giving birth to an heir. Julia had now lived past her one short spell of poetry, had written her one sonnet, and was prepared for the business of the world.

HARRY CLAVERING CHOOSES HIS PROFESSION

Harry Clavering might not be an usher, but, nevertheless, he was home for the holidays. And who can say where the usher ends and the schoolmaster begins? He, perhaps, may properly be called an usher, who is hired by a private schoolmaster to assist himself in his private occupation, whereas Harry Clavering had been selected by a public body out of a hundred candidates, with much real or pretended reference to certificates of qualification. He was certainly not an usher, as he was paid three hundred a year for his work,—which is quite beyond the mark of ushers. So much was certain; but yet the word stuck in his throat and made him uncomfortable. He did not like to reflect that he was home for the holidays.

But he had determined that he would never come home for the holidays again. At Christmas he would leave the school at which he had won his appointment with so much trouble, and go into an open profession. Indeed he had chosen his profession, and his mode of entering it. He would become a civil engineer, and perhaps a land surveyor, and with this view he would enter himself as a pupil in the great house of Beilby and Burton. The terms even had been settled. He was to pay a premium of five hundred pounds and join Mr. Burton, who was settled in the town of Stratton, for twelve months before he placed himself in Mr. Beilby's office in London. Stratton was less than twenty miles from Clavering. It was a comfort to him to think that he could pay this five hundred pounds out of his own earnings, without troubling his father. It was a comfort, even though he had earned that money by "ushering" for the last two years.

When he left Julia Brabazon in the garden, Harry Clavering did not go at once home to the rectory, but sauntered out all alone into the park, intending to indulge in reminiscences of his past romance. It was all over, that idea of having Julia Brabazon for his love; and now he had to ask himself whether he intended to be made permanently miserable by her worldly falseness, or whether he would borrow something of her worldly wisdom, and agree with himself to look back on what was past as a pleasurable excitement in his boyhood. Of course we all know that really permanent misery was in truth out of the question. Nature had not made him physically or mentally so poor a creature as to be incapable of a cure. But on this occasion he decided on permanent misery. There was about his heart,—about his actual anatomical heart, with its internal arrangement of valves and blood-vessels,—a heavy dragging feeling that almost amounted to corporeal pain, and which he described to himself as agony. Why should this rich, debauched, disreputable lord have the power of taking the cup from his lip, the one morsel of bread which he coveted from his mouth, his one ingot of treasure out of his coffer? Fight him! No, he knew he could not fight Lord Ongar. The world was against such an arrangement. And in truth Harry Clavering had so much contempt for Lord Ongar, that he had no wish to fight so poor a creature. The man had had delirium tremens, and was a worn-out miserable object. So at least Harry Clavering was only too ready to believe. He did not care much for Lord Ongar in the matter. His anger was against her;—that she should have deserted him for a miserable creature, who had nothing to back him but wealth and rank!

There was wretchedness in every view of the matter. He loved her so well, and yet he could do nothing! He could take no step towards saving her or assisting himself. The marriage bells would ring within a month from the present time, and his own father would go to the church and marry them. Unless Lord Ongar were to die before then by God's hand, there could be no escape,—and of such escape Harry Clavering had no thought. He felt a

weary, dragging soreness at his heart, and told himself that he must be miserable for ever,—not so miserable but what he would work, but so wretched that the world could have for him no satisfaction.

What could he do? What thing could he achieve so that she should know that he did not let her go from him without more thought than his poor words had expressed? He was perfectly aware that in their conversation she had had the best of the argument,—that he had talked almost like a boy, while she had talked quite like a woman. She had treated him de haut en bas with all that superiority which youth and beauty give to a young woman over a very young man. What could he do? Before he returned to the rectory, he had made up his mind what he would do, and on the following morning Julia Brabazon received by the hands of her maid the following note:—

"I think I understood all that you said to me yesterday. At any rate, I understand that you have one trouble left, and that I have the means of curing it." In the first draft of his letter he said something about ushering, but that he omitted afterwards. "You may be assured that the enclosed is all my own, and that it is entirely at my own disposal. You may also be quite sure of good faith on the part of the lender.—H. C." And in this letter he enclosed a cheque for six hundred pounds. It was the money which he had saved since he took his degree, and had been intended for Messrs. Beilby and Burton. But he would wait another two years,—continuing to do his ushering for her sake. What did it matter to a man who must, under any circumstances, be permanently miserable?

Sir Hugh was not yet at Clavering. He was to come with Lord Ongar on the eve of the partridge-shooting. The two sisters, therefore, had the house all to themselves. At about twelve they sat down to breakfast together in a little upstairs chamber adjoining Lady Clavering's own room, Julia

Brabazon at that time having her lover's generous letter in her pocket. She knew that it was as improper as it was generous, and that, moreover, it was very dangerous. There was no knowing what might be the result of such a letter should Lord Ongar even know that she had received it. She was not absolutely angry with Harry, but had, to herself, twenty times called him a foolish, indiscreet, dear generous boy. But what was she to do with the cheque? As to that, she had hardly as yet made up her mind when she joined her sister on the morning in question. Even to Hermione she did not dare to tell the fact that such a letter had been received by her.

But in truth her debts were a great torment to her; and yet how trifling they were when compared with the wealth of the man who was to become her husband in six weeks! Let her marry him, and not pay them, and he probably would never be the wiser. They would get themselves paid almost without his knowledge, perhaps altogether without his hearing of them. But yet she feared him, knowing him to be greedy about money; and, to give her such merit as was due to her, she felt the meanness of going to her husband with debts on her shoulder. She had five thousand pounds of her own; but the very settlement which gave her a noble dower, and which made the marriage so brilliant, made over this small sum in its entirety to her lord. She had been wrong not to tell the lawyer of her trouble when he had brought the paper for her to sign; but she had not told him. If Sir Hugh Clavering had been her own brother there would have been no difficulty, but he was only her brother-in-law, and she feared to speak to him. Her sister, however, knew that there were debts, and on that subject she was not afraid to speak to Hermione.

"Hermy," said she, "what am I to do about this money that I owe? I got a bill from Colclugh's this morning."

"Just because he knows you're going to be married; that's all."

"But how am I to pay him?"

"Take no notice of it till next spring. I don't know what else you can do. You'll be sure to have money when you come back from the Continent."

"You couldn't lend it me; could you?"

"Who? I? Did you ever know me have any money in hand since I was married? I have the name of an allowance, but it is always spent before it comes to me, and I am always in debt."

"Would Hugh—let me have it?"

"What, give it you?"

"Well, it wouldn't be so very much for him. I never asked him for a pound yet."

"I think he would say something you wouldn't like if you were to ask him; but, of course, you can try it if you please."

"Then what am I to do?"

"Lord Ongar should have let you keep your own fortune. It would have been nothing to him."

"Hugh didn't let you keep your own fortune."

"But the money which will be nothing to Lord Ongar was a good deal to Hugh. You're going to have sixty thousand a year, while we have to do with seven or eight. Besides, I hadn't been out in London, and it wasn't likely I should owe much in Nice. He did ask me, and there was something."

"What am I to do, Hermy?"

"Write and ask Lord Ongar to let you have what you want out of your own money. Write to-day, so that he may get your letter before he comes."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I never wrote a word to him yet, and to begin with asking him for money!"

"I don't think he can be angry with you for that."

"I shouldn't know what to say. Would you write it for me, and let me see how it looks?"

This Lady Clavering did; and had she refused to do it, I think that poor Harry Clavering's cheque would have been used. As it was, Lady Clavering wrote the letter to "My dear Lord Ongar," and it was copied and signed by "Yours most affectionately, Julia Brabazon." The effect of this was the receipt of a cheque for a thousand pounds in a very pretty note from Lord Ongar, which the lord brought with him to Clavering, and sent up to Julia as he was dressing for dinner. It was an extremely comfortable arrangement, and Julia was very glad of the money,—feeling it to be a portion of that which was her own. And Harry's cheque had been returned to him on the day of its receipt. "Of course I cannot take it, and of course you should not have sent it." These words were written on the morsel of paper in which the money was returned. But Miss Brabazon had torn the signature off the cheque, so that it might be safe, whereas Harry Clavering had taken no precaution with it whatever. But then Harry Clavering had not lived two years in London.

During the hours that the cheque was away from him, Harry had told his father that perhaps, even yet, he might change his purpose as to going to Messrs. Beilby and Burton. He did not know, he said, but he was still in doubt. This had sprung from some chance question which his father had asked, and which had seemed to demand an answer. Mr. Clavering greatly

disliked the scheme of life which his son had made. Harry's life hitherto had been prosperous and very creditable. He had gone early to Cambridge, and at twenty-two had become a fellow of his college. This fellowship he could hold for five or six years without going into orders. It would then lead to a living, and would in the meantime afford a livelihood. But, beyond this, Harry, with an energy which he certainly had not inherited from his father, had become a schoolmaster, and was already a rich man. He had done more than well, and there was a great probability that between them they might be able to buy the next presentation to Clavering, when the time should come in which Sir Hugh should determine on selling it. That Sir Hugh should give the family living to his cousin was never thought probable by any of the family at the rectory; but he might perhaps part with it under such circumstances on favourable terms. For all these reasons the father was very anxious that his son should follow out the course for which he had been intended; but that he, being unenergetic and having hitherto done little for his son, should dictate to a young man who had been energetic, and who had done much for himself, was out of the question. Harry, therefore, was to be the arbiter of his own fate. But when Harry received back the cheque from Julia Brabazon, then he again returned to his resolution respecting Messrs. Beilby and Burton, and took the first opportunity of telling his father that such was the case.

After breakfast he followed his father into his study, and there, sitting in two easy-chairs opposite to each other, they lit each a cigar. Such was the reverend gentleman's custom in the afternoon, and such also in the morning. I do not know whether the smoking of four or five cigars daily by the parson of a parish may now-a-day be considered as a vice in him, but if so, it was the only vice with which Mr. Clavering could be charged. He was a kind, soft-hearted, gracious man, tender to his wife, whom he ever regarded as the angel of his house, indulgent to his daughters, whom he idolized, ever patient with his parishioners, and awake,—though not

widely awake,—to the responsibilities of his calling. The world had been too comfortable for him, and also too narrow; so that he had sunk into idleness. The world had given him much to eat and drink, but it had given him little to do, and thus he had gradually fallen away from his early purposes, till his energy hardly sufficed for the doing of that little. His living gave him eight hundred a year; his wife's fortune nearly doubled that. He had married early, and had got his living early, and had been very prosperous. But he was not a happy man. He knew that he had put off the day of action till the power of action had passed away from him. His library was well furnished, but he rarely read much else than novels and poetry; and of late years the reading even of poetry had given way to the reading of novels. Till within ten years of the hour of which I speak, he had been a hunting parson,—not hunting loudly, but following his sport as it is followed by moderate sportsmen. Then there had come a new bishop, and the new bishop had sent for him,—nay, finally had come to him, and had lectured him with blatant authority. "My lord," said the parson of Clavering, plucking up something of his past energy, as the colour rose to his face, "I think you are wrong in this. I think you are specially wrong to interfere with me in this way on your first coming among us. You feel it to be your duty, no doubt; but to me it seems that you mistake your duty. But, as the matter is one simply of my own pleasure, I shall give it up." After that Mr. Clavering hunted no more, and never spoke a good word to any one of the bishop of his diocese. For myself, I think it as well that clergymen should not hunt; but had I been the parson of Clavering, I should, under those circumstances, have hunted double.

Mr. Clavering hunted no more, and probably smoked a greater number of cigars in consequence. He had an increased amount of time at his disposal, but did not, therefore, give more time to his duties. Alas! what time did he give to his duties? He kept a most energetic curate, whom he allowed to do almost what he would with the parish. Every-day services he did prohibit,

declaring that he would not have the parish church made ridiculous; but in other respects his curate was the pastor. Once every Sunday he read the service, and once every Sunday he preached, and he resided in his parsonage ten months every year. His wife and daughters went among the poor,—and he smoked cigars in his library. Though not yet fifty, he was becoming fat and idle,—unwilling to walk, and not caring much even for such riding as the bishop had left to him. And, to make matters worse,—far worse, he knew all this of himself, and understood it thoroughly. "I see a better path, and know how good it is, but I follow ever the worse." He was saying that to himself daily, and was saying it always without hope.

And his wife had given him up. She had given him up, not with disdainful rejection, nor with contempt in her eye, or censure in her voice, not with diminution of love or of outward respect. She had given him up as a man abandons his attempts to make his favourite dog take the water. He would fain that the dog he loves should dash into the stream as other dogs will do. It is, to his thinking, a noble instinct in a dog. But his dog dreads the water. As, however, he has learned to love the beast, he puts up with this mischance, and never dreams of banishing poor Ponto from his hearth because of this failure. And so it was with Mrs. Clavering and her husband at the rectory. He understood it all. He knew that he was so far rejected; and he acknowledged to himself the necessity for such rejection.

"It is a very serious thing to decide upon," he said, when his son had spoken to him.

"Yes; it is serious,—about as serious a thing as a man can think of; but a man cannot put it off on that account. If I mean to make such a change in my plans, the sooner I do it the better."

"But yesterday you were in another mind."

"No, father, not in another mind. I did not tell you then, nor can I tell you all now. I had thought that I should want my money for another purpose for a year or two; but that I have abandoned."

"Is the purpose a secret, Harry?"

"It is a secret, because it concerns another person."

"You were going to lend your money to some one?"

"I must keep it a secret, though you know I seldom have any secrets from you. That idea, however, is abandoned, and I mean to go over to Stratton to-morrow, and tell Mr. Burton that I shall be there after Christmas. I must be at St. Cuthbert's on Tuesday."

Then they both sat silent for a while, silently blowing out their clouds of smoke. The son had said all that he cared to say, and would have wished that there might then be an end of it; but he knew that his father had much on his mind, and would fain express, if he could express it without too much trouble, or without too evident a need of self-reproach, his own thoughts on the subject. "You have made up your mind, then, altogether that you do not like the church as a profession," he said at last.

"I think I have, father."

"And on what grounds? The grounds which recommend it to you are very strong. Your education has adapted you for it. Your success in it is already ensured by your fellowship. In a great degree you have entered it as a profession already, by taking a fellowship. What you are doing is not choosing a line in life, but changing one already chosen. You are making of yourself a rolling stone."

"A stone should roll till it has come to the spot that suits it."

"Why not give up the school if it irks you?"

"And become a Cambridge Don, and practise deportment among the undergraduates."

"I don't see that you need do that. You need not even live at Cambridge. Take a church in London. You would be sure to get one by holding up your hand. If that, with your fellowship, is not sufficient, I will give you what more you want."

"No, father—no. By God's blessing I will never ask you for a pound. I can hold my fellowship for four years longer without orders, and in four years' time I think I can earn my bread."

"I don't doubt that, Harry."

"Then why should I not follow my wishes in this matter? The truth is, I do not feel myself qualified to be a good clergyman."

"It is not that you have doubts, is it?"

"I might have them if I came to think much about it,—as I must do if I took orders. And I do not wish to be crippled in doing what I think lawful by conventional rules. A rebellious clergyman is, I think, a sorry object. It seems to me that he is a bird fouling his own nest. Now, I know I should be a rebellious clergyman."

"In our church the life of a clergyman is as the life of any other gentleman, —within very broad limits."

"Then why did Bishop Proudie interfere with your hunting?"

"Limits may be very broad, Harry, and yet exclude hunting. Bishop Proudie was vulgar and intrusive, such being the nature of his wife, who instructs him; but if you were in orders I should be very sorry to see you take to hunting."

"It seems to me that a clergyman has nothing to do in life unless he is always preaching and teaching. Look at Saul,"—Mr. Saul was the curate of Clavering—"he is always preaching and teaching. He is doing the best he can; and what a life of it he has. He has literally thrown off all worldly cares,—and consequently everybody laughs at him, and nobody loves him. I don't believe a better man breathes, but I shouldn't like his life."

At this point there was another pause, which lasted till the cigars had come to an end. Then, as he threw the stump into the fire, Mr. Clavering spoke again. "The truth is, Harry, that you have had, all your life, a bad example before you."

"No, father."

"Yes, my son;—let me speak on to the end, and then you can say what you please. In me you have had a bad example on one side, and now, in poor Saul, you have a bad example on the other side. Can you fancy no life between the two, which would fit your physical nature, which is larger than his, and your mental wants, which are higher than mine? Yes, they are, Harry. It is my duty to say this, but it would be unseemly that there should be any controversy between us on the subject."

"If you choose to stop me in that way—"

"I do choose to stop you in that way. As for Saul, it is impossible that you should become such a man as he. It is not that he mortifies his flesh, but that he has no flesh to mortify. He is unconscious of the flavour of venison,

or the scent of roses, or the beauty of women. He is an exceptional specimen of a man, and you need no more fear, than you should venture to hope, that you could become such as he is."

At this point they were interrupted by the entrance of Fanny Clavering, who came to say that Mr. Saul was in the drawing-room. "What does he want, Fanny?" This question Mr. Clavering asked half in a whisper, but with something of comic humour in his face, as though partly afraid that Mr. Saul should hear it, and partly intending to convey a wish that he might escape Mr. Saul, if it were possible.

"It's about the iron church, papa. He says it is come,—or part of it has come,—and he wants you to go out to Cumberly Green about the site."

"I thought that was all settled."

"He says not."

"What does it matter where it is? He can put it anywhere he likes on the Green. However, I had better go to him." So Mr. Clavering went. Cumberly Green was a hamlet in the parish of Clavering, three miles distant from the church, the people of which had got into a wicked habit of going to a dissenting chapel near to them. By Mr. Saul's energy, but chiefly out of Mr. Clavering's purse, an iron chapel had been purchased for a hundred and fifty pounds, and Mr. Saul proposed to add to his own duties the pleasing occupation of walking to Cumberly Green every Sunday morning before breakfast, and every Wednesday evening after dinner, to perform a service and bring back to the true flock as many of the erring sheep of Cumberly Green as he might be able to catch. Towards the purchase of this iron church Mr. Clavering had at first given a hundred pounds. Sir Hugh, in answer to the fifth application, had very ungraciously, through his steward, bestowed ten pounds. Among the farmers one pound nine and

eightpence had been collected. Mr. Saul had given two pounds; Mrs. Clavering gave five pounds; the girls gave ten shillings each; Henry Clavering gave five pounds;—and then the parson made up the remainder. But Mr. Saul had journeyed thrice painfully to Bristol, making the bargain for the church, going and coming each time by third-class, and he had written all the letters; but Mrs. Clavering had paid the postage, and she and the girls between them were making the covering for the little altar.

"Is it all settled, Harry?" said Fanny, stopping with her brother, and hanging over his chair. She was a pretty, gay-spirited girl, with bright eyes and dark brown hair, which fell in two curls behind her ears.

"He has said nothing to unsettle it."

"I know it makes him very unhappy."

"No, Fanny, not very unhappy. He would rather that I should go into the church, but that is about all."

"I think you are quite right."

"And Mary thinks I am quite wrong."

"Mary thinks so, of course. So should I too, perhaps, if I were engaged to a clergyman. That's the old story of the fox who had lost his tail."

"And your tail isn't gone yet?"

"No, my tail isn't gone yet. Mary thinks that no life is like a clergyman's life. But, Harry, though mamma hasn't said so, I'm sure she thinks you are right. She won't say so as long as it may seem to interfere with anything papa may choose to say; but I'm sure she's glad in her heart."

"And I am glad in my heart, Fanny. And as I'm the person most concerned, I suppose that's the most material thing." Then they followed their father into the drawing-room.

"Couldn't you drive Mrs. Clavering over in the pony chair, and settle it between you," said Mr. Clavering to his curate. Mr. Saul looked disappointed. In the first place, he hated driving the pony, which was a rapid-footed little beast, that had a will of his own; and in the next place, he thought the rector ought to visit the spot on such an occasion. "Or Mrs. Clavering will drive you," said the rector, remembering Mr. Saul's objection to the pony. Still Mr. Saul looked unhappy. Mr. Saul was very tall and very thin, with a tall thin head, and weak eyes, and a sharp, well-cut nose, and, so to say, no lips, and very white teeth, with no beard, and a well-cut chin. His face was so thin that his cheekbones obtruded themselves unpleasantly. He wore a long rusty black coat, and a high rusty black waistcoat, and trousers that were brown with dirty roads and general ill-usage. Nevertheless, it never occurred to any one that Mr. Saul did not look like a gentleman, not even to himself, to whom no ideas whatever on that subject ever presented themselves. But that he was a gentleman I think he knew well enough, and was able to carry himself before Sir Hugh and his wife with quite as much ease as he could do in the rectory. Once or twice he had dined at the great house; but Lady Clavering had declared him to be a bore, and Sir Hugh had called him "that most offensive of all animals, a clerical prig." It had therefore been decided that he was not to be asked to the great house any more. It may be as well to state here, as elsewhere, that Mr. Clavering very rarely went to his nephew's table. On certain occasions he did do so, so that there might be no recognized quarrel between him and Sir Hugh; but such visits were few and far between.

After a few more words from Mr. Saul, and a glance from his wife's eye, Mr. Clavering consented to go to Cumberly Green, though there was