Helping your children choose books they will love

I ♥ reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Dr. Thorne

written by

Anthony Trollope

published by

Penguin Books Ltd

All text is copyright of the author and / or the illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

CHAPTER I



The Greshams of Greshamsbury

BEFORE the reader is introduced to the modest country medical practitioner who is to be the chief personage of the following tale, it will be well that he should be made acquainted with some particulars as to the locality in which, and the neighbours among whom, our doctor followed his profession.

There is a county in the west of England not so full of life, indeed, nor so widely spoken of as some of its manufacturing leviathan brethren in the north, but which is, nevertheless, very dear to those who know it well. Its green pastures, its waving wheat, its deep and shady and – let us add – dirty lanes, its paths and stiles, its tawny-coloured, well-built rural churches, its avenues of beeches, and frequent Tudor mansions, its constant county hunt, its social graces, and the general air of clanship which pervades it, has made it to its own inhabitants a favoured land of Goshen.[1] It is purely agricultural; agricultural in its produce, agricultural in its poor, and agricultural in its pleasures. There are towns in it, of course; depots from whence are brought seeds and groceries, ribbons and fire-shovels; in which markets are held and county balls are carried on; which return members to Parliament, generally – in spite of reform bills, past, present, and coming – in accordance with the dictates of some neighbouring land magnate: from whence emanate the country postmen, and where is located the supply of post-horses necessary for county visitings. But these towns add nothing to the importance of the county; they consist, with the exception of the assize town, of dull, all but death-like single streets. Each possesses two pumps, three hotels, ten shops, fifteen beer-houses, a beadle, and a market-place.

Indeed, the town population of the county reckons for nothing when the importance of the county is discussed, with the exception,

as before said, of the assize town, which is also a cathedral city. Herein is a clerical aristocracy, which is certainly not without its due weight. A resident bishop, a resident dean, an archdeacon, three or four resident prebendaries, and all their numerous chaplains, vicars, and ecclesiastical satellites, do make up a society sufficiently powerful to be counted as something by the county squirearchy. In other respects the greatness of Barsetshire depends wholly on the landed powers.

Barsetshire, however, is not now so essentially one whole as it was before the Reform Bill divided it. There is in these days an East Barsetshire, and there is a West Barsetshire; and people conversant with Barsetshire doings declare that they can already decipher some difference of feeling, some division of interests. The eastern moiety of the county is more purely Conservative than the western; there is, or was, a taint of Peelism[2] in the latter; and then too, the residence of two such great Whig magnates as the Duke of Omnium and the Earl de Courcy in that locality in some degree overshadows and renders less influential the gentlemen who live near them.

It is to East Barsetshire that we are called. When the division above spoken of was first contemplated, in those stormy days in which gallant men were still combating reform ministers, if not with hope, still with spirit, the battle was fought by none more bravely than by John Newbold Gresham of Greshamsbury, the member for Barsetshire. Fate, however, and the Duke of Wellington were adverse, and in the following Parliament John Newbold Gresham was only member for East Barsetshire.

Whether or not it was true, as stated at the time, that the aspect of the men with whom he was called on to associate at St Stephen's[3] broke his heart, it is not for us now to inquire. It is certainly true that he did not live to see the first year of the reformed Parliament brought to a close. The then Mr Gresham was not an old man at the time of his death, and his eldest son, Francis Newbold Gresham, was a very young man; but, notwithstanding his youth, and notwithstanding other grounds of objection which stood in the way of such preferment, and which must be explained, he was chosen in his father's place. The father's services had been too recent, too well appreciated, too thoroughly in unison with the feelings of those around him to allow of any other

choice; and in this way young Frank Gresham found himself member for East Barsetshire, although the very men who elected him knew that they had but slender ground for trusting him with their suffrages.

Frank Gresham, though then only twenty-four years of age, was a married man, and a father. He had already chosen a wife, and by his choice had given much ground of distrust to the men of East Barsetshire. He had married no other than Lady Arabella de Courcy, the sister of the great Whig earl who lived at Courcy Castle in the west: that earl who not only voted for the Reform Bill,[4] but had been infamously active in bringing over other young peers so to vote, and whose name therefore stank in the nostrils of the staunch Tory squires of the county.

Not only had Frank Gresham so wedded, but having thus improperly and unpatriotically chosen a wife, he had added to his sin by becoming recklessly intimate with his wife's relations. It is true that he still called himself a Tory, belonged to the club of which his father had been one of the most honoured members, and in the days of the great battle got his head broken in a row, on the right side; but, nevertheless, it was felt by the good men, true and blue, of East Barsetshire, that a constant sojourner at Courcy Castle could not be regarded as a consistent Tory. When, however, his father died, that broken head served him in good stead: his sufferings in the cause were made the most of; these, in unison with his father's merits, turned the scale, and it was accordingly decided, at a meeting held at the George and Dragon at Barchester, that Frank Gresham should fill his father's shoes.

But Frank Gresham could not fill his father's shoes; they were too big for him. He did become member for East Barsetshire; but he was such a member – so lukewarm, so indifferent, so prone to associate with the enemies of the good cause, so little willing to fight the good fight, that he soon disgusted those who most dearly loved the memory of the old squire.

De Courcy Castle in those days had great allurements for a young man, and all those allurements were made the most of to win over young Gresham. His wife, who was a year or two older than himself, was a fashionable woman, with thorough Whig tastes and aspirations, such as became the daughter of a great Whig earl; she cared for politics, or thought that she cared for

them, more than her husband did: for a month or two previous to her engagement she had been attached to the Court, and had been made to believe that much of the policy of England's rulers depended on the political intrigues of England's women. She was one who would fain be doing something if she only knew how, and the first important attempt she made was to turn her respectable young Tory husband into a second-rate Whig bantling. As this lady's character will, it is hoped, show itself in the following pages, we need not now describe it more closely.

It is not a bad thing to be son-in-law to a potent earl, member of Parliament for a county, and possessor of a fine old English seat, and a fine old English fortune. As a very young man, Frank Gresham found the life to which he was thus introduced agreeable enough. He consoled himself as best he might for the blue looks with which he was greeted by his own party, and took his revenge by consorting more thoroughly than ever with his political adversaries. Foolishly, like a foolish moth, he flew to the bright light, and, like the moths, of course he burnt his wings. Early in 1833 he had become a member of Parliament, and in the autumn of 1834 the dissolution came. Young members of three or four-and-twenty do not think much of dissolutions, forget the fancies of their constituents, and are too proud of the present to calculate much as to the future. So it was with Mr Gresham. His father had been member for Barsetshire all his life, and he looked forward to similar prosperity as though it were part of his inheritance; but he failed to take any of the steps which had secured his father's seat.

In the autumn of 1834 the dissolution came, and Frank Gresham, with his honourable lady wife and all the De Courcys at his back, found that he had mortally offended the county. To his great disgust another candidate was brought forward as a fellow to his late colleague, and though he manfully fought the battle, and spent ten thousand pounds in the contest, he could not recover his position. A high Tory, with a great Whig interest to back him, is never a popular person in England. No one can trust him, though there may be those who are willing to place him, untrusted, in high positions. Such was the case with Mr Gresham. There were many who were willing, for family considerations, to keep him in Parliament; but no one thought that he was fit to be there. The consequences were, that a bitter and expensive contest

ensued. Frank Gresham, when twitted with being a Whig, foreswore the De Courcy family; and then, when ridiculed as having been thrown over by the Tories, foreswore his father's old friends. So between the two stools he fell to the ground, and, as a politician, he never again rose to his feet.

He never again rose to his feet; but twice again he made violent efforts to do so. Elections in East Barsetshire, from various causes, came quick upon each other in those days, and before he was eight-and-twenty years of age Mr Gresham had three times contested the county and been three times beaten. To speak the truth of him, his own spirit would have been satisfied with the loss of the first ten thousand pounds; but Lady Arabella was made of higher mettle. She had married a man with a fine place and a fine fortune; but she had nevertheless married a commoner and had in so far derogated from her high birth. She felt that her husband should be by rights a member of the House of Lords; but, if not, that it was at least essential that he should have a seat in the lower chamber. She would by degrees sink into nothing if she allowed herself to sit down, the mere wife of a mere country squire.

Thus instigated, Mr Gresham repeated the useless contest three times, and repeated it each time at a serious cost. He lost his money, Lady Arabella lost her temper, and things at Greshamsbury went on by no means as prosperously as they had done in the days of the old squire.

In the first twelve years of their marriage, children came fast into the nursery at Greshamsbury. The first that was born was a boy; and in those happy halcyon days, when the old squire was still alive, great was the joy at the birth of an heir to Greshamsbury; bonfires gleamed through the country-side, oxen were roasted whole, and the customary paraphernalia of joy usual to rich Britons on such occasions were gone through with wondrous éclat. But when the tenth baby, and the ninth little girl, was brought into the world, the outward show of joy was not so great.

Then other troubles came on. Some of these little girls were sickly, some very sickly. Lady Arabella had her faults, and they were such as were extremely detrimental to her husband's happiness and her own; but that of being an indifferent mother was not among them. She had worried her husband daily for years because he was not in Parliament, she had worried him because he would

not furnish the house in Portman Square, she had worried him because he objected to have more people every winter at Greshamsbury Park than the house would hold; but now she changed her tune and worried him because Selina coughed, because Helena was hectic, because poor Sophy's spine was weak, and Matilda's appetite was gone.

Worrying from such causes was pardonable it will be said. So it was; but the manner was hardly pardonable. Selina's cough was certainly not fairly attributable to the old-fashioned furniture in Portman Square; nor would Sophy's spine have been materially benefited by her father having a seat in Parliament; and yet, to have heard Lady Arabella discussing those matters in family conclave, one would have thought that she would have expected such results.

As it was, her poor weak darlings were carried about from London to Brighton, from Brighton to some German baths, from the German baths back to Torquay, and thence – as regarded the four we have named – to that bourne from whence no further journey could be made under the Lady Arabella's directions.

The one son and heir to Greshamsbury was named as his father, Francis Newbold Gresham. He would have been the hero of our tale had not that place been pre-occupied by the village doctor. As it is, those who please may so regard him. It is he who is to be our favourite young man, to do the love scenes, to have his trials and his difficulties, and to win through them or not, as the case may be. I am too old now to be a hard-hearted author, and so it is probable that he may not die of a broken heart. Those who don't approve of a middle-aged bachelor country doctor as a hero, may take the heir to Greshamsbury in his stead, and call the book, if it so please them, 'The Loves and Adventures of Francis Newbold Gresham the younger'.

And Master Frank Gresham was not ill adapted for playing the part of a hero of this sort. He did not share his sisters' ill-health, and though the only boy of the family, he excelled all his sisters in personal appearance. The Greshams from time immemorial had been handsome. They were broad browed, blue eyed, fair haired, born with dimples in their chins, and that pleasant, aristocratic, dangerous curl of the upper lip which can equally express good humour or scorn. Young Frank was every inch a Gresham, and was the darling of his father's heart.

The De Courcys had never been plain. There was too much hauteur, too much pride, we may perhaps even fairly say, too much nobility in their gait and manners, and even in their faces, to allow of their being considered plain; but they were not a race nurtured by Venus or Apollo. They were tall and thin, with high cheekbones, high foreheads, and large, dignified, cold eyes. The De Courcy girls had all good hair; and, as they also possessed easy manners and powers of talking, they managed to pass in the world for beauties till they were absorbed in the matrimonial market, and the world at large cared no longer whether they were beauties or not. The Misses Gresham were made in the De Courcy mould, and were not on this account the less dear to their mother.

The two eldest, Augusta and Beatrice, lived, and were apparently likely to live. The four next faded and died one after another – all in the same sad year – and were laid in the neat, new cemetery at Torquay. Then came a pair, born at one birth, weak, delicate, frail little flowers, with dark hair and dark eyes, and thin, long, pale faces, with long, bony hands, and long, bony feet, whom men looked on as fated to follow their sisters with quick steps. Hitherto, however, they had not followed them, nor had they suffered as their sisters had suffered; and some people at Greshamsbury attributed this to the fact that a change had been made in the family medical practitioner.

Then came the youngest of the flock, she whose birth we have said was not heralded with loud joy; for when she came into the world, four others, with pale temples, wan, worn cheeks, and skeleton, white arms, were awaiting permission to leave it.

Such was the family when, in the year 1854, the eldest son came of age. He had been educated at Harrow, and was now still at Cambridge; but, of course, on such a day as this he was at home. That coming of age must be a delightful time to a young man born to inherit broad acres and wide wealth. Those full-mouthed congratulations; those warm prayers with which his manhood is welcomed by the grey-haired seniors of the county; the affectionate, all but motherly caresses of neighbouring mothers who have seen him grow up from his cradle, of mothers who have daughters, perhaps, fair enough, and good enough, and sweet enough even for him; the soft-spoken, half-bashful, but tender greetings of the girls, who now, perhaps for the first time, call him by his stern

family name, instructed by instinct rather than precept that the time has come when the familiar Charles or familiar John must by them be laid aside; the 'lucky dogs,' and hints of silver spoons which are poured into his ears as each young compeer slaps his back and bids him live a thousand years and then never die; the shouting of the tenantry, the good wishes of the old farmers who come up to wring his hand, the kisses which he gets from the farmers' wives, and the kisses which he gives to the farmers' daughters; all these things must make the twenty-first birthday pleasant enough to a young heir. To a youth, however, who feels that he is now liable to arrest, and that he inherits no other privilege, the pleasure may very possibly not be quite so keen.

The case with young Frank Gresham may be supposed to be much nearer the former than the latter; but yet the ceremony of his coming of age was by no means like that which fate had accorded to his father. Mr Gresham was now an embarrassed man, and though the world did not know it, or, at any rate, did not know that he was deeply embarrassed, he had not the heart to throw open his mansion and park and receive the county with a free hand as though all things were going well with him.

Nothing was going well with him. Lady Arabella would allow nothing near him or around him to be well. Everything with him now turned to vexation; he was no longer a joyous, happy man, and the people of East Barsetshire did not look for gala doings on a grand scale when young Gresham came of age.

Gala doings, to a certain extent, there were there. It was in July, and tables were spread under the oaks for the tenants. Tables were spread, and meat, and beer, and wine were there, and Frank, as he walked round and shook his guests by the hand, expressed a hope that their relations with each other might be long, close, and mutually advantageous.

We must say a few words now about the place itself. Greshamsbury Park was a fine old English gentleman's seat – was and is; but we can assert it more easily in past tense, as we are speaking of it with reference to a past time. We have spoken of Greshamsbury Park; there was a park so called, but the mansion itself was generally known as Greshamsbury House, and did not stand in the park. We may perhaps best describe it by saying that the village of Greshamsbury consisted of one long, straggling street, a

mile in length, which in the centre turned sharp round, so that one half of the street lay directly at right angles to the other. In this angle stood Greshamsbury House, and the gardens and grounds around it filled up the space so made. There was an entrance with large gates at each end of the village, and each gate was guarded by the effigies of two huge pagans with clubs, such being the crest borne by the family; from each entrance a broad road, quite straight, running through to a majestic avenue of limes, led up to the house. This was built in the richest, perhaps we should rather say in the purest, style of Tudor architecture; so much so that, though Greshamsbury is less complete than Longleat,[5] less magnificent than Hatfield,[6] it may in some sense be said to be the finest specimen of Tudor architecture of which the country can boast.

It stands amid a multitude of trim gardens and stone-built terraces, divided one from another: these to our eyes are not so attractive as that broad expanse of lawn by which our country houses are generally surrounded; but the gardens of Greshamsbury have been celebrated for two centuries, and any Gresham who would have altered them would have been considered to have destroyed one of the well-known landmarks of the family.

Greshamsbury Park – properly so called – spread far away on the other side of the village. Opposite to the two great gates leading up to the mansion were two smaller gates, the one opening on to the stables, kennels, and farm-yard, and the other to the deer park. This latter was the principal entrance to the demesne, and a grand and picturesque entrance it was. The avenue of limes which on one side stretched up to the house, was on the other extended for a quarter of a mile, and then appeared to be terminated only by an abrupt rise in the ground. At the entrance there were four savages and four clubs, two to each portal, and what with the massive iron gates, surmounted by a stone wall, on which stood the family arms supported by two other club-bearers, the stone-built lodges, the Doric, ivy-covered columns which surrounded the circle, the four grim savages, and the extent of the space itself through which the high road ran, and which just abutted on the village, the spot was sufficiently significant of old family greatness.

Those who examined it more closely might see that under the

arms was a scroll bearing the Gresham motto, and that the words were repeated in smaller letters under each of the savages. 'Gardez Gresham' had been chosen in the days of motto-choosing probably by some herald-at-arms as an appropriate legend for signifying the peculiar attributes of the family. Now, however, unfortunately, men were not of one mind as to the exact idea signified. Some declared, with much heraldic warmth, that it was an address to the savages, calling on them to take care of their patron; while others, with whom I myself am inclined to agree, averred with equal certainty that it was an advice to the people at large, especially to those inclined to rebel against the aristocracy of the county, that they should 'beware the Gresham'. The latter signification would betoken strength – so said the holders of this doctrine; the former weakness. Now the Greshams were ever a strong people, and never addicted to a false humility.

We will not pretend to decide the question. Alas! either construction was now equally unsuited to the family fortunes. Such changes had taken place in England since the Greshams had founded themselves that no savage could any longer in any way protect them; they must protect themselves like common folk, or live unprotected. Nor now was it necessary that any neighbour should shake in his shoes when the Gresham frowned. It would have been to be wished that the present Gresham himself could have been as indifferent to the frowns of some of his neighbours.

But the old symbols remained, and may such symbols long remain among us; they are still lovely and fit to be loved. They tell us of the true and manly feelings of other times; and to him who can read aright, they explain more fully, more truly than any written history can do, how Englishmen have become what they are. England is not yet a commercial country in the sense in which that epithet is used for her; and let us still hope that she will not soon become so. She might surely as well be called feudal England, or chivalrous England. If in western civilised Europe there does exist a nation among whom there are high signors, and with whom the owners of the land are the true aristocracy, the aristocracy that is trusted as being best and fittest to rule, that nation is the English. Choose out the ten leading men of each great European people. Choose them in France, in Austria, Sardinia, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Spain (?), and then select the ten in

England whose names are best known as those of leading statesmen; the result will show in which country there still exists the closest attachment to, the sincerest trust in, the old feudal and now so-called landed interests.

England a commercial country! Yes; as Venice was. She may excel other nations in commerce, but yet it is not that in which she most prides herself, in which she most excels. Merchants as such are not the first men among us; though it perhaps be open, barely open, to a merchant to become one of them. Buying and selling is good and necessary; it is very necessary, and may, possibly, be very good; but it cannot be the noblest work of man; and let us hope that it may not in our time be esteemed the noblest work of an Englishman.

Greshamsbury Park was very large; it lay on the outside of the angle formed by the village street, and stretched away on two sides without apparent limit or boundaries visible from the village road or house. Indeed, the ground on this side was so broken up into abrupt hills, and conical-shaped, oak-covered excrescences, which were seen peeping up through and over each other, that the true extent of the park was much magnified to the eye. It was very possible for a stranger to get into it and to find some difficulty in getting out again by any of its known gates; and such was the beauty of the landscape, that a lover of scenery would be tempted thus to lose himself.

I have said that on one side lay the kennels, and this will give me an opportunity of describing here one especial episode, a long episode, in the life of the existing squire. He had once represented his county in Parliament, and when he ceased to do so he still felt an ambition to be connected in some peculiar way with that county's greatness; he still desired that Gresham of Greshamsbury should be something more in East Barsetshire than Jackson of the Grange, or Baker of Mill Hill, or Bateson of Annesgrove. They were all his friends, and very respectable country gentlemen; but Mr Gresham of Greshamsbury should be more than this: even he had enough of ambition to be aware of such a longing. Therefore, when an opportunity occurred he took to hunting the county.

For this employment he was in every way well suited – unless it was in the matter of finance. Though he had in his very earliest manly years given such great offence by indifference to his family

politics, and had in a certain degree fostered the ill-feeling by contesting the county in opposition to the wishes of his brother squires, nevertheless, he bore a loved and popular name. Men regretted that he should not have been what they wished him to be, that he should not have been such as was the old squire; but when they found that such was the case, that he could not be great among them as a politician, they were still willing that he should be great in any other way if there were county greatness for which he was suited. Now he was known as an excellent horseman, as a thorough sportsman, as one knowing in dogs, and tender-hearted as a sucking mother to a litter of young foxes; he had ridden in the county since he was fifteen, had a fine voice for a view-hallo, knew every hound by name, and could wind a horn with sufficient music for all hunting purposes; moreover, he had come to his property, as was well known through all Barsetshire, with a clear income of fourteen thousand a year.

Thus, when some old worn-out master of hounds was run to ground, about a year after Mr Gresham's last contest for the county, it seemed to all parties to be a pleasant and rational arrangement that the hounds should go to Greshamsbury. Pleasant, indeed, to all except the Lady Arabella; and rational, perhaps, to all except the squire himself.

All this time he was already considerably encumbered. He had spent much more than he should have done, and so indeed had his wife, in those two splendid years in which they had figured as great among the great ones of the earth. Fourteen thousand a year ought to have been enough to allow a member of Parliament with a young wife and two or three children to live in London and keep up their country family mansion; but then the De Courcys were very great people, and Lady Arabella chose to live as she had been accustomed to do, and as her sister-in-law the countess lived: now Lord de Courcy had much more than fourteen thousand a year. Then came the three elections, with their vast attendant cost, and then those costly expedients to which gentlemen are forced to have recourse who have lived beyond their income, and find it impossible so to reduce their establishments as to live much below it. Thus when the hounds came to Greshamsbury, Mr Gresham was already a poor man.

Lady Arabella said much to oppose their coming; but Lady

Arabella, though it could hardly be said of her that she was under her husband's rule, certainly was not entitled to boast that she had him under hers. She then made her first grand attack as to the furniture in Portman Square; and was then for the first time specially informed that the furniture there was not matter of much importance, as she would not in future be required to move her family to that residence during the London seasons. The sort of conversations which grew from such a commencement may be imagined. Had Lady Arabella worried her lord less, he might perhaps have considered with more coolness the folly of encountering so prodigious an increase to the expense of his establishment; had he not spent so much money in a pursuit which his wife did not enjoy, she might perhaps have been more sparing in her rebukes as to his indifference to her London pleasures. As it was, the hounds came to Greshamsbury, and Lady Arabella did go to London for some period in each year, and the family expenses were by no means lessened.

The kennels, however, were now again empty. Two years previous to the time at which our story begins, the hounds had been carried off to the seat of some richer sportsman. This was more felt by Mr Gresham than any other misfortune which he had yet incurred. He had been master of hounds for ten years, and that work he had at any rate done well. The popularity among his neighbours which he had lost as a politician he had regained as a sportsman, and he would fain have remained autocratic in the hunt, had it been possible. But he so remained much longer than he should have done, and at last they went away, not without signs and sounds of visible joy on the part of Lady Arabella.

But we have kept the Greshamsbury tenantry waiting under the oak-trees by far too long. Yes; when young Frank came of age there was still enough left at Greshamsbury, still means enough at the squire's disposal, to light one bonfire, to roast, whole in its skin, one bullock. Frank's virility came on him not quite unmarked, as that of the parson's son might do, or the son of the neighbouring attorney. It could still be reported in the Barsetshire Conservative *Standard* that 'The beards wagged all' at Greshamsbury, now as they had done for many centuries on similar festivals. Yes; it was so reported. But this, like so many other such reports, had but a shadow of truth in it. 'They poured the liquor in,' certainly, those

who were there; but the beards did not wag as they had been wont to wag in former years. Beards won't wag for the telling. The squire was at his wits' end for money, and the tenants one and all had so heard. Rents had been raised on them; timber had fallen fast; the lawyer on the estate was growing rich; tradesmen in Barchester, nay, in Greshamsbury itself, were beginning to mutter; and the squire himself would not be merry. Under such circumstances the throats of a tenantry will still swallow, but their beards will not wag.

'I minds well,' said Farmer Oaklerath to his neighbour, 'when the sqouire hisself comed of age. Lord love 'ee! there was fun going that day. There was more yale drank then than's been brewed at the big house these two years. T'old squoire was a one'er.'

'And I minds when squoire was borned; minds it well,' said an old farmer sitting opposite. 'Them was the days! it an't that long ago neither. Squoire an't come o' fifty yet; no, nor an't nigh it, though he looks it. Things be altered at Greemsbury' – such was the rural pronunciation – 'altered sadly, neebor Oaklerath. Well, well; I'll soon be gone, I will, and so it an't no use talking; but arter paying one pound fifteen for them acres for more nor fifty year, I didn't think I'd ever be axed for forty shilling.'

Such was the style of conversation which went on at the various tables. It had certainly been of a very different tone when the squire was born, when he came of age, and when, just two years subsequently, his son had been born. On each of these events similar rural fêtes had been given, and the squire himself had on these occasions been frequent among his guests. On the first, he had been carried round by his father, a whole train of ladies and nurses following. On the second, he had himself mixed in all the sports, the gayest of the gay, and each tenant had squeezed his way up to the lawn to get a sight of the Lady Arabella, who, as was already known, was to come from Courcy Castle to Greshamsbury to be their mistress. It was little they any of them cared now for the Lady Arabella. On the third, he himself had borne his child in his arms as his father had before borne him; he was then in the zenith of his pride, and though the tenantry whispered that he was somewhat less familiar with them than of yore, that he had put on somewhat too much of the De Courcy airs, still he was their squire, their master, the rich man in whose hand they lay.

The old squire was then gone, and they were proud of the young member and his lady bride in spite of a little hauteur. None of them were proud of him now.

He walked once round among the guests, and spoke a few words of welcome at each table; and as he did so the tenants got up and bowed and wished health to the old squire, happiness to the young one, and prosperity to Greshamsbury; but, nevertheless, it was but a tame affair.

There were also other visitors, of the gentle sort, to do honour to the occasion; but not such swarms, not such a crowd at the mansion itself and at the houses of the neighbouring gentry as had always been collected on these former gala doings. Indeed, the party at Greshamsbury was not a large one, and consisted chiefly of Lady de Courcy and her suite. Lady Arabella still kept up, as far as she was able, her close connexion with Courcy Castle. She was there as much as possible, to which Mr Gresham never objected; and she took her daughters there whenever she could, though, as regarded the two elder girls, she was often interfered with by Mr Gresham, and not unfrequently by the girls themselves. Lady Arabella had a pride in her son, though he was by no means her favourite child. He was, however, the heir of Greshamsbury, of which fact she was disposed to make the most, and he was also a fine gainly open-hearted young man, who could not but be dear to any mother. Lady Arabella did love him dearly, though she felt a sort of disappointment in regard to him, seeing that he was not so much like a De Courcy as he should have been. She did love him dearly; and, therefore, when he came of age she got her sister-in-law and all the Ladies Amelia, Rosina, etc., to come to Greshamsbury; and she also, with some difficulty, persuaded the Honourable Georges and the Honourable Johns to be equally condescending. Lord de Courcy himself was in attendance at the Court – or said that he was – and Lord Porlock, the eldest son, simply told his aunt when he was invited that he never bored himself with those sort of things.

Then there were the Bakers, and the Batesons, and the Jacksons, who all lived near and returned home at night; there was the Reverend Caleb Oriel, the High-Church rector, with his beautiful sister, Patience Oriel; there was Mr Yates Umbleby, the attorney and agent; and there was Dr Thorne, and the doctor's modest, quiet-looking little niece, Miss Mary.