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LUCIUS DAVOREN

OR

PUBLICANS AND SINNERS

A NOVEL.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," ETC.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. III.

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CONTENTS

O F V O L U M E III.

BOOK THE THIRD

(Continued).

	Page
CHAPTER XIII. How Geoffrey enjoyed the Garden-Party	7
— XIV. Lucille has strange Dreams	35
— XV. The Dawn of Hope	46
— XVI. An old Friend reappears	53
— XVII. Lucius seeks Enlightenment	74
— XVIII. Mr. Agar's Colonial Client	84
— XIX. Lucille's Confession	93
— XX. Lucille makes a new Friend	126

BOOK THE LAST.

— I. At Rouen	137
— II. The Story grows clearer	155
— III. Julie Dumarquès	174
— IV. Coming to meet his Doom	190
— V. "'Tis with us perpetual Night"	207
— VI. Lucius in Quest of Justice	227
— VII. The End of all Delusions	240

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

	Page
CHAPTER VIII. Aunt Glenlyne	247
— IX. Geoffrey has Thoughts of Shanghai	272
— X. Lucius surrenders a doubtful Chance	293
EPILOGUE	308

LUCIUS DAVOREN.



BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER XIII.

How Geoffrey enjoyed the Garden-Party.

WHILE Lucius Davoren was thus occupied at the east end of London, Geoffrey Hossack was making the best of an existence which he had made up his mind to consider utterly joyless, so long as adverse fate denied him the one desire of his heart. For him in vain warm August skies were deeply blue, and the bosky dells and glades of the New Forest still untouched by autumn's splendid decay. For him vainly ran the bright river between banks perfumed with wild flowers. He beheld these things from the lofty standpoint of discontent, and in his heart called Nature a poor creature.

"I would rather be mewed up in Whitecross-street prison, or in the Venetian Piombi, with Janet for my wife, than enjoy all that earth can give of natural beauty or artificial splendour without her," he said to

himself, when his cousins had bored him into a misanthropical mood by their insistence upon the charms of rural life, as exemplified at Hillersdon Grange.

"I'm afraid you have no soul for Nature," said Belle, when she had kept Geoffrey on his feet for an hour in the cramped old-fashioned hot-houses, where she went in desperately for ferns and orchids, and imitated Lady Baker on a small scale.

"I'm afraid not—for Nature in flower-pots," answered Geoffrey, with an unsympathetic yawn. "I daresay these Calopogons, and Gymnadenia, and what's-its-names are very grand, but I've seen finer growing wild in the valleys on the southern side of the Rocky Mountains. You English people only get nature in miniature—a poor etiolated creature. You have no notion of the goddess Gea in her Titanic vigour, as she appears on 'the other side.'"

"Meaning America?" said Belle contemptuously, as if that western continent were something too vulgar for her serious consideration.

The sun shone upon Lady Baker's fête as gaily as if fine weather had been a matter within her ladyship's power of provision, like the luncheon from Gunter's, or the costumes for the tableaux vivants. The lady herself was radiant as the sunlight. Everybody had come—everybody worth receiving, at any rate. She gave Geoffrey a smile of particular cordiality