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Jules Verne

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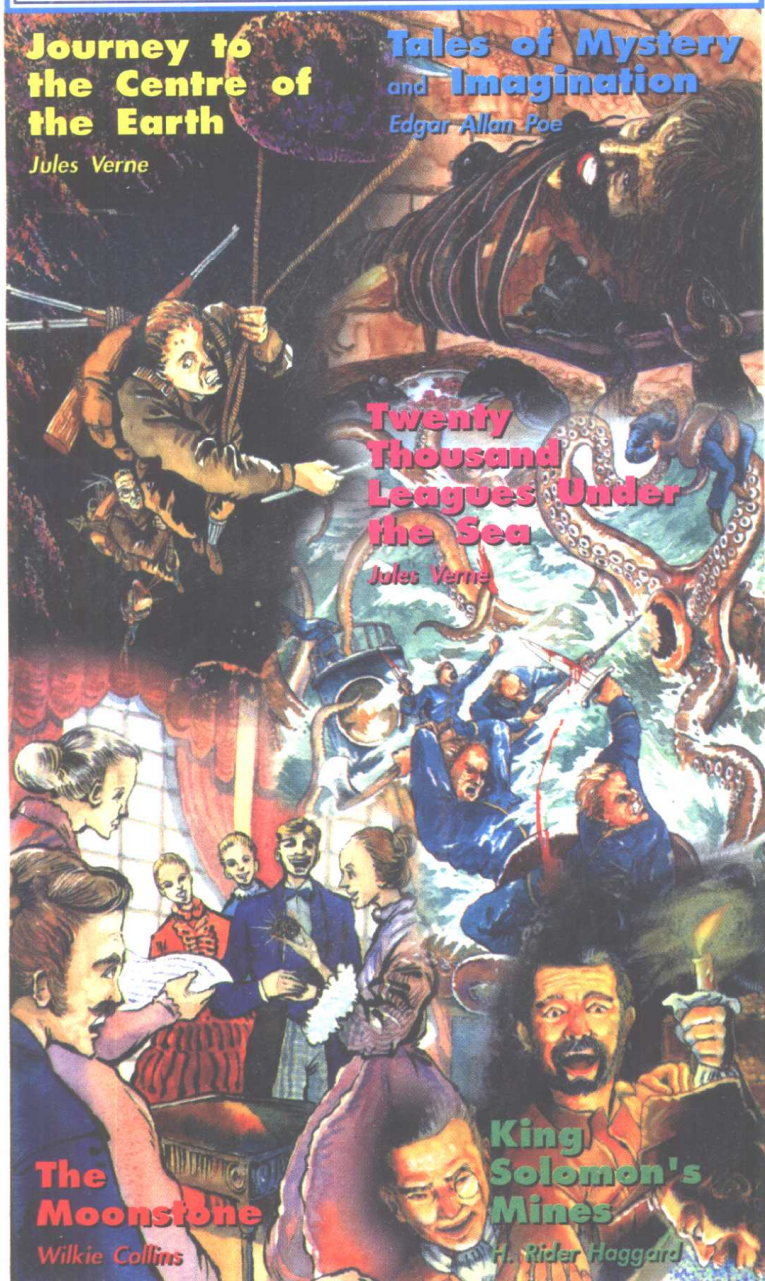
Jules Verne

The Moonstone

Wilkie Collins

King Solomon's Mines

H. Rider Haggard



The Moonstone

月 亮 宝 石

Wilkie Collins

Syllabus designer: David Foulds

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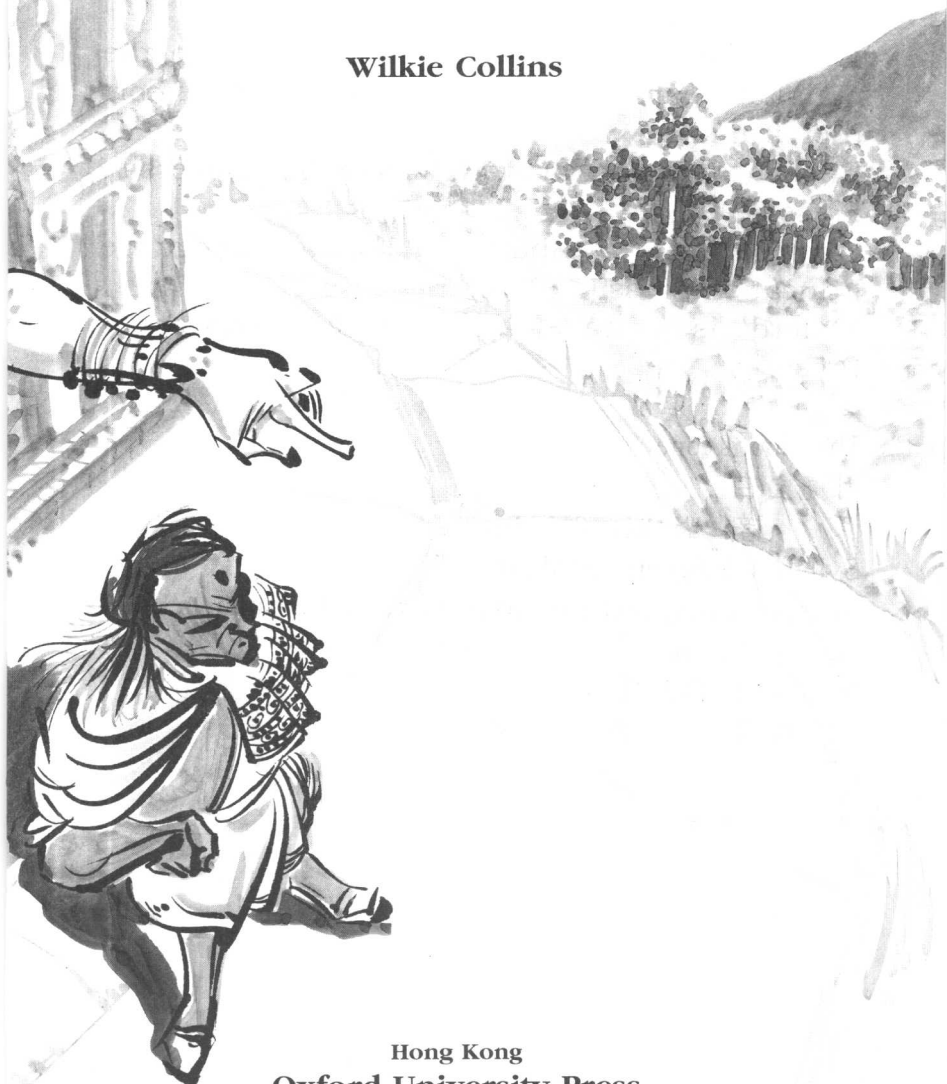
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The Moonstone

Wilkie Collins



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The Moonstone

月亮宝石

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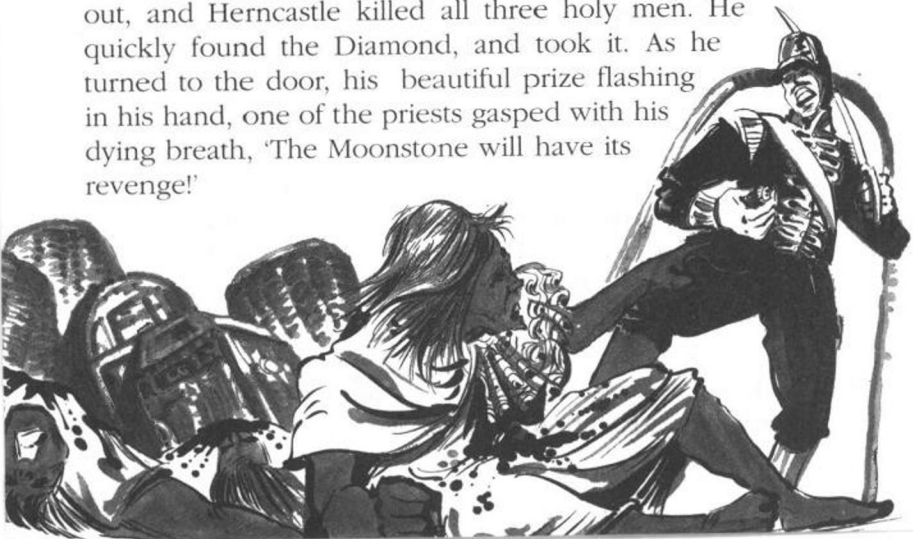
PROLOGUE

The history of the Diamond

Hundreds of years ago in India, an unusually large diamond called the Moonstone was set in the forehead of a statue of a Hindu god, and placed in a sacred temple. Legend says that three Hindu priests were commanded by the god himself to watch over the Diamond until the end of time. It was also said that misfortune would come to anyone else who touched it, and to his family.

In the eleventh century, thieves stole the Moonstone from the statue, and it passed from one owner to another. One by one the owners of the Moonstone died terrible deaths. And the three guardian priests kept their watch.

In the last years of the eighteenth century, the English army attacked and captured a city in India called Seringapatam. The ruler of Seringapatam was at that time the owner of the Moonstone. He was killed in the battle. An English officer, John Herncastle, who had heard the story of the Moonstone, decided to get the Diamond for himself. He entered the palace storeroom, and discovered three Indian priests keeping watch there. A struggle broke out, and Herncastle killed all three holy men. He quickly found the Diamond, and took it. As he turned to the door, his beautiful prize flashing in his hand, one of the priests gasped with his dying breath, 'The Moonstone will have its revenge!'



PART 1

The Loss of the Diamond (1848)

Told by Gabriel Betteredge, servant to Lady Verinder



1

THE THREE INDIANS

The family servant

This morning, my lady's nephew, Mr Franklin Blake, told me that he and the lawyer, Mr Bruff, had decided to have the whole story of Miss Rachel's lost Diamond written
5 down. It was agreed that the people who were most closely connected with each part of the story should write about what happened, as far as they knew it.

As a beginning, I will tell you that at the age of fifteen I worked as a servant-boy to the three Herncastle sisters,
10 Miss Adelaide, Miss Caroline and Miss Julia, who was in my opinion the best of all three. I lived with the Herncastle family until Miss Julia married Sir John Verinder. She then became Lady Verinder, and I went with her to her husband's house and lands in Yorkshire, near Frizinghall.

15 After a time, I married my housekeeper (it seemed to me it would be cheaper to marry her than to keep paying her). After five years she died, leaving me a little girl, Penelope. Shortly afterwards Sir John died, and my lady was left with her daughter, Rachel. My lady was very good
20 to Penelope and me, and when my daughter was old enough, she became Miss Rachel's personal maid. Not long afterwards I became the chief servant in the whole house.

Now I must tell you about the Diamond, beginning on
25 the day that we heard that Mr Franklin Blake was coming to visit her ladyship and Miss Rachel.

Franklin Blake

On Wednesday morning, 24th May 1848, my lady had some surprising news for me. Her nephew, Franklin Blake, had come back from abroad (he had been in Europe for some years, finishing off his education). He would be staying for a month. 5

I remembered Master Franklin as a fine young lad, but he had some bad habits, especially to do with money. When I had last seen him, as a boy, he had borrowed seven shillings from me. He was now twenty-five. I looked forward to seeing what kind of man he had become. However, I did not expect to get my seven shillings back. 10

Early the next morning, my lady and Miss Rachel drove into town. I was busily checking to see that all was ready for our guest's arrival that evening, when I heard a sound like the beating of a drum. Going round to the front of the house, I found three Indians there, dressed in white. With them was a thin little English boy. When I asked them what they wanted, they said they were travelling magicians, and asked permission to perform their tricks before the lady of the house. I informed them that she was out. They bowed low, and went away. 15 20

I went to sit in the sun, but then my daughter Penelope came along from the house. She wanted me to have the Indians arrested at once. She said that they meant to harm Mr Franklin! I was very surprised. At first I did not believe her, but I could see that she was very serious about it, so I listened. This is what she told me. 25

Penelope had been in the garden, and had seen the Indians leaving the house. As there are a lot of trees in the garden, and she was behind them, they did not see her, but she could see them. Naturally, she wanted to know what they were doing, so she watched them. After they had walked a little way, they all turned and stared hard in the direction of our house. Then the chief Indian said (in English) to the boy, 'Hold out your hand.' 30 35



He poured some ink onto it. Touching the boy's head, and making signs in the air, he said, 'Look.' The boy became quite stiff, looking hard at his hand. Then the chief

Indian said to him, 'Is it on this road and no other that the English gentleman from foreign parts will travel today?'

The boy nodded once. 'Has he got It with him?' The boy nodded again.

'Will he arrive, as he said, at the end of the day?'

The boy said he was too tired to see any more. After that the strange group went on their way.

My girl and I both thought the 'Englishman from foreign parts' must be Mr Franklin, but what could 'It' be?

Rosanna Spearman

After Penelope went back into the house, the kitchen-maid came out, complaining that the new servant, Rosanna, was late for dinner. I said I'd go and find her.

I was fond of Rosanna Spearman. She had had an
 30 unhappy life. She was a child of the London streets, and
 had kept herself alive by stealing, until she was caught.
 Then she was sent to prison and after that, to a special
 school. My lady took her from the school, and gave her
 a chance to better herself. In return, Rosanna worked very
 35 hard to show that she deserved my lady's kindness.

Very few people knew where our new servant had come from, but even so the other servants did not like her. She was a quiet girl and did not make friends. She was also terribly plain-looking, and one of her shoulders was bigger than the other.

I thought I knew where I would find her. Our house is in the eastern part of Yorkshire, and close to the sea. There is a walk through a wood of fir trees which brings you out on the loneliest and ugliest little bay on all our coast. Small sand-hills run down to the sea here, and end in two stretches of rock which reach out opposite each other. One of these stretches of rock is called the North Spit, and one the South Spit. Between the two lies the most horrible quicksand on the shores of Yorkshire. If you step into it by mistake, that is the last mistake you will ever make. Slowly it will suck you down: nothing escapes, not even the strongest animals can get out once they have fallen in. When the tide turns, the whole surface of the quicksand shakes and trembles in the strangest manner. It is called the Shivering Sand. No sensible person ever likes to go anywhere near it, but for some reason, it was there that Rosanna could always be found.

When I reached the beach, there she was, all alone and looking out at the sea. She turned, and I saw that she was crying. She was still troubled by her past. I sat down beside her, and asked her why she came to this spot.

‘I don’t know,’ she answered. ‘I try to keep away from it, but I can’t. I even dream of it. Sometimes I think that this place will one day be my grave. Look at the way it trembles,’ she said. ‘Isn’t it wonderful? Isn’t it terrible?’

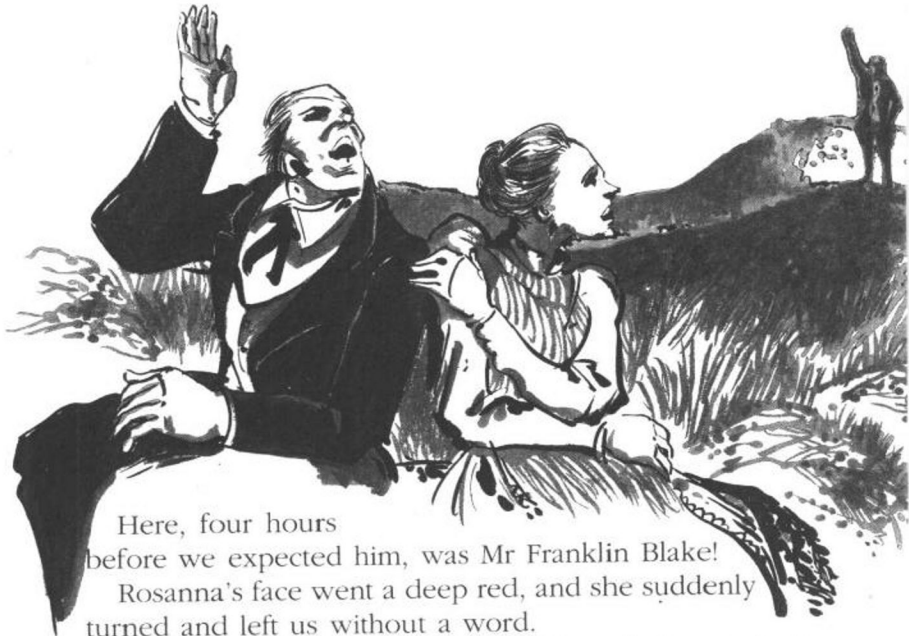
Suddenly a voice shouted, ‘Betteredge, where are you?’

Rosanna jumped to her feet. I was amazed to see her brighten all over with a kind of breathless surprise.

‘Oh! Who is that?’ she said softly.

Coming through the sand-hills was a very handsome young man with a happy smile on his face.

‘Dear old Betteredge,’ he said. ‘Don’t you know me?’



Here, four hours
before we expected him, was Mr Franklin Blake!

Rosanna's face went a deep red, and she suddenly
turned and left us without a word.

5 'What an odd girl!' said Mr Franklin, a little surprised.

The wicked Colonel's Diamond

Mr Franklin explained that he had a good reason for
coming early. He said he was sure that for the past three
days, someone had been following him. He had caught
10 the early morning train to escape his watcher. He had
already spoken to Penelope, who had told him about the
three Indians.

'I think that they may have something to do with the
man who has been following me,' said Mr Franklin. 'And
15 I believe that the "It" they were talking about means this.'
He pulled something out of his pocket. 'This, Betteredge,
is my uncle Herncastle's famous Diamond.'

'Good Lord, sir!' I said in amazement, 'what are you
doing with the wicked old Colonel's Diamond?'

20 'The Colonel is dead,' replied Mr Franklin, 'and he left
his Diamond as a birthday present to my cousin Rachel.
But why do you call him "the wicked Colonel"?''

I told Mr Franklin that many things were said about the
Colonel and his bad ways, but the story of the Diamond

was all I needed to mention. It was said that while he was in India, the Colonel had obtained a most wonderful diamond in a very disgraceful way. No one knew the full story, but they knew enough and they were happy to guess the rest. When John Herncastle came back to England, respectable society turned its back upon him, but he kept the Diamond in spite of this. 5

After his return to England from India, I saw him only once. He came to my lady's home in London. It was Miss Rachel's birthday, 21st June, and he told me he had come to wish her many happy returns of the day. However, my lady had never liked the Colonel. When I informed her that he had come to the house, she refused to allow him to see either herself or her daughter. I went back to tell the Colonel. I expected him to be angry, but if he was, he did not show it. Instead he looked at me for a moment, and laughed. 'I shall remember my niece's birthday,' he said. 10 15

The next birthday came round, and we heard that he was ill. Now, six months later, the Colonel was dead. 20

'Betteredge,' said Mr Franklin, 'we must ask ourselves three things. Was the Colonel's Diamond an object of evil in India? Has this evil followed the Diamond to England? Did the Colonel know that great misfortune would come to anyone who owned the Diamond, and has he left it to his niece knowing that it may harm her?' I could see that Mr Franklin's European education had turned him into a very clear thinker. 25

The Colonel's will

Mr Franklin continued. 30

'My uncle, the Colonel, had some family papers which my father wanted. When he returned from India, he said my father could have these papers if he would do something for him. The Colonel had decided that if he kept the Diamond himself, something very bad would 35

happen to him. He wanted my father to take the Diamond and put it in a safe place. Every year he would send a letter to let my father know he was still alive. If no letter arrived, it would mean he had been murdered. In that
5 case, my father was to open an envelope which contained instructions on what to do with the Diamond.

‘Everything was agreed, and as soon as my father received the Diamond, he put it in a bank. Year after year the letters came. The last one arrived six months ago,
10 saying that the Colonel was dying of natural causes. He asked my father to be the executor for his will. He left the Moonstone as a birthday present to his niece. After the Colonel’s death, we found out that the Diamond was worth at least twenty thousand pounds.

15 ‘Although the Colonel was not murdered, my father was curious to know what instructions the mysterious envelope contained. When he opened it, he found a letter saying that if the Colonel died by an act of violence, the Diamond was to be cut up into four or six separate stones.
20 These were to be sold, and the money given to a good cause. The Diamond cut up would in fact be worth far more than the Diamond whole.

‘I believe my uncle’s life was protected by this plan. The Colonel must have known that the Moonstone was
25 only really important to some people if it was kept in one piece. If someone just wanted to take the Colonel’s wealth, these instructions made murdering him an even better idea. But if there was a plot to get the whole Diamond for some other reason, and not for the money, then the
30 Colonel was safe.’

‘What plot do you speak of, sir?’ I cried.

‘A plot organized by the people who were the first owners of the Diamond,’ said Mr Franklin. ‘The Diamond belongs to one of their gods, and they will do anything
35 to get it back.’

The Indian magicians! We looked at each other for a long moment.

MISS RACHEL'S BIRTHDAY PRESENT

Difficult questions

'Betteredge,' said Mr Franklin, 'we must now ask ourselves why the Colonel has left this Diamond to his niece. Here, read this.' He handed me a piece of paper on which was written a part of the Colonel's will. This is what it said: 5

I leave to my niece, Rachel Verinder, the yellow Diamond known as Moonstone, subject to this condition: that her mother shall be living at the time. The Diamond shall be given to my niece, on her next birthday after my death, and in the presence of my sister Julia Verinder. My sister should be told that I give the Diamond to her daughter to show that I have forgiven her for the way in which she has behaved towards me; and especially the insulting way in which I was treated when I last visited her house. 10 15

'By bringing the Diamond to Rachel, am I helping the Colonel to get his revenge, or am I showing that he was really a forgiving man?' asked Mr Franklin. 'How are we to explain why he wants to give Rachel the Diamond only if her mother is alive? Oh, what should I do?' 20

'Miss Rachel's birthday is on 21st June, which is nearly four weeks away,' I said. 'Let's wait and see what happens. If we need to, we can warn my lady when the time comes. And in the meantime, why not take the Diamond to the bank at Frizinghall? It will be quite safe there.' 25

Mr Franklin jumped to his feet. 'Betteredge,' he said, 'that is a very good idea. I shall go this minute.'

We found the fastest horse in the stables, and he rode away to put the Diamond once more in the bank. 30

Love at first sight

Penelope told me that after Rosanna had returned to the house, she asked hundreds of questions about Mr Franklin Blake, and had been seen writing his name inside her sewing-box. She had also been crying and looking at her badly-shaped shoulder in the mirror.

'Father,' said Penelope, 'I think Rosanna has fallen in love with Mr Franklin at first sight!'

Mr Franklin returned from Frizinghall, having put the Diamond safely into the bank. I did not see his meeting with his cousin, but Penelope said she had never seen Miss Rachel looking so pretty. When I took Mr Franklin his brandy, I found that the sight of Miss Rachel had made him forget about the Moonstone.

At midnight, I locked up, accompanied by Samuel, another servant. Then I stepped outside for a breath of fresh air. Looking along the path beside the terrace, I saw the shadow of a person at the corner of the house. I went back to get Samuel. We each took a gun, and went all round the house, but found no one. As we returned, I noticed a small bottle lying on the ground, full of a thick, black ink. I realized that I had disturbed the three Indians.

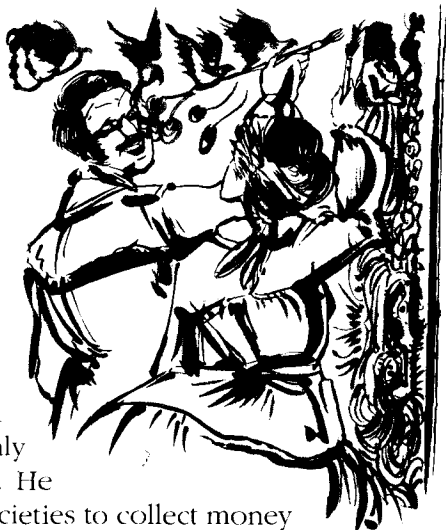
Painting Miss Rachel's door

The next morning I showed Mr Franklin the little bottle, and told him what had happened. He thought the Indians had brought the boy to the house to show them the way to the Diamond, and had discovered that it had been put in the bank. Mr Franklin and I waited to see what might happen, but the Indians seemed to have disappeared.

On 29th May, Mr Franklin and Miss Rachel together began to paint her sitting-room door with pictures of birds, flowers and fairies. It took a long time, but they never seemed to get tired of the work. We servants began to wonder if there might be a wedding in the house quite soon. It was easy to see that Mr Franklin was in love.

But Miss Rachel was a girl who did not tell her secrets to anyone. No one was sure what her feelings were towards Mr Franklin.

I myself believed that Miss Rachel had chosen another cousin, Godfrey Ablewhite, to be her husband. He stood over six feet tall. He had a smooth face and golden hair. And he was not only handsome, but good too. He did a lot to help ladies' societies to collect money for the poor. His speeches at charity meetings were quite famous. What chance did Mr Franklin have against such a man as this? Well, we would find out at Miss Rachel's birthday party, when the two men met.



20

Meanwhile, Mr Franklin never stopped trying to please Miss Rachel. He even gave up smoking his cigars because she hated the smell, although he slept so badly afterwards that she begged him to start smoking once more.

Godfrey Ablewhite arrives

25

Rosanna's behaviour was very peculiar at this time. One day Penelope caught her in Mr Franklin's room, secretly removing a rose which Miss Rachel had given to him, and putting in another which she had picked herself. The poor girl was also rather rude to Miss Rachel, and was always getting in Mr Franklin's way.

30

On 20th June a note arrived from Mr Godfrey, saying that the next day, he and his sisters would ride over for dinner. He sent Miss Rachel a beautiful china box with his love and best wishes. Mr Franklin had only given her a

35