

# TIME'S REVENGES

A Novel

BY

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"THE WEAKER VESSEL" "A DANGEROUS CATSPAW"  
"FIRST PERSON SINGULAR" ETC.



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## CHAPTER I

To be more royalist than the king is a common vice with a certain order of mind. Mr. Stanley Mallard fell into it when, after thirty years of unusually profitable broker's work on the Liverpool 'Change, he decided to turn country gentleman.

He was rich enough to be able to afford the gratification of his most expensive whims, and at the beginning he was quite resolute to be more exclusively and exquisitely "county" than the county people among whom he proposed to spend the remnant of his days. He looked out, to begin with, for the oldest, the largest, and the most picturesque country mansion to be had anywhere for love or money within the limits of England. He did not want a feudal castle, or he would have had one. He wanted simply a country gentleman's house of the most unexceptionable type and character, and he found it in the neighborhood of Heydon Hay, which, as all men should know, stands in the very heart of the English Midlands.

The Abbey, for so the house was called, was but newly vacated by the Jessops, an ancient and honorable household, brought to untimely grief by injudicious speculation. It stood in the midst of a well-wooded park, at a distance of some three or four miles from its nearest county neighbor, and from its roof was visible the height of Beacon Hargate and the more distant hills of Quarrymoor. All about it lay cultured and prosperous farm-lands, with here and there a homestead built of that mellow-colored red brick of which modern builders seem to have lost the secret.

Mr. Stanley Mallard had undoubtedly secured the noblest house of its class in the county, but the place had one or two defects which he proposed to himself to obliterate. Its gardens, though beautiful and old-fashioned, were small. Mr. Mallard determined to enlarge them, and to make them the wonder of the neighborhood. The vineries were insignificant. They, too, were to be enlarged. There were one or two other comparative trifles of this nature, but the one thing which most appealed to the heart of the new owner was the desire to become a breeder of game, and to be renowned for the excellence of his coverts.

For a man to be a country gentleman it seemed in some sort necessary to Mr. Mallard to be in a kind of superbly disdainful opposition to the common people. Now the common people, at this time, were in a state of some froth and uproar. Mr. Mallard opined that they were, in the main, better fed and housed, and generally more pampered than common people had a right to be. He attributed the spread of Chartism to these undoubted facts, and his soul abhorred a Whig as a true patriot soul must always hate the false half-ally who palters with the enemy. Mr. Stanley Mallard's father had himself so far belonged to the people as to wheel a fish-barrow in the East End of London, but it had pleased Providence to make Mr. Mallard himself wealthier than the ordinary run of wealthy men; and, standing on the pile of money he had gathered for himself, he seemed to his own easily satisfied fancy to be at a very lofty height indeed above those from whose roots he had grown.

There was already a little shooting in the neighborhood of the Abbey, but it was insignificant alike in quantity and quality; and Mr. Mallard would never have bought the property at all if he had not been aware of the fact that the ninety-nine years' lease of a farm, which formed a portion of it, was on the very eve of expiry. When he entered on possession at the Abbey this lease was held by Thomas Barton, a man of the solid English home-loving type, who conceived himself rooted to the soil. His father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and one ancestor even yet remoter, had

farmed the land before him. The place had been known as Barton's Farm time out of mind, and if it had ever owned an earlier name there was no local antiquary who had found a record of it. Farmer Barton had one stalwart son, at this time four-and-twenty years of age, but no other kith or kin. The family somehow had died down to this, but the young fellow was engaged to be married, and the farmer lived in hope that he should yet see new branches springing from the old stock. Tom the younger was waiting only for a renewal of the lease, and expected that with the sort of unconscious certainty with which we all look for the rising of to-morrow's sun. The Bartons were not wealthy people, and, to tell the truth, the land they valued so highly was mainly of a sour, thin character; but it was their pride that the old rent-book, handed down from sire to son for nigh a hundred years, had been receipted punctually every quarter-day without a break. They knew themselves to be excellent tenants; they were paying, all things considered, a fair value for the land; and, to their apprehension, the worst thing that could befall would be a bit of friendly tussel between the agent and themselves with regard to an increase of rental. Perhaps they might be called on to pay a little more—perhaps not. Father and son talked the matter over, smoking their pipes by the kitchen fire of a night-time, and were inclined to be hopeful.

It fell upon them with such a shock as if Nature herself had gone to pieces, when their application for a renewal of the lease was refused. Mr. Kelly, the Castle Barfield lawyer, who had acted for the Jessops during the elder Barton's lifetime, did his best to soften the blow. He wrote, saying what admirable tenants they had been, and how strongly he had recommended their claims to the new proprietor. He expressed himself in terms of genuine sorrow for the decision which had been arrived at. His own powers of protest were, of course, early exhausted. There was nothing else for it. They must go.

They made inquiries as to the intended disposition of the land, and could learn nothing. One or other of them, father