

The Duchess and the Jeweller

(Explanations)

3) As their hands touched. . . . behind them.

These lines have been taken from the short story Duchess and the Jeweller written by one of the most eminent novelists of our time. In these lines we get a very delicate picture of the relation between Oliver and the Duchess. It was not altogether a new relation. They knew each other even before. In fact, they had come in contact several times. They had settled several business deals. Oliver dealt in a kind of business in which he required the support of many such Duchesses and Courtesans. The Duchess of Lambourne too, was a seasoned lady. She had also bargained with him several times. They were old acquaintances. So as soon as their hands touched, a new relation was established between them. They were friends yet enemies friends because they were interested in the bargain — the business transaction. They were enemies because their intention was to defraud each other. He was master, she was mistress. Each held a status in life. Each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other, each felt this and knew this everything. They had entered many times in fraudulent cheats. So, they suspected each other, and yet there was no way out. The nature of their business was such that they had to rely upon each other. Everytime they had met in the same dark room against the background of the leafy trees in June.