The train sped northward, under innumerable tunnels. It was only an hour’s journey, but Mrs. Munt had to raise and lower the window again and again. She passed through the South Welwyn Tunnel, saw light for a moment, and entered the North Welwyn Tunnel, of tragic fame. She traversed the immense viaduct, whose arches span untroubled meadows and the dreamy flow of Tewin Water. She skirted the parks of politicians. At times the Great North Road accompanied her, more suggestive of infinity than any railway, awakening, after a nap of a hundred years, to such life as is conferred by the stench of motor-cars, and to such culture as is implied by the advertisements of antibilious pills. To history, to tragedy, to the past, to the future, Mrs. Munt remained equally indifferent; hers but to concentrate on the end of her journey, and to rescue poor Helen from this dreadful mess.

The station for Howards End was at Hilton, one of the large villages that are strung so frequently along the North Road, and that owe their size to the traffic of coaching and pre-coaching days. Being near London, it had not shared in the rural decay, and its long High Street had budded out right and left into residential estates. For about a mile a series of tiled and slated houses passed before Mrs. Munt’s inattentive eyes, a series broken at one point by six Danish tumuli that stood shoulder to shoulder along the highroad, tombs of soldiers. Beyond these tumuli, habitations thickened, and the train came to a standstill in a tangle that was almost a town.

The station, like the scenery, like Helen’s letters, struck an indeterminate note. Into which country will it lead, England or Suburbia? It was new, it had island platforms and a subway, and the superficial comfort exacted by business men. But it held hints of local life, personal intercourse, as even Mrs. Munt was to discover.

“I want a house,” she confided to the ticket boy. “Its name is Howards Lodge. Do you know where it is?”

“Mr. Wilcox!” the boy called.

A young man in front of them turned around.

“She’s wanting Howards End.”

There was nothing for it but to go forward, though Mrs. Munt was too much agitated even to stare at the stranger. But remembering that there were two brothers, she had the sense to say to him, “Excuse me asking, but are you the younger Mr. Wilcox or the elder?”

“The younger. Can I do anything for you?”

“Oh, well”—she controlled herself with difficulty. “Really. Are you? I—” She moved; away from the ticket boy and lowered her voice. “I am Miss Schlegel’s aunt. I ought to introduce myself, oughtn’t I? My name is Mrs. Munt.”

She was conscious that he raised his cap and said quite coolly, “Oh, rather; Miss Schlegel is stopping with us. Did you want to see her?”

“Possibly.”

“I’ll call you a cab. No; wait a mo—” He thought. “Our motor’s here. I’ll run you up in it.”

“That is very kind.”

“Not at all, if you’ll just wait till they bring out a parcel from the office. This way.”

“My niece is not with you by any chance?”

“No; I came over with my father. He has gone on north in your train. You’ll see Miss Schlegel at lunch. You’re coming up to lunch, I hope?”

“I should like to come UP,” said Mrs. Munt, not committing herself to nourishment until she had studied Helen’s lover a little more. He seemed a gentleman, but had so rattled her round that her powers of observation were numbed. She glanced at him stealthily