

A TALE OF TWO NATIONS

CHAPTER I.

TWO bankers and financial operators in London met one evening at the residence of one of them by invitation of the host, to discuss what he claimed to be a highly important matter. It was in the year 1869. The fog had hung heavily over the big metropolis all day long, and the manipulators of stocks, bonds and money, had deserted their offices early in the afternoon, to frequent the clubs, or to enjoy the luxury of their magnificent homes.

Baron Rothe, the host, was a portly, well-fed, brainy diplomat and financier. He dealt in bonds, and in bonds only, save that he was a banker and that through his bank all deals were made. The bonds he bought and sold were governments or municipals or the first issue of railway bonds. All of his collaterals were such that he could realize on them at any time in a few days. This is what he called safe financiering. If at any time he so desired, he could have raised the enormous sum of two hundred and fifty million dollars, or fifty million pounds sterling, on ten days' notice. He came of a family of financiers and was an improvement on his ancestors.

His guest, Sir William T. Cline, like himself, was very wealthy, and had two brothers and a partner, each