

609316.

FASHIONABLE LIFE;

OR,

PARIS AND LONDON.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

“THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF A CLEVER WOMAN,”

“THE BARNABYS,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1856.

NAWAB SALAR JUNG BAHADUR.

PARIS AND LONDON.

CHAPTER I.

HOWEVER unfortunate Clara Holmwood might deem herself, and certainly not without reason, as to the result of her attachment to Henry Hamilton, the singularly happy chance which had led to her connexion with Lady Amelia Wharton, appeared as if destined by her guardian angel to atone for it.

Never, upon any occasion since they had been together, had any point of their domestic arrangements been discussed between them, without resulting to both parties in the pleasant conviction that their feelings and opinions

were in the most perfect unison on all such points ; nor could either of them fail to become more and more aware of the fact, that the wide difference that certainly existed between them, both as to fortune and rank, only tended to unite them more closely, and to make them both feel that they had been equally wise and fortunate in forming the arrangements which had so closely linked them together.

One proof of this, among many others, might be found in the facility with which they had contrived to achieve such a complete revolution in their mode of living (as far, at least, as general society was concerned), without either of them feeling that she differed in opinion from the other, on any one point concerning it.

In one respect, indeed, the fact that they were two, and not one, notwithstanding this very perfect unity, was exceedingly convenient, for it greatly facilitated the process of escaping from both the visits and the invitations of their too numerous friends, without quarrelling with any of them ; for when Lady Amelia was attacked on the subject, she pleaded

the health of Clara, who suffered severely from the heat of crowded rooms ; and when Clara had to show cause for their retreat, she pleaded her friend's anxiety about the health of her daughter, which she thought was likely to suffer from the same cause.

In short, from one cause or another, they seemed to be in possession of a more complete *carte blanche* as to the choice of their society, than the majority of people can boast:

Upon the whole, however, they did not, by any means, abuse the privilege ; and excepting that they gave more dinners and fewer balls than most others, possessed of equal power to do exactly what they best liked, there was nothing very particularly eccentric in their proceedings.

But though they did not give balls, both the presiding ladies were exceedingly good-natured on the subject of waltzing ; for Annie was an excellent waltzer, and, like every one else possessing the same accomplishment, she was extremely fond of the exercise ; and many an evening, when they had, by common consent, declined a fine ball, she might have been

seen at home in much fuller enjoyment of this waltzing, than it would have been possible for her to have found, had the invitation to the fine ball been accepted.

But this was a pleasure which Clara could not share with her, for she had never been taught to waltz ; and although Annie almost on her knees implored her to accept her as a teacher in this enchanting art, she could only get a smile and a kiss in return, accompanied by the assurance that if the half of her future life were to be devoted to the study, she should lie down and die at last without having ever been able to take a single trial without stumbling. “ And though I know, dearest Annie,” she added, “ that you would always pick me up again in the very kindest manner possible, it would not prevent my suffering from that most painful sensation which we call giddiness, but which I think ought to be called misery.”

“ Misery !” exclaimed Annie, looking very sincerely dismayed. “ Misery ! My dear, dear Miss Holmwood ! Do you think I would purchase the greatest pleasure that could be

offered to me, at the expense of your feeling miserable ?”

“No ; I am sure you would not, Annie. Do not fancy that I meant to accuse you of it,” replied Clara, with an affectionate caress ; “and I only used this vehement language to express my incapacity, that you might set your dear kind heart at rest about it at once, and prevent your fancying that it could ever be possible for me to like it.”

“But how will you then be able to bear the tiresome sameness of watching us ?” said Annie, shaking her pretty head very gravely. “Mamma, you know, delights in playing waltzes, almost as much as I delight in dancing them . . . And as to aunt Sarah, she never looks so perfectly happy, I think, as when she is sitting in her favourite low chair and watching us . . . But you ! dear, dear Miss Holmwood ! What is to become of you ?”

“I will tell you, Annie,” replied the heiress, with a very kind and loving smile, but with sufficient earnestness of manner to convince her young friend that she was not jesting.

“I will tell you, Annie, what shall become of me. I will take possession of the back drawing-room, but without closing the folding-doors of it, however, for in some moods I would rather watch your graceful *girouettes*, than listen to an heir-apparent of King Solomon, even if such a one proposed a *tête-à-tête* to me. But there are other moods, dear Annie, in which I like to talk and be talked to; and when these come upon me, I shall like to find myself up in that snug, comfortably-cushioned corner yonder, where I should see no dancing, and scarcely hear any music.”

“And where do you hope to find those heirs-apparent of King Solomon, whose wisdom you intend to listen to in the corner?” said Annie, laughing.

“I shall find them, Annie, somewhere or other, you may depend upon it. Perhaps I shall not be very strictly particular, you know, respecting their right of succession . . . and, moreover, I shall admit no *salique law* to contract the limits of my choice. I often find women who can talk very well . . . and moreover, my dear, in order to set your dear little

heart at rest concerning me during your domestic waltzings, I hereby promise to retire to my downy pillow, whenever I happen to wish for it, and neither your steps nor your notes will ever reach me in my remote paradise over the terrace."

Although all this was certainly said for the purpose of setting Annie's heart at rest concerning her frequent evening dances of three or four couple instead of three or four score, it had truth in it as well as kindness.

Clara not only had a very decided liking for conversation, whenever she got what was deserving the name, but she decidedly preferred it to any amusement that could be offered to her, except reading; and herein, her strange education had done more for her, than any amount of the ordinary accomplishments bestowed on young ladies could possibly have achieved. Mr. Williamson was not only an excellent linguist, as an accomplished scholar, who brought his scholastic familiarity with languages no longer spoken, to assist his acquirement of those which had succeeded them; but he had, moreover, that special

facility of acquiring colloquial idiom, which is occasionally met with in individuals of all lands (more frequently in Russia, perhaps, than anywhere else), and which is much more frequently met with in England and in Germany, than either in France or Italy.

Whether or not Clara partook this peculiar gift, it might be difficult to say ; but certain it is, that her schoolmaster had taught her, and at an unusually early age too, to converse with much more facility in French, Italian, and German, than is often found where there has been no assistance from native masters.

That her habitually constant habit of reading had been greatly assisted by this, cannot be doubted ; but it was only *now*, that she became fully aware of the benefit derived from this remarkable colloquial facility. Had it not been for this, it is probable that her preference for conversation, when put in competition with waltzing, might have been considerably less decided. As it was, however, she found herself in the somewhat singular position of being talked to by French people, as if they forgot that she was not French ; nay, it is not im-

probable, that some among those who thus honoured her, did not yield implicit belief to her statement, but entertained a secret suspicion, that although, for some mysterious reason or other, she did not choose to mention it, she *must*, in some way or other, be of French descent ; for so deeply patriotic a feeling pervades the generality of French citizens, that few things, remarkably excellent in any way, can be recognised among them, without generating a suspicion that it must have been derived from “ the French.”

Without being at all conscious of the high compliment thus paid her, Clara found great amusement, and occasionally really very great enjoyment, in the conversation of one or two new acquaintance, who, for some reason or other, appeared to seek her society more zealously in her own drawing-room, than they had ever done during the time that she was to be met with in the crowded ball-rooms to which Lady Amelia, with little loss of time, had found easy admittance.

One of these was a Madame de Barbec, whose attention had been attracted to Clara

by hearing her speak as she thought none but a Frenchwoman could speak. At first, this said French countess stoutly denied the fact of her being English, qualifying her expression of disbelief, by acknowledging it to be possible that the young lady might be the child of English parents, but persisting in refusing to believe that she had received her education anywhere but in PARIS.

Information, however, being sought for and obtained, her incredulity speedily gave place to cordial admiration ; and having immediately sought for and obtained an introduction to Lady Amelia Wharton and her extraordinary friend, she speedily established herself as an *habituée* in their drawing-room, feeling, as she explicitly, and very truly declared, a strong desire to hear an Englishwoman converse in a way that might give her a more just idea of English powers of conversation than it was possible to obtain through the medium of the miserable jargon to which the natives of that country, both male and female, usually have recourse, when their politeness leads them to attempt *conversing in French*.

“But what renders this so particularly strange,” she added, “is the undoubted fact that almost all the English, both male and female, certainly appear to *understand* the language perfectly ; and yet there is not one in a thousand who can speak it intelligibly. I never find that they have any difficulty in comprehending what we say, and, moreover, for the most part, their notes and letters are always correct—but in speaking ! . . . what with the genders, and what with the vowels . . the difficulties are almost insurmountable.”

Clara meekly submitted to the national odium thus thrown upon her country, without attempting any remonstrance, though feeling a good deal disposed to believe that there was considerable exaggeration in the statement ; she only replied with great humility, that she could not but fear that she should herself be found to be no exception, though she might blunder less egregiously than the majority. “But may I not hope, dear lady,” she added, “that I may hear you speak my language, instead of running the risk of proving to you, by my imperfect French, that you have not

been in my case a very watchful critic? Do let me have the pleasure of conversing with you in my own language, dear countess."

Madame de Barbec shook her head and laughed. "It is very true, fair Clara," she replied (but not in English), "it is very true that I read Walter Scott, and Byron too, in the original, and, as I flatter myself, I understand, and enjoy as I read, almost, nay, I should think *quite*, as well and as much as you can do; but doing so, will no more enable me to speak in their language, than the enjoying an aria of Mozart would enable me to compose the like, or even to perform it. But let us thank the gods that my inability to speak English, need not be fatal to our intercourse. Will you and Lady Amelia let me come to you again to-morrow evening, in the same delightful way that I came last Tuesday? One of our tremendous crowds will be assembled at Count D.'s to-morrow, you know, but I am quite sure that you none of you intend to be *there*. Am I right?"

"Right in every way, dear lady," replied Clara, "but most right in believing that we

shall be enchanted to exchange the ball-room for such a visit as you offer us. It is only fair, however, to tell you, that you will not wholly escape the sight and sound of a waltz by coming here ; for if I mistake not, our fair Annie is to be indulged to-morrow evening, in twirling about here for an hour or so, to atone for the loss of Madame D.'s grand *fête*."

"Both dancing and talking, my dear, may go on very comfortably in these delightful rooms," replied Madame de Barbec. "They seem to have been built on purpose to accommodate all possible whims . . . not to mention that delicious terrace outside, which looks as if it were prepared expressly, either for love or treason, wisdom or folly."

The engagement thus unceremoniously made, was very faithfully kept, not only by Madame de Barbec, but by three or four ladies, and four gentlemen, selected from among their most petted and familiar friends ; and as one of these four gentlemen happened to be Victor Dormont, and the other half-dozen guests were all young, gay, and well disposed to be happy, there was no danger

that any of the *little* party should lament their not being present at the *great* one.

Nor were the two elder ladies at all averse to enjoy themselves; Lady Amelia declared that she felt as if she could play all night; and aunt Sarah, having placed herself, with a chair and a footstool of superlative comfort, precisely where she could best watch the dazzling evolutions of the young party, with the least possible wish of their tumbling over her, proclaimed an equal consciousness of being absolutely beyond the reach of fatigue.

All this having been arranged, decidedly in the best manner possible, Madame de Berbec and Clara quietly crept into a corner, from whence, very literally *tête-à-tête*, they could look out upon the moon-lit garden, and soon fell into the discussion of sundry interesting subjects, in which both French and English nationalities were very freely handled by both.

CHAPTER II.

It may be doubtful, whether an individual, constituted in all respects like Clara Holmwood, would be more attracted by great intellectual, or by great moral superiority.

In the ordinary intercourse of society, however, it is far easier to form a favourable judgment of the latter, than of the former ; for it is vastly less difficult for a practised talker to expatiate eloquently on the beauty of holiness, than to discourse *of mind*, without being either so common-place, or so unintelligible, both as to the powers and the products of human intellect, as to leave no very exalted idea of the success with which he has devoted himself to the study of both, or either. But there is another mode by which human beings

may be mutually attracted towards each other, and which, without having any mixture of high intelligence, or sterling virtue in it, may, and will make its way to the affections of the best and the wisest among us for who is there can resist kindness?

When a kind feeling is genuine, and is (without affectation) expressed in looks and in manner, as well as in language, it becomes, perhaps, the most unfailing propitiation of all.

In this respect Madame de Berbec was quite irresistible, and her sweet smile, and the gentle, loving expression of her soft dark eyes, had a fascination which it would have been very difficult to resist; nor was there any mixture of hypocrisy in this; but its value might have been greater, perhaps, if the feeling had been less general; but the kind and amiable Madame de Berbec found it much more easy to love her fellow-creatures, than to discriminate among them.

The liking she felt for Clara was both genuine and strong, and the intimacy which had sprung up between them had not continued long, before this very fascinating and

affectionate French woman began to feel exceedingly anxious upon the subject of Clara's religious principles.

But it was only by very gentle degrees that she ventured to enter upon the important subject; for she had a vague sort of idea that all heretics hated the name of religion, and that she might run a great risk of losing the heart of her friend, while (perhaps vainly) endeavouring to provide for the safety of her soul.

It was, therefore, only by very gentle hints, that she ventured to approach the subject.

But Clara was far from wishing to avoid it. Her schoolmaster, in the same rational spirit in which he had encouraged the discussion of all subjects reasonably interesting to human beings, had not shrunk from *this*, but, on the contrary, they had often during the latter part of the time that they had been within the reach of each other, held many interesting discussions on that strange anomaly in the human mind, which has produced such violent diversity of opinion, on the most important points in religious belief; each party, more-

over, highly gifted with sagacity on other subjects, both appearing to think that on *this*, the place of their birth ought to decide the question.

It had never, as yet, happened to Clara, to hear a Roman Catholic enter freely upon the subject, and she felt considerable curiosity to know how such a theme would be treated by one who appeared to read indiscriminately, and to judge fairly enough on most subjects.

It was, therefore, with a sort of zealous attention, which could not be mistaken, that she listened to a somewhat enthusiastic burst of admiration from her new friend, when speaking of a grand mass which she had attended in the morning.

“Ah! my sweet Clara!” exclaimed Madame de Barbec, “you look as if you wish you had been there! Oh! my dear friend! will you let me take you to St. Rock the next time there is a fine service there?”

“Willingly,” replied Clara; “it will give me great pleasure.”

“Ah, Clara!” resumed Madame de Barbec, with much earnestness of voice and manner,

“what would I not give could I be the means of leading you to a knowledge of the truth !”

Had these words, and the voice in which they were spoken, expressed only an inclination to enter upon religious controversy, their effect upon Clara would have been very different ; but they were accompanied by a look and tone of such tenderly, affectionate interest, that Clara was greatly touched by it, and replied with more earnestness than her fascinating companion either hoped, or expected ; “ It is probable, my dear Madame de Barbec, that I have been too long accustomed to the simple but impressive ritual of my own country, to change my manner of offering worship ; but, nevertheless, I am very sensible of your amiable interest in my welfare, and I thank you for it heartily and sincerely.”

Thus encouraged, it would have been next to impossible for so zealous a Catholic as the Countess de Barbec to suffer so tempting an opportunity to escape her, without making an effort to achieve that most precious of all

Roman Catholic triumphs, the conversion of a wealthy infidel.

Her first reply to Clara's encouraging words, was the suddenly bending forward, and kissing her forehead ; and then seizing both her hands, which she also covered with kisses, she said :

“Dear and gentle Clara!” she then exclaimed, in a soft, low voice, which while it seemed to intimate caution, expressed very eloquently both affection and earnestness, “ dear, dear Clara ! Intellectual, pure, and evidently uninfluenced, as yet, by the frightful bigotry of your (in this respect) most unhappy country, it seems as if the blessed Virgin herself had specially ordained my meeting with you ! Dear, dear Clara ! I cannot express to you the emotion which this idea inspires ! I feel as if I could willingly sacrifice half my life, so that the other half might be passed in the sort of earthly beatitude which I should feel, could I but see you become a convert to the only true faith, and *that*, with the blessed consciousness that your being so was my work !”

“ Believe me,” replied Clara, “ I am not ungrateful for the interest you so kindly express for me, dear countess ; but I should be undeserving this interest, did I not honestly confess to you, that although I listen to you with great, very great pleasure—for you are as eloquent as you are kind—yet I feel that, though not an intolerant, I am an earnest Protestant ; and I will confess to you, that I should be sorry to believe it possible for *any* eloquence to shake the opinions which I believe to be founded on truth.”

As the tone and manner of Clara in saying this were quite as temperate as her words, it is probable that a much less fervent *devotée* than the Countess de Barbec would have found more hope of making a convert of her, than they might have done had they been aware that the firmness of Clara would be found less in her accents than in her heart.

It was, therefore, with increased hope, and very sanguine confidence in her own powers, that the Countess renewed the attack ; and deeply aware that success would obtain for her both approval and confidence from a

quarter where approval and confidence are extremely desirable, she returned to the charge with renewed earnestness; and with very beautiful tenderness in her fine eyes, and touching earnestness in her almost whispered words, she entered at once upon the point that almost all Roman Catholics seem to consider as the most important and most precious of their creed.

“However far I may be, my sweet friend,” she began—“however immeasurably distant from approving your opinion, I cannot be insensible to the fact, that, whether wrong or right, you are in earnest. Did I not feel this, dearest Clara, I could never speak to you as I am speaking now. But it seems to me impossible that, being in earnest, you should long remain an alien to the only true, the only authorized, the only saving faith! Can you not imagine, dearest, the deep delight of being watched over, and cherished by a being of your own sex, who is made up of Pity, Love, and Mercy? It is difficult for me to comprehend how any poor, frail human being, conscious as we all must be of much and fearful

sin, it is truly difficult for me to conceive how any one so situated can throw from them the merciful mediation so affectionately offered by the gracious Mother of God ! We all feel, and we all know, how all hearts are softened, and all anger soothed, by the pleadings of a mother ! How then can any one justify, either to their heart or their conscience, the deliberate refusal which Protestants venture to utter, when the mediation of the Virgin Mary is offered to them ? Answer this question, dearest Clara !—Answer it ! And if you can find any words capable of justifying, or even of explaining, such wild rebellion, and such mad ingratitude, I will promise to abandon the faith of my fathers for ever.”

Clara felt that the gentlest avowal of disbelief in a favourite dogma, though an easy task, must be an offensive one ; and she therefore evaded it by saying, “ Go on, dear countess ! I much prefer listening to your opinions, to making any attempt to combat them.”

It was immediately evident that Madame de Barbec also thought that this would be the most advantageous way of continuing the dis-

cussion ; for with an exceedingly sweet smile, which said as plainly as a smile could speak, “ You are quite right, my dear,” she resumed her discourse, by saying—“ Nor is this the only point, my beloved friend, by which the dark cloud which covers all those who profess your faith, has rendered you blind and insensible to the greatest blessing that the beneficence of God ever offered as a consolation for the weakness of man. Alas ! alas ! my poor Clara ; how lamentable, how pitiable, is the blindness of those who, notwithstanding their unavoidable consciousness of sin, resolutely refuse to accept the unspeakable consolation of confession !”

“ No, dear countess ! no !—You mistake us there,” replied Clara, earnestly. “ Our religion very distinctly enjoins the confession of sins.”

“ And do you really fancy, my dear love, that there is any comparison between the holy Roman Catholic practice of openly stating all the sins of which you are conscious to an anointed priest, ordained in every sense of the word to receive your confession—to dictate your penance, and then console and strengthen

you by absolution can you, I say, my very dear friend, compare to this the ill process of confessing to *yourself* to-day what you did yesterday ?”

“Perhaps I might agree with you,” replied Clara, smiling, “if I could bring myself to believe that any human being, whether priest or not, really possessed the power of absolving sin.”

“Alas ! dear love ! if such a power did not exist, what would become of us ? The very best among us, Clara, if not most strangely and fatally blinded by a false belief, must tremble as they lay their heads upon the pillow, at the bare idea of asking God to bless them, before they have cleansed their souls from sin by the divinely-ordained process of confession.”

“If I could believe in the literal and absolute power of any of my fellow-creatures to exonerate me from the responsibility of my own bad deeds,” said Clara, “I dare say I might occasionally feel much relieved by recounting them. But, on the contrary, I feel considerable difficulty in believing that the

irregularities of our lives may be atoned for by the mere act of recording them in the presence of a fellow-creature."

"Oh! my sweet Clara!" exclaimed the countess, seizing the hand of Clara, and pressing it with tender enthusiasm to her heart, "every comfort in life depends upon our choice of a confessor! If our confessors are *well* chosen, my beloved friend, we may be sure—oh! very, very sure—that they will not fail to make our peace with God! Let me awaken you to this most important truth, dear Clara! At once make up your mind to become a Roman Catholic! Trust me, it is the only rational religion for such weak and simple beings as we are!"

The conversation did not stop here; but as its continuation consisted of repetitions, it is needless to record it.

CHAPTER III.

It was not always, nor even often, however, that Clara had to listen to such grave discourses as the above ; for Madame de Barbec had too much genuine Parisian *tact* to permit herself to run the risk of becoming a bore, even for the achievement of so sublime an object as the conversion of an heiress ; and, therefore, it was not from any *ennui* occasioned by her frequently-recurring discussions with her friend the Catholic countess, that my heroine began ere long to doubt whether their present *rational* mode of passing their evenings might not, to some of the parties engaged, be attended by worse perils than any which had beset her, from the attack made on her own Protestant principles.

Though as far removed, as it was well possible to be, from the class of young ladies who, when not engaged in a flirtation on their own account, deem it no sin to find amusement in the flirtations of others, Clara was neither blind enough, nor heedless enough, to be insensible to a very obviously growing attachment between Annie Wharton and Sir William Lawrence's petted *protégé*, Victor Dormont.

In appearance, in manner, in brightness of intelligence, and apparently in everything demonstrative of temper and disposition, the young man certainly appeared to be something more than merely *faultless*—for very decidedly he was fascinating; and most assuredly it would have been very difficult to have found any individual of their acquaintance who could have been placed in competition with him.

Although Clara did not waltz, she had been at no loss to find opportunities of conversing with him, and that too in a tone of sufficient intimacy to make her know and value him. Yet, still, she could scarcely feel

assured that he was a suitable match for Annie; and nothing short of her extreme averseness to interfere upon a subject which belonged so exclusively to her friend, Lady Amelia, restrained her from making some observation on the subject.

At length, however, and very greatly to her satisfaction, Lady Amelia herself entered upon the theme, but did so in a manner very unlike what Clara had anticipated. What she had been for a long time expecting was, that Lady Amelia should gently hint at the probability that the young man might eventually have to pay the penalty of a heart-ache, for the somewhat too pleasant hours which the partiality of Sir William Lawrence had obtained for him; but instead of this, her ladyship entered upon the subject by saying, "What a very lucky thing it is, my dear Clara, that neither my darling Annie, nor Sir William's pet favourite, young Dormont, are addicted to falling in love! For some time, I assure you, I was positively living in a great fright about it, but I have watched them both very closely of late, and I am quite sure that

they neither of them have ever for a moment taken such a thing into their heads."

"I quite agree with you, dear friend, in thinking this very fortunate," replied Clara, "for I cannot suppose it would be a proper match for your daughter Annie. . . . But I own to you that I too have been rather on the look-out for symptoms of the tender passion, for they are both so really charming, that it is a miracle they should have escaped."

"But the miracle is all on the side of the gentleman," replied Lady Amelia, "for it would have been a greater miracle still, if Annie had given her heart before it was asked for; however," she continued, "all jesting apart, I am heartily glad that this danger, such as it is, has drifted past us without ruffling the quiet stream of our very rational and pleasant existence; and most assuredly, my dear Clara, it would have been sadly ruffled had the gifted youth been somewhat more susceptible; for in that case I cannot deny that it is possible my Annie might have been more susceptible too; and as I am certainly inclined to agree with you as to the probability that it would not be a desirable

match, I feel that I have great reason to rejoice at the toughness of the young man's heart ; for depend upon it, dear Clara, had it been otherwise, my uncle would have supported him with his vote and interest. The youth certainly must have many endearing qualities, besides his good looks, and gay, bright intelligence, or Sir William Lawrence would never have become so very strongly attached to him."

Not long after this conversation had passed between Clara and her friend, the pleasant routine which they had adopted, of receiving most days a *few* of their most agreeable acquaintance to dinner, was interrupted by their being tempted to a very unusually frequent attendance at the Theatre Français.

Rachel, who had been for several months absent from Paris, was now returned, and going through a brilliant course of performances, the effect of which, upon those who had never before witnessed her extraordinary powers, was such as to make almost everything else seem flat and unprofitable ; and dinners and dancings were almost entirely given up, by common consent, every night she played.

Aunt Sarah assured Clara, that "though she could not go herself, because she should not be able to find out what it was about, yet that their all having such a fancy for it would be really a very good thing for her, for she should take the opportunity of going to bed every play-night by nine o'clock, at the very latest, which would do her all the good in the world."

Their box, therefore, which Sir William Lawrence took care should be one of the best in the house, might always be seen occupied by the same party, namely, Lady Amelia, Clara, Annie, Sir William Lawrence, and his unfailing shadow, Victor Dormont.

This constant attendance at the spectacle was certainly a very decided proof that they all enjoyed it, and so they very certainly did; and during the scenes when Rachel (the most perfect personification of the French tragic muse that it is possible to conceive) occupied the boards, the eyes and ears of the party appeared wholly engrossed by her.

But this very earnestness of attention during the exciting moments of her performance,

might be one reason why their attention to the business of the stage relaxed when she occupied it no longer ; and then it was that both Lady Amelia Wharton and her friend Clara both began, for the first time, to suspect that the graceful, animated, handsome young Frenchman, who sat behind Annie, was not perhaps altogether so insensible to the fascination of the sweet smile with which she listened to him, as they had been wont to deem him.

But for more than one night after this idea suggested itself to Lady Amelia, she laid her head upon her pillow and went peaceably to sleep, with the comfortable conviction that what she had noted could only have been the result of some momentary emotion, suggested by the sympathy in their feelings concerning the words to which they were listening together; and, if nothing more or nothing else had occurred, it is very possible that when Rachel's engagement had ended, they might have returned to their pleasant dinners, and their almost childish little waltzing parties, without any anxiety being awakened in her ladyship's very unsuspecting heart, respecting the con-

sequences which might ensue from their frequency. But this quiescent state of mind was not destined to endure much longer ; for it so happened that Clara also, though as far as possible from intending to play the part of a spy but it did so happen, that just about the same time that Lady Amelia had marked the heightened colour of Annie's fair cheek, Clara had observed in her downcast eye an appearance of embarrassment, such as she had never seen in her laughter-loving friend before ; and Clara did not forget that look as speedily as Lady Amelia forgot the blush.

Moreover, the following day did not pass without bringing additional food for anxious meditation.

Sir William Lawrence and his young friend were both expected to dine with them on that day, and all the ladies, excepting aunt Sarah, were assembled in the drawing-room, awaiting their arrival. But, lo ! the door opened, and admitted the stately figure of Sir William, but closed again as soon as he had passed through it.

By some sort of unconscious sympathy, the

eyes of both Lady Amelia and Clara were directed, at the same moment, to Annie, who almost stealthily walked out of the room ; and, in the next moment, a glance, as if by accident, was exchanged between Lady Amelia and her friend. But no sooner had their glances thus met, than the eyes of both were withdrawn.

Lady Amelia, after the pause of a moment, addressed her uncle with her usual kindly welcome, and immediately added, “ but where is Victor Dormont, uncle ? How will you manage to get through an evening without him ? ”

“ As to where he is at this moment, Amelia, it is not in my power to tell you. . . . And as to the means whereby I may be enabled to exist, without having him within reach of me, I shall look to you, and your’s, to furnish them. But it will be no joking matter to me, if I am to lose him, I can tell you. I never met with any one like him before, and I never expect to do so again ; but I cannot ask him to give up all his prospects in life, in order to be at leisure to amuse me ; and I believe, poor fellow ! that he has at last had some capital

good proposal made him, of becoming a partner in some magnificent concern or other ; so I suppose that he will swell into a millionaire, and that I shall dwindle into a mummy.”

“ Not quite yet, uncle William, if you please,” replied his niece. “ Your confining yourself to the mummy state will not at all suit me just at present, and I therefore must request that you will not indulge your despair at the absence of Victor to so very vehement a degree as you seem inclined to do. On the contrary, you would be acting much more in accordance with my wishes, if you would take the trouble of learning, and communicating a little more information respecting this very brilliant young man than you seem at present to be in possession of.”

“ And why do you wish this, Lady Amelia ?” replied Sir William, fixing his eyes upon her with an enquiring look.

Lady Amelia remained silent for a moment, and then replied, “ Because I think him so very amiable, so very brilliant—in short, so very fascinating, that I think it just within the bounds of possibility, uncle William, that my

Annie may also in time find out that she knows none to equal him in any way. Now, neither you nor I, dear uncle, should like to indulge ourselves by enjoying his society at such a risk as this."

"No, my dear Amelia, we certainly should not," replied the old man; "but I should have thought that you knew me well enough to trust me. I have watched both the lad and the lass pretty closely, and had there been any symptoms of falling in love on either side, take my word for it, dear niece, my conduct would have been very different. But no such unlucky accident has happened to us, and I have therefore never thought it necessary to cross-examine the dear boy respecting his fortune. He has been carefully educated, is a most accomplished linguist, has read much and profitably, and, intimately as I have known him for many months past, I have never discovered a single trait of character that I disapproved. Nevertheless, if he had happened to fall in love with Annie, I should certainly have required more information concerning his worldly affairs than I have hitherto done; and now that I have

learned from him, without any enquiry at all, that a very brilliant future seems opening before him, I almost regret that he has not shown himself more susceptible to the attractions of my pretty niece."

Not many minutes after Clara had retired to her room for the night, a gentle tap at her door caused her to open it, and on doing so she found Lady Amelia waiting for admission. She received her with a smile, and an extended hand, placed her on the sofa, seated herself beside her, and looked, perhaps, as if she were going to ask what brought her there at so unwonted an hour. But if any such uncourteous question was on her lips, her friend saved her from uttering it by saying, "Does my visit puzzle you, dear Clara? or have you guessed at once what brought me here?"

"I rather think I have, my dear friend," replied Clara; "your dear old uncle forgot, perhaps, that I was in the room when he spoke to you so unreservedly about our friend Victor.

. . You are come, I think, to talk to me concerning what he said. . . . Or it may be that you come to examine me as to the effect which

Annie's sudden departure produced. Or it may be both."

"Yes, Clara, yes; it is about both. It is about all and everything concerning my darling Annie! Is it possible, Clara, that we can have been mistaken, in believing that she never for a moment thought about this young man in any other light than as an agreeable friend of her uncle's?"

"Yes, Lady Amelia," replied Clara, rather solemnly, "I do most certainly believe that we have mistaken her feelings, and never given her the credit and the warm approval so justly due to her conduct."

"Which is, I presume, as much as to say, that you think she has been falling deeper and deeper in love for the last six months, without ever for a single moment losing sight of her filial duty, and her womanly dignity and discretion?"

"Yes!" replied Clara, not lightly, but earnestly; "yes, Lady Amelia, I do believe it."

"And I have been treating her all the time as if she were a child, too young and too giddy to recognize grace and talent where she met it."

“Yes, Lady Amelia,” Clara again very gravely replied, “that is exactly what you have been about.”

“And why did you suffer me to blunder so, dear Clara?” rejoined her friend, reproachfully. “Why did you never utter any single word calculated to open my eyes, and give me a glimpse of the truth?”

“Only because I never got a glimpse of the truth myself,” replied Clara; “never, till I saw the colour forsake her cheeks when she became aware of his non-appearance this morning, did the idea of her loving him occur to me.”

“And were you also as unsuspicious as my stupid self respecting the feelings of Victor?”

“Not quite,” replied Clara; “not quite; for there have been one or two trifling occasions on which I have suspected that he was not so wholly indifferent as to who was to be Annie’s partner as he certainly wished to appear. But even this, if proved to demonstration, fell far short of suggesting that he was in love with her. . . . They are both pre-eminently good dancers, and I believe it to be recognised as an

important fact, that for a good waltzer to be linked to a bad waltzer is a misery to the former, which a very moderate degree of charity in an initiated looker-on would render it very painful to witness. But it may be," continued Clara, smiling, and pointing to the page which lay open before her, "it may be, to borrow this pregnant phrase from Walter Scott, that I am 'uttering conjectures which my imagination has over-hastily converted into facts' "

"Not so, Clara! not so!" exclaimed Lady Amelia, with considerable emotion. "It seems to me at this moment as if I had wilfully shut my eyes, and determined to see nothing before me which could cause me a moment's anxiety."

"You would call that an unfair judgment, if you heard it passed upon another in similar circumstances," replied Clara. "In my opinion you would have been infinitely more blameable had you tormented yourself, and your dear, good, light-hearted little girl, by fancying that she was in love with her partner, and her partner in love with her, merely because they both danced well, and liked to dance together."

"True! quite true, dear Clara!" returned her friend; "I had rather, for my Annie's sake,

as well as for my own, be too little suspicious than too much so. And yet, dear friend, there is no denying that, notwithstanding our confiding natures, we are both of us at this moment full to overflowing with the persuasion, that Annie Wharton and Victor Dormont are in love with each other. Is it not so?"

Clara remained silent for a moment, and then replied, "Yes. . . . As far as I am concerned, I answer, *yes*."

Lady Amelia clasped her hands together almost in an attitude of despair, and moreover tears started to her eyes.

"Before you permit yourself to be so very seriously alarmed by this discovery, my dear friend," said Clara, gravely, "you would do wisely to examine all the circumstances of the case. You are scarcely justified, as it seems to me, in anticipating any very deplorable result from an attachment which, if it exists at all, has so evidently been most honourably restrained by the good sense and right feeling of the parties concerned. If their conduct towards each other is different now from what you have hitherto observed it to be, you may be very

certain that there is some good reason for its being so."

"Right and reasonable, as you always are, my dearest Clara. What would become of me without you?" replied Lady Amelia, looking greatly comforted. "But at least I blundered not, when I perceived, for the first time, I confess, something very like a look of tender intelligence pass between them—for you saw it too."

"I will not let you stay up to talk about it," said Clara, rising; "nor will I stay up either. Let us both go to sleep in the comfortable assurance that Sir William Lawrence will make you a visit at a tolerably early hour to-morrow morning, and speak farther upon the subject of the 'brilliant future' to which he alluded this morning."

Lady Amelia now rose also, though somewhat reluctantly, as it seemed.

"Yes. So it will be, my dear Clara, I have no doubt of it," said she; "and then our next adventure, I suppose, will be the witnessing Annie's emotions upon receiving an offer of marriage; for I have a strong presentiment

that such will be the next scene of our drama. Whether the said offer will be received or rejected, must of course depend upon many circumstances, concerning all of which we are at present most profoundly ignorant."

"I shall certainly not be very greatly surprised if such were to be the case," replied her friend; "and yet, when I remember how often I have marvelled at the apparent indifference of these two very fascinating young people for each other, the idea of such exceedingly sudden change seems positively ridiculous. One thing at least is quite certain, and that is, the admirable forbearance and discretion of Dormont, if he has been really 'suffering love' for her. Such high principle as this shews, ought to be considered as proof of too honourable a character to leave any fear that he would act in any way in a manner that you would disapprove."

"And I do so receive it, Clara," replied Lady Amelia, giving her friend a farewell kiss; "so now good night. Before the time comes for our again exchanging this salutation, I flatter myself that we shall know much

of which we are now very profoundly ignorant."

This reasonable hope and reasonable expectation were fulfilled on the morrow ; but even then it was not Victor Dormont himself who undertook the task of clearing up the mystery in which he seemed to be enveloped ; he had, however, been fortunate enough to find an envoy and interpreter, as able as he was willing, to explain all that had been hitherto doubtful, nay, almost mysterious in the conduct of this highly-gifted young man.

That the heart of the pretty, gentle, sweet-natured Annie Wharton had been not only touched, but won, by this truly amiable, as well as truly fascinating young man, is quite certain, and a more presumptuous youth than Victor might have preferred being his own advocate, instead of selecting any one else as his ambassador ; but although he was not, perhaps, quite unaware of the fact that he had been for a good while Annie's favourite partner, he nevertheless felt that the obtaining the assistance of such an ambassador as her uncle, was an advantage not to be neglected,

even for the pleasure of reading the answer he hoped to receive in her eloquent eyes ; moreover, this mode of conducting the affair was more in accordance with the laws and regulations by which all such affairs were managed among persons of gentle rank in his country.

It was Sir William Lawrence, therefore, and not Victor Dormont, who, at rather an unusually early hour on the following morning, entered the unoccupied drawing-room, and sent the servant to announce to his niece, that he was there, and wished to see her.

She joined him immediately, feeling a strong presentiment that the subject which had occupied many of her night thoughts, was to be the theme of the conversation to which she was now invited. Nor did he leave her long in suspense.

“ I dare say, my dear Amelia,” he began—
“ I dare say that you guess what has brought me here.”

“ I guess,” replied his niece, with a somewhat heightened colour—“ I guess that you are come to tell me something about Victor Dormont.”

“You are quite right, Amelia,” he replied ;
“but what makes you think so ?”

“My thinking so is partly in consequence of what you told me respecting him yesterday,” she replied ; “and partly from my having observed a striking alteration in the young man’s manner to Annie.”

“If you regard this alteration in the same light that I do, Amelia, it ought to give you a very exalted idea of his character,” said Sir William.

“I am greatly disposed to think well of him for many reasons, uncle Lawrence,” replied the lady ; “and your very decided and unvaried good opinion of him is not, as you will easily believe, the least reason for my having a good opinion of him likewise.”

“Indeed I do believe it, Amelia, and my heart thanks your heart for its trust in me. But you do not make a correct statement concerning my judgment of this young man, when you use the word *unvaried*. On the contrary, my opinion has varied greatly. When I first became acquainted with him, the judgment I passed upon him related wholly to his

brilliant talents . . . but ere very long I became aware of the sweet and unselfish temper of this highly-gifted young man. Then came a pretty strong conviction that he contemplated your dear Annie with more of admiration, and of tenderness too, than was likely to be at all conducive to his happiness ; and subsequently, indeed, not long after I had arrived at this conclusion, I arrived also, by pretty close observation, at the certainty that his manner to her had become considerably more cold and more restrained than it had ever been before ; whereupon, I arrived next, without any great difficulty, at another conclusion, namely, that he was, and is in all respects, a high-minded, honourable young fellow, who might safely be trusted ; and that, as there was, moreover, nothing in Annie's manner to indicate that she was in any degree partial to him—but in fact, perhaps, rather the contrary—I fearlessly continued to bring him here without scruple . . . Nay, Amelia, so highly did I approve his conduct, that had Annie been *my* daughter instead of yours, I verily believe I should have assisted him in

thawing the ice in which the young lady seemed to have enveloped herself."

Sir William literally paused to take breath, for he had been speaking both with earnestness and rapidity, and his niece took advantage of the pause, to say, which she did very cordially, "I truly believe that Victor Dormont is an excellent young man. His conduct throughout seems to have been admirable."

"I know it to have been so, Amelia," returned Sir William, earnestly. "I speak upon no light grounds when I say so, for I have watched him closely. And now then," continued the old gentleman, with considerable solemnity; "now then, Amelia, I wish you to tell me with all sincerity, and to the best of your knowledge and belief, whether you think that Annie has any other fancy in her head? Do you think she likes any other young dancing adorer better than she does my dear friend Victor?"

"Upon my word, I believe not," returned Lady Amelia, smiling; "but I think the question is scarcely a fair one, for in answering no,

I leave you in the persuasion that she likes Victor Dormont better than any one else ; and yet I really do not feel sure that I should be justified in saying so. But at best, however, I can most truly say, that I have never seen any reason to believe she has liked any one else better."

" I am quite satisfied with this, dear Amelia," replied the old gentleman, drawing his chair a little nearer to her, " and I think it quite enough to justify my making you acquainted with what has passed between my dearly-beloved Victor and myself. He has, of late, frequently hinted to me," continued the warm-hearted baronet, " that the painful uncertainty in which he had been living, respecting his future prospects, appeared in a fair way of being speedily removed. He was originally, it seems, intended for a lawyer, his late father having followed that profession, both with honour and profit ; but, unfortunately, he died while Victor was still a youth at college ; and his mother's brother, the only near relative remaining to him, has been from that time to this unceasing in his efforts to

obtain for him some situation that would be more immediately profitable.

“ This, I rejoice to say, has now offered itself ; and it really seems to promise so well, and the persons with whom he will be engaged appear in all respects to be so perfectly trustworthy, that to reject the situation now offered to him would, as he truly says, be an act of madness.

“ His immediate income will be, of course, in a great degree dependent upon the *immediate* success of the speculation ; but Monsieur Roche, the head and chief of the whole concern, has, very liberally I think, offered to guarantee an income of ten thousand francs to him for the first five years, provided he is admitted into the concern ; but without any idea of limiting his income to that sum, as he confidently anticipates an income for him of at least five times that amount, before the end of the stipulated five years.”

And here Sir William paused, and appeared to expect an answer ; but several minutes elapsed in silence ; the eyes of Lady Amelia being fixed during that time upon the

floor, and her countenance expressing very grave meditation.

“Why do you not reply to me, Lady Amelia?” said her uncle, in a tone expressive of something like impatience.

“Simply, because I know not what to say,” she answered.

But after another short interval of silence, she added, “It is evident to me, my dear uncle, that this proposal is approved by you, and I need not tell you, that this conviction will go a great way towards its being approved by me also. Nevertheless, I confess that I should have preferred marrying my Annie to a man whose paternal acres, or inherited property of some sort, would have secured to her and her children, beyond the reach of accident, a certain maintenance.”

“I should not have expected to find you so devotedly attached to the idea of paternal acres, my dear Amelia,” replied her uncle, with a smile. “You have yourself seen a good deal of pecuniary embarrassment, arising from the immovable nature of paternal acres.”

“ Yes ! that is quite true,” replied her ladyship, with a sigh.

“ Or, perhaps, the coldness with which you receive this proposal, may arise from the absence of a *title* in the young man’s family ?” said Sir William.

“ If it be so,” returned Lady Amelia, colouring, “ it is a great weakness ; a great, a very great proof of folly ! It would be so, perhaps, in any one,” she added ; “ but in me, I confess I think it would be most particularly so ; for I have not only felt the emptiness, but the very decided inconvenience of title, when unaccompanied by wealth and yet, uncle Lawrence, though I am much too well aware of this truth to deny it, I am not at all sure that your suspicion is altogether unjust. On the contrary, indeed, I am greatly inclined to believe that I should receive this very charming young man’s proposal with more satisfaction if he *were* noble ”

“ Then all I can say in reply,” returned her uncle, “ is, that I am very sorry for it.”

And having said this, in a manner which

left no doubt as to the sincerity with which he spoke, Sir William rose, and somewhat hastily prepared to leave the room.

“ Stay one moment, dear uncle !” said Lady Amelia, laying her hand on his arm ; “ I am quite aware that such an objection as this ought not to separate them for ever—these two young people do certainly, in other respects, seem so very particularly well suited to each other. Let me tell Annie,” added Lady Amelia, after a moment’s pause, “ let me tell Annie of the young man’s having proposed to her, before we either of us decide upon rejecting him. I have reason to think that our dear little girl has acted admirably in this matter, and in a way to merit both our confidence and our indulgence. You know, uncle Lawrence, how much they have been thrown together ; and you know also, I think, that all her sayings and doings are too interesting to me to pass unnoticed ; yet never, *till yesterday evening*, had I seen either in her manner to Victor, nor even from a single glance of her speaking eye, any symptom that he was a more interesting personage

to her, than any other of the dancing young men who are occasionally her partners. But last evening, both Clara and I perceived symptoms of emotion in her manner, which we both feel persuaded were occasioned by *something* that had passed between them and your embassy of this morning explains the nature of that *something*. If it shall appear that my darling Annie loves him, you may depend upon it, uncle William, that I will not run the risk of breaking her heart, by refusing my consent to their marriage."

"It is no small pleasure to me to hear you say so, Amelia," replied the old gentleman, taking both her hands, and bestowing a very affectionate pressure on them. "May I bring him, then, to dine here to-day, as I have so very often done before?"

"Yes, dear uncle, YES, you may do so; but it must be upon condition that Annie also shall approve his coming. If you do not hear from me, however, to the contrary, before four o'clock, you may take it for granted that we shall all be very happy to see him

arrive with you at seven. I say *all*, because it is a positive fact, that both Miss Holmwood and her good aunt Sarah are quite as likely to welcome the beloved of Annie, as I am myself."

CHAPTER IV.

LADY AMELIA'S first movement after the departure of her uncle, was towards the room in which Annie usually employed herself after breakfast, in practising on the pianoforte; but before she had taken many steps towards it, she changed her mind. Her heart was beating vehemently, and she felt that she should be better prepared for this important interview with her young daughter, if it were postponed a little.

The conversation she had held with Clara before they parted on the preceding night, had left so strong an impression of her affectionate sympathy on Lady Amelia's mind, that she felt as if the best preparation for her interview with her child, would be found in

a few moments passed with Clara ; and it was to Clara, therefore, that she went.

Her first words on entering the apartment of her friend were, " I dare say you guess my errand, Clara."

" You are come to tell me that Victor Dormont has proposed for Annie," was the immediate reply of her friend.

Lady Amelia bowed her head in token of assent ; and then taking Clara's hand, she led her back into her room, and placing her upon the sofa, seated herself beside her in precisely the same position which she had occupied on the preceding night.

" It is hard upon you, Clara, to have your retreat invaded thus," said she " But I cannot help it."

" Why should you wish to help it, my dear friend?" replied Clara, affectionately. " Do you really think I feel no interest in what is going on? Tell me, dear Lady Amelia—tell me at once Is he accepted?"

" Annie does not know of his proposal yet," replied Lady Amelia.

" Why not?" returned Clara, almost reproachfully : " surely you cannot have inter-

preted her looks and her tones, as I have done, or you would not thus keep her in suspense."

"Then you feel quite sure she loves him?" returned Lady Amelia, looking at her anxiously.

"I feel quite sure that I think so," said Clara, gravely.

"And you think me cruel and unfeeling, for permitting her to remain in suspense? Is it not so?" rejoined the mother, somewhat reproachfully.

"But do you not think, Clara," she added, "that before I communicate this proposal to her, I should take some little time to consider it myself? It surely would not be the way to spare her all farther doubt and anxiety, were I to communicate the fact of his having proposed for her, with an avowal on my own part that I had not yet made up my mind as to whether I wished her to accept him or not."

"And is this really the case, Lady Amelia?" said Clara, anxiously.

"You think such doubt would be blameable? It is very evident from your accent, Clara, that you would consider any opposition on my part as cruel, and, perhaps, tyrannical,"

returned the anxious mother, somewhat mournfully.

“Speak to me with all your usual candour, my dear love. I should not find the comfort I hope for from friendship, did I think you would use any reserve towards me.”

“Be very sure,” returned Clara, “that if I venture to express any opinion at all on this very important subject, it will be genuine and sincere, if it has no other merit. There are, however, as I think you must be aware, a multitude of reasons which might lead me to contemplate the question in a very different light from any in which you can see it. But I am far from thinking that this difference is likely to render my opinion worth your attention . . . And for this reason, dear Lady Amelia . . . Our birth, our education, and, in fact, almost all our antecedents, have been so very widely different, that it would, and must be, very highly improbable, that we *could* think alike concerning it.”

“I do not feel quite sure of this total difference of opinion, my dear Clara,” returned Lady Amelia; “but even if I did,” she added, “I

should by no means consider it a good reason for not listening to you."

"Your saying so is quite sufficient to make me forget all my scruples," replied her friend ; "and I will tell you what I think about him as freely as if I were communing with my own heart. But at present you must remember that I am in a state of very profound ignorance concerning all things connected with this young man, save and except his pleasing exterior, his very charming manners, and the conviction that he is not only endowed with very brilliant talents, but that his education has been most sedulously attended to."

"All true, my Clara," returned her friend ; "and moreover, you may add to this very correct statement, that my dearly-beloved and highly-respected uncle, Sir William Lawrence, not only gives him credit for all these good gifts, and a great many more, I believe, that we can know nothing about, but he decidedly and unequivocally declares that it would afford him the most unmixed satisfaction if he could see me bestow my darling Annie upon him as a wife."

“Of course, my dearest Lady Amelia, it is you, and you only, who can be a judge of how far such a wish on the part of your uncle ought to influence you,” said Clara, very quietly.

“If you mean that it is I only that can know in what degree Sir William has the power of so far increasing poor Annie’s little fortune as to render the young man’s present income of less importance than it would be without it, you are perfectly right, Clara; for I am probably the only person nearly concerned who is perfectly aware of the fact that he has no such power whatever. His estate is not only entailed, but its clear revenue is so small, that I suspect you, with your notions, would hardly think it sufficient to supply him with the mere necessities of life; so that he really has not the power of doing anything, either for his niece, or the petted friend to whom he wishes to marry her.”

“Then it is, in fact, wholly from prudential reasons, dear Lady Amelia, that you feel reluctant to give your consent to this marriage?” said Clara.

“Unquestionably, I should think it extremely

wrong to permit such a connexion, or even to think of it for a moment, if my uncle Lawrence had not given me reason to suppose that, partly by means of his assistance or influence, dear, good man ! such an income might be arranged for them as might enable them to live very comfortably, with economy, at present, and with reasonable hopes of a much larger income in future. On that point I dare say he has taken good and sufficient care to be well informed. . . . But . . . I believe I am very silly, Clara ! For I seem to prefer speculating upon the point which I suspect offers no very reasonable cause for fear, in order to avoid confessing a feeling which I think may lower me in your estimation.”

“ Then spare yourself the task of confessing it, my dear friend,” replied Clara, laughing, “ for I know already all about it, as well as if you had explained it to me at full length. The real truth is, dear Lady Amelia, that although you like the young man, even as he deserves to be liked (which is saying much), and although you have no serious fears respecting his pecuniary resources, yet, nevertheless, you do not

like the idea of his becoming your son-in-law —because he is not noble.”

Lady Amelia coloured, and for a moment or so she looked vexed, but speedily recovering herself, she said,

“ Well, dear Clara, I will for once indulge myself in the Romish relief of confession. I believe you are very right. I feel as fully aware as you can be, that this repugnance originates in weakness, vanity, folly, and the very falsest species of false pride ! But, nevertheless, it very decidedly has the effect of making me dislike the idea of this marriage.”

“ I am sorry for it,” replied Clara, gently ; “ but nevertheless,” she added, “ if such be your feeling, Lady Amelia, I very decidedly think that no wish or whim of your uncle’s to promote the marriage should be suffered to interfere with your wishes. You have not only the best right to use your influence in this matter, but it is to you a matter of infinitely greater importance than it can possibly be to him.”

“ You say truly there, dear Clara,” replied her friend, gravely. “ To him, comparatively

speaking, it can be only the whim of a moment: to me it is the most important question of my life."

"Then, as far as you are either of you concerned, it is quite evident, that for you to yield your wishes or your will to his in this matter would be very decidedly wrong, and far more indicative of weakness of character than of sound judgment."

Lady Amelia had taken the hand of her friend Clara as she spoke, and she now pressed it very affectionately.

"It would be very repugnant to my feelings, dearest Clara," she said, "to act upon this occasion, or upon any other, in a way that should make you suspect me of a contemptible degree of family pride. The history of my own life ought long ago to have cured me of such weakness, if I were ever subject to it. But I will not deny to you that I do not consider my uncle Lawrence as by any means a safe authority upon such a question. He has made his boast and his glory through life, that he considers the value placed upon titles and family honours, as the greatest possible

folly, and that rather than have fallen into it, he would have chosen his associates from the lowest rank of the people ; his only protection, or, as he states it himself, his only *reason*, for not having done so, arising from the fact that his taste and his talents have led him to seek for education, and the information it brings in his associates ; and this has, in fact, made his practice much less absurd than his theory. Nevertheless, dear Clara, I do not think his judgment ought to be taken implicitly in such a question as this."

"You are most assuredly right, Lady Amelia," returned Clara, earnestly ; "and though it must be both judicious and dutiful to listen to all he may have to say to you in favour of this highly-talented young man, I certainly think you would be very wrong if you suffered your conduct in this important matter to be decided by it."

"I am quite, *quite* sure you are right," reiterated the greatly-comforted Lady Amelia, "and your opinion," she added, "will give me all the courage I wanted in avowing my feelings to him. But I would rather do it in

writing, I think, than by word of mouth," added her ladyship, rising; "and I will set about the ungracious task immediately."

"One moment, Lady Amelia," said Clara, rising likewise. "Tell me, my dear friend, before you go, if you have as yet contrived to make your dear, shy Annie express herself freely to you on the subject of Victor's attachment."

"My dear Clara," returned Lady Amelia, with a look of great astonishment, "I have never named it to her. Consider her age, my dear friend. And consider, too, how constantly we have both marked her apparent indifference to this young man. In fact, nothing but my having observed this, could have justified my permitting him to be so much here as he has been; and such being the present very desirable state of affairs, it would certainly be very unwise were I to endeavour to rouse a feeling of *liking him* in her young heart, by telling her that he has proposed for her."

For a minute or two Clara made no reply, but at length she said—"Perhaps I might

agree with you, Lady Amelia, did I feel quite certain that Annie was still as ignorant of Victor Dormont's real feelings towards her as she was three days ago."

The heightened colour of Lady Amelia shewed plainly enough that this suggestion was startling, to say the least of it.

She did not immediately reply to it, however, but after a somewhat awkward silence, she said, "I scarcely know what your observation means, Clara. Has Annie been less reserved to you on this subject than she has been to me? Has she ever said anything to you which might lead you to suspect that such an avowal from him would be agreeable to her?"

"I should have thought that you knew your Annie too well to ask such a question," replied Clara, shaking her head, so as very intelligibly to pronounce a negative.

"Then may I ask you, my dear, what can have put it into your usually very reasonable head, to think (after what I have stated to you concerning my own feelings on this subject) that I should do wisely in leading her into a discussion on it?"

“The wisdom of your doing so, my dear friend, can only be manifested to you by your feeling conscious that it would be right,” replied Clara, gravely.

“Wise and right ought to be synonymous,” said Lady Amelia, with a very sturdy tone of conscious good sense. “If I am justified in not wishing to encourage the addresses of this young man, I am more than justified in wishing to avoid all discussion on the subject with my still very childish Annie.”

This reply appeared so very reasonable, that Clara seemed silenced by it; and Lady Amelia again turned towards the door.

“It is very painful to me,” said Clara, again making a movement to detain her, “to feel called upon, as I do at this moment, to tell you that I think you wrong. It would be painful to me to do so upon any subject, and very particularly so on this, because I am quite aware, that to a person nobly born as you are, dear lady, the judgment of a tradesman’s daughter must, almost of necessity, appear impertinent. Nevertheless, I cannot let you leave me, without asking you whether

the glance by which your Annie answered that of Victor (which we were mutually sure we both of us understood), was a glance of indifference?"

The noble blood of Lady Amelia again mounted to her cheeks, and for a moment she seemed doubtful how to answer. But the pride of Lady Amelia Wharton was not merely pride of race—she had quite as much, and perhaps a little more, of the pride of integrity also; and after this indecision of a moment, she reseated herself upon the sofa, extending a hand to Clara, to indicate her wish that she should do so also; and again the two friends were seated side by side, in deep and thoroughly-confidential discussion on the destiny of the unconscious Annie.

"Your frank question, my dear Clara, shall receive, as it deserves, a frank answer," said Lady Amelia. "I certainly did see the glance by which my Annie returned the impassioned appeal made to her by the eyes of Victor, and most assuredly I did not think it indicated indifference on her part. That I was both puzzled and surprised by it, I think you were

immediately aware, for our glances encountered afterwards ; but I cannot think the having seen that hasty glance, which was very probably, I think, the mere result of surprise, could justify me in taking any step whatever which might promote an attachment, and a marriage which my heart, or rather my judgment perhaps, does not entirely approve.”

Clara paused a moment before she ventured to reply. Perhaps she felt that she was one of the very last persons in the world who ought to attempt proving that the affections of the heart could be considered of sufficient importance to be brought into competition with the pride of race. But her conscience speedily told her that there was more of paltry cowardice than of high principle in the feeling which beset her, and she presently replied—

“I have already told you, with the most perfect sincerity, my dear Lady Amelia, that I think there can only be one reason which ought to interfere with your judgment and your wishes on the subject. If, during the frequent intercourse, and the very great domestic intimacy which has been permitted

between these young people, the heart of your sweet-natured, affectionate Annie has been won by the very striking attractions and charming qualities of this decidedly very fascinating young man, I certainly am of opinion that the caution which might have prevented this, has been too long delayed to be put in force *now*, without running the risk of producing great unhappiness."

"But is it possible, Clara, that you can attach such enormous consequence to a single look, as would lead you to approve, or at least to permit, a marriage, which you would think it reasonable to oppose if it had never been given?" returned Lady Amelia, looking at her very earnestly.

But Clara did not permit herself to be disconcerted, and quietly replied, "If the look under discussion had been given by a more common-place young lady, I might think it very probable that it had no meaning of sufficient importance to be attended to at all. But Annie is not a common-place sort of young lady."

Though these words were spoken with

the most perfect and simple sincerity, they produced a greater effect than might have followed a more studied harangue. The effect was evident, both from the look and manner, as well as from the words of Lady Amelia. "You have made no mistake there, Clara," she said, very earnestly, though almost in a whisper; "most assuredly, Annie is no common-place sort of young lady; neither have I any wish or intention of treating her as if she were. But go on, Clara," she continued, "go on in the same tone of observant good sense, which dictated that remark Go on, my dear friend, and tell me frankly what you think I ought to say to her. Ought I to allude to that look, Clara? Ought I to say to her, 'Annie dear! I saw you bestow a glance on Victor Dormont, which seemed to indicate that you were in love with him?' Ought I to say this to her, my good friend?"

Clara smiled, and shook her head. "No," said she. "Important as I hold that look to be, I do not think that you must allude to it."

"Then what would you have me say to

her, my dear girl?" returned her ladyship, looking very much as if she thought she had puzzled her too sentimental, and too tender-hearted confidant.

"The only thing which it seems to me important for you to say to her is, that Victor Dormont has offered her his hand," returned Clara, quietly.

The complexion of Lady Amelia was again heightened by this reply ; but the only answer she made to it was, "So be it, then ;" and rising from her seat, she left the room, without saying another word.

CHAPTER V.

WHETHER wrong, or right, in thinking that, notwithstanding the portionless condition of her daughter, the proposal she had now received was not one which ought to be accepted, Lady Amelia was most honestly conscientious in complying with the suggestion of Clara, that this proposal should be made known to the young girl herself, before the answer to it had been finally decided on.

On the whole, perhaps, Lady Amelia Wharton's very excellent heart and understanding were as little obscured or tarnished by false opinions, or prejudices of any kind, as it was well possible they could be; and therefore it was, that before she reached the room in which she expected to find her daughter, she

stopped short, and after the meditation of a moment, turned back, re-entered the room of her friend, and holding out her hand to her as she stood almost on the spot where she had left her, said beseechingly, "Dearest Clara ! I wish you would go with me."

This request startled, but by no means displeased Clara. It was not that she misdoubted the faithful purpose of her friend, in making this appeal to the feelings of her young daughter ; on the contrary, she was quite sure that it was the genuine intention of Lady Amelia to discover, from what should pass in this interview, whether or not Annie was really so decidedly attached to the young man, as to cause his being rejected to be a source of unhappiness to her ; and Clara gave her full credit for this intention. But she did not give her full credit for being in a state of mind to judge fairly of Annie's feelings.

Clara had considerable faith in the opinion, which has almost passed into an adage, that

*" All those convinced against their will,
Are of the same opinion still."*

And it was precisely for this reason, that she rejoiced at the idea of being present at this very important interview.

Clara's affection for Annie was no common affection. She knew the young girl well, and she loved her dearly and fondly. She knew, too, if nobody else did, how lasting and how blighting to happiness, is the pang which disappointed love leaves in the heart of woman; and moreover she felt, or fancied, that whatever might be the result of this proposed interview upon the mind of Lady Amelia, she should herself be quite sure of discovering the real state of the young Annie's heart. It took her not a moment, therefore, to decide upon the answer she should make to this request; but she immediately replied, "Assuredly, dear Lady Amelia, I will go with you, if you wish it."

Not a word more was now said on the subject; their arms were immediately interlaced, and thus they proceeded together to the room where Annie was sure to be found.

Lady Amelia seemed to feel that the subject which she came to discuss, was not one the

difficulties of which would be lessened by a long preface, and she therefore entered upon it somewhat abruptly, perhaps.

“Are you aware, Annie, that I have already, early as it is, had a visit from your uncle Lawrence this morning?”

Annie was perfectly aware of this fact, for young ladies in Annie’s situation always do find out, either by mental electricity, or some other mysterious process, when anything has been going on which is likely to touch them nearly, and her delicate colour was perceptibly heightened as she replied, “Yes, mamma, I know that uncle Lawrence has been here.”

“But I think, my dear,” resumed her mother, with a faint or a feigned smile, “I think you do not know, and will not very easily guess, what the business was which brought him here.”

Now the fact is, that Annie did guess, and without any difficulty at all, exactly what the business was which had caused this unusually early visit.

Fortunately, however, it was only a guess for she certainly could not be strictly said to

know very positively anything about it, and she therefore was enabled to reply with a very safe conscience, "No, mamma, I do not know."

"He came to execute a commission, Annie, which I think will surprise you, my dear, as much as it certainly did me. He came at the request of Mr. Victor Dormont, my dear Annie, to announce his purpose—Mr. Victor Dormont's purpose, I mean, of offering you his hand in marriage. . . . I think you must feel a good deal surprised at hearing this, my dear."

Lady Amelia ceased speaking, but her daughter did not answer her, but she changed colour and trembled so perceptibly, that Clara felt frightened, and almost wished that she had not been present at a scene which it might be embarrassing to witness, and in which it might be wrong, as well as difficult, to interfere.

Lady Amelia changed colour also, and looked very evidently both surprised and vexed. After silently waiting for a minute or two, as if expecting an answer, her ladyship resumed the subject by saying, "Had you any reason, my dear Annie, to suppose, that this young

man contemplated the making you such a proposal?"

Annie felt, poor young thing! that sooner or later she must speak, however difficult or painful the doing so might be, and she therefore replied, almost immediately, but in a voice that was scarcely audible, "I don't know what I expected, mamma but I believe, I had begun to think that Victor liked me."

"How long ago was it, my dear, when you began to think so?" said her mother.

"It would be very difficult for me to tell you, mamma," replied Annie, "because it was a thing that for a very long time I was uncertain about myself."

Lady Amelia here seemed rather at a loss as to what she ought to say next; but after a silent pause of a minute or two, during which both the mother and daughter looked considerably embarrassed, Lady Amelia resumed the conversation by saying, "Then I must presume, dear Annie, that as you continued very gay and happy during all this uncertainty, you never took the subject very much to heart.

. . . . In short, I presume that you never fancied yourself in love with him, however much you fancied that he was in love with you."

"I don't think I said that I fancied he was in love with me, mamma ; at least, what I meant to say was, that I thought he liked me."

"Yes, my dear, that was what you said. But now that you hear he is talking about offering marriage, I suppose you may venture to go a little further than he has done in what he said to you ; and I should be very glad, for my own satisfaction, Annie, to hear whether you think you are in love with him."

"Dear, dear mamma ! What a very odd question that is !" exclaimed Annie. "Do you think it likely, mamma, that I should fancy myself in love with any one who had never asked for my love ?"

"No, my dear, I should not think it likely. And I may therefore take it for granted—may I not, my dear child—that your heart is your own, and that you do not feel any wish to be married to any one just at present ?"

Annie's only reply to this question was a deep bright blush.

“Very well, my dear, I am quite satisfied,” replied her mother; “and I shall certainly be very glad to tell your uncle that you have no such stuff in your thoughts.”

And having said this, Lady Amelia rose from the chair in which she had placed herself, saying, with the self-gratulating tone of a person who has satisfactorily executed a disagreeable commission—“Now then, I may return to the enjoyment of my new review.”

Clara felt, and looked also, both vexed and embarrassed. She neither liked to remain in the room nor to leave it. If she remained, she felt it almost impossible, considering the mutual affection which subsisted between Annie and herself, that something should not be said on the subject so very lightly touched on by Lady Amelia; and if such were the case, she was conscious that she should run a great risk of saying more upon it than she wished to do. Yet in leaving the room with Lady Amelia, it would naturally appear evident to Annie that she was a consenting party to the inquisitorial sort of visit so abruptly paid her. But a moment’s consideration, how-

ever, led her to decide that it would be safer to go than to stay ; for in truth she felt so exceedingly dissatisfied at the manner in which her ladyship had performed her promise of consulting her daughter on the subject of Victor's proposal, that she very honourably preferred confessing this to Lady Amelia herself, than being led to make any observations upon it to her ladyship's daughter.

Her ladyship, however, would very decidedly have preferred her taking a contrary course, for she felt considerably more sure that she might safely trust her with Annie, than trust herself to the observations which her conscience told her she deserved, for the manner in which she had performed the promise of *consulting* her daughter.

But upon Clara's rejoining her the moment after she had passed through the door, she felt that she could not escape, and must make up her mind either to obtain the rejection of Victor's proposal, despite the very evident inclination to favour it, so plainly perceptible in poor little Annie herself, as well as in her uncle, and her friend Clara, or else yield her

consent to it, very decidedly against her own inclination and judgment.

The predicament was a very painful one ; and the truly amiable and estimable Lady Amelia felt it to be so ; but she would have acted more wisely had she acted with more candour and more courage.

Had she at once honestly avowed to Clara that she thought Annie too young and too thoughtless to be capable of judging for herself in a matter of such importance, Clara would have been more inclined to agree with her, than she now was to approve the pretence of consulting her inclinations, while her manner of conducting the inquiry was so evidently intended to disguise the truth, instead of discovering it.

As she had managed it now, however, she had left poor Annie in a state of very profound unhappiness, and with the feeling of not having been treated fairly ; and moreover she perceived by the very first sound of Clara's voice, as she walked off from Annie's door beside her, that the effort she had made, in despite of her repugnance, to inform her

young daughter of the proposal which had been made for her, was very far from having obtained the approval of her friend.

“ You are not satisfied with me, Clara,” said she.

This gentle challenge did not immediately receive an answer ; but after meditating for a moment, Clara replied—“ If I display an unwarrantable degree of audacity, Lady Amelia, not only in blaming you, but in telling you so, you must remember, my most dear friend, that the fault is, in a great measure, your own. You have spoilt me, Lady Amelia ; for by constantly endeavouring to make me forget the inequality of station between us, you have really so far succeeded as to make me remember it only when the doing so is a mere affair of manner and ceremony, and not of feeling. For instance, dear lady . . . what can be more indecorous than the words you have now uttered ? *Not satisfied with you !* How is it possible for me to reply to such words with propriety ?”

“ Don’t talk nonsense to me, dear Clara !” replied the vexed Lady Amelia. “ This is no

moment for it. You must know as well as I do, that I am ill at ease, and uncomfortable."

"Nay! If you confess *that*, you disarm me at once!" replied Clara, in her usual tone of simple sincerity. "If all the thoughts of my bold head, and all the feelings of my still bolder heart, were all mapped out before you, it would only bring to your mind the conviction that I do not think you *ought* to feel at ease and comfortable."

"Verily you have found the means of bringing me to confession when I was very far, I believe, from intending it," returned her friend. "But now," she added, "as it seems clear that we not only understand each other, but what is, perhaps, more important and more difficult still, that we understand ourselves — let us go into your quiet sitting-room, dear friend, and talk this matter over with the best judgment that we are capable of bringing to it. Perhaps we may be both of us partly wrong and partly right in our estimate of the temptations and the objections which this proposal involves; and the frankly examining these together may be a very useful process."

“Indeed I think so,” replied Clara, earnestly. “There are two sides, you know, to every question, and a predetermination to look only at one, shews a lamentable lack of that species of policy which, according to the wisdom of nations, we are told is the best.” Clara, as she said this, moved on with a rapid step towards her own dressing-room, and they entered the snug retreat together, mutually disposed to be as perfectly sincere, and as nearly reasonable as it was respectively in their power to be.

CHAPTER VI.

A CONSULTATION thus rationally entered upon between two well-intentioned and decidedly intelligent people, seemed to offer a very fair chance of coming to a judicious practical conclusion ; but they were neither of them by any means fully aware of all the difficulties involved in the question they were about to discuss.

They set off fairly and correctly enough upon the mutual conviction that everything which they knew concerning Victor Dormont *personally*, was in his favour. His intellect, his temper, his person, his manners, the education he had received, and his well-ordered habits of life, so often dwelt upon by Sir William Lawrence, were all in his favour ;

and they perfectly agreed in opinion as to the important fact, that he was one whose love, if openly avowed, with opportunity allowed for pleading it, could scarcely be listened to with indifference by any young girl whose affections were still at her own disposal.

All this was so frankly accorded by Lady Amelia, that Clara felt that there was no necessity whatever to dwell upon that part of the theme which they were discussing.

This avowal being frankly made, and frankly agreed to, they seemed mutually prepared to take it for granted that Annie would be disposed to accept him, if the circumstances of his position in life were such as to justify her doing so.

“But, alas! my dear Clara, it is a much easier matter to judge fairly and wisely of a man’s personal merit, than of the real position of his affairs,” said Lady Amelia, somewhat sadly; “and till we can find the means of doing this, I could be tempted to wish that Victor were less charming.”

“There would be more cause for anxiety on this point,” replied Clara, cheerfully, “if

there were no uncle Lawrence in the case. It seems to me quite impossible that he should be either indifferent on the subject, or that he should be unable to ascertain the truth concerning it, with quite sufficient accuracy to enable him very correctly to judge whether Victor Dormont has the power of placing his wife in such a situation in life as he would wish that his niece should fill."

"It is quite impossible to deny this," replied Lady Amelia, "and yet, I confess to you, that it does not fully satisfy me. I by no means, however, suspect my uncle of being unmindful of this part of the question; but what I fear is, that his anxiety for her welfare will lead him to pay more attention to the young man's probable income, than to the station he holds in society."

Clara smiled, and gaily replied, "It seems to me to be quite evident, that between us all, the safety of Annie, in all ways, will be most thoroughly well attended to. Your ladyship will investigate what, I believe, the Americans call the young man's 'standing' in society; Sir William will make all

necessary inquiries into the amount, and the stability of the young man's pecuniary resources; and I will fail not, occasionally, to suggest a gentle hint, that the state of the young lady's affections should be taken into consideration."

"And so they shall, Clara!" replied Lady Amelia, throwing her arm around the bold advocate for young love, and affectionately kissing her. "I know I behaved very ill just now, and I am heartily ashamed of it. My poor, dear Annie certainly deserves to be treated more reasonably. Assuredly, she is no longer a child, though I believe I am apt to forget this important fact—one reason for which may be, that she so often seems to forget it herself. You may, however, set your kind heart at rest, my dear Clara, on the subject of this supposed attachment. Should we, after due investigation of our Annie's condition, come to the conclusion that she is really attached to this very decidedly agreeable young man, I hereby pledge my word, dear Clara, to offer no farther opposition. Will this suffice to restore to me your affection and esteem?"

This very candid avowal of having been wrong, on the part of Lady Amelia, did more than satisfy Clara ; for, in fact, it almost frightened her.

It is certain that she herself had little or no doubt of Annie's tender attachment to Victor ; and it is equally so, that she had felt shocked, and almost indignant, at the very light tone in which the young man's proposal had been communicated to the poor girl ; but Lady Amelia's abrupt transition from appearing to think this proposal unworthy of serious attention, to the opposite extreme of at once accepting it, startled her ; and the more so, perhaps, because she was conscious that her own conduct had probably, in a great degree, been the cause of this sudden change.

This feeling, however, was by no means strong enough to make her abandon the cause she had espoused ; but, nevertheless, it awakened sufficient caution to induce her to say, after bestowing a very affectionate kiss on the cheek of her contrite friend, " Of course, your good uncle will take upon himself the task of examining into the young man's pecuniary

prospects. Though I should very reluctantly see two loving hearts torn asunder, because the pedigrees of the respective owners were not precisely of the same length; I should certainly be more reluctant still to bring them together, did I think it probable that the doing so might involve them in anything approaching to pecuniary embarrassment. It might be difficult to say, which line of conduct would be the most cruel; but it is probable, I believe, that eventually the greater degree of misery would result from poverty."

"There can be no doubt of that, my dear," returned her friend; "but on that point I really believe we have nothing to fear, for Sir William was evidently rather more business-like in his manner of canvassing that branch of the affair than is at all usual with him. I do not suppose, however, that they will immediately be very rich: no man at his age can be supposed to be so, unless his fortune is hereditary. However, on that point I feel no great anxiety. The career of Annie, as the wife of Victor Dormont, must inevitably be quiet and domestic, nor will she be at all likely to mix

so much with her English connexions as to make any attempt at equality with them at all desirable."

This was said simply, and with very perfect sincerity; and Clara knew her friend well enough to feel certain from her manner, that having made up her mind to Annie's making herself happy in her own way, no further difficulties of her finding out would be likely to interfere to prevent it.

And now, having reached this important point by her bold intercession for the youthful lovers, Clara felt half frightened lest she should have gone too far.

Lady Amelia now spoke, she thought, perhaps, too lightly, and considering the thoughtless character of her uncle, too confidingly, respecting this very important branch of the subject. But she had not the courage to begin lecturing her again, and, as it would seem, in a manner so very nearly contradictory to her former reasonings. Perhaps she might have been more reluctant to let the subject drop without venturing to make any single observation upon it, had she not been conscious that she had the

power of coming very effectually between her dearly-loved young friend, and any disappointment that might arise from deficiency of income. This comfortable consciousness reconciled her to what certainly appeared a somewhat imprudent degree of confidence on the part of Lady Amelia respecting this branch of the subject, and enabled her to baffle a feeling a little akin to self-reproach, for having ventured so sturdily to oppose Annie's mother in her evident wish to decline the proposal of young Dormont, although conscious of feeling her own courage fail, when she became aware that the said proposal was not one that ought to be too hastily accepted.

But, in truth, she felt it much easier to make a memorandum in her heart that neither Annie, nor any one belonging to her, should ever be in want of money as long as she had any to bestow, than to commence a fresh attack upon the young lady's mother, for having too implicitly, and too promptly, followed the advice which she had herself so unscrupulously given.

From this day, therefore, the life of Annie ceased to be the life of a laughter-loving child,

and at once assumed all the deep feelings of a tender-hearted woman.

That she had so long succeeded in keeping even herself, as it were, ignorant of the fact that she was most devotedly in love, did her, assuredly, great credit as a well-behaved young lady ; for, had it been otherwise, she must have felt guilty of disobedience to that already-quoted, and almost sacred *dictum*, which says, that woman “*must be wooed, and not unsought be won.*”

Nor did Victor Dormont deserve less credit than Annie ; for the efforts he had made not to tell, or in any way betray his love, were fully equal, in their true and earnest solicitude, to those she had so perseveringly made, not to feel, or at any rate not to acknowledge to her own heart, that this said poor beating heart was no longer at her own disposal. But her present happiness was infinitely the greater for her past discretion.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next visit of Sir William Lawrence to his niece was a very important one. He had the pleasure of receiving from her the assurance that she would not oppose the wishes of the young people, sanctioned as they were by his approval, provided he would have the kindness to inquire carefully into the pecuniary prospects of the young man.

This gracious answer not only pleased, but absolutely delighted the kind-hearted baronet. He almost danced for joy at receiving it; and in reply to Lady Amelia's very reasonable request, that he would make himself acquainted with all particulars respecting the young man's present income and future prospects, he assured

her that he had not only done so already, and that the result was most perfectly satisfactory, but that he was perfectly ready, if she wished it, to go over the same process again, for that there was evidently a much greater inclination on the part of the young man, and of the wealthy friends with whom he was associated, that the brilliant career before him should be made known to the family of the young lady, than that it should be either overlooked or concealed.

And, in fact, every enquiry within the reach of Sir William Lawrence to make, was most readily, and most pleasantly answered. The commercial firm to which Victor, as he hoped, was about to be admitted, had not only the names of some of the most prosperous *nouveaux riches* in France among them, but they appeared to be as prudently cautious on their side as the friends of Annie could be on hers; for it was only on being assured by Sir William Lawrence that the young lady for whose sake he was making so many careful enquiries was not only his own niece, but the niece also of a well-known English earl, that these gentlemen con-

descended to answer his anxious questionings at all.

All this took some time, however ; and while it lasted, and that any thing like doubt or uncertainty remained on the minds of Sir William and Lady Amelia, the evening circle of the partner ladies became almost wholly domestic ; for excepting Victor himself, and his truly attached and zealous friend, Sir William Lawrence, they scarcely received any company at all.

Clara, however, had by this time made one or two intimacies which enabled her to vary the occupation of her evenings without interfering with the domestic consultations which at this time made so natural, and so every-way proper a part of the occupation of her friends.

As to aunt Sarah, she had become so very essential a part of Annie's own particular " belongings," that though very decidedly many thousand fathoms deep in love, the enamoured girl would not have thought that anything went on exactly as it ought to do, unless aunt Sarah knew all about it ; and she was therefore quite sufficiently occupied, both in heart and head,

to permit Clara to pursue her own devices without any scruples of conscience on her account.

But all Clara's new acquaintances were not quite so catholic as Madame de Barbec; and just at the time when all the loving Annie's thoughts and wishes were very particularly devoted to speculations connected with the little globe called Earth, Clara, without any catholic assistance at all, was soaring, and diving, into regions as remote from all the petty concerns of every-day earthly life as she could possibly have done had all the cardinals in existence, with their pious pope at their head, been her guides and conductors.

But she shall herself give an account of the manner in which some of her hours were spent while visiting at the house of Madame de Charmont, a new friend, who first became known to her through the intimate acquaintance which Lady Amelia had previously formed with her (Madame de Charmont's) mother, a nobly-born, and highly-connected French-woman, who, gifted with the power (so rare in France) of speaking English *well*, was in the

habit of receiving many of our countrymen and women at her hospitable and elegant residence.

But Madame de Charmont, her daughter, was a person of much more retired habits, and much less known in the fashionable world than her mother.

This latter peculiarity might have sufficed of itself, to render her an interesting person to Clara; for it must be confessed that my heroine had somewhat more than a reasonable shyness in cultivating either the friendship or intimacy of persons particularly distinguished as people of fashion.

This shyness probably originated in her consciousness that, notwithstanding her enormous wealth, she did not herself belong to that class, but most assuredly her strongest feelings of repugnance to intruding her plebeian self among them arose not from any fear of neglect, but from the supreme disgust she had felt at witnessing the coarse worship of the Brixbourg family towards all connected with that wealth.

Madame de Charmont, however, possessed other claims to the partial liking of Clara than the mere fact of being exempt from the English epidemic of title-hunting.

She was highly intelligent, perfectly without pretension of any kind, amiable in temper, and both graceful and friendly in manner.

Moreover, the liking was mutual ; and as Madame de Charmont was quite as independent a widow (though not quite so rich) as Glara was independent as a maiden, no obstacle whatever impeded the intimacy which they felt naturally inclined to form.

Madame de Charmont's married life had lasted but three years, and the loss of her husband fell heavily upon her, for they were truly and deeply attached to each other. He left her with one child, a lovely and intelligent little girl, whose education might have served, if anything would, as an occupation of sufficient interest to reconcile her again to life. But this blessing only lasted long enough to make her feel how precious it was, and then she lost her.

Ten years had now worn themselves away since this last bereavement fell upon her, and it was, in fact, but very recently that Madame de Charmont had appeared sufficiently recovered from this heavy affliction to feel much interest in anything that was passing around her.

But of late she had appeared to the very few who still sought, and were admitted to intimacy with her, as being better both in health and spirits.

During the whole of the melancholy period which had elapsed since the early death of her excellent husband, and which had left her so much in need of a comforter, her father had been her most frequent companion, and his tender kindness her greatest consolation.

Of late, however, she had become strongly attached to Clara. There was, in fact, a great deal of very genuine sympathy between them. The tenderest affections of both had been crushed, and both had learned to feel, that whatever consolation was still left within their reach, must not be sought in crowded drawing-rooms.

It was, in fact, Monsieur de Montfort who first introduced Clara to the especial notice of his daughter. An accidental discussion, in which she chanced to get engaged, when she had accompanied Lady Amelia Wharton to his house, had been the first means of attracting his particular attention to her; and the acute

old gentleman discovered that, although she was both young and beautiful, Clara Holmwood was no novice in the habit of thinking and of reasoning.

It was not very often now that M. de Montfort laid any parental commands upon his daughter in a tone of positive authority ; but there was something very like it in the manner with which he now told her that he must insist upon her becoming acquainted with “ *Mademoiselle de Holmwood.*”

Madame de Charmont smiled at the earnestness of his tone, but very dutifully replied that “she was perfectly ready to submit to this ceremony of introduction, whenever it should be his will and pleasure to perform it ;” and, accordingly, the said ceremony was performed with as little delay as possible, and the result of it justified very fully the pertinacity of will which brought it about.

Many had been the years, months, weeks, and days, which had passed over the head of the childless widow, since she had felt anything so nearly approaching social enjoyment as she became conscious of enjoying in her intercourse with Clara.

But, however sagacious had been the judgment passed by M. de Montfort on the character of my heroine, and which had led him to feel so sure that her society would be agreeable to his daughter, it was not to this alone that their subsequent intimacy was entirely to be attributed, for accident had quite as much to do with it as judgment.

It so chanced that there was at that time, in Paris, one of those mysteriously-gifted individuals who either are, or seem or pretend to be, in a state of existence which places them between heaven and earth.

The title of *medium* which they have assumed to themselves, expresses better, perhaps, than any other word could do, the position which they hold, or appear to hold, in creation.

This Paris *medium* was, as I believe nearly all of the class are, a citizen of the United States.

He was quite a young man, quiet in manner, apparently, both by temperament and by principle; and well it was for him that he should be so, for, by a strange perversion of *sai-disant* philosophy, the great majority of those whom

curiosity led to witness the marvellous phenomena he exhibited, did not content themselves by avowing that what they heard, and what they saw, was beyond their comprehension, but very unscrupulously declared their opinion that the effects they witnessed were produced by some delusion, the nature of which it was not very easy to point out ; but which, of course, must be in its object very detestably fraudulent.

This was certainly a painful ordeal for the transatlantic seer to go through ; but he endured it all with a sort of passive philosophy, which, whether it was derived from the innate and soothing conviction of his own truth, or from constitutional gentleness of temper, or from a resolute system of deception, gave a very amiable air of peaceful endurance to him, which, though it might occasionally have somewhat the manner and tone of indifference, could never have been objected to, as rude or offensive.

It certainly would not have been easy in any land to have found an individual more likely to witness the strange effects produced

by this mysterious agency, with deep interest, than poor Madame de Charmont.

Tender-hearted, meditative, pious, imaginative, and often solitary, the phenomena which she had been permitted to witness, were calculated both to soothe her heart and puzzle her intellect; and when, in addition to this, she was led to think that the unoffending medium was often exposed to impertinence, which he had certainly no means of repelling, let his possible conviction of his own truth be as strong as it might; her interest, both in his doctrines and himself, became such as to occupy and employ her mind more actively than anything had done since the death of her child.

The very natural consequence of all this was, that she had no sooner become sufficiently intimate with Clara, to feel really interested about her, than she sought to obtain her attention, and interest her feelings upon the subject, which at that time most deeply interested her own.

It is by no means necessary to follow the process by which she achieved, or partly achieved this; but as a means of showing how

far she had succeeded in occupying the mind of her new friend, it may be as well to give a part, at least, of a letter, which Clara addressed to her well-beloved old schoolmaster on the subject.

It was not the first epistle, by many, in which she had exerted all the epistolary eloquence she possessed, in order to make him comprehend how great a blessing had fallen upon her, by her having become acquainted with Madame de Charmont; and now, she again indulged herself by alluding to sundry good gifts which this admirable woman possessed, in a degree that she had never before met in the same perfection in any woman.

“ I have generally found,” she said, “ that where very decided, and, perhaps, rather exclusive opinions are avowed, the individual to whom they belong is *intolerant*; and this has always been a great impediment to my cordially loving, and liking, what are generally classed as *strong-minded* women.

“ But Madame de Charmont is totally free from this, and it is, I am sure, for this reason, that I always feel so much more disposed to

adopt her opinions, than those of the generality of others, from whom I may chance to differ ; and I am at this very moment strongly disposed to do so but I will not decide till I have your opinion on the subject.

“ Though you are, I imagine, beyond any very probable chance of coming into personal contact with any individuals partaking of the new-born celebrity of being ‘ MEDIUMS,’ you must, I think, have heard of their appearance on this side the Atlantic.

“ In the United States of America, we all know that they abound, notwithstanding their *very* doubtful reputation there ; but in Europe they are still sufficiently rare, to produce considerable excitement wherever they appear.

“ Now it happens that my dear new friend, Madame de Charmont, had made acquaintance with one of these remarkable individuals some time before we became known to each other ; but it was not until the cautious sort of prudence generally attendant upon new acquaintance had worn off, that she ventured to mention this Mr. Wilson to me, not only

as a person for whom, as an amiable individual, she felt considerable interest, but as a being who, if worthy of trust—as *she, at least*, most fully believed him to be—is one of many heralds sent to earth, for the purpose of communicating to man a new epoch in his onward progress towards a higher state of existence.

“ There was something so strangely startling to my common sense (or, as she calls it, to my *ignorance*) in this statement, that I own it revolted me; and had it been any other than Madame de Charmont who made it, I should, I believe, have ended the conversation as speedily as possible, by taking my leave of her; and it might, perhaps, have been with a resolution not to put myself within reach of listening to such extravagant nonsense again.

“ But Madame de Charmont is not, in my estimation, a person who can be so disposed of. I had never heard her say anything that was not worth listening to; and as to doubting a *fact*, which she stated upon her own knowledge to be *true*, it is no longer within

the reach of my will or my intellect to do so.

“ The solution, therefore, of this strange mystery—the only solution, at least, which suggested itself to me, was, that her senses must have been deluded by some such tricks as we hear attributed to the Indian jugglers, whose powers in that ingenious branch of *art*, appear by numberless, apparently, authentic statements, to be wonderfully incomprehensible.

“ But her gentle, stedfast, persevering assurances, that the phenomena of which she spoke had nothing in common with the species of ocular deceptions to which I alluded, led me at length to wish that I could myself witness them.

“ But the nearer she brought me to believing that there must be *some* agency of a different order employed in producing the effects she described, to any attributed to the celebrated Indian jugglers, the more I felt a sort of timid doubt growing upon me, not only as to the wisdom, but the righteousness of thus endeavouring to peep beyond the

curtain which Death appears so rigorously to place before our mortal eyes.

“As the possibility of my friend’s clear and vigorous intellect having been so utterly deluded, as to make her solemnly state to me as facts the visions of a bewildered imagination, as this possibility becomes, day by day, more difficult for me to believe—I feel as if I had become day by day more afraid to listen to her; and at last, though half expecting that you will make a jest of the whole business, I have determined to ask either for your *sanction*, or *forbiddance* of the wish, which is growing rather strong within me, of seeing, and judging by the aid of my senses of the truth or the fallacy of the phenomena so repeatedly witnessed by my friend.”

The remainder of the letter was chiefly concerning the happy prospects which seemed opening before Annie, mixed with more than one pleasant anecdote, illustrative of the intense interest of aunt Sarah in all that was

going on, and her exceeding happiness in witnessing that of her darling pet.

* * * *

To this letter, Clara, by the next post, received an answer, written with a warmth of affection which proved that the feelings of the writer were still as warmly affectionate as those of his youthful correspondent.

In reply to that portion of her letter to him which has been given above, he writes thus :

“I cannot believe, my dearest Clara, that Nature has any secrets which it would be a sin to penetrate.

“On the contrary, I am deeply persuaded, that no advance in human knowledge can be obtained, or rationally hoped for, but by careful and persevering study of her laws ; and, most assuredly, I do not believe that Nature has any laws which it would be sinful to investigate, although there may be many which we may long try to investigate in vain.

“Nevertheless, there is still much now wrapped in mystery, which, though requiring much patient industry, and much accumulated

intelligence to reach, may very fairly be hoped to be attained, in the fulness of time.

“ And we have, at least, the great satisfaction of knowing, that every onward step we take, renders the next more easy ; and experience has proved, that the light afforded by science, not only aids our progress as we advance each newly-discovered fact holding a flambeau, as it were, to the labourers who are struggling onward but it sustains their moral courage, too, and many an acute observer may be emboldened to hint at new discoveries *now*, from which he might have shrunk a hundred years ago, because his courage is increased by finding himself in such bold and honest company.

“ I am but an idle looker-on upon all this, my dear Clara ; but as far as my eye can penetrate, I can discern no law in Nature, nor recognise any principle in ethics, which can lead me to doubt that every effort to acquire knowledge, is a manifest obedience to the laws of God.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS letter brought all Clara's doubts and fears to a very abrupt conclusion.

But few hours, indeed, were permitted to elapse after she received it, before she contrived to see Madame de Charmont, and to tell her, that having consulted the valued old friend who had been her faithful guide through life, she had received from him not only permission, but something like encouragement, to indulge her wish of being present the next time she was kindly invited to be so, when she might hope to witness the extraordinary powers of Mr. Wilson.

It will be easily believed that this invitation was not long delayed ; and the result of the meeting to which it led shall be given in

Clara's own words, from the very faithful statement which the next day's post conveyed to her schoolmaster. They were as follows :

“ I should be sorry, my dearest friend, not to believe that you would be expecting a letter from me, dispatched from Paris by this day's post ; and more sorry still, were I capable of disappointing you. Yet, however true I may be to my promise of writing, it is but too probable, I fear, that the result of receiving my letter will be a feeling of disappointment on your part, quite as strong, or perhaps rather more so, than if you received no letter at all ; for all I can tell you is, that every faculty of my mind is bewildered and lost in conjecture ; or rather let me say that my faculties are very painfully *defeated* in all their efforts to form any conjecture at all upon what I heard and saw last night.

“ I will, to the very best of my power, relate faithfully all that my senses received, or seemed to receive ; for the old familiar phrase often used in relating marvels, and which runs thus—‘ *I could not believe my own senses,*’ was most assuredly my condition last night.

“So much for my preface; and now then let me begin at the beginning.

“On entering Madame de Charmont’s drawing-room, I found her, as I very often do, sitting *tête-à-tête* with her father, M. de Montfort.

“He is a right good friend of mine: one proof of which is, that I owe the happiness of knowing his daughter entirely to his good offices in my favour. He wished me joy of the permission I had received to witness the marvels which had so greatly interested himself and his daughter; kindly adding, that I might receive this congratulation as a compliment to my intellect; ‘for I do assure you,’ he added, ‘that I am much more inclined to warn off, than to invite the generality of my friends and acquaintances, when about to be occupied as I hope to be this evening; for, in truth, let people be as intelligent and well-informed as they may on other subjects, I almost uniformly find them troublesome on this.’

“‘In what way?’ I said. ‘I wish you would explain the nature of their offences to me, in order that I may avoid the like.’

“‘One word explains it,’ he replied. ‘Their offence lies in their insisting to be made to comprehend what is, in fact, utterly incomprehensible.’

“‘I am almost afraid,’ I replied, ‘that I may be tempted to commit the same offence; for I greatly prefer understanding what I see and what I hear, to being left in the dark concerning it.’

“‘And so do I too,’ he returned, laughing; ‘but upon this particular occasion I have schooled myself into submitting to the continuation of my ignorance; because I believe this ignorance to be part and parcel of my present state. But then I have the great consolation of believing that the intellectual portion of my nature will not be suffered to remain in this darkness for ever.—Depend upon it, that we shall, by degrees, be permitted to know all about it, but not, I think, till we are emancipated from the body.’

“‘Then your hope of my particular good behaviour on the present occasion is founded on your belief, that when I ask questions I am disposed to wait patiently for long-

delayed answers I scarcely think I shall deserve the credit due to such forbearance,' said I.

“ ‘Nor is it such forbearance that I give you credit for,’ he replied. ‘What I do ascribe to you in the way of credit is this : that when you shall witness phenomena which you feel, and know to be incomprehensible, you will not be likely to accuse others of fraud, merely because they are as much in the dark as yourself.’

“ ‘There would be considerably more blame, I think, in making such accusation, than merit in not doing it,’ I replied. ‘But at any rate,’ I added, ‘my object will be to keep my *senses* true to me. As to my judgment, after *they* have done the best they can for me, I must leave that to the sagacity of those around me, for I really do not expect to feel capable of forming any opinion on the subject myself.’

“ ‘I will not flatter you with any hope that you will be more capable of doing so to-morrow than to-day,’ replied Monsieur de Montfort. ‘But here comes our young Medium !’

“And as he spoke the door was thrown

open, and so very slight and delicate-looking a young man entered, that at the first glance I took him for a boy of at most sixteen or seventeen years old ; but I believe he is more than twenty. He had a quiet and rather pleasing expression of countenance ; but it appeared to me that he did not look in good health.

“ Madame de Charmont presented him to me as a friend for whom she had the very highest value ; and upon my extending my hand to him, in order to show that I duly appreciated such an introduction, the smile with which he received it was really very pleasing, from its kind expression.

“ Upon hearing me named as *Miss Holmwood*, he exclaimed, in English, with great apparent satisfaction—‘ Now then I shall hear my own language again !’

“ ‘ Nay, friend Wilson ! your French is too good to be thrown aside with contempt,’ said Madame de Charmont, who speaks English, by the bye, very nearly as fluently as I do myself ; ‘ but nevertheless,’ she added, ‘ I do not wish that you should have the trouble of

translating your thoughts for us. Treat us this evening as if we were all English or American ; and if either my father or myself feel at a loss for the meaning of a word or a phrase, our friend Miss Holmwood shall be our interpreter.'

"He smiled again, and silently bent his young-looking head in token of assent ; and then seconding the movement of Madame de Charmont, he placed his own chair (and assisted me in placing mine) at a small round table, covered with a moderate-sized table-carpet, which, however, was very little larger than was necessary to cover it—not hanging over it at any point, except the corners, beyond a few inches.

"On this table was placed a heavy lamp, and also paper, pencils, and the letters of the alphabet, on separate bits of pasteboard.

"We then seated ourselves ; and in less than sixty seconds, I think, after we had done so (our eight hands being all placed upon the table), I became conscious of a tremulous motion in the table, producing a strange sort of sensation, very like what I remember to

have experienced many years ago, during a slight shock of earthquake, as we were told. And then followed a similar tremulous motion in the floor under our feet. This also lasted but a moment; and then it was followed by so vehement a movement of the table in various directions, that I really expected every moment to see the lamp thrown down, and almost I involuntarily exclaimed, ‘The lamp!—the lamp!’

“‘Fear nothing,’ said Mr. Wilson, very quietly. ‘Nothing is ever overturned by these movements.’

“‘Then the spirits, or some power for which I have no name, set the laws of gravity at defiance?’ I said in a half whisper to Monsieur de Montfort.

“‘Completely so,’ he replied, laughing, ‘and in my case, as now apparently in yours, this was the first phenomenon which appeared to me as decisively preternatural, and I have in vain endeavoured to comprehend it.’

“The table then, after pressing itself firmly against me, with what appeared to me exactly as much force as could be used without hurt-

ing me, began performing exactly the same ceremony to Madame de Charmont, who sat opposite to me, and then recovered its original place, and remained perfectly still.

“We also remained perfectly still, and perfectly silent also ; and this lasted for a minute or two.

“I then very distinctly heard three taps given under the table.

“‘Who is that for?’ said Mr. Wilson. The answer to this question was given by a pressure, evidently from a hand, upon my knee.

“I exclaimed, ‘It is to me!—I feel a hand pressing my knee.’

“I had no sooner said this, than the pressure was removed ; but immediately after it was followed by three distinct taps given upon the same knee.

“‘The hand has moved, and has given me three distinct taps,’ said I.

“‘That is the token of affirmative,’ said Mr. Wilson. ‘The spirit is come to *you*,’ he added.—‘Can you guess who it may be?’

“‘Is it my dear father?’ said I.

“This question was again answered by three taps on my knee.

“For a moment I was quite overpowered, and my eyes filled with tears.

“ ‘Speak to it,’ said Mr. Wilson ; ‘there is nothing to fear ! Such intercourse can only give you pleasure.’

“Thus encouraged, I bowed my head over the table and said, ‘Father, are you happy ?’

“Three knocks, briskly and cheerily given under the table, was the reply. But though the sensation produced by this was most undoubtedly pleasurable, I was too much overpowered by it to continue an intercourse which appeared to me so awful, and instead of speaking again, I only wept ; and yet I felt supremely happy.

“Madame de Charmont had probably experienced the same sort of overwhelming emotion when she first witnessed these extraordinary manifestations, for she evidently felt that I was not in a state to bear any great additional excitement without suffering ; and she therefore said aloud, and as if addressing some spirit that she felt a happy consciousness of being near her, ‘Is my dear husband here ?’

“The three affirmative taps were instantly

given with very zealous promptitude upon the part of the table immediately before her, and, after a short interval, these were followed by five more, which the young American told us was the signal for carrying on the intercourse by means of the alphabet.

“Madame de Charmont then took a sheet of writing-paper and a pencil, while Mr. Wilson placed the letters of the alphabet before him, and then the business of spelling the answers to the questions which might be asked began. Had I been the operator, I have little doubt that between nervous excitement, and the awkwardness generally attendant upon the performance of a new manœuvre, I should have been very long in doing what was now achieved with great quickness, precision, and facility. The process is this:—A question being asked, the answer is obtained by repeating the letters of the alphabet aloud. When the letter required by the spiritual interlocutor is named, a sharp rap under the table indicates the fact, whereupon the letter is written down, and so on, till the intended communication is completed.

“On this occasion Madame de Charmont wished, for my particular edification, I believe, rather than for her own—(for, if I mistake not, the subject then brought under spiritual discussion was one upon which she was already extremely well informed, namely, the doctrines of Swedenborg,)—that the answers should be distinctly understood.

“I will not affect to be verbally precise, however, in giving the words in which her questions were expressed, but I think I can venture, without danger of falsification, to approach more nearly to the *spirit* answers.

“Her enquiries were evidently not those of a novice on the subject; and I may venture to say to *you*, what I certainly should not choose to repeat among her Roman Catholic friends and acquaintance here, that I have little, or rather no doubt, that she is herself a disciple of that very extraordinary man.

“She asked, as nearly as I can recollect her words, or rather the meaning of them, whether Swedenborg were indeed a prophet, specially sent by God to instruct mankind?

“The reply to this, again spelt out by means

of a tap under the table when the proper letter was reached, as Monsieur de Montfort repeated the alphabet, was this—‘*Swedenborg was as a star, and was sent at a time of great darkness.*’

“A few other questions followed, which I cannot recall with sufficient certainty to repeat them, and I think it would be useless for me to tax my memory in order to repeat to you, with the perfect accuracy such a statement demands, the questions and answers which followed, for I feel that I could not do so with sufficient verbal correctness to satisfy myself.

“Nor would there be any use whatever in my doing it if I could; for most assuredly neither you nor I, my dear friend, should feel disposed to found, or modify, any doctrine upon dogma so received.

“I cannot, however, accuse this young man of having uttered upon this occasion any word that any ear could shrink from as profane. On the contrary, indeed, there was *apparently* a deep feeling of piety, both in his words and manner, whenever any subject connected with religion was alluded to.

“The faith of Swedenborg is, I have recently

had reason to believe, very widely spread throughout the United States of America ; nor is it, as I have lately been assured, at all difficult to find professors of it, if sought for, in Europe, a very large amount of believers in his doctrine being, as I am assured, among the most highly educated persons in our own land.

“ Of the truth of this statement, however, I have no means whatever of judging.

“ But to return to our young *medium*.

“ Madame de Charmont, after the above questions had been asked and answered, bent her head over the table and said, ‘ Can my Adele come to me ? ’ The question was immediately answered in the affirmative by three loud raps, and the next moment Madame de Charmont exclaimed, ‘ She is here ! Her hand is touching my knee.’

“ ‘ Dearest Adele ! ’ murmured the bereaved mother, in a voice as expressive of tenderness as if she had indeed been in contact with her lost treasure—‘ You are happy ? ’

“ Again three firmly-given raps were heard under the table in reply.

“ While this passed, and while Madame de

Charmont murmured fond words to her child, the medium was amusing himself, as it seemed, by arranging the letters of the alphabet in pretty forms, exactly as an idle child might have done, when not occupied by what was going on.

“After a minute or two, during which Madame de Charmont told me that her daughter’s hand was still caressingly pressing her knee, the happy-looking mother said, ‘Adele! will you take my eye-glass, and give it into the hand of my friend Clara?’

“And as she spoke she took from her neck the eye-glass, which was hung by a velvet ribbon around it, and held it suspended between herself and the table-cover.

“We immediately saw the ribbon gently drawn out of Madame de Charmont’s hand, and after a short interval I felt a touch upon my knee, and then saw the eye-glass raised sufficiently to be visible above the edge of the table. I took it in my hand, and drew up the ribbon to which it was attached as from a hand that held it loosely.

“Madame de Charmont then asked me if I

had lost no friend whom I would wish to recall to visit me.

“I confess to you that, for a moment, I hesitated from a sensation, certainly not of terror, but of awe. And for that moment I believe I felt a sensation of doubt as to its being right to meddle thus in breaking through what the experience of all past ages has taught us to believe was a law of nature, or, in other words, a *law of God*.

“But it took less than a moment to make me blush at my own credulity, which could permit me for a single instant to believe that I, or any other created being, COULD interfere with a law of God ; and it took but one rapid act of thought more to make me express a wish that my dear father should come to me.

“I immediately felt the pressure of a hand upon my knee. ‘Is that my father?’ said I ; and the question was instantly replied to by the three affirmative taps.

“I then said, ‘Are you happy, father?’

“To which I again received the assenting sign, given vigorously and very promptly.

“But here my narrative must end, for I have

nothing to add which could suggest anything approaching to a solution of this strange mystery.

“Monsieur de Montfort, indeed, asked several questions, the replies to which were not only, as he said, perfectly correct, but repeatedly alluded to circumstances with which he assured us, no one living, but himself, had any cognisance.

“In one of these questionings, a circumstance occurred which was certainly very remarkable. In reply to a question which he asked respecting some event long passed, the reply spelt out a name which Monsieur de Montfort said he did not know, and he evidently felt that the answer was a blunder.

“Whereupon the *spirit* spelt another name, but having the same baptismal name before it ; and no sooner was this done, than Monsieur de Montfort eagerly exclaimed, “Yes, yes, quite right ! The name first given was her maiden name, and I had forgotten it.”

“The extreme improbability that the young American medium could have known this *long ago defunct* lady’s maiden name is too obvious to

meet any commentary ; yet assuredly this does not amount to any proof of supernatural agency.

“The next thing which occurred was startling enough, also, for it consisted in a series of most vehement and capricious evolutions, performed by the table at which we sat. It rose from the ground till its legs were very nearly on a level with our heads, and then dropped down again upon the floor, with considerable violence, and then it rushed suddenly towards me, and again raised itself so as to press its edge (very gently) against my chest. It then turned itself towards Madame de Chermont, and performed exactly the same *violent seeming*, but perfectly innoxious manœuvre before her, and then replaced itself, by a sharp and noisy descent, upon the floor.

“During all this vehement movement the lamp retained its position, as if it had been screwed to the table, and in utter defiance, as it seemed, of all our notions concerning the laws of gravity.

“The whole of this extraordinary exhibition was so wholly beyond the reach of my com-

prehension, that I feel the dwelling upon it to be an idle waste of thought.

“It is evident to me that both Madame de Charmont and her father believe implicitly, that the touches they have felt, and the verbal communications which have been spelt to them, have proceeded from the spirits of their deceased friends ; and such is *decidedly* the explanation given by the medium, and given apparently without any mixture of doubt on the subject.

“While witnessing these most mysterious manifestations myself, I received the statement of their source without feeling any possibility of doubting, or at any rate of contradicting them . . . for where else was I to look for an explanation ?

“But during the quiet night-thoughts which I have given to the subject since, I confess that my mind has shrunk from receiving a doctrine so completely at variance with our world-wide experience.

“In answer to this scepticism, I have been told, and truly enough, that all things are in progression, and that many powers of nature,

which are now familiar to us, were as unknown to our fathers, as these spirit visitations have hitherto been to us.

“To this statement it appears to me impossible to make any perfectly satisfactory reply. A vast deal has been said and written to prove the absurdity of attempting to explain what is beyond our comprehension, by a doctrine equally incomprehensible, and which is, moreover, entirely at variance with our foregone experience.

“In short, my dear old friend, my mind is very disagreeably bewildered.

“A great deal of sagacity, and of a power very greatly superior to any of which my highest flights of vanity could ever believe myself capable, has been very actively at work, to find some plausible solution of this mystery, but in vain. Nothing really intelligible in the way of explanation, has yet been made public from any quarter.

“The explanation most obvious, namely, impugning the truth of the Medium, has, of course, been uttered again, and again, and again; and it will, of course, continue to be

uttered, and believed also, because the vast majority of those who hear this assertion made have had no means of judging by the help of their own senses, how far it is just or unjust ; and the probabilities very decidedly are in favour of the former.

“Nevertheless, to those who have had an opportunity of carefully observing the effects produced, the *impossibility* of much deception, on the part of the Medium, becomes evident, as far as regards *many* of the most extraordinary manifestations exhibited.

“That this strange power has been assumed by some who have it not, is highly probable ; and it is equally so, perhaps, that some among those who really have it, may have been tempted to exaggerate its extent.

“To what degree this may have been the case in the United States, which are evidently the birth-place and the cradle of this mysterious power, it is impossible for us to know ; but that Mr. Wilson has produced true answers upon several points, whereon he could not, in the ordinary course of nature, have received information, is a matter of quite undoubted

fact to those who have been within reach of witnessing his experiments.

“There is, moreover, one point upon which the truth is much more easily made manifest, than on any questions of a merely speculative nature. Many persons with whom I have conversed on the subject, stoutly continue to deny their belief in all, or any, spiritual or mental manifestations ; but I have never yet met with any one who had been present at one of Mr. Wilson’s sittings who ventured to ascribe the vehement manœuvres of the *table* to any physical power exercised either by him, or the united hands of those who sat with him.

“It is, indeed, difficult to conceive anything more truly ludicrous, by way of a solution, than the statement published by a very justly celebrated individual, respecting the movement of tables, when hands are laid upon them. Having seen, as I have done, a tolerably heavy loo table spring up to the distance of at least two feet from the floor, and then rest its edge (very gently), first upon the chest of one person, and then upon the chest of another, while the hands of all those surrounding it were totally

disengaged from every part of it ; having SEEN this, I certainly cannot refrain from smiling at the explanation which ascribes this movement to hands no longer in contact with it.

“ No index formed by strings, however ingeniously arranged under the table, can explain such movements as those I have witnessed. Nor, to confess the truth, have I sufficient ingenuity to enable me to guess how this very startling manœuvre was executed by any hands.

“ But I am detaining you too long, my dear old friend, upon a subject that occupies my mind much more like a troublesome vision in delirium, than like a sober, solid, reality, upon which I desire to receive your opinion.

“ OPINION ! What opinion can you possibly form upon all the strange statements which I have set down in this long epistle ? Perhaps in sober truth you may really think I *am* delirious at this present moment ? And, upon my word, if you tell me so, I am by no means quite certain that I shall not adopt this opinion myself. If it be so, I suppose my friends here will make me acquainted with the fact, if

I recover my senses ; and I do assure you, dearest schoolmaster, that it will be rather a relief to me to hear it all so explained, for I have at this moment a puzzled uncertain feeling about all I have heard, and all I have seen on this subject, which is very far from *comfortable*.

“ This delirium, however, if it be such, is wholly confined to my brain, and has in no degree affected my heart, which loves you as dearly as ever.

“ Remember me most kindly to dear Mary, and assure her that, notwithstanding my bewildered condition, I am ever her’s and your’s,

“ Most affectionately,

“ CLARA HOLMWOOD.”

This letter was very speedily replied to by the punctual schoolmaster, and it was thus he wrote :—

“ Your communication is a strange one, my dear Clara, and it doubtless would have appeared to me more startling still, had I not previously heard from other quarters statements considerably more astounding than even yours. It is very natural, dearly beloved

pupil, that you should have followed upon this occasion what has been the habit of your life . . . namely, that you should have applied yourself to your old schoolmaster for the solution of what amazed you.

“But I confess to you, my dear child, that it seems to me as if we had arrived at a period when the young should be applied to for information, and not the old.

“I can scarcely doubt, that if I were to draw up a statement, expressive of my own belief upon the authenticity of the marvellous accounts which you lay before me, its result would be little less than a series of contradictions; one very honestly indited sentence standing in precise opposition to another very honestly indited sentence, standing before, or after it. All my pre-conceived notions of the powers of man in his present earth-born condition, founded not wholly on my own experience, but on the solemnly-recorded experience of all past ages, are in direct contradiction to what is now stated to me as fact, not only by you, my dear child, whom I most firmly believe to be incapable of falsehood, but by

many others whose truth I have no right to challenge.

“It should therefore be to the young, and not to the old, that you should apply for the solution of these mysteries.

“The pre-conceived notions of the young, cannot, I imagine, be so firmly rooted in their minds as those of the old, who have passed long lives in familiar reliance upon what they believed to be the laws of nature, as manifested to their senses, and sanctified, as I may call it, by the profound science of those who have devoted their lives to the study of these laws.

“I will not allude here to any claiming authority higher still, as the judgment of such may not be uniform.

“But to your old schoolmaster, my Clara, and to others like him, the task of believing these new wonders is very difficult.

“That Science herself is day by day enlarging her horizon, by the discovery of truths as completely unguessed at a few hundreds, nay, even a few scores of years ago, as any that are said to be revealed at present, is most certain ; and therefore it is that I say to you,

consult the most enlightened philosophers you can find among the *young*.

“The only aperture, as it seems to me, by which any gleam of light can enter to assist us, is through the sort of chink which was made some years back, by *mesmerism*, in our pre-conceived ideas concerning the nature and the faculties of human beings.

“I plead guilty to having for a considerable time refused to believe the statements which reached me on this subject; but having at length consented to witness the experiments which had sufficed to overcome the incredulity of many, whose intellects, and whose truth, I held in esteem, I, too, became perfectly convinced that the power of one human being over another, was occasionally of a quality that no science, hitherto possessed by us, could explain.

“In like manner, I now again feel persuaded that it *may* be possible for a human agent to produce effects upon inert matter, such as you, and many others, have described; though the theory which refers the phenomena thus produced, to the *mesmerized* and *deluded* condition

of the *spectator*, and not to any locomotive activity in the tables and chairs, has, I am told, many advocates.

“But it appears to me, that the activity of the mahogany (whether real, or only apparent) sinks into tameness when compared to the visitations of the friends from whom we have been severed by death.

“It is true, indeed, that this ‘revisiting the glances of the moon’ is *not a new* idea; the apparent vitality of tables and chairs, *is* so. Nevertheless, the old world story of *ghosts*, is so much more awful to the imagination, as well as so infinitely more important in the way of *doctrine*, that it requires, in my estimation, a much more definite species of proof, before it can be received as true.

“Nevertheless, dearest Clara, I am very decidedly of opinion, that there is less of sound judgment shewn by those who stoutly declare (after hearing the statements on this subject, now so currently repeated in Europe as well as in the United States), that the whole thing is the result of fraud, than is manifested by those who confess that they believe not only

what they have seen, but what they have heard.

“And here let me say, as an illustration of my meaning, that I not only receive your statements as being perfectly true, but as being perfectly accurate also ; unfortunately, however, this confidence in you, which is the result of long years of watchful observation of your character, neither can, nor ought to be extended to any one less thoroughly known to me, and *therefore* it is, that I still fluctuate between the *possibility* that all you witnessed was as marvellous as it purported to be, and the *probability* that you and your friends were deceived by some ingenious illusion.”

CHAPTER IX.

THIS letter from her dearly-beloved school-master by no means completely satisfied Clara. She was indeed touched, and much gratified by the earnest expression of his entire reliance upon her truth . . . but, *per contra*, she was considerably vexed by his application of the words "*possible*" and "*probable*." I shall give, however, but one short additional extract from her letters on this subject ; for soon after it was written, she became too much interested in Annie's affairs, to have either time or inclination to devote even to *probabilities* with which that dear friend had nothing to do.

"In reply to your classification of my facts as possible, though not probable," it was thus

she replied to this too-incredulous passage, "I will state one circumstance that has occurred to myself, and which cannot, I think, be classed as being either merely possible or merely probable. I have again met the young American, Mr. Wilson, at the house of my friend, Madame de Charmont, and he then exercised the mysterious power with which he is, or *appears* to be, gifted, by causing the spirits of her departed husband and child to approach her.

"She was at first made conscious of their presence only by their touching, first, her knee, and then her shoulder. But upon this occasion, as it almost constantly happens to her, she was as much persuaded that the hands touching her were those of her husband and her child as if she had seen them, although assuredly she had no proof of this, save the assertion of the Medium. As usual, however, she said, 'Is that my husband?' and 'Is that my child?' as the hands successively touched her; and, *as usual*, she was answered by the affirmative knocks.

"And then followed some interesting ques-

tions on her part, but, as on a former occasion, these questions related wholly to different points in the doctrine of Swedenborg, all of which were very explicitly answered, and always in strict uniformity to the written doctrines which Swedenborg left behind him.

“She then said, addressing the spirit of her child, ‘May I not look at you, my dear one?’

“This question was followed by a profound silence.

“After what appeared to us to be a very long interval, we heard *five* knocks, distinctly given, under the table.

“Mr. Wilson immediately placed the alphabet before him, and putting a sheet of writing-paper and a pencil before Madame de Charmont, desired her to write down the letters which should be responded to (as he called it) by a tap.

“He began distinctly rehearsing the letters, and when he pronounced the letter P, we heard a tap, very distinctly given.

“He then recommenced, A, B, C, and so on, till he pronounced the letter U, when he was stopped by another tap under the table,

and the letter U was written on the paper by Madame de Charmont.

“ And in this manner, the words ‘*put out the lamp,*’ were inscribed upon the paper. The request, or command, whichever it be called, was immediately complied with ; and had it not been a very bright, moonlight night, and that our table was placed at no great distance from a large window, we should have been in total darkness, for the lamp on the table was the only other light we had.

“ This moonlight, however, was *quite* sufficient to enable Madame de Charmont to enjoy the pleasure of looking upon what she evidently considered to be the hand of her child ; for, upon Monsieur de Montfort’s complying with a sign from the Medium, that he should push back his chair from the table, a small hand was protruded from beneath the table-cloth, and placed itself on the knee of Madame de Charmont ; she, too, having pushed back her chair to the distance of, perhaps, a foot from the table. The little hand was very beautifully formed, and delicately white.

“ ‘ May I touch it ? ’ said the mother, in a manner that showed considerable agitation.

“ ‘ Yes, ’ replied the Medium, ‘ you may touch it. ’

“ She accordingly laid her fingers very gently upon the little white hand as it lay upon her knee, and then said, in a voice which trembled with emotion, ‘ The hand is warm ! ’ and, ‘ Oh ! it is so soft ! ’ The little hand was then gently withdrawn, retreating, as it were, behind the table-cloth. A portion of the arm had been also visible beyond the shelter of the table-cloth ; but it was covered with something like white drapery, not quite fitting like a sleeve, but a little approaching to it.

“ For a minute or two we were all silent, and it would be difficult, I think, to give you any notion of the sort of awe we seemed to feel (not including the Medium, however, for he evidently did not at all share in this emotion). Madame de Charmont wept ; and for a minute or two concealed her face with her hand ; her father remained profoundly silent, and not only silent, but, as it seemed, im-

movable; and, as to myself, I felt, and probably as any one might be expected to do, under such very novel circumstances, as if not quite certain whether I were awake, or dreaming.

“After this silent interval, however, which whether long, or short, I am unable to tell you, Madame de Charmont seemed to recover from the emotion which had overwhelmed her, and laying her hand on mine, she said, ‘Will you not venture, dearest Clara, to ask for the same happiness which has been granted to me? Will you not ask to see the hand of your father? It is such very intense pleasure, to know that what we so fondly loved on earth, exists for us still in Heaven! Do not let any nervous weakness prevent your enjoying this!’

“‘Can I see my father’s hand?’ I said, addressing the Medium. ‘I should like to do so!’ I added, with great sincerity, though certainly not without being conscious of a somewhat accelerated pulsation of my heart.

“At this moment I totally forget whether the wish I thus expressed received the assent-

ing three taps in reply, or not ; but the interval was short, before I saw a hand distinctly thrust from under the table - cover, the hands of the Medium, as well as those of my two friends, being at the same time all visible on the top of the table. The moonlight, from the large window before which we sat, was so brilliant, as to enable me to perceive both the shape and colour of the hand, *distinctly*. It evidently appeared to be the hand of a man, its colour being somewhat *fairer*, or *paler*, than that of life.

“ I asked if I might touch it ; and being answered in the affirmative, I laid my hand gently on that which I was told was the hand of my father ! It was warm, and soft enough to yield, exactly as a living hand might have done, to the slight pressure of mine.

“ It then withdrew itself, but presently appeared again, and instead of placing itself, as before, on the seat of the chair, which occupied the space between the window and the table, it raised the table-cover, and, by a sort of backward movement, took hold of a sheet of paper which was upon the table,

and laid it upon my lap, I having turned myself from the table towards the chair on which the hand had been laid.

“ I took the paper in my hand, and the Medium, or else one of my two friends, said (I cannot recall with certainty the voice which spoke), ‘ It is going to write for you.’

“ The hand was then again turned towards the table, and took a pencil from it, and having done so, was again directed towards me, and very distinctly took hold of the sheet of writing-paper which I held. I yielded it, of course, and it was then placed on the seat of the above-mentioned chair, and I saw the pencil applied to it, the hand being evidently in the act of writing.

“ This lasted but a moment, and then the paper was taken off the chair, and again laid upon my lap.

“ After this, the hand disappeared, and for a few minutes we sat perfectly still, but no farther manifestations of any kind reached us.

“ After this interval the lamp was re-lighted, and upon examining the paper I held in my hand, I found the word ‘*daughter*’

very legibly written upon it, with a cross above the word, and another below it.

“ This is a very long story, my dear friend, and I would not have recounted it, after reading your very reasonable letter, save and except for the purpose of stating one fact, and making one observation, which may, perhaps, enable you to understand why it is, that in despite of your evident opinion, that the farther discussion of this desperately vague theme promises no profitable result, I still venture to write you a long letter on it. But bear with me patiently on this occasion, and I will not disturb your philosophy by any similar narratives.

“ The one fact which I wish to state to you, and which is quite beyond the reach of any delusion that is *not* supernatural, is this. I have at this moment, in the desk at which I am writing, the bit of paper on which I saw the word ‘ daughter ’ inscribed. I received that bit of paper from the hand which I had seen write upon it, and I returned to my own room without having permitted it to leave my hand for an instant. This paper

I have preserved in great security, and the word 'daughter' and the two crosses remain on it still. So much for my fact. And now for my observation on it.

"I have listened with great interest, and very perfect faith, to the many statements which have described the process which I believe is called 'Electro-Biology.' By this process, as all those who have witnessed it seem to agree, most extraordinary effects are produced, the operator having the power of conveying to the mind of the person operated upon, the thoughts and the images which his (the operator's) mind suggests. Now if this power exists, it must be easy enough for the individual possessing it to persuade the individual upon whom he operates, that he sees, and that he hears, what, in reality, he neither hears, nor sees. The extraordinary effects produced by Mesmerism, are now so familiar to the great majority of tolerably well-informed persons, that the few (if any) who still doubt the truth upon this subject, are now for the most part content to doubt in silence.

“ Now to this large amount of believers in the various powers of Animal Magnetism, nothing now exhibited by a trans-atlantic medium can be very startling, for it is probably as easy to transmit one fantastic idea as another. But let this power, and this fact be established to the fullest possible extent, and it will not help us to explain how the seeming apparition, of a seeming hand, can LEAVE traces of its existence, and its vital power, by *writing*. And here I stop, dear schoolmaster, leaving both you and myself, I suspect, in a state of very inglorious uncertainty. My affectionate love is with you and dear Mary.

“ Ever your own,

“ CLARA HOLMWOOD.”

CHAPTER X.

PERHAPS it was fortunate for my heroine that very interesting events, having decidedly this present world for their scene of action, were passing near her ; for had it been otherwise, it is very possible that despite the rather chilling reception which her schoolmaster had given to the marvels she recited, her imagination might have been goaded into a degree of activity which might have left common sense very considerably in the back-ground.

But she was saved from any dangerous enthusiasm of this kind, both by feeling that the affairs of this life had enough of interest in them to deserve that they should not be forgotten, while anticipating that which was to follow, and by coming at length very quietly

to the opinion, that if what we call *the laws of nature* are gradually developing themselves before us, and that among these laws there are still some unguessed-at secrets to be divulged ; we shall show a wise reverence to their divine author by steadily profiting by the light that is evidently increasing upon us, than by forestalling, by idle guesses, the sublime truths which are still, as we hope, in store for us.

“For would it not,” thought Clara, “be as idle to spend our time and our intellect in labouring to discover a mode of flying bodily through the air, as swiftly as our electrified thoughts do now, as to prosecute researches concerning the intercourse between the living and the dead, with any greater vehemence of curiosity than well-established facts can justify ?”

And having answered this mental query very satisfactorily in the affirmative, she frankly told Madame de Charmont that she did not wish to witness any more experiments through the aid of her friend the American medium, till some new fact was elicited.

That this decision was a wise one there can be little doubt ; for no good can possibly arise from startling, puzzling, and unsettling the mind by the contemplation of appearances, for a real examination of which no science, as yet within our reach, can lend us aid.

There is nothing unnatural, nor in any way incredible, in the doctrine which teaches that we are in a progressive state ; a very slight acquaintance with the history of the human mind may suffice to shew us that new discoveries are not to be thrown aside as idle imaginings, merely because they ARE new ; yet such appears to be the reasoning of those who turn aside in anger and disgust from contemplating phenomena in this case, of which they cannot *deny* the existence, yet hesitate to avow it.

It was decidedly lucky, however, for my reasonable heroine, that her heart and head found so much occupation from the interest she took in the affairs of Annie Wharton.

Had no such interest existed, she might have found it more difficult to turn a deaf ear to the urgent entreaties of Madame de Char-

mont to assist her in her still eager pursuit of superhuman information ; but, as it was, Clara did not greatly exaggerate, when she told her, in reply to her reiterated invitations, that her mind was too completely occupied by those still in life, to leave her at leisure to speculate upon the possibility of being visited by those who had left it.

In truth, the present position of Annie was such as could not but awaken deep interest in those who loved her ; nor was this interest altogether without anxiety ; for although the young man, upon whom it was easy to see her affections were riveted, became more and more endeared to all who loved her, the more his charming character developed itself ; and the more they saw of his devoted affection to her, the circumstances of his position were not as yet, by any means, sufficiently assured to render it quite clear that it would be prudent to permit the marriage to take place immediately.

It was, however, no longer Lady Amelia who showed the most decided symptoms of anxiety on this subject. It had certainly

not been without some effort—nay, some rather strong effort—of self-control, that she had conquered her feelings of disapprobation to the connection; but having achieved this, she sympathised with all the tenderness of a very devoted mother in the happy prospects which seemed opening before her darling. No sooner, indeed, had her mother's consent been fully given, than it became easy enough to perceive that the gentle girl was truly a thousand fathom deep in love, though the secret might have gone with her to the grave, had such consent been withheld.

But, in truth, from the moment Lady Amelia had fairly succeeded in her very genuine efforts to conquer her aristocratic averseness to the marriage, she only saw in it a delightful assurance of happiness to her Annie; and as every passing day increased her conviction that she might very possibly have lost her daughter, if she had persevered in withholding her consent, the approaching marriage became, day by day, an increasing source of satisfaction to her; and day by day she became more anxious that all the pre-

liminaries should be settled, that every possible obstacle should be foreseen and removed, and that the irretrievable deed should be done which would put the misery of seeing the happy hopefulness that now sparkled in her darling's eyes exchanged for the dark misery of disappointment, beyond the reach of fate to bring it to her.

But it soon became evident to Clara, that Sir William Lawrence and Lady Amelia had, in some degree, changed sides as to their respective feelings on the subject of this alliance.

Not, indeed, that the kind-hearted baronet appeared in the least degree to have lost the feeling of affectionate partiality which he had uniformly manifested towards Victor ; but Clara was not at all mistaken in thinking that she perceived symptoms of his wishing to delay the marriage, although there was evidently no diminution of his affectionate attachment towards the bridegroom elect. It was of course impossible that she could perceive this without feeling considerable anxiety concerning the cause of it ; and this anxiety

was certainly not a little increased by her remembering that she had herself used all her influence, and very effectually too, in bringing about the engagement, the fulfilment of which she now felt, with a very painful degree of certainty, was no longer so cordially approved as it had been by Sir William Lawrence.

But it was equally evident to her, that let the cause for this change be what it might, it had not been communicated to Lady Amelia ; and though feeling greatly averse to again interfering in the affair, she resolved at length, though very reluctantly, to take the earliest *tête-à-tête* opportunity of speaking to Sir William Lawrence on the subject.

But it is probable that this bold resolve would never have been executed by Clara, had she not felt a strong presentiment that this threatening obstruction to all the happy hopes of her greatly-loved Annie arose from some disappointment respecting the income which could at once be assured to the young man, by the influential persons who had agreed to receive him as a junior partner in the lucrative

concern to which he had been so unexpectedly promised admittance.

Should this presentiment prove true, my heroine had the heartfelt satisfaction of knowing that she could, with perfect facility, remove the objection, and not only that the doing so could be productive of no possible inconvenience to herself, but that it would, in fact, be doing no more than she had previously determined to do, for the mere gratification of proving to Lady Amelia that the advice she had presumed to give, had not been offered in the character of an ordinary acquaintance, but that she had felt, and did still feel, that Annie was as dear to her as the most fondly-loved younger sister could have been, had heaven bestowed so great a blessing on her.

With this pleasant scheme in her head, by which she hoped and expected to remove all difficulties, and that, too, before Lady Amelia had felt the annoyance of believing that any such existed, Clara watched for the next approach of Sir William Lawrence, and having succeeded in becoming aware of his arrival, before he had entered the drawing-room, she

met him with an extended hand upon the landing-place, and opening the door which led to her private sitting-room, invited him to enter it. It is possible that he was somewhat surprised at the invitation, but not sufficiently so to prevent his accepting it with a very good grace ; and Clara having fairly seen him seated on her sofa, did not permit him to be long embarrassed by any doubts as to her reason for placing him there.

But no sooner had she touched the theme upon which she had so anxiously wished to consult him, than the sudden augmentation of his colour as plainly acknowledged the fact, that he shared her anxiety, as any words could have done. But, of course, this discovery only stimulated her courage, and strengthened her purpose of speaking to him with the most perfect unreserve ; but she very discreetly began by seeking information, instead of giving it.

“ Let me ask you one question, dear Sir William,” she began, “ before I proceed to communicate the thoughts which occupy me just now too much to enable me to feel comfortable without a confidant. You are not a

man of mystery, and, therefore, I feel sure that you will not refuse to tell me frankly whether Victor Dormont continues to possess your affection and esteem, at present, as fully as he did when he first avowed his attachment to Annie ?”

“Fully ! fully ! fully !” repeated the old gentleman, with energy ; “and were it possible that I could think more highly of any man than I did of him, at the period you allude to, I should say that both my affection and esteem for him had increased.”

“Most fervently do I rejoice to hear you say so,” she eagerly replied ; “for as long as these feelings towards him endure on your part, I am quite sure that there can exist nothing on his part to justify the anxiety which I have been lately feeling about him.”

She said this with a very cordial smile ; “But, nevertheless,” she added, “I cannot help fancying, that, for some reason or other, you are less desirous of promoting the marriage than you appeared to be, when it was first proposed.”

“You are a very acute young lady,” replied

Sir William, shaking his head with rather a melancholy smile; "but yet you are not wholly right either, for I am not at all less desirous of promoting the marriage than I was when it was first proposed; but I am fain to confess that I fear it must, in common prudence, be delayed."

"I am very sorry to hear it," replied Clara, with very deep sincerity; for she had known the sickness of the heart which is caused by hope delayed, and she loved the gay-spirited young Annie much too fondly not to deprecate such suffering for her.

The silence of a minute or two followed this expression of her sympathy, for in truth she did not very well know how to express what she wished to say. Had her birth been noble by a dozen descents, she could not have been more sensitively alive to the difficulty of hinting at the portionless condition of Annie than she did now; and her intention of adding that it was her purpose to supply this deficiency, rather increased her embarrassment than lessened it.

She was too much in earnest, however, in her determination that her friend's happiness

should not be sacrificed from any want of courage on her part, to permit this feeling to impede her long; and though she looked, as she spoke, quite as much ashamed as if she were making an effort to petition for alms, she contrived to say that the circumstance of Annie's fortune being dependent on the death of her mother, need not be considered as any reason, either for opposing or delaying the marriage, for that it was her intention to present her dearly-loved young friend with ten thousand pounds upon her wedding day.

There may, perhaps, be many a high-spirited independent old English baronet who might not only have felt startled, but somewhat *put out*, as the phrase goes, at such a proposal from a still very juvenile, as well as a very isolated heiress; but Sir William Lawrence was not one of them.

From habitual thoughtlessness, he rarely, on any occasion, paused to look at both sides of a question before he answered it; and had the impediment to the immediate marriage of Annie arisen from the well-known fact that she had no marriage portion to bring with her,

he would have unquestionably have listened to this generous proposal, not only with affectionate gratitude, but unmixed satisfaction. But, as it happened, the case was otherwise. The immediate effect of Clara's words, however, was to produce a feeling of affectionate confidence towards her; but it seemed to have as little mixture of gratitude in it, as there would have been had Lady Amelia (from some unknown source or other) proposed to do the same thing. He got up from his place on the sofa, put his hands, firmly clasped, behind his back (which was rather a favourite attitude with him), and then stationed himself immediately before her.

"If you will listen to me for five minutes," he said, "I will explain to you how the matter stands. It is hardly possible for any young fellow to have finer prospects before him than Victor Dormont . . . and you may take my word for it, my dear, that there is no want of ready money in the concern. There is a longer list of first-rate French names connected with it than you would take the trouble to read, and all these gentlemen are much more than

ready and willing to take part in the concern they are as energetic and clamorous to obtain admission to it, as Nap. the First was to get into Moscow, or Nap. the Third into Sebastopol. Our pet Victor is well known, and dearly valued too, by some of the first and most influential individuals who are at the head of the concern, and, as an *employé*, he might be received to-morrow, with a capital good salary too.

“ But, with all my love for him, I am not going to give my consent to Lady Amelia’s daughter becoming the wife of a *clerk*, let the salary be as good as it may ; and I have therefore made dear Victor understand that the marriage must either be given up altogether, or else that they must wait as patiently as they can, poor young things ! till he shall have obtained sufficient influence, by his great intelligence and active services, to induce the most influential members of the company to receive him as an associate, though without a capital.

“ Such arrangements are made, I believe, every day with us, and I have little or no doubt that the same sort of thing may be done

here ; only we may have to wait for it. And it is for this reason, my fair lady, that I have preached to both parties the absolute necessity of patience."

Clara listened to this, of course, in very perfect silence ; nor was the silence broken for the first minute or two after the kind-hearted baronet had ceased speaking. But then my heroine ventured to say, "I had hoped, Sir William, that the ten thousand pounds I have mentioned as my wedding gift to Annie, might have been placed by Victor in the concern as his contribution to the common capital."

"No, dear lady, no !" replied Sir William Lawrence, in a more serious tone than it was his wont to use ; "I'm not a man of many words, at least not of many grave words, but perhaps I can feel more easily than I can express the gratitude which your generous gift inspires. Did I not know, as surely as I do, that the feelings which unite you and my dear relatives so closely together, are as mutual as they are sincere, your generosity might excite more pain than pleasure. But, as it is, I only feel that Providence has blessed my dear

Amelia and her child, by an accidental union with you, which seems to atone to them for all deficiencies. But the more precious this accidental union appears to me, the more I feel it to be my duty that all the advantages arising from it should be assured and secured to our dear Annie, who deserves, dear, sweet-spirited little soul! a great deal more than either her mother or I can do for her. Your noble gift must be SETTLED ON HER, my dear Miss Clara. It must have nothing whatever in common with this grand commercial concern, superb as it is. It must be devoted wholly and solely to the dear girl and her children, should she be happy enough to have any. And, most certainly, the knowledge that there is such a sum, so settled, will be a pillow of down for her mother to rest upon, let the marriage take place when it will."

"My object, my dear sir," replied Clara, "will be effectually obtained, if what I have promised to do shall have the effect of accelerating a marriage upon which I cannot but think the happiness of dear Annie depends. As to the rest, that is, I mean concerning

everything which regards the disposal of it, that rests wholly on the judgment of yourself and Lady Amelia.”

And here the discussion ended. Sir William took his leave, after kissing the fair hand she extended to him, with gratitude and affection ; and Clara saw him depart with the pleasant consciousness that she had very decidedly smoothed some of the difficulties which had appeared likely to divide her friend Annie from one who seemed in every way (but one) so well deserving the tender affection her young heart had bestowed upon him.

She longed to see the sweet happy face which she expected Annie would show her, after hearing what had passed, but determined to wait patiently for this gratification till she should have had time to discuss with her lady mother the probable acceleration of the marriage, to which what had just passed was likely to lead.

Clara was not disappointed in her hope that Lady Amelia would speedily pay her a visit, for within half an hour after Sir William Lawrence had left her, the well-known knock was heard at the door.

The "come in," which Clara spoke in reply to it, was followed by the eager entrance of her grateful friend; who uttered, with very perfect sincerity, as she threw her arms around her, "Clara! I cannot thank you!"

"If you love me, as well I love you," said Clara, returning her embrace, "you will not talk about thanking me, for you will understand perfectly well that I have been only pleasing myself. But at this moment, my dear friend," she continued, "we have something more important to talk of than either your pleasure or mine. Tell me, dearest Lady Amelia, if you can, whether my now doing, what I always intended to do some time or other, is likely to hasten the marriage on which the happiness of this dear Annie so evidently depends?"

"I cannot doubt that it must do so," replied Lady Amelia; "for, in the first place, it removes the great objection arising from the impossibility of Victor's making any settlement, let his income from this magnificent concern be what it may; and, in the second, it must make so handsome an addition to their imme-

diate income, as entirely to remove any anxiety we might feel on that account."

"You have stated precisely the result which I wished and hoped for," returned Clara, joyously. "My knowledge of life, in any direction, is still, as you are aware, but a very confined and very imperfect one; but nevertheless, I have a notion . . . perhaps it was born with me, you know, but I certainly have a notion that it is thought desirable that the settlement made at marriage upon a woman and her children, should always be independent of all mercantile concerns; and therefore I mean, that my *cadeau de noce* shall be a little personal concern between Annie and me, in which neither partners nor principals shall have any concern whatever."

"I must not attempt to thank you!" said Lady Amelia, in a tone of great feeling. "I know you too well, Clara, even to attempt it. But there is one little feminine triumph upon which I must offer you my congratulations, and I do not think you will refuse to accept them . . . I congratulate you on your very superior discernment. How came you, Clara,

to understand me so very much better than I understood myself? You not only contrived, with wonderful rapidity, to make me feel that I was acting unworthily, but somehow or other, you contrived to discover into the bargain, that I was not only torturing my poor little girl, but myself also. I dare say I should have gone on till I had proceeded too far to retreat, if you had not pulled me up so sharply as you did; and, judging by what my feelings are at this moment, I really think I should have broken *my* heart had Annie taken me at my word, and crushed her young heart, and that of her lover too, because there was no earl's blood in his veins . . . You do not know yourself, Clara, how much I owe you! I might find it difficult to make you understand how very dearly I too have learned to love this Victor! His unmistakeable, his ardent affection for my sweet Annie, seen, as I see it now, that he is licensed to love her by the consent of his friends, is in such striking contrast to the cautious avoidance on his part of everything of the kind, so strikingly remarkable before, that I feel something almost ap-

proaching to reverence for his steadfast self-control.

“Your very ladylike, but very intelligible disapprobation of my conduct at the critical moment when pride of race was so very near making me act both cruelly and dishonourably, made me stop short in my bad career ; and all the happiness that I have tasted since, I owe to you.”

“Say rather that you owe it to your own affectionate heart, my dear friend,” replied Clara. “I have, however, no small pleasure in thinking that I helped to rouse the courage necessary to make you listen to its dictates. But you know the old saying concerning the clear-sightedness of ‘*lookers-on* ;’ and I being in that position, certainly did see more of what was going on in poor little Annie’s heart than you did. In short, Lady Amelia, I am very decidedly of opinion that it would be a difficult matter to find a more thoroughly well-pleased set of people than we are likely to have round our dinner-table to-day ; for I think you will venture to answer for your uncle in this respect as confidently as I can do for my good;

aunt. How that little Annie of yours contrives to make herself loved ! I really do not believe that aunt Sarah could have doted upon a child of her own with more tender affection than she feels for your sweet Annie.”

“ I see it and feel it too, my dear Clara !” replied Lady Amelia, with emotion ; “ and I feel, too, that I am a much happier being than I ever thought myself before. I used to think that though a great many people were always very civil and obliging to us, yet that in truth neither little Annie nor her mother either had any one to care much about them, save each other. But, thank heaven ! I think so no longer.”

Clara’s answer may be easily guessed ; and the assurance that she too felt the blessing of having found very precious friends, where she had only hoped for agreeable companions, was equally sincere, for it had decidedly made her a far happier being than she had ever hoped to be.

CHAPTER XI.

THIS very pleasant state of things, however, unhappily, did not endure long ; the attachment between the parties nevertheless seemed decidedly rather to increase than diminish ; and of the little groups who dined together, after the conversation detailed in the last chapter, there was not one who did not feel that their best affections and hopes of happiness were bound up with the rest.

But, nevertheless, it soon became evident to Clara, that neither Sir William Lawrence nor Lady Amelia Wharton were as gay, and apparently as happy, as she had hoped to see them. This puzzled her ; and the puzzle was the more disagreeable, because she felt very

great averseness to making any inquiry as to whence it arose.

Had she herself done less, or done nothing, to remove the serious difficulties which at first had appeared to impede the union upon which the happiness of their common darling, Annie, so evidently depended, she might have felt less scrupulous of inquiring whence arose the change, which was so painfully evident to her; but, as it was, she looked on in very painful and embarrassed silence, being fully persuaded that something gravely important was going wrong, though it was entirely beyond her power to guess what it might be.

It is probable, however, that her silence did not effectually conceal the uneasiness under which she was suffering; for a little more than a week after she had come to the very painful conviction that something was decidedly amiss, Sir William Lawrence asked her, when taking his leave for the night, if she would accept a visit from him in her boudoir on the following morning.

To this request she, of course, most readily acceded; but it was not without feeling a

strong presentiment that he had some not quite agreeable information to give her, that she awaited his visit on the following morning.

The kind-hearted baronet did not keep her long in suspense; for he not only knocked at her door within half-an-hour after she had left the breakfast-table, but entered at once upon the important subject which brought him there, as soon as he had seated himself beside her.

“Do you remember,” said he, “what I said to you, my dear Miss Clara, when we were last seated side by side here, exactly as we are now? Do you remember how positively, when blessing you for your generosity to my unportioned niece, I protested against suffering your noble donation to be mixed up in any way with the enterprize (magnificent as it is) into which Victor hopes to be admitted? Do you remember this?”

“I remember it perfectly, Sir William,” replied Clara; “and I remember, too, that you made me understand very clearly your reasons for it.”

“And I believe you thought I was very

right," returned Sir William, rather dolefully, shaking his head.

"Yes, indeed, you did," said she.

"And what will you think of me, now," he resumed, "when I confess that I am come this morning for the express purpose of unsaying all I said then?"

"I must suppose that some circumstances have arisen which have led you to think that in this particular instance, at least, it will be more advantageous for our dear Annie that her settlement should be secured by some other fund," replied Clara.

"I heartily wish I could tell you that you were right," returned the old gentleman, again shaking his head; "but this is by no means the case, Miss Holmwood. Neither now, nor ever, has our dear, excellent Victor uttered a syllable concerning his own position, which could mislead me in any way. Nothing can be more strictly honourable than his conduct has been from the first hour I became acquainted with him to the present. He must have seen how greatly I enjoyed his society, and have been perfectly well aware that I

would have done anything and everything that I thought would give him pleasure ; yet never in any single instance have I found him taking advantage of this ; on the contrary, I have more than once caught him, when he little thought I was watching him so narrowly, contriving to change an arrangement, which very certainly I had only made to give him pleasure, in order to leave me at liberty to do something else which his sharp-eyed affection had made him aware I liked better."

"I do, indeed, believe him to be most truly affectionate and amiable," replied Clara ; "and for that reason is it that I am so annoyed by perceiving symptoms not exactly of reserve, but of embarrassment, when any allusion is made, either by Lady Amelia or myself, or, as more frequently occurs, from my dear, warm-hearted aunt Sarah, to the marriage, which we have all of us taught ourselves to look forward to as the most desirable event possible. I hope and trust," she added, after the pause of a moment—"I hope and trust, Sir William, that nothing has occurred to impede this marriage. I do assure you, that I think the

consequence of such a disappointment *now* might be fatal to Annie. Her very heart and soul seem devoted to this excellent and fascinating young man ; and though she displayed a wonderful degree of steadfast high principle and self-command in resisting this affection till it had been sanctioned by her friends, I doubt her power of returning to the same state of mind, were she to encounter a disappointment now."

" It is because I am exactly of the same opinion, that I asked you to receive me this morning," replied Sir William. " I have learned both from Victor himself, and from an old family friend of his, who seems as affectionately interested about him as we are, that the concern, in which he is now engaged as an *employé*, is one of the most promising speculations for those who have a share in it, that French speculators have ever yet hit upon. Large fortunes, as we all know, are much oftener made by bold speculations in England, than in France ; but a new spirit seems to be awakened among them now, for many new companies have, I am told, been

recently formed in a truly English style. But, as Victor's friend very justly observed, there is but one mode by which this can result in permanent national benefit, and that is, by the greatest caution being observed to secure the command of capital, sufficient to enable every new concern to meet accidental losses, without being ruined by them. The application for shares in this mining company is, I am told, quite unprecedented; but, nevertheless, those who are in authority among them are quite as cautious now, as they were at their very first starting, not to admit into the concern, as partners, any individual, however well known, or however highly esteemed, who cannot give a perfectly satisfactory guaranty of having the command of either capital, or security, to a certain amount. Now it seems that your noble donation to Annie is sufficient to secure the reception of Victor as a partner in this very promising concern, and every inquiry I can make on the subject confirms me in the belief that it would be impossible to place the money where it would be safer, and equally so to employ it in any

way that would at once so completely fulfil the object you had in view when giving it, namely, that of immediately ensuring the happiness of these young people. Such being my conviction, my dear Miss Holmwood, can you blame me for again troubling you, even though I have come to ask you to do exactly what you had decided not to do when last we met?"

"Do you think, Sir William, that I could ever have forgiven you for *not* coming to me, if I had chanced to learn what you have now told me, when, perhaps, it might have been too late for me to have been useful? Dear, dear Annie! Do not let me see her dear young brow clouded again, By the same anxious look that I have seen on it for the last few days! But, Sir William, you must remember that it is *you* who must explain both to her, and to Victor, the alteration that we have now agreed upon. I cannot endure the idea of talking about this money to either of them. All that is necessary, my kind friend, is, that *you* should understand that I shall be ready to perform my very easy portion of the trans-

action exactly at the moment, and in the manner that you shall dictate."

Sir William rose, and eagerly taking her hand, he kissed it with a degree of fervent feeling, the sincerity of which it was impossible to mistake. "God bless you, my dear girl! and make you as happy as I wish you," he exclaimed; "I feel as if a heavy weight had been taken off my heart! Poor dear Victor! I suppose I may have some chance now of seeing him smile again." And with these hopeful words he quitted the room, leaving her once more with the pleasant conviction, that she had been the means of conferring happiness on those she loved.

CHAPTER XII.

It so chanced, that within an hour after Sir William Lawrence had quitted the *boudoir* of Clara, he encountered the important individual, whose patronage of his young friend, Victor Dormont, had first raised, and by its earnest continuance fully justified, the hopes of the young man himself, as well as those of the friends most deeply interested for him, to a point which led them to anticipate for him a very brilliant, and no very distant future.

The name of this individual was Roche ; and though this name bore not the prefix of a *DE*, to render it illustrious, there was a vivacity, an intelligence, a charm, in short, in the person who bore it, which rendered it absolutely impossible that he could ever be classed as an ordinary man.

Hitherto, the intercourse between Sir William Lawrence and this Monsieur Roche had but little exceeded that of mere ordinary acquaintance. They had, however, frequently met at both French and English dinner-tables; and the sociable qualities of Sir William, who spoke French nearly as well, perhaps, as it is possible for an Englishman to speak it, together with his well-known partiality to young Dormont, the especial *protégé* of the wealthy and enterprising Frenchman, had led, at length, to a considerable degree of intimacy between them.

“Roche!” exclaimed Sir William, in an accent of very cordial satisfaction on meeting him, as he turned the corner of a street, within ten minutes after he had left the *boudoir* of Clara.

“*Bon jour*, Sir William!” returned M. Roche, presenting his hand with great cordiality.

“Of all the men in Paris, my good friend, you are precisely the one I most wished to see,” said Sir William, turning in such a sort as conveniently to take possession of the

great man's arm. "Your steps are turned towards the Tuilleries, are they not? At any rate, let us take a turn in the garden together. Are you sufficiently at leisure to afford me your attention for a few minutes?" said Sir William.

"I must be very busy, indeed, if I said no," cordially replied Monsieur Roche. "But, as it happens, Sir William, I am at this moment as free as air, and the more so, because in about an hour from this time, I have promised to meet a very select, and very important portion of our committee; and therefore I can do nothing, and can talk to no one, save and except where I can say, 'I must go,' when the right moment comes."

"And I promise, that the moment you do say it, I will start like a guilty thing, and be off!"

Another moment placed them within the quiet shelter of the Tuilleries gardens, and then Sir William Lawrence lost not a moment in preface, but at once entered upon the subject upon which he was so anxious to speak.

“ You have not forgotten what I said to you respecting the ten thousand pounds, which our great heiress friend has presented to my dear niece?” said he; “ I am sure you have not forgotten it, my dear Roche, for I believe you are as much attached to the young man, whose proposals we have accepted for her, as I am myself.”

“ You cannot be more attached to Victor Dormont than I am,” replied Monsieur Roche, warmly; “ and I must trust rather to your discretion, than my own, for keeping my appointment, if his concerns are to form the theme of our discourse. What is it, my good friend, that you would say to me concerning him? Has anything occurred to prevent the fair heiress from fulfilling her promise to your niece?”

“ No, no, no; nothing of the sort, my dear sir,” replied Sir William, eagerly; “ but you are probably aware that Monsieur de Breton, who by what I hear appears to have influence almost equal to your own,—you are probably aware that he makes it a positive condition with our friend Victor that this ten thousand

shall be at once vested in the concern, unencumbered by any settlements or conditions whatever."

"No, really I was not aware of it; but on the contrary, I am aware that our Victor would be extremely averse to any such condition; for when he told me of this noble gift to your niece, he told me also, that the money was to be immediately settled upon her and her children, this being the only mode by which the anxiety of her mother and yourself concerning her future provision could be effectually removed."

"Nothing can be more accurate than your statement," replied Sir William; "such, in truth, is precisely the state of the case at present; but by poor dear Victor's account this will not do, and unless some other terms are agreed to, our dear young friend will never have his name inscribed as a member of the company."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Monsieur Roche, vehemently; "Victor Dormont SHALL become a member of the company, or I will cease to be so: and I rather think, Sir William, that,

all-powerful and prosperous as they certainly are, they would none of them be particularly well-pleased by my withdrawing my name from the conspicuous place in which they have done me the honour to place it."

"Your warm and steadfast friendship for Victor fully justifies our high opinion of him," replied the well-pleased Sir William Lawrence; "and you will easily understand, Monsieur Roche, that to strangers in the land, as we must still consider ourselves, such testimony to his worth is most welcome, and most important."

"I thank you for saying so," replied the Frenchman, with an appearance of deeper feeling than his manner usually expressed; "but I must perforce leave you," he added, again drawing forth his watch, "and I must sacrifice all dignity of march in my mode of reaching my rendezvous, or I shall do the deed which is precisely the most adverse to my principles and practice—I shall break my promise!"

Sir William gave him an approving smile, and with a hurried nod was turning to retrace his steps, when Monsieur Roche detained him

for an instant by laying his hand on his arm, while he said, "Tell your fair friend, Miss Clara, that I will call upon her in about an hour and a quarter from this time. My doing so may, I think, enable me to set all your hearts at rest upon this settlement question.

Au revoir, mon ami !"

And so saying, he darted forward on his way, with a step at once so firm and so rapid, as to promise well for the keeping his appointment.

As to Sir William Lawrence, he, too, walked with a rapid step as he proceeded to the dwelling of his niece, for he knew that he was at last carrying with him an assurance that all difficulties were, indeed, effectually removed, for he felt that it was as impossible to doubt the sincerity of M. Roche's attachment to Victor, as to question the power he so obviously possessed of serving him.

It is certain that Sir William Lawrence was both too indolent, and too ignorant of everything connected with business (commonly so called), to understand such matters well ; but nevertheless he lived too much in the world

of Paris not to be aware that M. Roche held a very high place in the opinion of the boldest and most enlightened of the newly awakened race of French speculators, who were bidding fair to rival their English neighbours in the occult science of rapid money-making. And better still, perhaps, was he capable of doing justice to the partial affection which the rich man entertained for the less fortunate young one, for the truly amiable Victor never omitted any opportunity of expressing his affectionate gratitude to him.

The first person the warm-hearted baronet met on his way to the morning sitting-room of Clara was, greatly to his satisfaction, Miss Holmwood herself.

“ I never encountered a beautiful young lady with more pleasure in my life,” he gaily exclaimed, as he extended his hand to meet hers ; “ for of all the ladies in the land you are exactly the one I most wished to see. Shall you be at leisure,” he added earnestly, “ to receive a visit from a very great man this morning ? ”

She nodded assent, and then leading the way

to the room she had just left, she said, "And who may your great man be?"

"I am not quite sure," replied Sir William, "that I am fully competent to explain to you exactly who he is, or what is the extent of his greatness. The source of it, however, is pretty well known, I believe, to be his wealth, and his all-powerful interest in the flourishing concern in which our dear Victor hopes to become a partner." Sir William paused for a moment, and then said, "I am well aware, my dear Miss Clara, that you, as well as the rest of us, have perceived very painfully the lamentable falling off in poor Victor's spirits. He was perfectly radiant in his happiness during the first week or two after your noble donation to my niece had been made known to him. It seemed to make him feel, and reasonably enough, certainly, that there was no longer any possible cause for anxiety respecting Annie's future resources, even supposing he failed in his own hopes of being admitted as a partner in this Golconda company. But now he looks very much more like a man who was going to be hanged, than the expectant bridegroom of a dearly-

beloved bride. This dismal change has arisen, as I well know, from his steadfast resistance to the wishes, or rather the demands of the company, that he should invest his wife's fortune in the concern. This, as I also know he has assured M. Roche, their great man, *par excellence*, that he will not consent to do, though his refusal seems likely to postpone the marriage *sine die*; for of course, you know, it is quite impossible that he should think of marrying if he is *not* admitted as a partner in this concern, for in that case he would positively have no assured income at all, beyond the interest of your donation, and his clerk's salary. This, most assuredly, is not what you expected or intended, Miss Holmwood, and can on no account be permitted. But I have this moment seen Roche, and although we had neither time nor opportunity to enter fully upon the subject, it is quite evident to me that he is determined, in some way or other, to have his own way on the question of Victor's becoming a partner in the concern. How he means to manage it I know not, but he has begged me to obtain for him an interview with you, and I have ventured

to promise that you will see him when he calls. He was hastening, watch in hand, to keep some important appointment, but I think he will be here within an hour or so : will you see him ?”

“ Most certainly I will,” replied Clara, readily. “ Do you suppose,” she added, “ that he will wish to see me alone ?”

“ I think it very likely,” replied Sir William. “ I suspect, from one or two hints which have reached me,” he continued, “ that our poor Victor has been suffering martyrdom from the pertinacity with which the managing committee of the company have been enforcing upon him the absolute necessity of his vesting the money you have so generously placed at his command in the concern by which he has every reason to hope that he shall ultimately realize a noble fortune, and I am fain to confess that there is nothing unreasonable in this demand, for it is obvious that if all husbands, or fathers of families, followed the system that our Victor insists upon for himself, this company, with all its brilliant success, must speedily fall to the ground. I cannot say that I understand much about such matters, but it seems to be a gene-

rally-received commercial truth, that money makes money."

"Practically," replied Clara, with a smile, "I believe that I am not very much better informed on the subject myself, notwithstanding my descent; but the theory you allude to is perfectly familiar to me, and I certainly agree with you, Sir William, that there is nothing unreasonable in this demand. But I perfectly well understand poor dear Victor's feelings on the subject. I made no secret of the fact, that what I did for our darling Annie was for the especial purpose of setting Lady Amelia's heart at rest respecting the *future* for her. Victor knows this as well as I do, and he thinks that my especial object would therefore be defeated were the money *not* secured to Annie and her children beyond the reach of accident."

"It is difficult to blame the resolute refusal of Victor under such circumstances," returned Sir William. . . . "And yet—" he added, and stopped.

"What were you going to say?" returned Clara, eagerly. "Let me beg of you, my dear Sir William, to give me your opinion without

letting it be in the least degree influenced by what I have said. I entreat you to finish the sentence which began with ‘and yet.’”

“Upon my honour I would do so, if I had really and truly formed a decided opinion on the subject,” replied Sir William, with very genuine sincerity ; “but the fact is,” he added, after pausing for a moment to meditate, “the real fact is, that I have not. It seems to me that upon this subject, as upon so many others, much may be said on both sides. . . . Let us wait, my dear young lady,” he added, after the meditation of a moment, “let us wait to hear what M. Roche says. It is impossible that we can any of us doubt either the warmth or the steadiness of his affection for Victor. I really do not think that he could be more attached to him if he were his own son. I have seen them together too often to be mistaken on this point. And it is equally certain, you know, that if he is competent in all ways to give judicious advice, as to what it will be best and wisest for Victor to do, we may listen to him without scruple as to what it will be best and wisest for Annie, or her friends for her, to

consent to ; for surely the interests of a man and wife are one and the same."

"In truth, I see not how they can be separated," replied *Onra*.

"Well, then, my dear Miss Holmwood, I say again, let us hear what Roche says. . . . And now I will leave you, hoping that when we meet again you will be able to tell me that some means may be hit upon to make my poor Victor look a little less miserable than he has done of late. It really breaks my heart to look at him."

CHAPTER XIII.

CLARA had not been left many minutes alone to meditate upon the important question which seemed likely to be left to her decision, when her expected visitor was announced.

She was thinking too much of Annie to leave her any great leisure to think about herself, or she might, perhaps, have felt a little embarrassed at the idea of discussing a question of so much importance to one she loved so dearly, and that, too, with an individual who was personally a total stranger to her.

But the very first glance she bestowed upon M. Roche as he entered her *boudoir*, would have sufficed to calm all fears that the interview might prove a painful one, had she employed the short interval which preceded it in

a much more active anticipation of its being disagreeable, than she had been at all disposed to do ; for Victor had too often expatiated on the good gifts of his friend and patron in her hearing, to make her greatly fear the agent, however much she might have shrunk from the responsibility that seemed thrown upon her.

It would indeed have been difficult for any one, after looking at M. Roche, to have disliked the idea of an interview with him ; but to a woman such a feeling must have been pretty nearly impossible.

It was not merely the fact that M. Roche at the age of fifty was still one of the handsomest men that France, or any other country could boast of—though this accident did, and ever must, produce some effect—but it was that indescribable charm of manner which can only be found when look, voice, demeanour, and words are all in unison, and all precisely what it is the most undeniably agreeable to encounter.

There are undoubtedly some temperaments more susceptible to this species of fascination

than others, but the few who escape it wholly are decidedly more to be pitied than envied. Our Clara was not one of these, and before M. Roche had been in the room five minutes, she wondered that Victor had never found, or made an opportunity of introducing to their society, an individual so every way calculated to be a welcome addition to it.

“If I did not know, with a very satisfactory degree of certainty, my dear young lady, that you were most affectionately interested for the chosen bride of my dearly-beloved Victor Dormont, I should find it extremely difficult to find any excuse that I should think sufficient to justify the liberty I have taken in thus obtruding myself, not only upon your time, but your privacy.”

“Did my good friend, Sir William, venture to tell you that I requested to see you alone?”

“Assuredly he did, M. Roche,” she replied, “and he well knew that no sort of apology was necessary for this, from a gentleman so well known to us as the friend of our greatly loved, and greatly valued Victor.”

“You do love and value him?” returned

M. Roche, suddenly drawing his chair at least two feet nearer to the one occupied by Clara, than it had been when he placed himself in it. "You do love and value him?" he repeated, while his fine eyes, aided by every feature in his handsome and animated face, expressed the most fervent pleasure in the belief that the words he so eagerly uttered only expressed the truth.

"Indeed we do," replied Clara, very earnestly. "He certainly possesses the happy gift of making himself loved, for, by Sir William Lawrence's account, M. Roche, you, sir, who have known him so much longer, still feel his influence in this respect as powerfully as we do."

"Miss Holmwood!" he replied, after the silence of a moment, during which it was very evident that he was considerably agitated—"Miss Holmwood! I have not the happiness of being a father. For six of the happiest years of my life it was otherwise. For this short period I had a son, whom my prophetic fancy ever painted to me as likely to become just such a perfect creature as Victor Dormont

is now. But at six years old I lost him. He died, Miss Holmwood, and I have never had another child.

“His mother did not long survive him, and for several years afterwards—in fact, till a blessed chance threw Victor Dormont in my way, I lived as if my heart had died with them. But that boy, by some sort of witchcraft or other, found the way to bring it to life again, and I certainly think I love him quite as well as it is possible I could have loved my own son had he survived. I tell you all this long story, my dear young lady, that you may, in some degree, be able to comprehend and understand why, and how it is, that I feel disposed to treat him and his whims with a degree of indulgence which I very certainly should not be likely to extend to another.”

“You are lucky, M. Roche,” replied Clara, with a very friendly smile, “that in giving way to a partiality so unbounded, you are not likely to be betrayed into mischief of any sort.

“By all Sir William Lawrence reports of Victor, he certainly appears less likely to abuse

your indulgence, than you could have reasonably hoped for, in one so young and so impressionable."

"No, no, Miss Holmwood! I cannot quite subscribe to that statement. It is no *whim*, believe me, which has thus strongly attached me to him, nor should I ever have been brought to listen to whatever he suggests, with the sort of attention I have long done, had not pretty keen, and pretty constant observation taught me to know, that on the very few points on which his judgment has differed from mine, he was, to say the very least, quite as likely to be right as I was."

"Your high opinion of him, Monsieur Roche, after so long an acquaintance, is a very decided proof that we have not over-rated the fine qualities which have attached us all to him so strongly," replied Clara; "and this conviction, my dear sir, must, as you are aware, be very valuable to the friends of Miss Wharton, for we all look forward to his union with her, notwithstanding the disagreeable fact that some impediment seems to have arisen respecting the marriage settlement."

“And it is precisely on this identical subject of the marriage settlement, that our friend Victor seems disposed to give us all trouble, and to talk, as I think, more nonsense than he was ever heard to talk in the course of his whole life before.”

“But if this be your opinion, M. Roche,” said Clara, with great sincerity, “I cannot but hope that he will be immediately persuaded to give it up. You are too intimately acquainted with every thing concerning Victor,” she continued, after the pause of a moment, “for me to suppose that you are ignorant of the fact that I am myself the origin of his opposition to your wishes on this subject.”

“Yes, I am fully aware of this,” he replied, with a smile.

“Then I presume I owe the honour of your visit to your wish to convince me that I am wrong?” she returned, with an answering smile.

“I certainly am not without hope of being able to convince you that you have taken a wrong view of the case,” he resumed. “The fact is, Miss Holmwood, that the company,

which I believe you are aware is the most wealthy, and the most flourishing that ever existed in France, are fully aware of the value of such an associate as Victor Dormont. His character, his talents, his activity, are all perfectly well known, and perfectly well appreciated by the managing committee, and you must pardon the seeming vanity, if I add, that my attachment to him is appreciated also. I believe there is no amount of salary that Victor would choose to ask as a clerk, which the company would refuse him ; but on this point the difficulty arises with me, and not with him. I have not as yet adopted Victor by any formal act, but it is perfectly well known that I not only love him as a son, but that, in all human probability, I am likely to treat him as such, not only during my life, but at my death.

“Such being the case, Miss Holmwood,” he added, after a pause, “I cannot let him submit to be a salaried clerk in a concern, which looks to me (pardon my apparent boastfulness) as to its chief. It is this feeling, my dear young lady, which has led me so perti-

naciously to require of him that he should place the sum which you have so liberally bestowed on his affianced bride, in a concern from which he not only anticipates a handsome, and perfectly secure income, but which most assuredly offers a better security than any other he could find, short only, perhaps, Miss Holmwood, of your celebrated *three per cent. consols.*”

“Your statement, my dear, sir,” replied Clara, with a blush and a smile, “is one which absolutely requires that I should explain to you, on my side, the reason, or, at any rate, the cause of my apparent *unreasonable* pertinacity ; and as it arises like your own, more from sentiment than calculation, I feel inclined to believe that you will excuse it. You are aware, M. Roche,” she continued, after receiving a courteous bow from her visitor—“you are, of course, aware, that the birth and station of Lady Amelia Wharton are generally disproportioned to her pecuniary resources. Our dear Annie is the granddaughter of an English earl, M. Roche ; and you are too much a man of the world—of the whole

European world—not to be aware that this fact, however *unprofitable* it may appear to such a plebeian as myself, is calculated to render all Annie's near connexions more ambitious in their views for her, than they would be were she less nobly connected."

"I am not only perfectly aware of this, my dear lady," replied M. Roche, eagerly; "but it is, in truth, one motive, and, perhaps, the most important one, which has rendered me so pertinaciously averse to Victor's remaining a *clerk*, instead of a partner, in this very promising concern."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, M. Roche," replied Clara, "because it convinces me that I shall have no great difficulty in making you very clearly and completely comprehend the motives of my own conduct, which, if you failed to do, might well be mistaken for caprice. I need not enter into any particulars, M. Roche, respecting the time and manner of our discovering that our seemingly indifferent Annie, and the seemingly light-hearted Victor, were very seriously and deeply attached to each other."

M. Roche shook his head, smilingly, as much as to say that such reminiscences were by no means necessary.

“It was not without a very considerable degree of anxiety that I watched the effect of this discovery on Lady Amelia,” continued Clara. “A more truly amiable woman than Lady Amelia Wharton cannot exist, M. Roche,” she added, earnestly. “I have never, during the many months that we have passed together, seen any single instance of selfish, or, in fact, of unamiable feeling of any kind on her part; for I am by no means disposed to class as such the sort of instinctive reluctance which she at first seemed to feel at the idea of her daughter’s marrying a man whose pedigree was not such as to appear to advantage beside her own. As I am myself the daughter of a tradesman, it was impossible for me, notwithstanding my very sincere admiration and love for Lady Amelia, to sympathise fully with this aristocratic feeling; and, in fact, I was so far from doing so, that I scrupled not to let her perceive that I thought her *wrong* in attempting to separate two excellent young people,

whose hearts were so evidently united. I believe, indeed, that the manner in which I made her understand that I thought her wrong, was greatly more abrupt than courteous ; and I can certainly never forget either the sweetness and gentleness of the manner, or the noble righteousness of the spirit, with which she yielded her own life-long wishes and opinions, in the hope of securing the happiness of her child. That I rejoiced at her thus yielding, you will easily believe ; but, nevertheless, the subject of Victor's future prospects was never brought under discussion without my feeling a very nervous sort of responsibility, lest their marriage might eventually prove an imprudent one. I certainly felt conscious that I had done much towards promoting it, and I therefore felt myself called upon to lessen the danger which the uncertainty of his position suggested ; it was for this reason that I determined to secure such a degree of independence to Annie as might, in some degree, set her mother's heart at rest concerning the future. But in order to render what I proposed to do effectual, as a security for the future, it was

necessary that my donation should be secured to Miss Wharton and her children beyond the reach of any commercial accidents to interfere with it."

"Most assuredly you were right—perfectly right, Miss Holmwood," replied M. Roche, with a look of perfect approval. "But I will not intrude upon you," he added, "by any attempt to express to you my gratitude or my admiration for the part which you have acted in this very interesting little drama; yet, nevertheless, I will tell you, with a certainty pretty nearly beyond the reach of doubt, that you have probably saved the life of Victor Dormont by the noble part you have acted; for nothing else could have removed the only rational objection to the union."

These words were not spoken as words of compliment, nor were they received as such by Clara; and it was with a very pleasant assurance of sympathy on the part of her auditor, that she continued her statement.

"I was, of course, very anxious," she said, "that Victor, who was so deeply interested in the business, should immediately be made

acquainted, not only of the conditions on which my offering was made, but also with the motives which suggested them ; and upon this occasion, M. Roche, as upon every other which has afforded me an opportunity of forming any judgment upon the character of Victor Dormont, I was not only satisfied, but positively charmed and delighted by every word he uttered. He pledged himself not only solemnly, but with an earnestness which convinced me that his heart took the same interest in the business as my own, that NOTHING should induce him to agree to any change in this disposition of the money which I meant to give Annie on her marriage ; and it is, therefore, as you must perceive, his honourable adherence to this promise which leads him so steadily to reject the proposal of being admitted as a partner, instead of a clerk, in this concern into which you are so kindly anxious to see him admitted."

Scarcely could the magic countenance of Rachel herself, in her best days, have more eloquently expressed strong feeling than did that of M. Roche, as he listened to this statement.

“How well I recognise the noble-hearted boy in the portrait you have drawn of him!” he exclaimed. “Rather than have defeated your object, he would have consented to become a porter to the concern, instead of being a partner! Dear, generous, self-forgetting fellow! . . . Can you be surprised, Miss Holmwood, that I should love and cherish him, as you know I do?”

“No! truly, M. Roche!” she replied, very earnestly, “I assure you, that I love and reverence him too much myself to feel anything, save sympathy, as I listen to you. He is, indeed, a most interesting and estimable young man; and notwithstanding the undeniable inferiority of his station in life when compared to that of my young friend, I am, believe me, very far from lamenting her attachment to him.”

“No one who loves *her*, and knows *him*, can lament it, Miss Holmwood,” replied Mr. Roche, with energy.

“It must appear very strange to you, my dear young lady,” he added, after remaining silent for a moment. . . . “I am quite aware that

it must appear perfectly unaccountable that, loving him as I do, and being in possession as I am of an excellent income, I should not myself come forward with the sum necessary to constitute him a partner in the concern—but a very few words will make you understand this. And, moreover, while they explain to you the too evident impossibility of my aiding him in this important matter myself, will make you also comprehend more fully than, perhaps, you do at present, the very high estimate I have of the value of what, unfortunately, I have not the power of obtaining for him. I presume, dear lady, that you are aware that I am not only accounted one of the wealthiest citizens of Paris, but that I really am such. My father, who was one of our first bankers, bequeathed me, very nearly ten years ago, a splendid fortune, and for a year or two afterwards I was well contented to enjoy this without feeling the least anxiety to increase it. I had a handsome, nay, an elegant *domicile*, an equipage that might have been approved in your Hyde Park, and a stud that was the pride of Long Champs. But ere

long, Mademoiselle, I was seized with a passion that threatened my peace of mind less than my peace of purse. I was seized by a passion for pictures ; and whenever you will confer on me the greatly-desired honour of a visit in the Place Vendôme, which honour I do not despair of obtaining, under the patronage of Lady Amelia Wharton and Sir William Lawrence, I flatter myself that I shall, at least, obtain your approval of my pictures from your taste, though I may fail of your acquittal from the charge of extravagance in the purchase of them. But, like all other expensive fancies, this could not be long indulged without making me feel that, rich as I had always been called, and rich as I had hitherto considered myself to be, I was not rich enough to indulge this new fancy without making or finding some means of increasing my revenue. I have often been told that I was born, as the saying goes, with a golden spoon in my mouth, and fore-doomed to be rich, let me spend what I would. But I am inclined to flatter myself that my activity and perseverance have done more for me than the golden

spoon declared to be my birthright ; though I will not deny that there was something very like predestined good luck in the manner in which I first became introduced to the concern which is so rapidly adding to my wealth. I am already feeling it more difficult to find space in which to hang my pictures, than money wherewith to purchase them. Such being the state of the case, you will not be surprised to hear that I have vested all my available capital in a concern which is every day becoming more prosperous, nor much puzzled to understand *why* it is that I cannot assist our dear Victor by the loan of money."

Clara listened to this long statement very attentively, and certainly understood from it, only too clearly, that it *was* very decidedly impossible for M. Roche himself to advance the funds required to place the young man in the position which it was so every way desirable that he should occupy.

A few minutes of silence followed, during which Clara was meditating upon the propriety of her again coming forward to remove the pecuniary difficulties which still

opposed themselves to the happiness of Annie. The bringing forward another ten thousand pounds from her overgrown wealth would have instantly suggested itself as a remedy, had she not known, beyond the possibility of doubt, that Lady Amelia Wharton would refuse her consent to the marriage upon such terms.

Though the noble gift already promised to her young friend had been accepted, gratefully and graciously accepted, by all the parties concerned, this result had not been arrived at without very perceptible difficulty, nor without considerable skill in evading it.

The genuine goodness of heart of Lady Amelia had been made manifest, by the evident consciousness she betrayed, of having been wrong, in the way in which she had endeavoured to conquer the attachment of Annie, by affecting not to have perceived it; but neither her penitence, nor any other feeling, had enabled her to conquer the sort of proud distaste, rather than rational objection, to the marriage, which she, nevertheless, consented to permit.

But the circumstance which had given the most pain to Clara, was the overhearing her ladyship, when conversing with Sir William Lawrence on the subject, use the phrase, "*purchasing* a husband for Annie."

This obnoxious phrase had been warmly, and, indeed, indignantly combatted by Sir William, and the repentant Lady Amelia had endeavoured to recall it, by eagerly exclaiming, "No, uncle William! no! I do not mean *that*;" but Clara could not forget that they had been uttered, and the phrase now came upon her in full force, as her generous, loving heart suggested to her the perfect facility with which her gift might be doubled, the latter half of it being devoted to the purpose of placing Victor on the footing of a partner in the concern. But, although no shadow of resentment, or any feeling like it, rested on the mind of the generous heiress, from having heard this disagreeable phrase, it acted powerfully as an impediment to her offering to bring forward more money, in order to facilitate the match; neither was she, perhaps, wholly without a feeling, a little approaching to sympathy with Lady Amelia on the subject.

She really did *not* like the idea of buying a husband for her darling Annie, much better than her proud ladyship did.

She therefore remained silent for a minute or two after M. Roche had ceased speaking, and both parties seemed to be meditating rather hopelessly on the subject. But the silence was at length broken by Clara. "Could I see Victor for a few minutes, alone?" said she.

"Do you mean immediately, Miss Holmwood?" returned her companion.

"Yes, immediately, if I could," she replied, with a smile; "but I do not give even you credit, M. Roche, for the power of obtaining his presence by a wish."

"It is lucky for him that I have it not," he said, almost gravely; "for, upon my honour, if I had, I believe I should never be without him. However, Miss Holmwood, I think I know where he ought to be, and therefore I think I know where he is. Shall I send him to you?"

"If the doing so will be neither giving you great trouble, nor making him do greatly wrong!" she replied.

Upon which M. Roche seized upon his hat, and departed, with a degree of zealous haste, that spoke plainly enough for his confidence in her wish to serve the favoured, though almost penniless young man, who was the well-beloved of so many friendly hearts.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE zealous haste of M. Roche was rewarded by success ; he found his young favourite exactly where he hoped to find him, and exactly where he ought to have been, namely, at his desk.

“ You must positively lay your pen aside for half-an-hour, or so, my dear boy,” said the faithful messenger, almost out of breath with the speed which he had used in reaching him. “ I will remain here till you return, that your place may not be found vacant ; but you must go with all speed to wait on Miss Holmwood, who is expecting you in her *boudoir*. What she wishes to say to you I know not ; but she is a very charming creature, Victor, as well as a rich heiress, and I

am very sure that she is perfectly in earnest in the wish she expresses to serve both you and her friend Annie. And if all they say about her immense wealth be true, it would be easy enough for her to make everything smooth."

"Do not, I beseech you, my dearest friend, allude to her doing anything more for us!" exclaimed Victor, stopping short in his approach towards the door. "I know perfectly well from what Sir William Lawrence has told me, that it has not been without great reluctance that Lady Amelia consented to Annie's receiving the noble sum she has already so generously presented to her. Lady Amelia is very amiable; but she is also very proud! . . . Promise me, my earliest and dearest friend, that I shall never be required to accept any more money from Miss Holmwood!"

"Depend upon it, my dear boy, there is no danger that any such misfortune should come in your way," replied M. Roche, laughing; "but if you will not accept her money, you cannot refuse to listen to her words. You forget that she is waiting for you."

Victor's only reply was rushing from the room, and in as short a time as possible, he was giving a gentle knock at Miss Holmwood's door.

He found her alone, and evidently expecting him with some anxiety.

"Sit down, dear Victor!" she said, with the friendly accent of a loving sister, "sit down, and let us talk quietly and rationally together. I have had a *tête-à-tête* visit from your friend, M Roche, this morning, as I suppose he has told you; but he cannot have told you, for he has not had time to do it, how much important information I have gained from him. It is quite evident, Victor, that he is right as to the importance he attaches to your becoming a partner in the concern, instead of a clerk; and he has explained to me, likewise, as I doubt not he has also done to you, the reasons which render it impossible for him to assist you with money for the purpose."

Poor Victor's handsome face became as red as fire. "Oh, yes! I know it all!" he replied, in a voice which manifested very painful

emotion ; “ and I declare to you, Miss Holmwood, that there are moments when not even the persuasion that my dear Annie loves me, can suffice to atone to me for the misery I suffer, from knowing the anxiety and embarrassment which my attachment to her has occasioned to her friends.”

“ Let us look forward to the time when this attachment will be the source of happiness to us all, instead of the contrary,” replied Clara, kindly. “ As far as I myself am concerned, I can assure you most truly, the pleasure I feel in looking forward to her happiness as your wife, far outweighs all that anxiety which now presses upon us, as to the best manner of bringing it about. For it is not only Annie’s attachment to you, dear Victor, which makes me so anxious for your union ; were this all, I should submit, as so many others are obliged to do, to yield before the obstacles that impede your marriage ; but the fact is, that it is not Annie’s happiness alone that is at stake ; the happiness of her mother will catch the malady, if that of the daughter be blighted ; and knowing and feeling this,

as certainly as I do, I should never forgive myself, if I omitted making every effort in my power to conquer the difficulties which beset us. These difficulties, my dear Victor, I will tell you very frankly, might very easily be made to vanish by my means, had not my very dear, but very proud friend, Lady Amelia, given me very plainly to understand that any further offer of pecuniary assistance on my part would be painful, not to say offensive to her ; and in some degree, I suspect, to Sir William Lawrence also. Such being the state of the case, I am driven, as a last resource, to apply to you ; and although what I am about to ask is in direct contradiction to what I asked before, when we were discussing the same theme, I nevertheless very confidently hope that you will comply In short, Victor," she added, " I am not only going to confess to you that I have changed my view of the question, but that I most earnestly hope that I shall induce you to change yours."

Victor looked at her earnestly ; but his only reply was, " I do not understand you, Miss Holmwood."

“ No, Victor !” she replied, laughing, “ I do not expect you should understand me before I have explained myself ; I shall be perfectly contented if you give me proof that you understand me afterwards.”

“ It will be from no want of very deferential attention if I fail to do so,” he replied, gravely. “ Let me beg of you to explain your meaning.”

“ My meaning is, that I most earnestly wish to do everything in my power that may tend to facilitate your marriage with my friend Annie. The statements which I have this morning listened to from your friend, M. Roche, have proved to me most satisfactorily, that were you a partner in the concern to the amount which Annie’s ten thousand pounds would obtain, you would at once be in possession of an income amply sufficient for the moderate style in which you would both be so perfectly well contented to begin your married life. The only real obstacle to this mode of settling the business arises, as I understand, from your recollection of the wish I expressed when I gave her this sum, that it

should be immediately settled upon her. But this wish of mine has vanished and evaporated into thin air, upon being brought into competition with my earnest desire to see it immediately applied to the purpose of at once securing to you a position not only more suitable to the place in society which the son-in-law of Lady Amelia Wharton ought to hold, but which will give a much better security for its continuance, than any mere stipendiary agent could possibly have."

Clara was engaged in knitting a purse, and although by no means so intently occupied by it as to prevent her occasionally raising her eyes and looking in the face of her visitor, relieved her from the awkwardness of fixing her eyes upon him, while alluding to the circumstances in his situation which he might feel to be embarrassing.

But she was too anxious to ascertain the manner in which he was likely to receive a proposition which was not only in direct contradiction to the advice she had before so earnestly given him, but which advice she was quite aware was entirely in accordance with

his own judgment, not to raise her eyes to his face the moment she had uttered it.

But the doing this occasioned her a sensation very nearly approaching to terror. Seldom, or rather never, had she beheld a countenance, the usual expression of which was so totally and vehemently changed by strong emotion as was that of Victor Dormont, as she now beheld him.

It might have been said that his handsome features expressed despair, had it not been for the eagerness with which he seemed struggling to speak, and which had more of the convulsive eagerness of a desperate sort of hope, than of the dark resignation of despair. Poor Clara felt positively terrified as she looked at him ; but, nevertheless, she found strength and courage enough to say, " You must listen to me with patience, my dear Victor, or it will be impossible for you to judge fairly of the subject we are discussing. My only wish is " . . .

" Forgive me ! Forgive me ! " exclaimed the agitated young man, " and think not for a moment that I doubt the kindness of your feelings towards me ! Never, never, while life

is left, can I forget your generous kindness to me, or your sister-like love to my dear Annie. But, oh ! Miss Holmwood ! you know not what you ask of me ! Nor never would you have asked it ! No ! Never, dear, gentle, generous, loving friend, would you have asked it, had you been present when Lady Amelia at length yielded her, lingering and reluctant consent. Never ! oh ! never, would this consent have been given had I not availed myself of the power you gave me, of pledging myself to the settlement of your noble donation upon my Annie ! Lady Amelia knows nothing. . . . Good heavens ! How should she ? Lady Amelia knows nothing of the enormous wealth and the brilliant prosperity of the company to which my too ambitious friend Roche is so anxious to see me attached, But much as I love, much as I reverence him, I have absolutely and positively refused to become a partner in the concern, if this can only be obtained by disobeying Lady Amelia as to the disposal of your donation to Annie. Rather than consent to this for the gratification of my own ambition, or that of the dearest friend I

have, I would give up Annie for ever, and hide myself where I could never see her more !”

All this was uttered with so much vehemence, that Clara felt totally unable to attempt any further expostulation on the subject.

In truth, she began to doubt whether she had not been wrong in urging him to change a purpose which he had so solemnly pledged his word to fulfil ; and, therefore, instead of adding another word in favour of the only measure which seemed likely to facilitate the event upon which she sincerely and most justly believed the happiness, if not the life, of poor Annie to depend ; she rose from her chair, and eagerly giving him a signal to depart, by extending her hand, she exclaimed, “ Go, dear Victor, go ! Do not let me any longer detain you from your business. You have perfectly succeeded in convincing me that you are right, undoubtedly right, in adhering to the promise you have given to Lady Amelia. My having changed my opinion as to the wisdom of the promise which I myself asked for, could not justify you in breaking it when given.”

Poor Victor took her hand, and kissed it with very fervent gratitude, and then made his hasty exit with the air of a man who had been suddenly relieved from the greatest evil that could threaten him.

My unfortunate heroine was left in a very different condition. She was, in truth, most miserably ill at ease in her mind, and, unfortunately for her, poor girl, the more she meditated the more miserable she became. Nor were the sources of this painful state of mind at all imaginary. In the first place, she was conscious that with almost unbounded means to relieve herself, and those she loved, from the misery which now seemed to involve them all, everything had been so badly managed as to render it impossible that these means could be made available. The judgment of Clara was by no means defective on most points ; but her own strange story had very decidedly inspired her with a sort of superstitious dread concerning the influence of family pride, which rendered her perfectly incompetent to form any rational judgment as to the manner in which it ought to be met and treated,

under circumstances in which it in any degree interfered.

The heightened colour of Lady Amelia, when she used the (to poor Clara) very terrible phrase of "*buying a husband*," haunted her like a malicious spectre, coming constantly between her and every scheme that suggested itself, by which she might smooth poor Annie's path to happiness. Nor was this the only spectre which haunted her. Another arose from her repentant recollection of the fact that had she not interfered, by permitting Lady Amelia to perceive her (perhaps presumptuous) disapproval of her ladyship's conduct, that disapproval would have quietly led to a termination which would have spared them all their present suffering, and left Annie with her thousand attractions, and her noble blood to boot, within reach of forming a connexion as eligible as that now proposed was decidedly the reverse.

To a mind so sincerely conscientious as that of Clara, this plain statement, offered by her judgment to her common sense for examination, could not fail of producing very dis-

agreeable feelings. She felt conscious that she had been wrong. She felt that she had interfered in a matter wherein, for many excellent reasons, she ought never to have interfered at all ; and, what was worst of all, she saw not any way, notwithstanding her immense wealth, and unlimited independence, by which she could assist in improving the present very disagreeable state of affairs.

It generally happens that when we have suffered our feelings (even of the very best kind) to take such complete possession of us as to leave sober judgment halting behind, that when the paroxysm is so far passed as to permit considerations, which had been wilfully banished while it lasted, to present themselves to our memories, they come back greatly the stronger from their temporary banishment ; and thus it now happened to my poor conscience-stricken heroine, for, as she gloomily sat with her aching head supported by her hands, while she rested her elbows on the table, the idea of her interference having been the cause of Lady Amelia Wharton's daughter

becoming the wife of a young clerk in a French mining company, almost overwhelmed her.

Her cheeks tingled as she thought of Henry Hamilton, and of what his feelings would be, could he be made acquainted with this specimen of her friendly interference !

All very vehement feelings are probably more or less unreasonable, and so most assuredly were those of poor Clara, as she dwelt upon this painful idea. It was in vain that her common sense suggested to her the fact, that as the uncle of Annie had appeared fully as desirous of seeing her happy in the way her young heart dictated, as she herself had been, she ought not to bear the blame of having encouraged the attachment, instead of checking it.

But it must be confessed, that there was one point on which Sir William Lawrence had very strongly insisted, but of which she had certainly permitted herself to lose sight till it was too late.

Sir William had, in fact, only sanctioned the marriage under the idea that, by some means

or other, the young man was to become a partner in the firm. But now, somehow or other, matters had been so managed as to render this apparently impossible. Clara felt that she dared not again awaken the idea from which Lady Amelia so evidently and so painfully shrunk, that a husband for her daughter had been *purchased* by the money of her friend ; yet, in what other way could poor Clara offer assistance ? She was quite as fully aware as Lady Amelia herself could be, that Annie's becoming the wife of a clerk in a commercial concern would render every attempt to enable her to keep her present place in society absolutely ridiculous. There were already several banking and commercial names in France, and their number was rapidly increasing, among whom might be found members of the highest society ; but the same could certainly not be said concerning their clerks.

But it is useless to dwell upon these details. The result of the whole was, that my heiress heroine was not only very profoundly unhappy, from meditating upon the inevitable disappointment of all Annie's hopes, but had the

additional torment of believing, that she had herself been, in a great degree, the cause of this misery: first, by creating, or at least encouraging these hopes, when, but for her interference, there would have been none; and secondly, by having herself suggested such a disposition of the money she had been permitted to give, as effectually to prevent its being available to the first, and most important object, of giving Victor a decently ostensible position in life.

CHAPTER XV.

It may be doubted if any of Clara's own concerns, though some of them had been of a very painful nature, had ever plunged her into a more painful state of mind than that which she was now enduring. At any rate, it is quite certain, that to a heart and temper like hers, the consciousness of having so acted as to produce unhappiness to a friend she loved, had a mixture of bitterness in it which nothing concerning herself alone could ever have produced.

The state of mind from which she was now suffering was made up of several painful feelings, and altogether they seemed quite to have overpowered her philosophy, for she was weeping,—a species of indulgence exceedingly rare with her.

But if she flattered herself that she was to be left peaceably to the enjoyment of it, such as it was, she was mistaken, for she had not buried her fair face in cambric for above five minutes before she was startled by an unusually sharp knock at the door.

For a moment she took no notice of it, not being in a condition to render the words "Come in" at all easy or agreeable for her to utter; but she felt that "she had to do it," as our transatlantic friends say, when according unwilling obedience to unavoidable necessity; and say it she presently did, in as steady a voice as she could command.

A very prompt obedience followed; the door was instantly, and almost vehemently opened, by M. Roche.

"My dear young lady!" he exclaimed, with a smile which might almost have been called radiant, so bright was its happy expression—"My dear Mademoiselle Holmwood! Can you forgive my again invading your leisure and your seclusion? You can, and you will forgive it, I think, when I explain its cause, for I come to make you a sharer in the happiest feelings

I have known for months. That there has been sympathy between us concerning the difficulties which beset the young lovers for whom we are both so deeply interested, I am quite sure. It would, indeed, be strange if I could doubt it, after all you have done for them; and now, thank heaven! I am the bearer of a suggestion which will enable us to make them as happy as we wish them to be."

It will be easily believed that these cheering words atoned very satisfactorily to poor Clara for the interruption they occasioned to her melancholy musings. "Is it possible!" she exclaimed, with a most happy smile. "I was most moodily brooding over my positive despair when you knocked at the door."

"And when I left you, Miss Holmwood, I must confess that I was very much in the same condition myself, and not, as you are well aware, without good reason, for I knew, that with all my affection for Victor, I had no more power to assist him than he, poor fellow, has to assist himself. Neither was I dull enough not to perceive very plainly from your statement, that notwithstanding the ample means

in your power, the feelings—the very natural feelings—of the young lady's noble mother, rendered your friendship as inefficient as my own."

"And that is the misery which I endure with the least patience!" exclaimed Clara, while tears again started to her eyes. "It is difficult," she added, "to be really angry with any one whom we know is acting from a sense of duty; but nevertheless, I do blame Lady Amelia for her proud shrinking from the idle idea of being under an obligation to me! She knows so well how happy it would make me to place Victor in a position which might justify her letting Annie marry him; and she knows too, that the doing so could not, by possibility, be productive of any inconvenience to me."

"I believe that *you* are right, and that *she* is wrong," replied M. Roche, gaily rubbing his hands; "and I am happy to say, that this does not signify a single *sou*. Now listen to me, my fair lady," he continued, "and I think I will show you a cure for her ladyship's pride, for Victor's despair, and for your generous embarrassment from not knowing how to help him.

As I was making my moody, melancholy way from your dwelling to my own, in a state of mind which was, I believe, anything but amiable, I encountered a gentleman whose rank and station in society give him considerable preeminence anywhere, and which his having vested a large portion of his property in the great concern to which our thoughts are just now so anxiously directed, has given a degree of value and importance which no instalment of *money alone* could have afforded. His first words, as we met face to face on the pavement, were, ‘What ails you, my dear Roche? You look exactly as you might do if you were going to have your right hand cut off because your life depended on your losing it.’

“This gentleman, Miss Holmwood, is the most intimate friend I have in the world. It was a comfort to me to see him, and I instantly seized his arm, twisted him into the Tuilleries Gardens, and told him very precisely exactly all the circumstances of the case which is tormenting us so sorely.”

“But of course without names, M. Roche?” said Clara, rather eagerly.

“Most assuredly, Miss Holmwood,” he replied; “I should ill deserve the confidence you have so frankly placed in me, were I capable of the indiscretion of naming either yourself or your friends. But though I carefully concealed names, I was equally careful not to conceal facts. My friend is not a dull man, Miss Holmwood; and before we parted I believe he had formed as correct an idea of my *dramatis personæ* as if he had intimately known you all for years. More especially, as you can easily comprehend, it was essentially and absolutely necessary that he should well understand the character, and the relative as well as the positive position of Lady Amelia Wharton and yourself. As a well-born and high-minded gentleman, he was very easily made to appreciate the feelings on both sides which rendered it impossible for you to press any further pecuniary assistance upon her; but having expressed with energy both his sympathy, and his genuine admiration for you both, he paused thoughtfully for a moment, and then exclaimed, almost with vehemence, ‘But what is there to prevent your getting the young

man's name inserted to the amount of the ten thousand pounds, which, as you say, would suffice for his reception into the concern as a partner? The fair friend you speak of would only have to give her name as security for him, and if you guarantee her solvency to that amount, she would have no need to break faith with her proud friend, for no further offer of money would be at all necessary.'

"The instant he named this," continued M. Roche, with a happy smile, "I perceived not only that all our difficulties would be at once got over by it, but that there could not be the least shadow of objection against it, either on Lady Amelia's part or yours. For not a single shilling of money will have to be brought forward. Will you agree to this, dear Miss Holmwood?"

"Will I?" cried the delighted Clara, clasping her hands together in a perfect ecstasy of delight. "Can you doubt it for a moment, my dear sir? But I should be very glad," she added, after the pause of a moment, "I should be very glad, M. Roche, if the thing could be done entirely between ourselves. I

should be very grateful to you, if you could contrive to get it effectually done without either Lady Amelia, Sir William, or even Annie herself, knowing anything about it. I do so very greatly dislike being thanked."

"I sympathise in that feeling, much too sincerely to risk its being wounded," replied M. Roche; "so now let us shake hands," he added, "and agree mutually not to allude to it. But I must give M. Victor a lecture on the subject, or we shall have him bursting out in thanksgivings that will spoil all! Poor dear Victor! Fancy his happiness! But it is a positive sin to let him remain in ignorance of this happiness for a single moment longer than needful"

And so saying, he again affectionately kissed her hand, and hurried from the room.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that he left Clara a much happier being than he found her.

The contrast of which she was herself conscious, poor girl, was indeed most delightful. Instead of being afraid, as she had been a few minutes before, that some privileged friend

might enter and question her concerning the misery which was too absorbing to be concealed, she now dreaded the same accident for a reason precisely the reverse, for she was conscious of being far too happy to be quite reasonable ; and how should she forgive herself if either Lady Amelia or Annie found out what she had been so kindly enjoined to conceal ?

Fortunately, however, her self-command was not put to this trying test, and a delightful hour or so, passed in solitude, so far restored her composure, as to enable her to pay aunt Sarah a visit, without letting her find out that she was too happy to be reasonable.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIS troublesome degree of restraint did not last long, and nothing could be more judicious than the manner in which M. Roche made all the parties concerned understand that instead of being exceedingly miserable, they were one and all of them at liberty to be as happy as they chose to be. Nor was this general happiness tarnished by any single word being dropped, which might suggest the idea that the ardently wished-for position which Victor had attained in the firm, had been procured by the agency of Clara.

Very little, indeed, was said upon the subject, beyond the announcement of the welcome fact that he had attained it, and perhaps the conscious ignorance of Lady Amelia on all

subjects connected with mercantile affairs, was one reason why the details of this most welcome improvement in Victor's position was suffered to pass without discussion by her, though not without often-reiterated expressions of thankfulness and joy.

The settlement of the happy Annie's fortune upon herself and her possible children, was achieved in a very satisfactory style, and simultaneously with the preparation of a very pretty, though not very costly *trousseau*.

But the happiness of the parties concerned, was as much excited by remembering the seemingly hopeless state of misery through which they had passed, as by contemplating the brightly smiling future.

As to my heroine, she shall speak for herself: it was thus she wrote to her quondam schoolmaster.

“A change has come over the spirits of us all, my most dear friend, which I most heartily wish you could witness; for if ever a feeling of genuine unmixed happiness was permitted to nestle itself into human hearts,

the sunshiny blessing has been accorded to us now. I do firmly believe that one purpose of sorrow, is to awaken our hearts to a vivid perception of joy. Who could ever have appreciated the delicious luxury of ease, if pain had been for ever unknown? And how could we at this present moment so deeply enjoy the happiness we read on the sweet young face of our beloved Annie, had we never seen the deep, quiet, but most profound wretchedness which we have all been contemplating there for the last five or six miserable weeks that have been passing over us?

“Neither you, nor I, though we both lived for so many years ‘within the sound of Bow bell,’ have any very particularly well-enlightened faculties respecting mercantile arrangements and transactions, and I will therefore make no attempt to explain how it has all been brought about; but you will be pleased to hear that my dear, and truly admirable friend, Lady Amelia Wharton, appears perfectly satisfied with the connexion her daughter is about to make, and her being so does her more honour than any one can be aware of

who knows not, as well as I do, all the circumstances of the case.

“ She has neither blindly, nor weakly yielded to her devoted love to this dear, only child ; nor has she consented to the marriage without knowing well, both that the character and fine qualities of the young man, most fully justify the devoted attachment he has inspired, and that his position is now such as to offer no reasonable grounds of objection to the marriage.

“ Sir William Lawrence, who is the uncle of Lady Amelia, most perfectly agrees with her in this opinion ; and as, moreover, this really excellent Victor Dormont has long been a very affectionately valued favourite of his, the approval he has given to the marriage has been most cordial ; and, indeed, we all agree in declaring that we never saw Sir William Lawrence perfectly happy before.

“ But notwithstanding the perfect approval, and very complete satisfaction which the prospect of this marriage now affords to every one interested in it, we were in a very different condition previous to the final arrangements

by which the question was at length brought to its present happy conclusion ; but as the only really important fact on the subject with which I am perfectly familiar, is the happy termination of all the negotiations which have taken place concerning it, I flatter myself that you will accept the news of the happy ultimatum without insisting upon any previous particulars ; for I am much more *au fait* of the happy fact that everything is now as we would wish it to be, than of the precise manner in which it was brought about.

“ But I do wish that I could graphically describe to you aunt Sarah, as she is now, and as she was, dear, affectionate, warm-hearted darling, *exactly* as she was about a week ago ! I really could not have believed, if I had not seen it, how deeply that seemingly calm, and very aged heart could have sympathised in the youthful love-sorrows of Victor and Annie.

“ She lost her appetite, dear soul ! and I greatly suspect she lost her sleep also, when things were at the worst with them ; for she looked most miserably ill, and I really and truly was afraid to speak to her, knowing that

she would be sure to revert to the sad subject, and that as I had nothing to say to comfort her, our melancholy talk could only lead to tears and suffering. But now, if I do but look at her, she instantly prepares herself to hear something delightful, and, what is better still, it would be very difficult for me to say any thing that she did not find so.

“I suppose it would be treason to the tender passion to say that I doubt if the lovers themselves are happier than she is.

“In short, beloved schoolmaster, we are a very happy party indeed, and most sincerely do I wish that you and Mary could look in upon us ; but as you had not courage to come when we were sufficiently in possession of our faculties to have made it probable that we should have known what we were about, and that, consequently, you would have had a fair chance of finding breakfast at breakfast-time, dinner at dinner-time, and so forth, it would be very decidedly imprudent for you to venture *now*, when I could by no means venture to promise so much.

“I have been called from my writing-desk in order to take part in a consultation of the very greatest and gravest importance. The question to be discussed was nothing less than the future residence of our young lovers ; and, to say the truth, it is not altogether without difficulty.

“I do not very precisely know what their income is likely to be, and as the subject has not been discussed before me, I have not volunteered any opinion on the subject ; the only point of it that interests me, is its vicinity to us. What will become of aunt Sarah if Annie is not near enough to run into her room about half-a-dozen times a day ? The thing might be easily managed if Lady Amelia had not unhappily one little weakness in her character, which comes inconveniently in my way, much oftener than you would believe possible. Notwithstanding the sister-like terms on which we really live together, she cannot conquer her aristocratic repugnance to my occasionally employing a little of my superfluous wealth in the service either of herself or her daughter.

“She did, indeed, submit, though I have

no doubt it was really painful to her, but she did at last submit to my making Annie a present on her marriage ; but this is so very usual a transaction among intimate friends, that I believe she did not feel courage enough to oppose it.

“ Beyond this, however, I cannot venture to go ; yet, were it otherwise, it would be as easy for me either to hire or to make purchase of a dwelling for Annie, within five minutes’ reach of our own, as to make her a present of a pincushion.

“ But on this point I know Lady Amelia would be inexorable.

“ Unfortunately our own residence is pretty nearly the most expensive, in point of situation, that we could have found in Paris ; but as the choice of it was expressly for the gratification of my own fancy, her ladyship submitted to the necessity of taking up her abode in it with me.

“ But not only have we established ourselves here as yearly tenants, the dwelling was so agreeable to us all, that I purchased a five-years’ lease of it, and have, moreover, expended

some few hundreds, extremely to my satisfaction, in making sundry alterations both in the arrangement and the decoration of the rooms.

“To propose, therefore, to leave it now, in order to follow our dear Annie to a less costly quarter, would be considered by them all as making a great sacrifice on my part, and be quite as objectionable, I suppose, as proposing to take apartments for Annie in the neighbourhood.

This, however, seems to be the only serious difficulty in the making arrangements for the future home of the young couple; for both the bride and the bridegroom are vastly too much in love to anticipate the slightest inconvenience from Annie’s exchanging our well-appointed household, for two servants, and the porter to help !

“But on this point Lady Amelia has behaved admirably. Her pride is not of the pitiful kind which would lead her to see degradation in activity and usefulness.

“Pecuniary obligations are intolerable to her, but on every other question which has

occurred, her conduct has been marked with equal kindness and judgment. So, on this point, I do not mean to interfere, for I feel that I have no right to do so ; and were it not for aunt Sarah, I could easily reconcile myself to a separation which, I am aware, will be greatly atoned for to our dear Annie, by her having secured the beloved Victor as a companion for life.

“ I do heartily wish you could witness the delight of aunt Sarah, while she is listening to some of Annie’s pretty domestic schemes for the future ! People may talk of high intelligence, and the sublime powers of the mind, as much as they will ; but, verily, I think there is something in the emotions of a purely unselfish, loving heart that is sublimer still.

“ I am sending you a letter full of scraps, a line now and a line then. But I prefer noting down for your edification the record of events as they occur, instead of postponing my dispatch till all our interesting affairs are finally

arranged, and keeping my news unrecorded till the *denouement* is reached.

“It will not be long before you will hear from me again. My very kind love to Mary.

“Ever your own,

“CLARA HOLMWOOD.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Nothing could be more faithfully true than the statements conveyed to her old school-master by this letter of Clara's; but it was not in her power to make her old friend and confidant fully understand her position, for she by no means fully understood it herself.

One point on which she had made a very decided blunder was respecting the degree of difficulty which was likely to attend the finding what would in all ways be a suitable residence for the affianced pair. Had no one interfered in any way, either from feelings of affection, which rendered any considerable distance as objectionable; or of prudence, which caused anything beyond a very moderate rent to appear equally so, still it would not have been

very easy for the question to be satisfactorily settled as to *where* they were to go.

There were, in fact, many difficulties in the way. It would not be easy, perhaps, to find any city in which the price of a dwelling is more accurately proportioned to its value, than Paris.

Everything seems taken into consideration. The common blessings of light and air; the comparative vicinity to all points of favourite or necessarily frequent resort; the number of stairs to be climbed up and scrambled down—all, and everything is brought to account, and that so fairly and accurately, that the disagreeable result was the necessity of being lodged either with too great expense, or with too little comfort.

The more the happy pair themselves became convinced that such was the state of the case, the more they became convinced also that the mere *agréments* of a lodging were, in fact, of little or no consequence at all to people who loved each other well enough to forget the aspect of a room, while contemplating the dear features of the companion who shared it; and

in the strength of this conviction the affianced pair had brought themselves to feel perfectly satisfied with a dismal *troisième*, which had no other recommendation save that of being at no very great distance from the maternal dwelling.

Before it was engaged, however, Clara, at her own particular desire, requested permission to visit it—a request which it was impossible to refuse, though it was evident enough that Annie would have preferred her postponing her visit till she should herself be there to receive her *chez elle*.

Clara was quite aware of this reluctance, and had no difficulty in discovering the cause of it. She knew that she had shown herself, on more occasions than one, considerably more difficult to please than poor Annie thought necessary ; and in order, in this case, to obtain permission to make one of the preliminary visits which were to decide the question, Clara was obliged to promise that she would behave with the greatest possible discretion, and find fault with nothing.

And Clara kept her promise ; she really did

say nothing; but her silence had eloquence, and poor Annie looked so very nearly disheartened as they drove home, that my unfortunate heroine began to think herself one of the most troublesome beings in existence, being as apt to find difficulties, as unapt, under Lady Amelia's restrictions, to remove them.

She felt pretty sure, that the first thing which would happen to her upon her return home, would be to hear the gentle tap of Lady Amelia at the door of her *boudoir*, requesting admittance, for the purpose of hearing her opinion respecting the *troisième* they had visited. Such a visit at that moment would have rendered the keeping her promise to Annie very difficult, if not absolutely impossible; and she, therefore, stole unperceived into the third drawing-room, which she was never in the habit of using when alone. Nevertheless, she found a book there, which she thought would give her as fair a chance of forgetting her troubles as anything else she could think of, and she accordingly placed herself in a very luxurious chair, and began her studies.

But poor Clara, though a very resolute reader, could not read now. She cared no more for the fine thoughts and expressive phrases which her eyes perused, than if she had been reading a catalogue.

And then she fell into what is generally called a brown study, which means, if it means anything, that she sat thinking vaguely of sundry things, which neither brightly nor distinctly occupied her mind. But somewhat suddenly, both her aspect and her attitude were changed; the book which she still held, fell from her fingers; and then, by a very rapid movement, she sprang from her chair, rushed to the door as rapidly as she could possibly have done had the house been on fire, mounted the stairs with an equally impatient step, and knocked at the door of Lady Amelia, by no means in the gentle style in which she had anticipated a similar visit, herself, but with a movement so nearly vehement, as to cause her ladyship to look considerably startled as she opened it.

“Have I frightened you, dearest Lady Amelia? I am sure I have! I beg ten thou-

sand pardons ! But I do so want to have you down stairs in the drawing-room with me for five minutes !”

“ Who is there in the drawing-room, my dear Clara ?” returned her friend, looking at her with considerable astonishment ; but immediately stepping forward to comply with her request—“ Who is there in the drawing-room, Clara ?”

“ Nobody at all, Lady Amelia ; not a soul !” replied Clara, adding coaxingly, as she passed her arm under that of her friend ; “ but I do so want to have you there, by myself, for a minute or two !” And then the two ladies glided down the stairs together, and the wide open drawing-room door being entered, Clara closed it behind them, and leading her puzzled friend to a sofa, placed her on it, and kneeling down upon a footstool at her feet, looked lovingly in her face, and exclaimed, “ Will you listen to me for about five minutes, without scolding me, let me say what I will ?”

“ Why, for five minutes, my dear, I think, if I make a very strong effort, I may be able to control myself. But don’t say anything,

dearest ! which you know it would be painful to me to hear," she added, more gravely.


Clara was at no loss to understand the meaning of this caution. She had more than once been made aware, that the fond mother of poor Annie had experienced very painful feelings from the fact, daily becoming more evident, that the happy bridal which they were all so joyously awaiting, would be the signal for establishing her child in a very unattractive home.

But, although this was quite evident enough, it was, perhaps, to her experienced eye and ear, more evident still, that no farther pecuniary assistance on her part would be at all well received, and she hastened to remove the sort of nervous anticipation of annoyance which the words of her friend seemed to imply.

" Be very sure that I will do no such thing !" she replied, throwing her arms round her in a very loving embrace ; " but if the vanity of my nature has not totally overpowered my reason, I think that within the last five minutes I have hit upon decidedly the cleverest idea that ever entered my head. But sit down by

me while I impart it to you, and be gentle with me, if you should happen to think that I have mistaken folly for wisdom. But I think the disappointment would break my heart!"

While saying these words, in a manner which certainly suggested no idea that she was in jest, Clara placed Lady Amelia on the sofa, and then sat down beside her. The interval of a few silent seconds followed, but when these were past, she exclaimed in an accent which had more of triumph than timidity in it, "Why should Annie take any apartment at all? Why should they not live with us here?" A very bright flush mantled the delicate cheek of Lady Amelia as these words reached her; but Clara saw in a moment that her features expressed no mixture of the painful, if not positively angry, feeling, which poor Clara had more than once encountered when hinting at the very particularly great facility with which more agreeable apartments than any which they had yet looked at *might* be secured for the young couple. To Clara's very great satisfaction and relief she instantly perceived that no feeling of this kind had been inspired



by her words ; the only opposition they met with was conveyed by Lady Amelia's saying, but not without a gentle smile—"Simply, my dear Clara, because it is impossible."

"Is that your only objection?" cried Clara, suddenly encircling her friend with one arm, while the other was raised with energy, as if to assist her eloquence.

"Is not that enough?" replied her ladyship, with another rather melancholy smile.

"Yes! Quite enough, if the statement were conclusive—I mean correctly conclusive, or rather conclusively correct," replied Clara, holding up a warning finger, which seemed to announce that the discussion was to be strictly logical.

"Well! my dear, kind Clara," returned her friend, in a tone which proved that whatever other blunders she might make there was no danger of her mistaking either the feelings or the motives of her generous friend—"Well! . . I will confess to you, that I do not think such a scheme would be impossible if you would consent to letting it be brought about in the manner I should propose."

“Only let it be brought about,” replied Clara, cordially kissing her—“only let it be brought about in some way or other, and I declare to you, that I think I should be too happy to grumble, if your scheme involved the necessity of our dining in the porter’s lodge.”

“Oh! Clara!—dearest Clara! how can either I or Annie ever hope to make you feel and understand all the gratitude with which our hearts are filled towards you? Yet not even this gratitude can be equal in degree to the delight I feel in perceiving how truly you love my dear, unpretending, simple-minded girl! Nothing but true and cordial affection could have suggested to you the idea of their living with us. But I leave you to guess, my dear friend, the sort of contrast which such a scheme offers to me, instead of my seeing her packed into a gloomy *troisième*, to which I must climb at the risk of having no breath to speak to her when I arrive at it. If, as I now most truly believe, if you would not dislike it, I certainly do not perceive any great objection to the scheme, provided you do not,

from any mistaken notion about my age and infirmities, which, I beg to assure you, are as yet by no means oppressive, take it into your head to object to my occupying Annie's present room, and giving up my present quarters to her and her husband."

The heightened colour of Clara showed plainly enough that this proposition was not listened to with indifference; neither did the expression of her features indicate that she very greatly approved it.

She was, however, very stedfastly bent upon behaving with extreme discretion, and she therefore replied, in the very gentlest voice imaginable, "I am not so dull an observer as your ladyship seems to suspect; I really doubt if Annie herself would be more indifferent about a few additional stairs, than her mamma would be. 'But' . . . and here she stopped short, and looked almost as much ashamed, and quite as much embarrassed, as she could have done had she been preparing herself to demand some selfish indulgence to which her conscience told her she had no right.

But the pause of a moment, if it did not

give her courage, gave her something better still, for it was in accordance both to common sense and sincerity, that she suddenly changed both look and manner, as she added, "Shall we be paying ourselves too great a compliment, if we mutually confess that we consider ourselves as placed both by intellect and education somewhat above the class of mortals who consent to do what is less wise, instead of that which is more so, for fear some 'MRS. GRUNDY' should find fault with them?"

Lady Amelia paused for a moment before she replied; but at length she said, "No, Clara; I do not think, that by such a claim to common sense, we should be over-rating ourselves."

"Let us prove it, then," returned Clara, in the firm tone of one who is not jesting.

"The subject we are upon may, and I firmly hope will, affect the enjoyment of many years of life to us all."

"I perceive what you conceive the difficulty in the arrangement we are about to make, as plainly as you do, Lady Amelia; and were there not something considerably more im-

portant than mere etiquette involved in it, I should yield now, as I repeatedly have done before, to your ladyship's superior experience on all subjects of the kind. But when the question involves consequences essentially important to the daily happiness of years, I cannot consent to be so passive."

Lady Amelia understood her too well to venture the making any reply, but silently waited for her to proceed. It may be that Clara would have preferred a less respectful demeanour; she took courage, however, and went on in the way she had determined to go. "Will you tell me," said she, in an accent, half sportive, half serious; "will you tell me for what reason it is necessary that we should have a third drawing-room?"

"Necessary?" repeated Lady Amelia, after the pause of a moment. "There are many things, dear Clara, which can by no means be deemed necessary, but from which we nevertheless derive great enjoyment."

"Most true, my dear friend!" said Clara eagerly, in reply; "and it seems to me, that the very evident difference which we perceive

between individuals, as to the degree, I mean, in which they seem to enjoy life, arises more from the greater or less degree of judgment displayed in the use made of the blessings within our reach, than from any inequality of condition."

"It may be so, my dear," replied Lady Amelia. "But the fact is, that what gives pleasure to one person, often produces annoyance to another."

"Very likely," said Clara. "But a family party must be very unhappily constituted, where such differences of feeling and opinion exist. You and your daughter, and I and my aunt, though not particularly likely, from our very different positions in life, to think and feel alike, have formed, since we have been together, a very happy family; and I much doubt if, in any matters of domestic arrangement, we should be likely to differ. Do you think, for instance, Lady Amelia, that if the question were fairly put to either of us, as to whether we had rather give up our third drawing-room, and continue to live together, or cease to live together, and keep our third

drawing-room, there would be any difference of opinion among us as to the answer?"

There was so much of pleading affection in the beautiful eyes of Clara as she fixed them on the face of her friend while saying this, that the only reply which suggested itself to her ladyship, was a loving embrace. "I have then succeeded!" exclaimed my heroine, very triumphantly. "I have, at last, made you aware, that we may not, any of us, find our daily happiness increased by coming down to breakfast, and finding no Annie to welcome us . . . nor the long hours of the day made shorter by meditating on the comparative miseries of climbing up unnumbered stairs to get at her, (and perhaps not finding her when we got to the top of them), or of at last making up our minds to passing the day without seeing her at all! I have at last made you think it possible that we might manage better?"

"You have made me feel now, my dearest Clara, as you have often done before, that your affection for my Annie is as genuine as mine for you. But you have not made me feel that

it would be in any way righteous, or proper, to permit your paying the high rent you do for this charming apartment, if you are to be deprived of one of its most elegant appendages in order to give it up for the accommodation of my daughter. Indeed, Clara, I cannot consent to it."

"I never thought of your doing so, dear friend!" replied Clara, laughing. "On the contrary, you will perceive, if you will patiently listen to me, that my scheme shows rather a selfish partiality to this pretty room than any inclination to give it up. If your ladyship will consent to such monopoly on my part, my scheme will be to take whole and sole possession of it *myself*, and woe betide the bold hand which shall venture to turn the lock without a deferential preliminary knock, to ask permission, before I leave it in order to dress for dinner! Are you willing, for our Annie's sake," she continued, coaxingly — "are you willing to sacrifice the pleasure of receiving your morning visitors in this beautiful little suburban paradise? *I* shall not be obliged to make any such sacrifice, for I shall be able

you know, to receive all *my* particular morning visitors here still !”

“And where are you to be lodged, Miss Holmwood ?” said Lady Amelia, painfully changing colour. “Oh, Clara, Clara ! Can you think that, in order to indulge myself by retaining my daughter near me, I will endure the seeing you abandon the rooms which you have prepared with so much taste for your own enjoyment ? Can you think that I will permit you to mount another flight of stairs in order to reach your sleeping apartment, in a house which is entirely paid for by yourself ? Clara, I cannot do it !” .

“Very well, Lady Amelia Wharton,” returned Clara, assuming a look and manner of great composure. “The question between us really lies, as the phrase goes, in a nut-shell. I was quite aware, before I spoke to you on the subject, that you would feel a strong objection to my going into Annie’s present room to sleep ; in truth, I was so very fully aware of this, that I would have spared myself the deep mortification of having my very happy plan rejected, but for one idea, which prompted

me to make the experiment, and which arose from the obvious fact, that I SHOULD be permitted to make the arrangement I so ardently desire, UNLESS your ladyship permitted etiquette to have more influence with you than affection."

"Not so, not so, not so!" returned the vanquished lady, again embracing her companion. "Be it as you will, my too generous Clara! If you have felt so much at the idea of losing Anne, think what I must feel at the idea of keeping her!"

From this point everything went on, not only smoothly, but most joyously. Even Lady Amelia was effectually coaxed out of her *remorse*, as she called the feeling which Clara had so effectually scolded out of her, in the first instance; and the exceeding happiness of aunt Sarah, while expatiating with most unwonted eloquence upon all the silent suffering she had been enduring while contemplating the departure of her beloved pet, really caused Annie a feeling of delight that seemed to mix itself, as she very truly said, with every scheme she formed for her future existence.

In short, a happier set of people than those now aiding and assisting the preparations going on for the marriage of Victor Dormont and Annie Wharton, would have been very difficult to find under any circumstances, or in any land.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN most cases when a wedding is approaching, there may be found, and felt, symptoms of that chequered character of which the successive events of life are usually composed ; but in the case of Victor and Annie there seemed to be a suspension of all the ordinary dark shades which usually so chequer existence. The most frequent drawback to general content at such times, arises, as we must have all felt, from the necessity of in some sort sacrificing old ties for new ones ; but in the case of our thrice happy Annie, none of those tearful separations occurred which will often cause a parting bride to sigh, even at the moment when the dearest wish of her heart is fulfilled.

But far, far different was the condition of the whole party when they separated for a few days after the ceremony.

The time of this absence was, in fact, but barely sufficient to give Clara time to accomplish all she wished to do in the way of preparation before their return. The two pleasant rooms which had been occupied by herself, were now arranged for the perfect accommodation of two, in a style of mingled elegance and comfort which could never have been achieved in the time, nor indeed ever achieved at all, had the purse of the fair projector been less happily in accordance with her fertile fancy and her generous heart.

It was upon this occasion that Clara for the first time indulged her taste, her fancy, and her almost unlimited power of spending money, without feeling herself subjected to any restraint whatever.

All that she had done for the decoration of the house, or the especial accommodation of the various inmates, since she had first taken possession of it, had always been in some degree restrained by the consciousness that Lady

Amelia seemed occasionally pained and embarrassed when any ornament or accommodation was added, apparently for her especial use or gratification. And the having discovered this, often checked Clara when meditating some fanciful indulgence or costly decoration.

But now all she did of this kind was rather welcomed than looked gravely at by Lady Amelia, because she flattered herself that Clara was, as it were, making atonement to herself for what she had sacrificed for the accommodation of Annie.

The watching the golden shower thus sprinkled over their abode with a very judicious, and not sparing hand, now seemed to afford as much pleasure to Lady Amelia as to Clara herself; a result very naturally arising from her being perfectly aware that the money so expended was absolutely of no importance whatever to the overgrown revenues of her friend, and that now, *at least*, it might be fairly supposed she was embellishing her residence in order to please herself, and, as it were, to atone to her taste, for the injury she had done it by her new arrangements.

As to the feelings of Clara herself, while thus employed, they were, most assuredly, quite as enjoyable as her ladyship imagined, though not altogether of the nature she supposed.

A few extracts from a letter written by Clara to her schoolmaster soon after the return of the newly-married pair from their short excursion, may, perhaps, convey a more correct idea of what her feelings really were.

“ My dearly-beloved friend, I sent you a ‘Galignani’s Messenger,’ in order to convey to you, in proper style, the important information that my dearly-beloved Annie had become Madame Victor Dormont. But I think it by no means improbable that, instead of being grateful to me for this kind attention, you, and very likely Mary also, may have been accusing me of every sort of idleness for not having written to you for the express purpose of giving you a detailed account of the whole affair. And I believe I should myself be inclined to agree with you in this view of the case, did I not happen to know that my writ-

ing *such* a letter at that particular time, was wholly and absolutely impossible.

“I have never before, during the nearly three-and-twenty years which have passed over me, known what it was to have more to do in the day, than a day could find hours for. But I know all about it now. As to my having dreamed of sitting down to write a gossiping letter to you, during the fortnight that Victor and his bride were absent, it was just simply impossible, unless I had given up all hope and endeavour to accomplish the important business which I had fixed my heart upon achieving before their return.

“I have now and then, I believe, grumbled a little when writing to you, concerning the only serious fault which I have discovered in the character of Lady Amelia Wharton : I allude to her extreme and, I must confess, very troublesome sensitiveness on the subject of what she calls pecuniary obligations. I am quite ready to allow great indulgence to it in this instance, as I have done heretofore in another ; nay, I am ready to allow that in both it may have arisen from what might be a noble

instead of a pitiful feeling, if not pushed to an extent at which common sense seems to revolt.

“ However, it is by no means my purpose to fill my pages with a dissertation on this subject now, the only remark concerning it which can assist you in comprehending the very active state of occupation in which I have been living, is, that in preparing this very pretty mansion for our continued winter residence, it became very troublesomely evident to me that I could not bestow any of my overgrown wealth upon its decoration in any possible way that could appear likely to contribute to her personal gratification, without her showing herself so much embarrassed and pained by it as very effectually to cut short any such proceedings. This was a very great annoyance to me ; but I had not courage enough to exert my power and my influence with her, in obvious opposition to her wishes ; and I therefore left a vast number of very ugly and awkward deficiencies, rather than see her look as if she felt under a very painful sense of obligation by the removal of them.

“But this dear, delightful marriage has happily restored me to freedom in this respect, though this very agreeable result has not been achieved without some little difficulty on her part, and some little skill on mine.

“I should send you a very long story if I narrated all the particulars of the discussions through which we have passed before arriving at their happy termination. The only very important point is, that our dear Annie and her charming husband are henceforward to make part of our family ; and here, again, I might have failed in making my proud friend agree to an arrangement which she felt a nervous consciousness might increase the amount of the weekly bills, had there not existed, on this point at least, such a very perfect sympathy between us, that Lady Amelia, who is as true as she is proud, neither felt, nor pretended to feel, that this arrangement was not as much for my gratification as for her own.

“This vital point being amicably settled between us, I was permitted, though not without a little difficulty, to manage the new arrangement of the rooms according to my own

fancy ; and under shelter of the general assertion that my comfort required a few alterations and improvements, I have contrived to get a few of the cleverest decorative artists in Paris into the house, and am at length enjoying the gratification of making Annie's rooms, and my own too, as perfect as a tradesman's gold can make them.

“ A very pretty illustration this of the elevation and purifying effect of genuine affection, that it not only banishes all selfish littleness from our own hearts, but it enables us to read correctly the hearts of others. Lady Amelia, as devotedly affectionate as she is proudly high-minded, knows and feels that I love her Annie, and, therefore, she also knows and feels that I enjoy more genuine happiness while preparing a luxurious home for her, than my dirty bank-notes could enable me to obtain in any other mode whatever.

“ And now adieu ! There is a particularly elegant drapery to be arranged in the apartment of the bride's-folk, and I must arrange its adjustment myself. I am afraid that, notwithstanding all the pains you have taken with

me, I must still plead guilty to a very childish tone of mind. But if you knew Annie, I think you would feel inclined to be indulgent with me upon this particular occasion.

“Ever your own,

“CLARA.”

END OF VOL. II.

INTERESTING NEW WORKS.

LAKE NGAMI; or, Explorations and Discoveries during Four Years' Wandering in the Wilds of South-Western Africa. By CHARLES JOHN ANDERSSON. Second Edition, royal 8vo. Embellished with upwards of 50 Illustrations, representing Sporting Adventures, Subjects of Natural History, Landscapes, &c., with a Map. Price 30s. Handsomely bound.

"This narrative of African explorations and discoveries is one of the most important geographical works that have lately appeared. The work contains much scientific and accurate information as to the geology, the scenery, products, and resources of the regions explored, with notices of the religion, manners, and customs of the native tribes. The continual sporting adventures, and other remarkable occurrences, intermingled with the narrative of travel, make the book as interesting to read as a romance, as, indeed, a good book of travels ought always to be. The illustrations by Wolf are admirably designed, and most of them represent scenes as striking as any witnessed by Jules Gérard or Gordon Cumming."—*Literary Gazette*.

REVELATIONS of PRISON LIFE. By GEORGE LAVAL CHESTERTON, Twenty-five Years Governor of the House of Correction at Cold Bath Fields. 2 vols. 21s.

"This interesting book is full of such illustration as the narrative of striking cases affords, and is indeed as well calculated to entertain mere readers for amusement as to instruct and assist those who are studying the great questions of social reform."—*Examiner*.

A SUMMER in NORTHERN EUROPE; including Sketches in Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Aland Islands, Gothland, &c. By SELINA BUNBURY, author of "Life in Sweden," &c. 2 vols. 21s.

TRAVELS in PERSIA, GEORGIA, and KOORDISTAN; with Sketches of the COSSACKS AND THE CAUCASUS. By DR. MORITZ WAGNER. 3 vols.

EASTERN HOSPITALS and ENGLISH NURSES; the Narrative of Twelve Months' Experience in the Hospitals of Koulah and Scutari. By A LADY VOLUNTEER. 2 vols. With Illustrations. 21s.

JOURNAL of ADVENTURES with the British Army, from the Commencement of the War to the Fall of Sebastopol. By GEORGE CAVENDISH TAYLOR, late 95th Regiment. 2 vols. 21s.

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS, SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN, 13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

