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THE OLD SCHOOLMASTER.

CHAPTER IV.

If learning hath no royal road its own,
There is at least a seeming choice of way
To reach the goal of thought—to win the crown
That ornaments the soul's activity.

As my readers have already been informed, the retreat I have chosen for myself beyond the turmoil of the great city is by no means a mere solitude, where care, as it were, sits in my presence brooding over what might have been. Besides the one or two friends who visit me regularly, I have many acquaintances who drop in occasionally to exchange ideas with me on this or that question, just as it arises in our desultory conversings. Indeed, hardly a week passes in which some incident does not occur, unimportant as it may be, in connection with these friendly visits, to wile away the time in some intellectually interesting kind of a way, or to strengthen me more and more, the older I become, to avoid what has been called a set way of thinking about things.

For instance, not very long ago, there was a pleasant little gathering at the cottage which many of my readers may possibly care to hear about, inasmuch as the conversation at the table, by some chance or other, found its way towards the discussion of the opinions enunciated in the preceding chapter of this narrative. To describe the party, as some would have called it, is no business of mine. Were this a novel I am writing, of course I would have to pause over a minute description of all