

impossibility of allowing his daughter to marry a man whose present income consisted of the savings of an ex-tutorship, and whose prospects embraced the doubtful gainings of a professional artist; Lewis perceived his embarrassment and rightly conjectured its cause, which it was the object of his visit to remove. But General Grant's cold imperturbability had caused him so much annoyance in bygone hours, that a slight spice of what the French term "esprit malin" actuated him, and under its influence he began after a few desultory remarks,—

"It may possibly not have escaped your memory, General, that during a conversation I had the honour to hold with you before I finally quitted Broadhurst, I mentioned to you my devoted attachment to Miss Grant."

The General bowed in token of assent, but the cloud upon his brow grew darker. Not heeding this, Lewis continued:—

"I remember expressing myself somewhat strongly against certain conventional prejudices relating to inequality of position, which opposed an effectual bar to the realization of my wishes. I was young and inexperienced then,—I have since become wiser in the ways of the world, and am perfectly aware that, in speaking as I did on that occasion, I alike wasted my words and your valuable time."

He paused, and the General, who had been considerably puzzled during the speech to make out what his companion might be aiming at, settled to his own satisfaction that the increased knowledge of human nature to which Lewis alluded had shown the young man the folly of which he had been guilty, and that this speech was intended as an apology,—nothing could be more respectful and correct. Accordingly, the cloud vanished, as in his most gracious manner he replied:—"Sir, your observations do you credit. Pray set your mind at rest on this subject; fortunately my daughter never had the slightest suspicion of your feelings towards her; and, for my own part, I have long ago dismissed the affair from my recollection; and you may rest assured, that in our future intercourse the subject shall never again be broached between us."

As the General alluded to his daughter's happy ignorance of Lewis's attachment, a slightly ironical smile curled that young gentleman's handsome mouth; repressing it instantly, he replied with a calm, almost nonchalant air,—"I scarcely see how that can be accomplished, General Grant, as the object of my visit here to-day is to make you a formal proposal for your daughter's hand!"

If Lewis had suddenly risen from his chair, and, with the full power of his returning strength, had hurled that article of furniture at General Grant's head, it might have knocked him down more literally than the foregoing speech, but, figuratively, nothing could have done so. For a minute or two he appeared utterly unable to frame a reply; then, drawing himself up to a degree suggestive of a telescopic conformation, he began in an awful tone of voice,—“Sir, you