

coffee-room) he could *not* sleep ; he felt so low and so wretched in himself. And what is more, when daytime came, he couldn't even eat while he was under this roof. You may laugh at me, ma'am—but even a servant may draw her own conclusions. It's my conclusion that something happened to my lord, which we none of us know about, when he died in this house. His ghost walks in torment until he can tell it ! The living persons related to him are the persons who feel he is near them—the persons who may yet see him in the time to come. Don't, pray don't stay any longer in this dreadful place ! I wouldn't stay another night here myself—no, not for anything that could be offered me !'

Mrs. Norbury at once set her servant's mind at ease on this last point.

'I don't think about it as you do,' she said gravely. 'But I should like to speak to my brother of what has happened. We will go back to Milan.'

Some hours necessarily elapsed before they could leave the hotel, by the first train in the forenoon.

In that interval, Mrs. Norbury's maid found an opportunity of confidentially informing the valet of what had passed between her mistress and herself. The valet had other friends to whom he related the circumstances in his turn. In due course of time, the narrative, passing from mouth to mouth, reached the ears of the manager. He instantly saw that the credit of the hotel was in danger, unless something was done to retrieve the character of the room numbered Fourteen. English travellers, well acquainted with the peirage of their native country, informed him that Henry Westwick and Mrs. Norbury were by no means the only members of the Montbarry family. Curiosity might bring more of them to the hotel, after hearing what had happened. The manager's ingenuity easily hit on the obvious means of misleading them, in this case. The numbers of all the rooms were enamelled in blue, on white china plates, screwed to the

doors. He ordered a new plate to be prepared, bearing the number, '13 A' ; and he kept the room empty, after its tenant for the time being had gone away, until the plate was ready. He then re-numbered the room ; placing the removed Number Fourteen on the door of his own room (on the second floor), which, not being to let, had not previously been numbered at all. By this device, Number Fourteen, disappeared at once and forever, from the books of the hotel, as the number of a bedroom to let.

Having warned the servants to beware of gossiping with travellers on the subject of the changed numbers, under penalty of being dismissed, the manager composed his mind with the reflection that he had done his duty to his employers. 'Now,' he thought to himself, with an excusable sense of triumph, 'let the whole family come here if they like ! The hotel is a match for them.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFORE the end of the week, the manager found himself in relations with 'the family' once more. A telegram from Milan announced that Mr. Francis Westwick would arrive in Venice on the next day, and would be obliged if Number Fourteen, on the first floor, could be reserved for him, in the event of its being vacant at the time.

The manager paused to consider, before he issued his directions.

The re-numbered room had been last let to a French gentleman. It would be occupied on the day of Mr. Francis Westwick's arrival, but it would be empty again on the day after. Would it be well to reserve the room for the special occupation of Mr. Francis ? and when he had passed the night unsuspectingly and comfortably in 'No. 13 A,' to ask him in the presence of witnesses how he liked his bed-chamber ?