

# BELFORD'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

MARCH, 1877.

NICHOLAS MINTURN.

BY J. G. HOLLAND.

## CHAPTER VIII.

NICHOLAS having telegraphed his departure for home, was met at the station by his devoted servant Pont, who dropped his hat upon the platform, seized him by both his hands, and shook them until they ached.

"'Pears like you're de prodigal son done come back," said Pont. "I tole de missis she muss git up a fuss-rate veal dinner for yer sho, dis time, and git out yer silk dressin'-gown, an' call in de neighbours, cos you'd been nigh about dead, and come to life ag'in."

When Pont had finished his little speech, which he had been concocting and rehearsing all the morning, the young man's neighbours who crowded the platform, pressed up to welcome him, and congratulate him upon his safety.

It was very pleasant for Nicholas to find himself among familiar scenes and old friends. He wondered why he had ever left them ; and between the station and his home, he went through the experience that comes once to every sensitive young man with the first consciousness that he has been forever removed from the sphere of dependence to a life of active and self-directed manhood. For a few unhappy minutes, he was filled with a tender, self-pitying regret that he could never again be what he had been. He shrank from life and its responsibilities. He half wished that he were a woman, in order that he might honourably bind himself to retirement, and evade the struggles with men which seemed so coarse and repulsive to him. But he had learned that he was a man, and knew that the smooth, round shell which had held him could never take the fledgeling back.

He was not in a talkative mood, as his carriage crawled slowly up the Ottercliff hill, but the pressure upon Pont was too great to be successfully withstood.