

not my guardian." Then she almost wished that he was, fearing the real personage might in reality resemble the false one.

"My dear little Nellie," replied the old man, "I am both the one and the other of the gentlemen you have now named. Your father always knew me as George Burton, and when, through my marriage with Miss Knightbridge, Arthur's aunt, I had, at her father's request, to assume the old family name. I did not deceive him, and in fact he never knew that I was married at all, for my wife lived but three short months after our wedding, and I could not then bear to write about my loss. So it was to the George Burton of his college days, that my old friend intrusted the guardianship of his orphan daughter. Forgive me my darling child, and you too Arthur, but when I learned how matters had turned out, that *my* nephew was the chosen one of this young lady's heart—O you needn't blush my dear, you know you told me as much last night—I then saw I could make quite a little romance out of it: A gallant knight, ready to brave all the danger of a silken ladder; a distressed damsel, who talked of love and duty in a breath; and last of all, *myself*, the 'tyrannical old guardian.' O dear, when I thought of it, I nearly died from laughing, for Arthur had not the remotest idea that his old Uncle, who had lived twenty years in India, was the veritable destroyer of his happiness, &c. Well, you all know the remainder, only I could not stand it any longer. Last night this little girl's sorrowful face struck a pang to my heart, and I went straight down to Fleet street, intending to tell you all about it and have a pleasant surprise for her to-day, but of course you were both out, as I might have known you would be, gone to Charing-cross to meet *me*; ha, ha, ha. However, I am glad it's all out at last, for upon my soul I wouldn't endure such another twenty-four hours, for—for—"

"*This*, you dear old guardy," and both Nellie's arms were round his neck.

"Bless the child," he murmured, stroking her hair, "she is the very image of her father, and last night, when she looked at me with her large blue eyes, I thought that Harry was reproaching me for playing this trick upon his child. Come here Arthur," he called, and gently disengaging Miss Ashleigh, grasped his nephew's hand, "I believe," he went on in a tone of mock gravity, "that it is customary in England, as in all other European countries, to present gifts of some description to those we esteem, on the anniversary of our Saviour's birth, and not wishing to be an exception to the general rule, nor to any longer sustain the *role* of 'tyrannical guardian,' I here present Miss Nellie with her 'Christmas-box.'"

The "Box" opened its arms and Nellie glided into them, so we suppose the present was satisfactory to both parties.

The old gentleman was happily prevented from listening to the profuse expressions of gratitude, which his nephew was preparing to bestow, by the loud ringing of the dinner bell.

"Ah, you rogue," he said merrily, as he offered his arm to Mrs. Barber, and addressing Arthur, "I see how it is, you want *your* Christmas-box too. Well we musn't have the same thing over again, so to vary it a little, I will—on this day week—make you a present of my ward, and call her a 'New Year's Gift.'"

Arthur read his answer in Nellie's blue eyes, and a look of heart-felt gratitude followed the old man, who had given him this great, unspeakable happiness, and drawing his betrothed closer to his side, he stooped and whispered "Thank God, darling, it was all for the best; you were right, we now have our reward," and his listener, also, thanked in her heart, that Heavenly