

CHAPTER X

THE upshot of this state in which Frances Copley found herself, at the conclusion of her cousin's just-recorded visit, was twofold. By bringing her into contact with old familiar conditions, it made for practical clear-seeing and for a certain moral exaltation. That these conditions possessed merit, had a very delightful side to them, she in no wise denied. They touched, yet somehow failed to hold her. She had, indeed, merely to come thus into close contact with them to learn—even while savouring their attraction—how slight their compulsion over her actually was, how far she had actually swung away from and beyond them.

The blest babe's portentous outcry took place in the nick of time to prevent her committing herself. Thanks to it she had opportunity to revise her position, adroitly to hedge, successfully throw dust in Lucia's affectionately inquiring eyes; thereby saving the dear pretty creature from an attack of bewilderment, a strain on the imagination little