



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT IS WELL !



THE Earl and Countess changed their plans, and remained at Kendal Hall to welcome the happy party from Merlin-on-Sea. But they were the only strangers, for Mrs. Kendal, not wishing to have any prying eyes upon such a family gathering, did not press her other guests to prolong their stay on Christmas week. At her husband's request she wrote to Mary Osborne and asked her to accompany Frances and her husband to Sutton, but when she did so she had no idea that she was addressing her son's promised wife. On the last day of the old year the party from Merlin arrived at the Kentish village. Harry made one of them, for he had put up at the Merlin Hotel, and insisted on remaining until they could all return together. A carriage met them at the station, and as they drove rapidly along the bare, shelterless roads, a silence fell upon them only broken by little Harry's chatter and exclamations of delight at the near prospect of