

weeks or eight, you will not see me till then. I will join you there."

"A weary, uncertain prospect, my son, to a fond anxious heart; but where are you going now?"

"To spend a fortnight with young Middlemore. He has promised me rare sport, and as his kennel is one of the finest in the country, I dare say he can keep his word. I have given a sort of half promise also, to look in at Lawton castle for a week or two."

"That is right, Augustus dear, and I entreat you not to forget it! The Marquis of Lawton, from his name and position, will prove a powerful friend to you hereafter."

"Pshaw! What do I care for his friendship or patronage?" was the boyish reply. "His preserves are all I look to, but they, I fear, are far from being as well stocked with game as his venerable head is with wise saws and proverbs. The son is a conceited fellow, as proud as a girl of his handsome face and curly hair, but a splendid whip withal, and very good humoured."

"What of the young ladies?" asked lady Huntingdon, stealing a sharp though covert glance at her son. "I hear they are very handsome and remarkably elegant."

"Stylish enough," was the careless reply, "but visitors at the castle would be much better off in my opinion without them. The last time I was there, they bored me to death. I had to drive, walk with and escort them about, sing duets and carry their parcels, in short amuse them instead of amusing myself. Hang it! I won't submit to it this time though. That I am resolved upon. If I do go, which I most probably will, as you seem so anxious about it, you will not see me in London for some weeks after your arrival there."

"Then, in the meantime, will you promise to write often, dear Augustus! To tell me where you are, what you are doing?"

"Really, mother, 'tis a promise I have very little inclination to give, and still less to keep. You know how I detest, how I abhor letter writing."

"Indeed I should know, for I have had good proofs of it in months of silence unenlivened by a single line from you, though I wrote to you regularly every week. I do not hope, I do not expect, a long letter from you. I ask you but a line to say where you are and if you are well."

"'Tis all very fine to talk about a line, mother, but if I were to reduce it to practise, I fear you would look very blank over it. You reproached me bitterly for the last letter I wrote to you, and yet there were six lines in it, and that without counting the date or signature."

Lady Huntingdon replied by a sad smile, and her son, starting up from the sofa, exclaimed: "Well, I must be off and pack up my effects. I have wasted too much time as it is, already." Calling to his dogs, which joyously bounded around him, Augustus dashed up stairs to his room, where he immediately entered on the arduous duty of arranging his trunks; his valet having gone off with word to young lord Middlemore that his master would be with him the following night. His labours were enlivened, if not hastened, by the exertions of his four-footed friends, who, springing into his trunks and out of them, rolling over each other, dragging away his "effects," as fast as he collected them, bade fair to render the task a somewhat lengthy one. Their master, however, regarded their exertions with the greatest good humour, occasionally desisting from his task to join in their sports, but finally remembering he had many other claims upon his time, he had recourse to an oft-tried stratagem to free himself from their gratuitous services. Rehearsing the scene of the drawing-room, he soon changed their amicable mirth to deadly hostility, and whilst they were engaged in a general contest, cast his things hastily into his valise, which he locked and strapped down, and then brought about an amnesty amongst his canine friends. The following morning about half-past nine, (an unusually early hour for her) lady Huntingdon was sitting in her dressing room under the hands of her maid, when a loud knock at the door, followed by a joyous: "May I come in, mother?" left her in no doubt as to the intruder, and with his customary reckless gaiety her son bounded in.

"Well, mother, I'm off! Come to say good bye."

"Sit down, for one moment, then. You have nearly an hour yet."

Evidently impatient of further delay, he paid no heed to the request. Morris having gathered her mistress' still luxuriant hair into a simple twist, left the room, and lady Huntingdon, turning to her son, sadly exclaimed.

"So you are really determined on going to day, Augustus! I had hoped, even till now, that you might have changed your intention."

"Not the slightest appearance of such a thing, mother. Trunks corded, horse saddled, self ready. Where is father?"

"Taking his morning walk in the grounds."

"Well, I must try and find him out, to say farewell. I am really hurried, so good bye, mother. Take care of yourself till we meet again!" and stooping down, he imprinted a care-