

might actually produce what she dreaded, and I therefore wished to save her constitution that shock, by putting all the clocks and watches one hour behind the real time, on the following day. He pledged himself to follow my directions most faithfully, and promised the most inviolable secrecy. The servants were made acquainted with just sufficient to ensure their co-operation; and, as they were sincerely attached to their young mistress, full reliance could be placed on their faithful execution of the orders entrusted to them.

The morning of the eventful 10th was, fortunately, as brilliant a day as can well be conceived; even smoky London became almost bright, and all things seemed to exult in the coming spring. I visited my patient in the morning, and found her, weaker and lower than the preceding evening. I peremptorily ordered carriage exercise; and, as she always yielded to my suggestions, it was settled that at three o'clock her husband should accompany her in a short country drive. While she was attiring for this purpose, her maid was awkward enough to break the chain to which her mistress's watch was attached, (being provided by me with the means to do it,) and the watch was obliged to be left at home. During her absence, every clock and watch was put back one hour; and I succeeded in getting the church clock in their immediate vicinity retarded that time. I will not recount the difficulties I met with in accomplishing that part of my plan, nor the pompous refusals with which my earnest entreaties were first met; nor how the dignity of the parochial powers gradually softened into humanity when told that a Member of Parliament would not only feel deeply indebted to them, but would make a liberal donation to their parochial funds. On re-entering her apartment, poor Clara eagerly resumed her watch, the damage having been repaired during her absence, and anxiously compared it with the clock on the chimney-piece—the hour both indicated was five. She also found on her table two notes from her two most intimate friends, inviting themselves to dine with her that day at six—*alias* seven—in consequence of my having paid them a visit that morning, when, confiding the consequences to them, I taught them their parts. One was a Mrs. Wakefield, who had been the in-

structress of Mrs. Delaware's youth, and was still regarded by her with sincere affection; she was a calm, sensible, self-possessed person, of encouraging and maternal manners. The other was an old maid, a Miss Holman, the most agreeable, plain woman I ever knew, full of drollery and anecdote, but hiding a strong mind and excellent heart under a light, careless, gay address. She had also known our invalid from her birth, and a strong friendship existed between them. I had, of course, invited myself to this momentuous dinner of my own arranging; and, moreover, had requested Colonel Delaware to bring home to dinner, apparently by accident, the Rev. Wilfred Alderson, an old friend of the family, and a bright example of all a Christian pastor ought to be. There was an expression in his benign and reverend countenance of such complete internal conviction of the divine nature of his profession, and the truths he was called upon to inculcate, that inspired confidence and affection; and yet the unbeliever and the scoffer invariably shrunk from his calm, clear gaze. I had not forgotten to pay him a visit in my morning rounds; and I could not but hope the presence of such a man, the type of all that is cheering and consoling in our holy religion, would not be without its effect on our poor sinking hostess. When we were all assembled, the greeting over, we descended to the dining-room, which Mrs. Delaware reached with less difficulty than I had apprehended. When I saw her in the full blaze of light, all my terrors, in some degree smothered by the active exertions I had been making all day, returned full upon me. It was not only that she was wasted and pale, but her eyes drawn back into her head had a most painful expression; her lips were of a purple tinge, and nervous twitches passed frequently over her face. I glanced round to see if her friends were all conducting themselves according to orders, and, observing a slight contraction in the features of the gay old maid, I frowned at her; and she, immediately taking the hint, with great self-command, rattled story after story, and *bon-mot* after *bon-mot*, until even a sort of half-smile stole over poor Clara's face. A most painful smile it was, and nearly unmanned her husband, ignorant as he was of the worst; but a severe look brought him into obedience again. I shall never forget