

for wearing hats which made one look hideous ; but, when people started asking me every time if I was ill, I changed my mind. How's business? On the up grade?"

"Indeed ; mounting by leaps and bounds. Do you remember my telling you that I'd like to be the owner of the biggest hat-shop in London? If things go on as they are doing, I shouldn't wonder if one day I was."

"Then I shall be your best client. To be the biggest customer of the biggest hat-shop in the world is just the kind of thing which appeals to me. Besides, now and then, it amuses me to drop a hint that it was I who started you—because I did, didn't I?"

"You certainly did ; I owe everything to you."

"You don't know how it pleases me to hear you say that ; it is so sweet to feel that one has done someone a good turn. You're a dear ; if ever I do go into business I'll become your partner. How is Mr. Beckwith?"

"He's all right ; he's my managing man. You know he never has quite recovered from what they did to him on that horrible ship, so he gave up the dried fruit trade, and as my manager he's simply invaluable. I tell him that most of the success of the establishment is owing to the way in which he handles the accounts."

"And how's the family?"

"The family?" One of her rare smiles illumined and transformed Catherine's countenance. "The family is in the next room. I can't do without my baby boy all day and every day, so I have him brought here every afternoon, and he sleeps nearly all the time."