

gant, nor, what is still worse under such circumstances, exacting. You are a devilish lucky dog."

"So people say," said Cecil, who was sitting at his desk, and affected to be looking over some memoranda. "I have been telling her that the sooner I go down westward the sooner I shall get my work over. If I went to-day, for example, I could see Critchett about the mill to-night and set him going."

"To-day! Do you mean to say that Ella will let you go to-day, after six weeks' absence?"

"I think, sir, she is sensible enough to perceive the advantages of such a course."

The old gentleman put up his gold spectacles over his bushy eyebrows, in the rut they had formed for themselves in his forehead, and regarded his son attentively.

"You have had no quarrel with Ella, I hope, Cecil?" said he, earnestly.

"Quarrel! Certainly not, sir. What makes you think that?"

"Nothing. I suppose folks change with the times; but in my day a young wife would not be so easily induced to part with a young husband, just after they had been separated so long; that's all."

"It is the Age of Reason," said Cecil, with a short laugh.

"So I have heard it said," replied the old gentleman dryly. "Everything moves so fast, too, that I dare say you both consider yourselves old married people."

To this Cecil made no reply, but his face grew a shade paler as he bent over his memoranda.

"You have no objection, then, father, to my returning to Wellborough at once?" observed he presently.

"Not I, if your wife has none. But I do think, in justice to her, Cecil, that you should not remain in the West indefinitely without sending for her."

"But you see, sir, I have to move about so much just now; it is not as if I were positively established at Wellborough."

"Well, well, you are the best judge of your own affairs. I never interfere in domestic matters. Let me look again at that estimate of Mr. Critchett's."

So that matter was settled, thanks to the preliminary talk which Cecil had had with his father on the previous night. It was not likely that the old gentleman would compare notes with Ella upon the subject, notwithstanding that he had put that word in on her behalf with her husband. He was, as he had said, not one to interfere in domestic matters, nor, indeed, in any matters out of his own line. He knew nothing of the society in which the young couple moved in London, and did not