

CHAPTER XLI

THE "MAISON CATHERINE"

Two years afterwards Mrs. Van Groot and Mr. Beckwith were in a small room, reserved for the of the more important customers, in the "Maison Catherine," the hat-shop which, although only its first youth, was already doing so well in a street off Hanover Square. Hats were everywhere; particular there were a large number spread out upon a table.

"That, I think, makes fifteen," observed Mrs. Van Groot, regarding the hats on the table with dancing eyes.

"It does."

"Then mind you send them round to my hotel this afternoon."

"I will—though, if you'll excuse me I don't see what you can possibly want with fifteen hats."

"Want with fifteen hats! One of the reasons why I've come to Europe is to wear hats; I always wear two, and sometimes three a day. Since I became known as the purchaser of the most expensive hat in the world, I've had to keep up my reputation. Parker buys works of art, and I buy hats; everybody knows it." The lady knitted her pretty brows. "Sometimes it's rather a nuisance. The hats one buys aren't always becoming. Sometimes I make a point of buying hats which don't become me. Once I thought of starting a craze