

light to what we did, and he urged Mary not to be entangled in any affair so indefinite and uncertain.

"Let me write to Mr Williams," he said, "and he will see you have a friend able and willing to protect you. I will tell him I shall advise you not to continue a correspondence so calculated to unsettle you."

"Do you think this stranger is trying to impose upon Mary?" I asked, when she was gone; and my husband was writing his letter.

"I think he may have been misled by her appearance," he answered. "In those days there is no judging a person's position by her dress: and Mary might be a countess. It is an unaccountable affair altogether; but this letter will effect something, for I have made it very strong."

"Mr. Williams promptly answered my husband's letter, and requested some information respecting Miss Wigley's family position and character. My husband replied something to this effect.

"Miss Wigley is the daughter of a surgeon, who left her and her mother in very reduced circumstances; they have maintained themselves by a respectable millinery business. Her education was that of a lady, and her character is such as to make her the chosen and intimate friend of my wife. So strong an interest I feel in her welfare, that I should carefully investigate the principles and circumstances of any one paying his addresses to her. You may not be aware that the limp, observable in her gait, is owing to the total loss of a limb; this circumstance has materially militated against her settlement in life.

"The next Sunday Mary and I had scarcely taken our usual seats (she sat with me, as our pew was near the door, and she avoided attracting the notice of the congregation), when the chapel-keeper showed a stranger into our pew. He was a tall military-looking man, with dark hair and moustache, which marked him of a different stamp to the usual frequenters of a chapel, for who can associate the ideas of unworldliness and moustaches! A beard is more patriarchal and even Scriptural. The stranger bowed to

us, and then composed himself into an attitude of profound attention. He presented himself again at evening service, and my husband remarked to me, as we walked home: "I imagine he is a Polish or Hungarian refugee, and to-morrow he will call with a petition."

"But the next morning early there came a note, inviting my husband to dine with Mr. Williams at six that evening, at the principal hotel in our town. He threw the note to me with a comical mixture of consideration and fun.

"This is really getting a serious affair," he said. "I will go out and see if I can meet this stranger somewhere, and take my measure of him."

"I remained at home on thorns of curiosity and suspense till my husband returned; he was already delighted with Mr. Williams's intelligence, information, &c., and said so much about them, that I thought they had forgotten Mary.

"By no means," he said, "I have invited Mr. Williams to meet her here to-morrow evening, and we must invite a few friends, who are not in the secret, to take off the awkwardness,"

"With the first dawn of morning I was up, and before Mary had left her bed-room, I was there announcing to her mother the actual impending interview with their unknown correspondent. Mary's agitation was extreme, quite hysterical in fact, but Mrs. Wigley most judiciously entered into a discussion upon her dress, and I left her tolerably composed.

"It was a busy and anxious morning to us all; my husband passed it with his new friend, and, at the appointed hour, when I had engaged to be ready to receive him, and wonderful to say not before, he brought him, and introduced him to me. Nothing could surpass the suavity and easy politeness of his manner and in a few minutes I felt as if I had known him all my life. I watched him when we heard Mary's step in the passage, and his eyes lighted up with a pleasant smile; she looked really beautiful after the first awkwardness of meeting him; her dress was the most elegant and becoming her mother's taste could advise, while her heightened colour and eyes cast