

CHAPTER XVI.

A WONDERFUL CONCESSION, AND A WONDERFUL JOURNEY—A PENCIL BEAM UPON TWO HISTORIES.

ABOUT the period of Mr. Baring's meditations and great trials, Mr. Meldon appeared one day at the Crag. He was accompanied by his daughter Clara; and all the style within Mr. Meldon's command seemed "put on" for the occasion. The phaeton was shining; the horses were shining; and the harness outshone horse and phaeton. In fact everything looked "spic and span" new.

Mr. Charles Baring had been away for some days; and Mr. Giffard D'Alton was ill at ease, people said—so that, with all the offices of charity and her reading, which was never given up, Clara had been saying to her father that Amy's life was a great trial, and almost a misery. What rendered Clara's sympathy more active for her friend was the journey Mr. Meldon was about to make to Dublin, and the weary hours poor Amy would have to spend in their absence.

Clara, though so young, was full of good sense; and her education had given her confidence in herself. She loved Amy D'Alton deeply, and she conceived the wonderful thought of going to Mr. Giffard D'Alton to ask his concession for Amy to be a companion of her travels.

"Why, child," Mr. Meldon said, "you had better ask Amy herself first."

"Not for the word, papa. Amy would not move a step of herself to leave Mr. D'Alton alone. I must try and win the old gentleman myself, and, once he consents, I am sure of Amy. In fact, I will make Mr. D'Alton command her to come with us."

Mr. Meldon felt proud of his child. He saw, moreover how wise she was; and, kissing her on the forehead, he quietly said, "Bless you, Clara!"

We have now made the reader acquainted with the antecedents of this morning on which the Meldons appeared at the Crag; and, may be, the brilliancy of the "turn out," which was due to "Crichawn" very considerably, had some connection with that astute individual's knowledge of the objects of the visit, and also his desire of its success. Why Mr. Leyton Seymour was left at

home, we may readily guess; but Clara would have it so, if for no other reason than her desire to fight the battle with old Mr. D'Alton in the presence of the smallest number of witnesses that was practicable.

The phaeton flew along the road, and Sliere-na-Mon seemed to fly the other way; while Clara's pre-occupation of mind kept her musing and silent.

Arrived at the Crag, little delay was made in sending up cards, and preparing for the interview. The old gentleman was "at home;" and, in honest truth, had taken a survey of the equipage, and a good one, before he entered the drawing-room. His eyes fell particularly upon Clara, and he said afterwards, that "his heart softened" in the view of the young girl, and "he did not know why."

After the usual common-place, Mr. Meldon opened the way to Clara's mission, by announcing that he and his daughter were going to travel for a month or two; and that their visit was almost a "good-bye," though they intended to call again. They would not leave before a week or ten days.

"An expensive thing is travelling," remarked Mr. D'Alton.

"Well, sir, money is made to purchase recreation and information, as much as for food and raiment."

"Hem!" shrewdly coughed Mr. D'Alton. "Does your friend, Mr. Seymour, accompany you?"

"He leaves, to-morrow, and awaits us in Dublin or London."

"He is rich, I believe," continued the old man, and his gray eyes twinkled.

"Very wealthy," answered Mr. Meldon. "I should say his investments reach a hundred thousand pounds, and his property in Australia reaches several thousands a year."

"Phew!" emphatically replied Mr. Giffard D'Alton. "A hundred thousand pounds, and several thousands a year! 'pon my word!"

"Where is Amy, sir?" now demanded Clara Meldon.

"Where is Amy? Why, she is in her room, or in some cabin near. It is not hard to find that child of mine, Amy. She will be in great affliction after you, Miss Clara."

"No, 'Miss' now, sir! You promised