

most unexpected places. You will find that heaps of things have been carted over to the new house which you never meant to keep and for which you have no room. They will be in the way and will put you and everybody else out of temper many a time, before you get rid of them at any cost. No doubt you expect to be comfortably settled in a week, whereas you will not know where to place the sole of your foot without treading on a tack, or find an unencumbered chair to rest on, for months to come."

This tirade showed that the speaker's mind had recovered its balance, and that he was really at ease and happy about Aunt Mary.

Mrs. Dimsdale realised this, and greeted her nephew's forebodings with a cheery laugh.

"I shall have to say, 'Get you gone, croaker and prophet of evil,'" she replied. "Grant, you are a sham and a make-believe. If you had found me in a doleful mood, making the worst of every difficulty, and bemoaning my hard fate in having to leave this place, wailing at the thought of untold discomfort and loss during the removal, you would have set about convincing me that I was taking wrong views of everything. You would have declared that my regrets were purely sentimental; that I was parting with my home for my own convenience, since no one could have turned me out of it; that a removal ought to be looked on as a delightful variation on a humdrum, lonely life, and that things were so well managed now, if anybody could afford to do it comfortably, that it was like a chapter in a fairy tale; that it meant turning one's back upon the worn, the dingy and the unsuitable, and waking up in a new dwelling in spick-and-span order and comeliness."

It was always amusing to listen to a conversation between the "old lady," as the young people called Mrs. Dimsdale, and her nephew. They understood each other thoroughly, and could speak with absolute frankness, without fear of offence being given or taken on either side, despite the difference in years between them.

"Perhaps you are right," was the answer. "I came not daring to hope for what I have found; but you might have been deceitful enough to keep a brave face whilst I was here, and then melted into tears and wailings afterwards. In this case, my picture of terrors to be faced would have been like the bitter dose of physic which turns an invalid's thoughts from his ailment to its intended remedy. After all, you do not need the full dose, only the minimum; something between the two things I have described. You will have some worries of the sort I have named, for a removal cannot be effected by fairy hands; but your servants are tried and trustworthy; and you are not scrambling out of your house on quarter day to meet and be mixed up—dead and live

stock, so to speak—with the tenants who are at the same time scrambling out of the other place to make room for your incoming."

"Oh no, my case is quite different. They be part of this house almost untouched, and the other is put in order. Then you see, I have Lucy."

"True, you have Lucy, and in names a personage whose flesh-and-blood is better than the best amongst the things I have written about. To have Lucy is to have a devoted daughter, but one who is a good girl, to give you the best that can be reared by good hands, sound judgment, an innate good taste, and plenty of decision; a daughter of a loving heart and common level head."

"You understand Lucy most thoroughly."

"I doubt if I do, or if anybody does yourself."

"I sometimes doubt if I do, for she is delighting me with little new phases in her character that flash on me like the varied lights that come from the many facets of a diamond. She makes me a happy mother, independent of all else. You would have been charmed to see her with her note-book in hand, going over the new



"MY DARLING, YOU HAVE WORKED MIRACLES."