

"True; but I really do not think that there is any danger of my falling sick for want of exercise."

"Well, well, of course you know best about that; still I think that a few weeks' recreation would not do you any harm, at all events."

"Oh, certainly not," I replied; "and, as I could spare the time, I should enjoy it very much indeed."

"As to the time, there need be no difficulty about that. Besides, I have a little piece of business to transact, which, unless you will undertake to arrange for me, will necessitate my absence from the city for some time. Now, if you will take the matter in hand, you will not only enable me to remain here, but you will have an opportunity of spending a few weeks in as pleasant a spot as any one might wish to exist in."

"Rather an inducement to start, I must confess," said I. "But, as to the business you speak of: Is it anything connected with the firm?"

"Well, no, not exactly," answered William with a smile; "that is, it concerns directly only one of the firm, which is—myself. The fact of the matter is, Frank," continued my brother, assuming a more serious air, "that as you cannot make up your mind to act like a sensible man, and get married and have a comfortable home of your own, instead of a miserable apology for such, as is afforded by a couple of small rooms in an overcrowded hotel, I have, therefore, come to the conclusion to take the matter in hand and do all this myself. What do you think of that, eh?"

"Think of it?" I repeated, with a look of utter bewilderment. "I think it's very —, I mean I did not know that you had any intention of getting married."

"Of course not. But at present I have a very serious intention of doing so, and I should like to have your assistance very much to enable me to carry it out."

"Me? And how can I render you any possible assistance in this affair?"

"Well, you see," answered William, "that she whom I have selected to become the future Mrs. B. resides at some distance from the city, and, as I have not as yet consulted her upon the subject, it will be necessary for me to proceed thither and go through with the usual preliminaries, unless you will consent to act for me in this case, which, I should think, if willing, you might very easily do."

"Then, in plain language, you desire me to speed away to the home of this favored fair one, and humbly sue for her hand in your name, and, if successful, as soon as the necessary arrangements are completed, you —."

"Will step in and put the finishing touch upon the whole, with the aid of the parish rector. That's it, exactly."

"And may I enquire the name of her whom I may expect to look upon as my future sister-in-law?"

"Certainly," replied William. "You re-

member that when I was away last summer, on a fishing excursion, I stayed at the house of a gentleman, named Graham, for a few days?"

"Yes," said I; "Squire Graham, of Rosemount."

"The same. Well, while there I formed the acquaintance of his daughter, Miss Alice Graham, and she it is to whom I intend, through you, to pay my addresses. As to her personal appearance and disposition, I shall leave you to judge for yourself. And now, what do you say? Will you go or not?"

"Oh, certainly, if you are willing to intrust me with so important a mission, I have no objection to undertake it."

"Very well," returned William; "I suppose you will start to-morrow morning. And, by-the-bye, you had better go now and see about packing up any articles of wearing apparel that you may require during your stay at Rosemount; and, in the meanwhile, I will prepare a kind of introductory letter to the Squire, which will insure you a hearty welcome just as long as you desire to remain and behave yourself." And so saying he turned towards the desk, and I took my hat and proceeded to the hotel where William and I were then staying.

Well, next morning found me seated in the lumbering old stage coach, which was to convey me to a spot about three miles distant from Rosemount. To relieve the monotony of the journey, I engaged in sundry detached chats with the driver, gazed admiringly on the surrounding scenery, smoked cigars, and mused upon the rather singular errand on which I had started.

Ten hours of uninterrupted travel, save when we stopped for a short time to partake of a very poor dinner at a very high charge, brought me to the place where I was to leave the stage, and complete my journey on foot.

With a few hurried words of direction from the driver, I started off, valise in hand, at a brisk pace, for it was already growing late in the day, and I felt anxious to reach my place of destination before darkness came upon me. An hour's tramp, over a road running through as pretty a tract of country as I had ever beheld, placed me in front of the white painted gate-posts of Rosemount. I knew the place well enough, from the description given me by my brother. After passing through the gate I walked up a neatly gravelled avenue, which, after passing for some little distance through a double line of willow trees, of magnificent growth, separated to the right and left, and swept around on either side of a large enclosure, covered with groups of noble trees of various kinds, on the other side of which it again united a few yards in front of the house, which now came into view.

It was a handsome and commodious cottage, of the gothic style of architecture, painted a light fawn colour, which contrasted pleasantly with the surrounding foliage. A covered veranda or piazza extended along the front of the building, on which, as I drew nearer, I per-