

"There now, don't laugh at me, please. But, O Reginald, you dear old fellow! you are worth forty thousand of them any day; and I love you beyond all the world beside"—

"Beside Calvert, you mean;" interjected Harvey.

"Oh, I'm so sorry I let you find that out! And it's too bad, you should be anyway disappointed in me. But, you see, you've always been my dear, dear brother; and that's nicer than to think of you as anything else. Isn't it now?"

This last, with a pretty appealing air, which there was no gain-saying nor resisting. At least so Harvey seemed to think. For, though it cost him an effort to gulp down the rising in his throat, he acquitted himself very creditably of his rôle of the good genius by replying, as he wiped away the fast-falling tears of the little witch beside him:

"There now; there now! Of course it will be a thousand times nicer; and I'll not grudge you to him one single bit. But who in the world will play mad with me when you become *Madam la Comtesse*?"

"Don't break my heart, Regie; you know you never can leave me;" etc.

All which fragmentary, and somewhat enigmatical observations we consign to our fair readers, to spell out the meaning of as they alone can.

The entrance of their young host at this juncture, and a precipitate rush of Maddie to her own chamber to bathe her tear-stained and swollen face, put an end to the conversation.

A long and anxious discussion ensued between the two gentlemen, as to the best course to pursue in the present emergency. Into this, however, we propose not to enter; especially as their enemies' prompt action rendered all their schemes nugatory.

CHAPTER XXV.

APPARENTLY there is a fascination for Delaval in the Dog's Nose. He has business there again to-night, it would seem.

At least one of two figures we can faintly see dodging one another in the gloom, seems strangely like him, and his voice soon settles the doubt.

He is in a villainous humor, to judge by his muttered ejaculations: