

watched by each, the sands shall have run low within the glass, and the silver cord forever slackened in its strain.

For the first six months of our residence nothing occurred worth marking, except, indeed, that, to the writer's considerable surprise, he had not even begun to make the fortune. There had been several letters from Charley, desponding, for the most part, full of the obduracy of old Leadenhall and the injustice of Sir James. There had, we understood, been some commotion at the Grange, and the succession was, as yet, undetermined. Both the nephews were abroad, nobody could say where, for even Miss Fenchurch's letters were delivered indirectly, and gave no clue to the place of their composition. All that she knew was, that they took a very long time on the way. Then there were details of further troubles,—of unwelcome suitors pressed upon her by her guardians; of stormy discussions and mercenary arguments, and exasperated reproaches; of seclusion and ill-humour, and all but persecution; and altogether of precisely the sort of life which such a young lady, while spirited enough to resent, was at the same time sufficiently sensitive to suffer from. Nelly used to flood the room with sympathetic tears upon reading one of these missives, until at last it became necessary, for the sake of the carpets and furniture, to threaten their total suppression until good behaviour, after which she was wont to retire into obscure recesses and howl in unmolested privacy. I was myself sorry for Charley, to whom I had taken a warm fancy, but, knowing that she would be shortly of age, and within her own control, refrained from lifting up my voice aloud, and left the lamentation without competition to the mistress of the household.

It was towards the close of the first half-year that I brought home one evening some news from town, announcing myself as the herald of such intelligence as I hung up my hat on entering. Nelly's imagination instantly leaped into a ball-room phantasmagoria, and had already begun to calculate the effect of a certain new pearl bracelet, before I had time to undeceive her. This I did by producing the subjoined letter, with the effect of sufficiently diverting her train of idea:—

CRITERION HOTEL, August 15th.

My Dear Harry,

Emulous of your shining example, behold me established on your shores. I have been here some weeks, but was unwilling to write before I should have something definite to report. Congratulate me on my enterprise and discretion. I have fairly struck oil at last, and am deep in Bolindas and Bon Accords. They offered me a place in the direction of the former, but my modesty forbade acceptance, and I rest content as an unobtrusive though influential proprietor. It is the grandest investment that was ever known, 340 prem. yesterday, and rising every hour. I think I shall buy the Grange, or else a partnership with Leadenhall. Which would you advise? If you like, I can get you some Karkulfas at about 130, or, what will be better, put you on the subscription for Footscray Amalgamated. I wish I could spare you a few Bolindas,