

records" with considerable philosophy, and that it was not likely that he would take much trouble to spare his daughter's sensibilities. But in this case it seemed the good commissary was wronged. The house had been re-arranged throughout, and, it must be confessed, for the better. The mother-of-pearl glories of the drawing-room indeed remained; "The Abbey by Moonlight" on the sofa back, and "Windsor Castle by Night" on the conversation chair, still gleamed with livid splendour; but the rest of the rooms had been refurnished, and not without some taste.

"Why, my dear Gracie, this is quite palatial!" said Ella, with a touch of the old sense of fun that had won Cecil's heart almost as much as her beauty. "Your father has actually gone in for art;" and indeed there was a picture of a ship at sea over the dining-room sideboard, the gorgeous frame of which exacted involuntary homage from every eye.

"Yes," answered Gracie gravely. "I have no doubt papa has done it for the best; but it seems to me—just at first—that I should have preferred things to be as they were."

Ella felt she had struck a sad note, and was not sorry that at that moment her Uncle Gerard made his appearance. It relieved her from embarrassment as respected her friends, and besides she wished to have her meeting with the colonel independent of the commissary. Gracie guessed that she desired to be alone with him, and almost immediately left the room.

"Well, Ella, I am delighted to see you back at Woolwich, my dear, though I should have preferred receiving you under the old roof; but I have parted with the cottage, as you know, and gone back to barracks. Diogenes is in his tub again."

"I know it, my dear uncle. I hope you are all the happier for not having a self-willed niece to plague you?"

"No, Ella, I can't say that," returned he tenderly. "I miss you sadly. But what does it matter; a few more years, and then—why, damme, I shall have wings instead of epaulettes; I shall be an angel?"

Ella could not restrain a smile; she had not seen, or at all events heard, anybody so funny as the colonel for many a day. Yet perhaps the smile was forced, since he went on: "You look as beautiful as ever but not so bright and gay. What is it, my dear?"

"Oh, nothing, uncle. I am a sober matron now, remember, and not the thoughtless girl you knew me."

"And more's the pity. I like thoughtless girls; and I am afraid it is only the thoughtless ones that like me."

The colonel sighed. It was a bad sign with him when he sighed and did not swear.

"When a man has reached my time of life," he continued, "the gout